### Summary

In order to save Erica and Boyd from the Alpha Pack, Stiles is forced to face certain facts about himself and decide where he stands.

### Notes

*This is a sequel to The Lines on Which We Tread, there are references to events and characters in that story that will make much more sense if you've read it.*

*I will be posting roughly once a week, probably on Sundays.*

See the end of the work for more notes.
“Wow.” Stiles stared balefully at his best friend. “I’m impressed. You lasted a lot longer than I thought you would.”

“What?” Scott had kicked puppy look down to a fricking art now that he was a werewolf, but Stiles had built up an immunity over many, many years of friendship, so he was still pretty good at ignoring it despite the recent boost in potency.

“It’s been two months; I expected you to cave around day four. I really am impressed with your improved discipline.”

“Dude, come on! Don’t be like that, I’m serious.”

“So was she, Scott. Allison went through hell and what was probably a psychotic break, she deserves time to straighten herself out.” Stiles tried to reason with his heartbroken friend. Allison was Scott’s anchor though, and the last two months were a real test on his control during the full moon without her. Stiles was actually impressed that he’d lasted as long as he had.

That didn’t make his point any less valid, however. The last time he’d seen Allison—the whole fiasco with the shades and witches—she hadn’t trusted herself not to attack the wolves. He approved of her choice to think a little longer on whether or not she was ready.

Scott shuffled his feet a bit as they walked the edge of the woods. It probably wasn’t the safest place to be in Beacon Hills, supernatural hotspot, but it was quiet and secluded and Scott and Stiles were free to talk about whatever without being overheard by someone not in the know.

Like his dad.

Stiles hated that he couldn’t share the most significant thing to ever happen in his life with his dad, but it was for his own good. The world was way more dangerous than even the Sheriff realized and Stiles didn’t want to bring him in and expose him to that danger any more than he already had. It was better to lie.

Even he wasn’t sure he fully believed that anymore.

Scott pulled him out of his dour thoughts. “I just can’t stop thinking about her. I know she needs to think about stuff, but... We’re, like, meant to be together. How much thinking does that need?”

Stiles sighed and tried really hard to not make a jabbing comment about Scott’s assessment. Instead, he channeled his sarcastic energy into helping. Sort of. “Well, it’s shaping up to be a hot summer night, so you could always bring her some red roses.”

Scott stopped and got that confused look on his face that meant he knew Stiles had probably made a reference or joke about something, but he wasn’t quite getting the punchline. “Why does it matter what the weather’s like?”

Stiles sighed the sigh of the misunderstood. “No one appreciates the classics.”

He had that song stuck in his head now. Awesome. At least it was a good song.

A crashing sound from the forest derailed their conversation and Stiles’ train of thought. Scott was already stepping between Stiles and the tree line, crouched low, ready to wolf out at a moments
notice. Stiles immediately went for the only weapon-like object available to him: the bear mace his dad had given him when a new string of “animal attacks” had sprung up in the past few weeks.

A familiar roar preceded the appearance of Derek; wolfed out, bloody, and pissed off. He came tumbling out of the woods to land essentially at their feet, but he was quick to get off the ground. He stood a little in front and to the side of Scott, effectively blocking Stiles’ line of sight to what had followed him out of the trees. The way Scott’s claws extended and he roared, Stiles guessed it wasn’t very friendly.

Derek and Scott worked together, not getting in each others way, as they attacked what turned out to be another werewolf. Scott moved in to attack. The werewolf threw Scott into a tree easily. In his momentary distraction, Derek attacked from his flank, all claws and impossible speed, but the new wolf was apparently faster and possibly stronger. He kicked Derek away in a move reminiscent of Tom Hardy’s kick in Warrior.

Stiles would have been morbidly impressed if it weren’t for the fact that werewolf was now moving towards him. Which just wasn’t fair. He hadn’t done anything. The glowing red alpha eyes were not lost on Stiles either.

“Stiles!” Scott shouted, scrambling to his feet, though he seemed to be having some pretty severe issues with that relatively simple task.

It was enough to snap Stiles out of his ponderings. He lifted the tiny spray can clutched tightly in his hand and let the werewolf have a taste of Oleoresin Capsicum right in his snarling face. The effect was immediate: the werewolf stopped advancing and swatted ineffectually at the air around his face. Stiles figured the effect wouldn’t last long however, given the werewolf healing abilities, but he didn’t know how long he had. Scott had flatly refused to test it for him.

Not needing an invite, though, Stiles backed the fuck away. The werewolf was significantly distracted long enough for Derek to tackle him to the ground and knock him unconscious. Then he stood up, completely human-looking once again, and glared at Scott and Stiles.

“What are you doing here?” He demanded.

“We were just walking—”

“Haven’t you been paying attention? You think those animal attacks are really just animals?” Derek pinned Scott with a look that implied some serious judgement toward his mental capabilities.

Stiles jumped in. “How about a thank you, Derek.”

Derek turned his glare to Stiles, “You could have been killed. Or Turned. Or did it escape your notice that that is an alpha?”

“I did notice that, yes.” Stiles deadpanned. “Did it escape your notice that we helped?” He waved the can of bear mace while gesticulating with his hands. Derek grabbed his wrist and looked at the can. “It’s bear mace, dude. Want me to show you how it works?”

Derek shot him one of his better bitch faces and then took the canister away, pocketing it, ignoring Stiles’ ineffectual protests.

“Be glad you ran into us and not just some random person.” Scott pipped up, completely ignorant of the blatant theft of property.

Derek looked between the two with a look of incredulity and then stalked off, dragging the
unconscious alpha behind him.

“What the hell?” Stiles murmured.

“It was stalking you.” Stiles whirled around at the sound of Isaac’s voice. The beta was walking out of the forest a few yards away from where Derek had left. “Derek just stopped it from taking you by surprise.”

“Isaac.” Scott grinned, giving the other beta a bro handshake when he got closer.

Stiles tried really hard not to be jealous of the budding friendship between Isaac and Scott. His friend was putting in a lot of hours at the Clinic this summer and had gotten Isaac a job there too, so they were fast becoming bros. Stiles liked Isaac well enough when he wasn’t trying to be a bastard, and he had come to help save him when vampires nabbed him, so it could be worse, he supposed.

“Why was it stalking us?” Stiles asked, back on topic.

“There’s a whole pack of them, of alphas. They’re here because Derek is a new alpha.” Isaac admitted, like he was hesitant to share this pretty significant information. “We’re not sure if they’re here to kill him or just... testing him.”

Scott look mildly horrified at the idea of an entire pack of alpha werewolves. Stiles was pretty worried about it too, but he had a much better poker face than Scott. Also, a much more curious brain. He wanted answers.

“Testing him how?” Stiles asked.

“We don’t know that’s what they’re doing.” Isaac shuffled uncomfortably.

“It’s a whole pack of alphas against an alpha and a few betas; if they were going to kill him, they’d have done it by now. Probably fairly easily. So answer my question. Testing him how?”

“They could just be... tormenting him first.” Isaac looked even more uncomfortable.

Derek was not Stiles’s favorite person at the moment, but that just sounded downright unpleasant. Not that being tested by a pack of Alphas sounded any better. Stiles doubted it would be a simple multiple choice fill in the bubble type thing.

“Isaac, what’s going on?” Scott finally joined the conversation.

“They’re taking his pack.”

Scott blinked. “I told Derek he wasn’t my alpha; I’m not in his pack.”

Isaac very obviously bit his lip to keep from commenting. It was no secret that Isaac wanted Scott to reconsider rejecting Derek as his alpha. The young beta had some pretty strong opinions about it, and didn’t usually hesitate to talk about it. He was stubbornly convinced that he could change Scott’s mind.

“Can I ask the obvious question?” Stiles raised his hand.

“Of course, Stiles.” Peter said from behind him, of course making him jump; because creepy stalking clearly ran in the Hale family. “Do ask the obvious.”

“Why didn’t Derek just kill him? Isn’t that the appropriate response to territory invasion and pack threatening?”
Peter smiled, which made Stiles nervous. “See if you can guess; I’d love to see how your mind
works.”

Ignoring that creepy statement for the time being, Stiles thought. Isaac said that they were taking
members of the pack. Both Isaac and Peter were in front of him, Scott too, though he wasn’t
technically part of Derek’s pack, and Derek himself was obviously fine. That left Lydia and
Jackson... and Erica and Boyd. The two had been absent since the end of the whole Kanima
catastrofuck. Stiles was fairly certain that Lydia would have mentioned if her boyfriend had gone
missing, seeing as she was his only real connection to his old life. Having been pronounced dead
kinda limited one’s access to porches and rich parents’ money. So that left Erica and Boyd. Scott had
mentioned that they left the Pack though.

“The alphas have Erica and Boyd.” Stiles stated. It was the only thing that made sense. Judging by
Peter’s smirk, he was right. “Derek doesn’t know where they are though, so he’s going to ask that
alpha.”

“Politely, I’m sure.” Peter nodded.

Scott scoffed. “They left the Pack though.”

“As far as we can tell, they ran into the Alphas as they were leaving town. They must have still had
enough of Derek’s scent on them for the Alphas to think they were pack.” Isaac said, clearly
distressed. He’d liked Erica and Boyd, had disapproved of their leaving, even though he had briefly
considered joining them.

“Just like with Gerard.” Stiles sighed, rubbing furiously at his buzzed hair trying to control himself.
He still had occasional nightmares about finding Erica and Boyd strung up and beaten and unable to
help. They weren’t a part of Derek’s Pack then either. “Right. So. What’s the plan?”

“Plan?” Peter asked, amused.

“Yes, plan. I assume there is one. Or at least the possibility of one. As much fun as spur of the
moment, flying by the seat of your pants heroics are, I don’t think that’ll go so well for us against a
pack of Alphas.”

Now Peter was amused. Stiles could see it on his stupid smug, psycho face. It wasn’t Peter that
answered though.

“Us?” Isaac and Scott said simultaneously, though Isaac had a dash of hope rather than the heaping
skepticism.

“What, you thought we were going to sit here and twiddle our thumbs while those two are getting
tortured? Again?” He asked them both.

“They’ve been gone almost two months, Stiles. What, exactly, do you hope to find?” Peter asked.

Stiles just glared at him. He didn’t know what he expected to find, but he would be damned if he
didn’t try.

Another thought occurred to him. “When were you planning on telling us--”

“We weren’t.” Peter interrupted. Rude. “Derek said there wasn’t a reason to involve the two of you,
since you’re not Pack.”

Not Pack. For whatever reason, that actually hurt. Stiles was part of Scott’s sort-of-but-not-really
pack. If a lone beta (omega?) and two humans counted as a pack. When Scott had teamed up with Derek to take care of the Kanima, Stiles had been on board. Mostly. He may have made a token argument or two when he first learned about it, but it made sense to team up so he went along with it.

After? He didn’t know. He’d gotten help from Derek and the others when shit had hit the fan with faeries and vampires, and he’d jumped to help save the day when the witches had tried to take the territory. But then the Cookie Debacle had happened...

He’d figured that that was essentially Derek’s way of saying he wasn’t Pack. He had forced himself to come to terms with that thought in the weeks that had followed.

So why did hearing it out loud hurt so much?

He ignored it, tamped it down quick because there were super sniffers nearby and he really didn’t like the look Peter was shooting him. “So why are you telling us now?”

“Because Pack or not, the Alphas are after you.” Isaac said, looking at Scott.

Peter smiled smugly. Stiles really wanted to punch his face. He had a very punchable face. He restrained the urge though, since all it would get him was a broken hand and possible bloodshed.

“Fine, so what do we do now?” Scott asked.

“Same thing we do every night, Pinky. Research.” Stiles stretched his fingers, popping the joints and miming typing. It was what he was good at. His contribution to... not his Pack... damn, but that still didn’t feel right.

Isaac whipped out his phone and started typing, “Right. I’ll text Lydia to send you what she’d found already. See if you can dig up anything new.”

Stiles froze. “What?”

“She’s a very bright girl.” Peter drawled. “She’s been translating the bestiary for us. Seeing as she’s Jackson’s lady love, she has a vested interest in keeping him--and by default, the Pack--safe.”

“Dude.” Stiles knew Peter was just baiting him, but that was just rude. It is never cool to hear you’re easily replaced.

Isaac shot Stiles an apologetic look and put his phone away. “She’ll email you later.”

“Awesome.” Stiles nodded. He’d deal with his mild jealousy once this Alpha issue was settled. For now, he had to focus. “Let’s get going.”

Scott nodded and gave a farewell bro handshake--really?--to Isaac before following Stiles back to his jeep. They drove for about ten full minutes in silence before Scott finally said what had clearly been bugging him since they left the others.

“Are you really sure you want to do this? It sounds like they have it handled.”

“Really Scott? They have about as much a handle on this as a Finstock has bedside manner. Erica and Boyd are missing. Not just gone. Missing. Doesn’t that bother you?”

“Yeah, but... You heard Peter. They’re probably dead--”

“Dude!” Stiles shot him a quick look. “They aren’t dead.”
He could feel Scott looking at him. “What makes you so sure?”

Stiles gripped the steering wheel in a white-knuckle grip. “A hunch.” He gritted out.

“How...”

“Look, I only just heard about all this crap, but I have a theory.” Stiles explained. “Isaac said that they’re taking Derek’s Pack, right? Don’t ask me why they went after you since you haven’t been part of Derek’s pack in months, but! That sounds more like a test to me; a challenge. Can he take care of his pack, can he save them if they’re in danger? But it can’t just be about his ability to swoop in and save the day. If it was just about being able to get them back, I highly doubt they’d give him two months to do it.”

Scott was nodding along. “So why have they given him so long?”

“I don’t know. I only have a guess.”

“What is it, Stiles?”

“What if the Alphas are testing Erica and Boyd’s connection to Derek?”

“But they aren’t Pack, why would they still have them?”

Stiles hesitated. “What if... what if they are Pack? What if it takes more than simply saying you’re no longer Pack? What if they changed their minds when the Alphas took them and allied themselves with Derek in hopes of rescue? Or when Gerard took them? What if they weren’t leaving town, what if they were heading back to Derek? I mean, Derek sure seems interested in getting them back.”

Scott frowned, thinking. Stiles gave him time and kept silent, though he did tap a rapid rhythm against the steering wheel as they neared Scott’s place. Stiles had no way to know if he was right until he got some quality one-on-one time with his laptop and Lydia’s notes.

When he pulled up in front of Scott’s, he friend hopped out and waved absently at Stiles, still thinking. Stiles guessed he was thinking more about Pack connections than Erica and Boyd specifically. He really didn’t seem terribly interested in mounting a rescue, but his possible connection to Derek was potentially fatal to him if the Argents got wind and took offense.

Stiles drove off towards his own abode. With luck, he’d actually be home before curfew for once.

When he booted up his computer and logged in to his email, there was already a message from Lydia waiting for him. He opened the attachment and let it download while he read the body of her message.

Stiles,

This is what I’ve translated of the Bestiary regarding Alphas. Not much in the way of new information, but maybe you’ll see something I didn’t. Also, below is a list of articles that were even remotely helpful. Get started, you have a lot to catch up on.

Glad you finally got off your ass. Try not to completely abandon the Pack again?

Lydia

Stiles scoffed. Lydia seemed to have become an adept researcher. He was, somehow, unsurprised. He briefly considered sending a reply telling her that he’d have to be Pack to abandon said Pack, but
that sounded too much like he was being a petulant child, so he abstained. Barely. He opened the translation and started reading instead.

He had a few books of his own, and he pulled them out to cross reference the information in the Bestiary. He wasn’t sure if Lydia had access to these books, but she might. He’d gotten them at an antique bookstore a few towns over, so who knows if she might’ve found other copies to read. She probably had access to whatever books had been procured from the vampire’s library, though. Man, he wanted to get his hands on those.

In either case, even pouring over his supernatural library for the rest of the night, he wasn’t sure he’d found anything worthwhile. Certainly nothing regarding a whole freaking pack of Alphas.

If he didn’t think it’d get him thrown into the nearest wall, he’d ask Derek about some of this stuff. The guy was born a werewolf, he had to know something. He supposed he could ask Peter too, but that would require willingly interacting with the zombie wolf, and as sassy as Peter could be, he also tripped Stiles’ Creep-O-Meter like crazy and was just plain dangerous.

He moved on from the physical books to the articles Lydia had sent him around noon. He recognized more than a few of them as sites he’d visited when first researching werewolves after Scott was bit. He skimmed over them first, making sure he hadn’t missed something since he’d gone over them with a fine-toothed comb the first few times he’d read them. Satisfied that they hadn’t hid things from him, Stiles moved on to the new articles.

A knock on his door startled Stiles away from his computer.

“Hey kiddo.” The sheriff was in his uniform.

“Dad. You headed to work?”

He nodded. “Have you slept?” He glanced appraisingly over Stiles and didn’t seem terribly pleased.

“Uh... Not so much. Got distracted.”

The sheriff sighed. “I know it’s summer, but you shouldn’t get in the habit of staying up all night. Get some sleep.”


“I’ll be working late, so you’re on your own for dinner. And make sure to stay inside tonight. We’re still getting reports of animal attacks.”

“Don’t worry Dad. I’ll stay safe.” Stiles’ mind pinged on something. He was onto something... “No greasy burgers!” Stiles warned him as the sheriff turned away. He had ways of knowing when his dad skipped out on the healthy diet Stiles had him on. Mainly Scott and his super sniffer.

He heard a “yeah, yeah” from his dad as he moved away from Stiles and out the door. Stiles noted the sound of the front door opening and closing as he went back to research. Something his dad had said had given him an idea.

Opening a new tab on his browser, Stiles began a new search. The animal attacks were the work of the Alpha pack; Derek had essentially said as much. Stiles hoped that maybe he could track them... They left such an obvious trail after all, once you knew what to look for.

A subtle shift in the room’s air pressure made Stiles swing around. Sure enough, Derek was climbing through his window.
“What do you have?”

“I think I’m onto something.” Stiles said, choosing to forego arguing about the B&E, gesturing Derek to come in. “It probably won’t give us their exact location, but I’m thinking that if I can track their previous movements, see if they follow any kind of pattern, we might be able to predict their movements here.”

“How?” He heard Derek sit on his bed—the only other sit-able surface—and settle in to listen to Stiles give a full rundown of his thought process.

“The animal attacks.” Stiles explained. “The Alpha pack didn’t originate here, so wherever they were before probably experienced the same increase in animal attacks that Beacon Hills is dealing with. It’ll take me a few hours, but I’m positive I can come up with something useful.” His stomach growled audibly, even to his own ears, but Stiles ignored it. He was on the trail!

“Stiles.”

“Hm?” Stiles is too busy narrowing his search parameters to turn and face the alpha in his room.

“When’s the last time you ate? Or slept?”

It seriously struck him as odd that Derek asked him these questions, especially after the Cookie Debacle. Derek was usually all about results and getting it done as fast as possible; that’s why he went to Stiles. Stiles, who’d regularly forgo sleep and sustenance for the sake of research, and have no regrets. It literally threw him long enough that he forgot to lie. “Uh, lunch... yesterday. And I think I caught a few hours on Monday.”

“It’s Thursday.” Derek sounds almost affronted.

“Huh. Never could the hang of Thursdays.”

Suddenly his chair pulled him away from his desk, the keys of the keyboard escaping his earnest fingers as the distance yawned before him. He managed a squeak of protest before being unceremoniously dropped onto the bed. When he looked up, Derek was rolling the chair back to its home at the desk.

“Dude.”

“Sleep, Stiles.

“But--”

“Sleep.” There was enough of a rumble in his voice that Stiles got the impression he was trying hard not to outright growl at him. It was an improvement.

Stiles flopped back, letting out an exasperated sigh, and had every intention of arguing with Derek, but his bed was like ridiculously comfortable all of a sudden. He wondered idly if his father bought a different detergent, because it smelled different too, in a really nice way. He mumbled out his protests, but even to his own ears, they sound garbled and useless.

His eyes slipped closed as Derek moved for the window.
When he opened his eyes, it was kinda dark out. He guessed he’d been asleep for roughly six hours. Which was so not okay.

He leapt out of bed, ignoring the way his stomach was trying to eat his spine and all the organs in between, and slammed himself down into his chair. He woke up his laptop and started in on the research that he should have been doing.

As he typed in his search parameters, he noticed that he’d gotten a new email in the other tab. Clicking over, he found that Lydia has sent him another message.

Stiles,

Nice catch on the animal attacks. I think I’ve found a pattern to their movements. Working on setting up a map for the Pack meeting tonight.

If you’re awake; you should come.

Lydia

“But...” He suddenly felt so very inadequate.

The email had been sent probably about an hour and half after he conked out. She’d gotten the information faster than he probably would have. A lot faster.

Stiles sighed. Checking the time, he debated whether or not he wanted to go to the meeting. He had about an hour to decide, so he went downstairs and fixed himself some dinner. After eating, he put the leftovers in a tupperware for his dad to reheat later, and then ran back upstairs to take a shower. Dry and clothed, he flopped back down into his chair.

If he wanted to get there on time, he’d have to leave in the next few minutes.

He pulled out his phone to text Scott.

TO: McCujo
7:43pm

You going to the Pack meeting tonight?

Scott probably wouldn’t go, even after the attack today, but if he did, then Stiles would suck it up and go with him. If not... then he’d flip a coin. Or something.

FROM: McCujo
hadn't thought about it, u want 2?

Want to? Meh... He wasn’t too keen on facing a smug Jackson, certainly didn’t want to interact with Peter any more than absolutely necessary, he really didn’t want to feel even more inadequate next to Lydia than he already did, and he was miffed at Derek. But... It would be good to know what was happening.

If he was going to help get Erica and Boyd back, then he had to be informed. Knowledge was power.

TO: McCujo
7:46pm

I think we should. Need a ride?

FROM: McCujo
7:46pm

k

TO: McCujo
7:46pm

On my way.

Stiles grabbed his keys and sprinted down the stairs. If he was going to pick up Scott, they were probably going to be late. He snagged his red hoodie on his way out the door. If they were going to be late, might as well be fashionably late.

He drove a bit faster than he probably should have, but being late to Pack meetings was not really a good idea, from what he remembered. Scott was not waiting for him outside like he should have been, so Stiles honked the horn.

Mrs. McCall walked out of the front door, eyebrow raised. Stiles sunk a little in his seat. When she walked over calmly, Stiles groaned quietly. She did not look terribly pleased.

“Stiles.” She tapped on his window and he rolled it down so she could talk to him. Because ignoring her wasn’t, unfortunately, an option. “Where are you going?”

“Pack meeting?” He liked that Mrs. McCall was in the know. It was nice to not lie to someone all the time.

She nodded. “Something happening? From what I remember, Scott isn’t a part of Derek’s Pack.”

He thought about not telling her. Then he remembered that she worked at the hospital--the blue scrubs she was wearing gave it away--and that she had potentially helpful information, or access to helpful information.

“Don’t freak out, but the animal attacks aren’t actually animal attacks. Has anyone come in with canine-like bite marks recently, by the way?”

She rubbed her hand over her forehead, a grimace painting her features. “Someone’s attacking people?”
“Sort of... none of Derek’s Pack, but—”

“And you two thought that, what? You’d go out into the middle of the woods at night and that would be perfectly fine?”

“We’ll be with—”

“A group of teenaged werewolves. Not my definition of safe, Stiles.”

“We’ll be fine, Mom.” Scott had come out of the house at a run and opened the passenger door.

“Scott...”

“Don’t worry, Mrs. McCall. We’re far too pretty to die.” Stiles grinned.

Despite herself, Mrs. McCall did smile. She sighed and rubbed a hand through his buzzed hair. “You keep each other safe.”

“Always do.” Stiles nodded. “But really, if someone comes in with a Bite, give us a call?”

She nodded reluctantly, then patted the hood of the Jeep on her way back inside.

Tires squealing, Stiles drove away. When they finally pulled up to the Hale house, they saw the Camaro and Lydia’s car already there. They hurried in and saw that everyone was there. Derek and Lydia were looking at a large map of the western US that already had several pins pushed in. Stiles guessed they represented probable Alpha Pack locations.

Isaac, Jackson, and Peter were sitting on the couch watching the two debate over whether or not some of their pins deserved to be there.

Slipping in, Scott sank down onto the couch next to Isaac and joined in the watching. Stiles strode up to Derek and Lydia and looked at the map that they had up, listening to the argument as he did. He reached over and snagged the printed papers that Derek was holding, ignoring the growl that was probably aimed at him, and began to read quickly.

He went over the information: police reports, news articles, and even a few coroner reports. There was a lot of it, but not as much as he’d feared there might be. Lydia had narrowed her field of search to almost exclusively canine-esque and ‘unknown animal’ injuries, accounting for average wildlife attacks for each region, and paying special attention to reports of rumored wolf activity. It was good, thorough, and he was suitably impressed.

Derek was right though. There was no way to tell which of these attacks were the work of this specific Alpha Pack.

“Lydia.” He got two sets of glares for interrupting.

“Something to add?” She asked, huffy. He wondered idly how long the two had been arguing in circles for her to be this flustered.

“Derek has a point,”—he ignored the vaguely pleased sounding grunt from the Alpha—“but I think there might be a way to fix the problem.”

“All ears.”

“Do we know about other Packs? Regular ones, like this one? If we can cross reference locations of increased activity with other Pack dynamic shifts, we should be able to figure out where they were,
right?” Stiles asked the room at large. “I mean, they’re here because Derek became the Alpha, so wouldn’t they do the same for other Packs?”

“I don’t begin to guess what their motivations are,” Peter started. “I don’t know of every pack on the west coast, but I’ll see what I can dig up.”

Scott frowned. “If you could have talked to other Packs about the Alphas before, why didn’t you?”

“Limited resources.” Lydia explained. “We can’t really spare anyone to go talk to them.”

Stiles nodded. “But we’re in this now. Send someone and you’ll still have one more than you started with.”

The room actually went silent while Derek thought it over. He was the Alpha, it was his decision, and they would listen to what he said. Stiles liked that he took the time to actually consider his proposal, rather than dismiss it out of hand. He was getting better at this Alpha gig.

Finally, Derek nodded. Turning to his uncle, Derek said, “Get what information you can.”

Peter dipped his head slightly in agreement, then got up and left.

“In the meantime, we should go over these case files more closely, see if we can’t get anything more out of them.” Stiles said, gesturing with the papers in his hand.

Scott groaned. “Homework? Really?”

“No.” Derek shook his head. “Stiles, you and Lydia go over what we have. You three, with me.” He ushered the wolves out of the house and into the yard. Stiles got the distinct impression that Derek was going to make them wish they were doing homework.

Lydia took the time to show him the information she’d gathered for each pin, categorized by time and likelihood of Alpha activity. He followed along, adding his own opinions to what she suggested as evidence. It was nice, amicable, and they both shared private smirks whenever they heard the betas outside groan or complain.

After a few hours, Stiles sighed. “You’re really good at this.”

“Thank you.” She said. “It was your idea though.”

“You would have thought of it eventually.”

“Eventually, probably.” Lydia agreed. No sugar-coating bedside manner from her; she wasn’t shy about calling it like she saw it. “I’m good at research, Stiles. I’m the only reliable translator for the bestiary, and I’m stubborn enough to dig through the bullshit to find what actually helps. I find what I’m looking for.”

He nodded, accepting that as truth. She was a really good replacement. He couldn’t translate archaic latin, and while his sleuthing skills were impressive, she was just as good, if not better than he was. Plus, she had a solid connection with the Pack via Jackson.

Yep. Definitely inadequate.

“Stiles.” She snapped his attention back to her. “I find what I’m looking for.” She repeated. “You know what to look for.”

“Uh... What?”
She sighed. "Tell me something. When you and Scott were trying to protect everyone from Peter, who came up with the idea to ram Mrs. McCall’s car?"

"Uh, me, I guess."

"Get Allison’s car towed at the mall?"

"Scott moved it, I just suggested--"

"And you traced the text Peter sent to the hospital."

"Danny did, actually."

She shook her head. "He may have done the actual tracking, but it was your idea to bring him in, your idea to even look. Just like it was your idea to track Scott’s phone when Derek went missing."

"How... do you even know all this?"

Lydia’s shoulders stiffened, ever so subtly, and she pursed her lips. “I have some of his memories still.” She whispered. “Peter’s. He thought it was Scott that planned everything, but it wasn’t. It was you. Just like it was you who came up with a plan to save us from the witches.”

"Ok. I’m not sure I know your point--"

"My point is that you have a strategical mind. You can look at a situation and know what resources to use and how to use them to get the job done. The same goes for researching. You know what to research because you see a bigger picture of what will be useful. Whereas I just dig everywhere until I find something.” She smiled. “And that works just fine; like I said. I’m good at it. But it’s easier and faster with direction.”

“I... uh, not really sure what to say to that. Thanks?” Stiles was still confused.

“It’s just something to keep in mind.” She said primly.

"O-ok.” Stiles cleared his throat, awkward. He didn’t really know what to say to that. Deciding to go with his standard ignore it ‘til it goes away plan, Stiles went back to the information in front of him.

She didn’t bring it up again, which was good.

An hour later, Stiles’ stomach started yelling at him again just as the wolves came in from outside. They were in varying states of unkemptness. Jackson looked the worse, with clear slices taken out of his shirt and blood stains, though he’d healed whatever injury he’d suffered. Scott and Isaac both looked a bit winded and had small patches of blood on their clothes. All of them had dirt on their clothes and skin.

“So hungry...” Scott moaned.

Isaac nodded. “I feel like I could eat a whole cow.”

“Image, dude.” Stiles frowned.

“It’s my turn to get dinner.” Lydia stood, brushing imaginary dirt off her hands. “So should I get a cow, or something more practical?"

“Protein, yes. A whole cow might be conspicuous, though.” Derek commented.
Stiles bit back a startled laugh. He couldn’t remember Derek making just a whole lot of jokes, but there it was. Deadpan and dry, but a joke. Stiles felt so proud.

His ability to choke back a laugh however, needed work. He ended up coughing loudly and flailing a bit. He smiled apologetically when he saw the others were looking at him oddly.

“Breathe the air, not the spit.” He muttered, trying to cover for his failure.

The wolves just rolled their eyes or shook their heads, amused or annoyed depending on personality.

“I can go with you.” Stiles offered.

Lydia nodded, grabbing her keys from her purse. “I was about to insist. Come on, Stilinski.”

Stiles followed her out of the house quickly, eager to get some distance from Derek.

He had come to terms with the fact that he probably wasn’t Pack. He had. He’d hated the ambiguity of it when he hadn’t known, but he wasn’t sure how he felt about learning he wasn’t. Ok. That wasn’t true. He hadn’t liked it. He’d liked it even less when he’d heard the words spoken out loud by someone else.

Whether or not he wanted to admit it, Stiles liked that he had someone--multiple someones--that he could rely on to help him out when he needed it. He’d gotten used to it. When it turned out that it wasn’t true...

But again, there was that confusion.

Derek had certainly acted like Stiles was Pack when he’d helped him rescue the sheriff, and when he, Isaac, and Peter had shown up to rescue his ass from the vampires, not to mention fixing he Jeep. It didn’t make sense. What the hell had caused the abrupt one-eighty?

“Penny for your thoughts?” Lydia asked.

“Wondering why the Alphas went after Scott.” He lied. She wasn’t a werewolf, so he could get away with it.

“Because he’s in the territory?” She offered. “Maybe they don’t know he’s not Pack.”

Stiles frowned. “Possibly, but if they’ve been here as long as they obviously have been, then even if they couldn’t sense it, they should have realized it through observation, right? It’s not like Scott interacts with anyone other than Isaac unless there’s a threat.”

“That could be enough. Maybe they don’t want him helping the Pack.”

Stiles shrugged. It was as good a guess as any he supposed even if it had holes enough to sink the Titanic.

Lydia pulled into a grocery store parking lot and stopped the car, effectively ending the conversation now that they were among Normals. Stiles helped her select about ten pounds of red meat from the meat market, and then made sure to add a decent selection of veggies to the menu before letting her move to the check out. She paid with cash and they left.

“You’re looking rather morose, Stiles.”

“Can’t imagine why.” He groaned. “Couldn’t be the entire Pack of alpha werewolves that have moved into town, or the fact the Erica and Boyd didn’t just run away but have taken by said alpha
Pack to be tortured. Again--"

“How do you know they’re being tortured?” She frowned.

Stiles grimaced. “Call it a feeling.”

He couldn’t explain it, but he was so certain that they were being hurt now that he knew they were taken. It fit his theory as to why the Alphas hadn’t just killed them yet, too.

“Did Derek get anything off the alpha he took yesterday?” Stiles asked, remembering abruptly.

Lydia shrugged. “He won’t talk about it; won’t let any of the Beta’s down there either. Not even Peter.”

“Withholding information. Awesome strategy.”

Lydia chuckled. “He had his reasons for not telling you guys.”

“We should have been told.” Stiles shook his head. “This affects all of us, clearly.”

“He kept you two in the dark thinking that the Alphas wouldn’t go after you if you didn’t know about them.”

“That logic assumed Scott wasn’t already a target.”

“Yes.”

“Which was wrong. Obviously. So now we’re playing catch up instead of helping from the start. Bad plan.”

“I didn’t say I agreed with his plan.” Lydia said defensively.

“Then why didn’t you tell us? You of all people should have remembered how bad of an idea it is to keep someone in the dark.”

“I know, Stiles. I remember, but you certainly have no right to lecture anyone about keeping people in the dark.” She snapped, irritated. “Your own father was kidnapped by a crazy faerie and you still haven’t told him anything about what’s really happening in this town.”

Stiles flinched. “It’s for his own good.”

“Exactly. He’s trying to protect you guys. Just like you were trying to protect me and your dad. It sucks from both sides, so try not to judge him too harshly.”

Stiles groaned. He disliked feeling like a hypocrite, but Derek had been wrong to cut him and Scott out of the loop. They were already involved in the supernatural, and it should be obvious to any observing werewolf that he and Scott were involved. Derek might have had good intentions—he stressed the word might—but it had been seriously faulty logic. He was going to still be mad at Derek for a while about it, hypocritical or not.

In truth, if anything bad happened to Erica or Boyd because of his refusal to bring Stiles into the know sooner, Stiles wasn’t sure he’d ever forgive Derek.

Lydia didn’t say anything the rest of the ride back to the Hale house. When they got there, Derek cooked up the food and doled it out on paper plates. It was acceptably tasty and there were no leftovers, so Stiles deemed it a successful meal. He considered making a joke about Derek being
domestic, but he just wasn’t feeling it.

His emotions were toying with him. It was frustrating. On the one hand, he was rightfully upset and angry at Derek and the Pack, and he was now frightfully worried about Erica and Boyd, but on the other hand, it was nice to hang out with them all again. He’d missed them—Peter excluded—over the five weeks since the Cookie Debacle, and it had been kinda lonely. Scott was almost always with Isaac or at work and he’d only seen him maybe one or two days a week; this month’s full moon had been just a bucket full of joy. Leeloo wasn’t allowed to visit all that often, so he’d been restricted to talking to her via text. It had staved off a good portion of loneliness, but... there was nothing quite like being with the Pack.

After dinner, Lydia and Stiles went back to going through her research for another hour before Stiles had to call it quits. He was tired from his emotional indecision and lack of sleep and he wanted to get to bed.

“You ready to head out Scott?” Stiles asked, yawning.

Scott looked like he wanted to protest, but must have changed his mind when he saw how tired Stiles was. He nodded, and then gave Isaac a subdued version of their bro handshake as he got up from the couch to leave.

“Keep your eyes open.” Derek cautioned as they moved toward the door.

Stiles just waved over his shoulder, closing the door behind him.

After Stiles pulled into his drive once he’d dropped Scott off at his place, he trudged up to his room, ready to pass out as soon as his head hit the pillow. He remembered to take his shoes off before crashing. Barely.
The next few days were a frantic search of references and cross references and maps and gruesome images and articles of animal attacks all across California. He and Lydia went over and over the information, managing to eliminate a few, but not nearly enough for Stiles. If all these attacks were the work of the Alphas, then they were responsible for over three dozen deaths in the last five years.

When Peter returned on the fourth day, he’d managed to confirm that the Alphas had attacked seven other Packs in California that experienced shifts in power. Six were violent shifts, one was a natural passing. The only Pack that hadn’t suffered any losses was the one that experienced the natural passing of power. The others all lost at least two Betas; four Packs had been completely wiped out. They all described it as a learning experience, but they wouldn’t give any more details than that.

“So it is a test.” Isaac declared.

“Yeah, and not one with a good pass/fail ratio.” Stiles sighed, frustrated. His fear for Erica and Boyd increased tenfold.

What they’d found had solidified previous movements of the alpha Pack, but it didn’t help them get any closer to figuring out where they were now. Without the cooperation of the other Packs, there was no way to determine what their movements were like within a territory by looking at the map. Stiles decided they needed to narrow their search. If they focused on Beacon Hills, they might be able to track their preferred hunting grounds.

“We don’t even know they’re still alive.” Jackson shouted one day after Lydia and Stiles had spent three hours pouring over a topographical map of Beacon Hills and the surrounding area, looking for possible locations for the Alpha’s base.

“They’re alive.” Stiles and Derek said at once.

Derek gave Stiles an odd look, but Stiles ignored it. He wasn’t inclined to share his weirdly strong gut feelings about Erica and Boyd. Not yet. He was still too confused by them to share.

“Your optimism is admirable, if naive.” Peter drawled.

Jackson clearly agreed. “We haven’t heard anything about them since that damned box arrived—”

“What box?” Stiles snapped his head up to look at the others.

Lydia winced. Isaac whined.

Stiles got to his feet, made eye contact with Derek. “What box?”

“A message from the Alphas.” Peter supplied when Derek didn’t respond.

Derek shot Peter a look, flashing Alpha red eyes at him. Peter backed down, but he was smirking.

“Derek...”

After several minutes of tense silence, Derek finally said, “A little less than six weeks ago, a box with the Alpha’s symbol arrived. It had two fingers inside.”

Stiles felt like the rug had been pulled out from under him. He sat down hard on the couch and tried
to control his breathing. Two fingers. Probably one from both Erica and Boyd. They weren’t just being tortured, they were being mangled and sent back piece by piece. They were being punished because of some damned test that a group of power hungry sycophants had decided needed to be administered to all newly minted Alphas. A test that, by all measures, Derek was failing. If Derek continued to fail, they would die, and the others would follow.

He felt sick and light headed. Was he breathing? It didn’t really feel like he was breathing.

“Stiles!” Derek’s voice was suddenly loud and in his ear. “Breathe Stiles; focus on breathing.”

Derek was right in his face, when had that happened? His intense features were drawn tight in concern and his eyes seemed to be searching for something in Stiles’ face. When his vision got a little less spotty, Derek grabbed his hand and placed it on his own overly warm chest.

“Breathe with me. Match my pace.” He commanded gently, breathing deep, steady, and slow.

Stiles tried to match it, because he really hated panic attacks and breathing was truly one of his favorite things to do. After minutes that seemed like hours, Stiles was able to match Derek’s breathing. As oxygen returned, his vision cleared and the spinning stopped. When he could manage it on his own, without Derek, he nodded.

Stiles noticed that the room was empty. Everyone else had left, it seemed. To give them privacy? Probably Lydia’s doing. He was mostly grateful. It was a little embarrassing to lose control like that in front of people, but Scott could have handled it just as well as Derek. Probably.

With the return of oxygen also came the return of higher brain function. Stiles ran the math in his head. Nearly six weeks ago, Derek had said. That was either around or the same day as the Cookie Debacle.

Lydia said he’d kept them out of the loop to protect them.

If it coincided the way he suspected, then it would explain Derek’s behavior. Sort of. Explain why he’d done it, the triggering event behind the abrupt shift, but that didn’t mean Stiles agreed with his choice. In fact, even more than ever, Stiles believed Derek had made the Absolute Worst Most Wrong Choice Possible.

His grip tightened on the fabric of Derek’s shirt, fist clenching it tight. “You’re an idiot.”

Derek’s eye brows snapped together in confusion and anger.

“Instead of throwing me out, you should have told me what had happened. Six weeks, Derek! We could have found them by now!”

“You think I’m not just as worried about them as you are?!” He snapped. “Every day I’ve been out there looking for their scent! I can’t get a single trace of it.”

Stiles glared right back at Derek, but this close to the alpha’s face, Stiles could see better the little twitches, the repressed emotions written all over his features. Yes. Derek did care. Stiles knew that he did, he didn’t have to be told that Derek was worried about the safety of his betas; it was in the stiffness of his shoulders, the even shorter patience, and way he now constantly checked where everyone was. He was worried, and he cared about them all.

But Stiles wanted to rage, wanted to be furious with Derek, yell at him for waiting so long before coming to Stiles for help. If he had brought him in sooner, they might have found Erica and Boyd by now. Could have saved them from being tortured the way Stiles couldn’t save them from Gerard. He
wanted to lash out, but he didn’t.

It wouldn’t help.

He glanced away first, allowing Derek to win the staring contest, and let go of his shirt. Sitting back on the couch, Stiles rubbed his hand over his face trying to relax. He needed to focus on how to get them back, not what state they might be in when he found them.

“I need air.” Stiles muttered as he stood. He walked past Derek and went to the backyard, intent on running a while to clear his head and get in some much needed practice.

When Isaac followed him into the trees, he allowed it. Stiles recognized it was stupid to go anywhere alone, so Isaac’s presence was permitted so long as he gave Stiles time to think to himself. Which he did. Isaac didn’t say a word for the first two miles, just sedately kept pace with Stiles while he ran.

It was Stiles who broke the silence. “Do you trust him?”

“With my life.” Isaac replied.

“Why?” He was genuinely curious.

“He’s my Alpha.”

“That’s it?”

Isaac paused. “It’s... more than just a rank. It’s like... family. I can sort of feel it like a bond; it’s instinct now.”

“Sounds like blind trust to me.”

“It isn’t though.” Isaac frowned. “It’s hard to explain to someone who isn’t...”

“Pack?”

He shook his head. “A wolf.”

They ran a little further, in silence once again.

“What about you? Do you trust him?”

Stiles sighed. “I’d like to.”

“What’s stopping you? He’s saved your life a few times now.” Isaac pointed out.

“He has, and I’m grateful, believe me, but it’s shit like today that make it hard. I want to trust him; I know he has good intentions and that he cares about his Pack, but he keeps some really important information to himself and I can’t.” Stiles admitted. “I want to, but I can’t. Not until he starts trusting me.”

The rest of the run was silent. When they made it back to the house, it was nearly dark. Stiles nodded to Isaac before going around to the front. He was ready to take a shower, get something to eat, and then sleep.

He muttered a goodnight as he opened the door to his Jeep, knowing the wolves would hear him. He climbed in and started her up, but before he could pull out, Derek got into the passenger side.
“I’m not a taxi, dude. I’m going home.” Stiles told him.

“Drive.”

Stiles drove, because it wasn’t like he could physically throw Derek out of his car. “Am I dropping you off somewhere?”

“No.”

“Why are you riding shotgun?”

Derek gave him a look. “You shouldn’t go anywhere alone.”

“What about you? You’ll be alone once I go inside.”

“I can take care of myself.” Derek said.

“Just you versus a Pack of Alphas... Not sure that’s going to go the way you’re thinking.”

“I’ll be fine. They aren’t after me yet, remember.”

“Doesn’t mean they won’t take advantage if they catch you alone.” Stiles objected.

“Don’t worry about it, Stiles. I’m not going far.”

“Pardon?”

Derek sighed. “I decided on a new rule while you were out. Humans will have at least one werewolf nearby at all times. Just in case.”

Stiles nodded slowly as he thought about it. He could see how that made sense. He and Lydia were technically the most vulnerable, and whether he was Pack or not, Stiles had made himself a target by helping. Rationally, it made sense. He wasn’t too sure he actually liked the idea though.

“How close are we talking? Cuz I’m not sure how many times my dad’s going green-light Scott sleeping over before he starts getting suspicious.” Stiles hedged.

“Doesn’t have to be in the house with you, and it won’t always be Scott.” Derek practically growled.

“Dude. Why the rumbles? Scott makes the most sense.”

“He refuses to be Pack. If something goes wrong...” Derek shook his head. “It’ll be safer if it’s someone from the Pack.”

Scott’s stubbornness on this issue was starting to grate on Stiles’ nerves. It made logical and practical sense to join Derek’s Pack. There was safety in numbers and Derek had helped them in the past; he was even getting better at listening to someone else’s ideas and thinking before he acted. All good things. But Scott refused because it might wreck any chance he’d have with Allison.

Stiles disapproved, to say the least.

“Fine. I get it. But if my dad catches any of you lurking, I cannot be held responsible if he decides to shoot you.”

Derek rolled his eyes.
After about five minutes of silence, Stiles finally broke down and said, “Thank you. For earlier.”

Derek shrugged, again vaguely uncomfortable from the acknowledgement. “No problem.”

Stiles was still mad, about a lot of things in this situation, really, but he didn’t want Derek’s help to go unrewarded. It was rude, for one, and he hoped that him taking the time to thank Derek occasionally would encourage the surly alpha to offer his assistance in the future.

When they pulled up to the house, his dad’s cruiser wasn’t there. He was working late shift tonight, so Stiles hadn’t expected it to be there. He crossed his fingers that maybe his dad had saved him some leftovers of whatever take out he’d ordered, because Stiles wasn’t really in the mood to cook.

“You going to come in, or just run around outside?” Stiles asked.

Derek glanced out the Jeep’s window, “I’ll stay out here. Run a sweep of the perimeter.”

“Suit yourself. Let me know if you get hungry or something.” Stiles got out of the Jeep and headed for the door.

He checked the fridge for leftovers and found some pasta still there from a few days ago. He decided to eat it before it went bad and tossed it in the microwave. While it was heating, Stiles brainstormed. He hadn’t thought about it much before because he was too busy reeling from learning that bits of Erica and Boyd had been sent to the Pack, but he’d come to the realization that simply looking at maps of the area was taking too long. There was a lot of area to cover and the animal attacks had been sporadic enough that no patterns were emerging. They needed a backup plan.

Really only one option presented itself. He’d have to talk to Lydia about it. She would be the only one who would agree with him and help him.

He ate his pasta quickly, finished it with a glass of water, and then jogged up the stairs to climb in the shower. Once he was clean, he threw on pajamas and hopped on his computer. He started outlining his plan. He’d need to seriously detail the shit out of it because a lot could go wrong, but it was a solid idea. He’d need help with it, especially now that he’d have furry escort 24/7, but that’s where Lydia came in. If he was going to go to Lydia with his idea, he’d have to make his case thoroughly, so he’d wait for now. Get more of it sorted before he went to her. Leeloo too, if he could get her help.

He saved the file under Plan B and hid it in a folder that was hard to find, just in case nosy werewolves decided to go through his stuff, then he shut down his computer and climbed into bed.

“Don’t know if you can hear me, but if you get hungry before my dad gets back, the window is open. Help yourself to whatever’s in the kitchen.” Stiles says, a bit louder than normal indoor voice, just in case Derek was at the edge of hearing range. “I’m going to sleep. Goodnight.”

He awoke the next morning when his dad tapped on his door. “Hey Kiddo?”

“Whadsup?” He mumbled.

“Can you do me a favor, and go to the store today? I’ve got a list on the fridge.”

“Yeah, sure thing.” Stiles rubbed the sleep out of his face and checked the time. It was early yet and he could go back to sleep if he wanted, but there was really too much to do.

“Thanks. I’ll be back for dinner.”
His dad left and Stiles sighed. “Ok dude, he’s gone.”

Derek hopped through the window.

“Did you sleep at all?” Stiles asked.

Derek shrugged.

He was reduced to nonverbal communication it seemed. Stiles sighed. He did not have the patience to deal with that at the moment. He flung the covers off and rolled out of bed. “I’m going to get ready; sleep if you want. I promise not to trip and break my neck in the shower.”

Stiles gathered some clothes and made his way to the bathroom. He took an extra hot, extra long shower, easing a little of the ache the long run yesterday had produced, and then brushed his teeth, flossed, shaved, applied deodorant, basically anything he could think of to give Derek just a few more minutes of sleep--assuming he’d taken Stiles’ offer--before he got dressed and went back to his room.

Moving just in his socks, as quietly as he knew how, Stiles made his way back to his bedroom. Derek was on his bed, lying down, for all appearances asleep. Stiles let him sleep. He didn’t have to get to the store for a while and he could easily entertain himself for a few hours. He turned his computer on and opened up his Plan B outline. He’d work on it while he waited for Derek to catch a few Zs.

When he’d finally come up with something that was half decent, he sent an email to Lydia.

Lyds,

We both know we’re never going to find them at this rate. You know it. I know it. We need a new plan. I’ve got an idea.

I need your help with it, though.

S

He attached the document and waited for her response. He got it a little over thirty minutes later when she called him.

“Lyds--”

“You’re out of your mind!” She shouted. Derek stirred in the bed, so Stiles quickly ducked out of the room and made his way downstairs.

“Lydia, shh! Indoor voice please. The whole thing is spoiled if furry ears overhear it.” He told her as he made his way down the stairs.

“Good.”

“Come on. You know I’m right. We need another plan.”

“Your plan is suicide.”

“That’s why I brought you in on it. I need help.”

“In more ways than one Stilinski.” She sighed. “Look. If you really want to go through with this moronic plan, it needs a major makeover.”
“You have a suggestion?”

“Yes, in fact. Go to Deaton and get training.”

He paused. “What?”

“Go to Deaton. You’ve been burying your head in the sand for long enough; how many people—supernatural or otherwise—do you need to tell you that you have a power before you believe them and do something about it?”

Stiles winced at her choice of words, reminded of the shade that had taunted him when the witches had attacked.

He shook it off. “I’m just human, Lydia—”

“You don’t have to be a magical creature to use magic.” She told him curtly. “From what I’ve heard, you have a serious untapped potential. It could be what this Pack needs to survive.”

“They’ve made it abundantly clear that I am not Pack.” Stiles snapped, frustrated. He was resistant to the idea of using magic. The occasional use here and there, sometimes accidental, didn’t make him a Magic User. He wasn’t a witch or a wizard or a warlock or whatever the term was. He was just Stiles.

In truth? He didn’t want to be... corrupted by it. From what he’d read, it was easy to turn dark side with magic. A lot of people did and that’s how shit like evil covens happened. He didn’t want to be evil.

“Stiles...” Lydia sighed sadly. “Look, that’s not something I can... You should talk to Derek about that.”

“I’ll put it on my To-Do list.” He rolled his eyes. A conversation with Derek usually went one of two ways, either he got eyebrow’d at or slammed into something. No thanks.

“Whether you’re Pack or not, it’s the only way I’ll agree to help you and you said it yourself, our current plan won’t work.” Lydia clearly didn’t approve of his resistance to talk to Derek. it was in her voice. Subtext abounded. Then she hit him below the belt. “It’s the only way to get them back, Stiles.”

He sighed and rubbed his hand through his hair, frustrated and nervous. “Fine. I’ll talk to Deaton.”

“Good. We’ll revisit this crazy scheme when you’ve been sufficiently trained. Until then, delete that file, the email you sent, and we don’t talk about it unless it’s face to face. Got it?”

“Yeah, agreed. I have to go.” He hung up. Stiles decided that since he was down here, he might as well make breakfast.

He started coffee first and then set to frying up bacon and sausages. He got the eggs out too, but he’d wait to hear how Derek liked his eggs before he cooked them. He breathed deep when everything started smelling awesome. Breakfast was by far the most aromatic meal of the day, and Stiles loved it.

Derek too, apparently, since the werewolf took the stairs two or three at a time to get to the coffee.

“Morning.” Stiles greeted, fetching two mugs from the cabinets. He placed them both in front of the coffee maker and went back to cooking bacon.
Derek took a long inhale of the coffee after he poured it into a mug. “I haven’t had coffee since New York.”

Stiles blinked. That was not exactly something he’d expected to hear. It was a bit... honest. Stiles recovered quickly though, “That’s just wrong, dude. I think that might actually be illegal; my dad’s the sheriff, I would know.”

Derek smirked before he lifted the cup to his lips and drank. Of course Derek liked his coffee back. His shirt was black, his jeans were black, his jacket was black, his car was black, why wouldn’t his coffee be black too?

“How do you take it?” He asked, gesturing to the other mug.

“As black and bitter as my soul.” Stiles told him, mock sinister glare on his features.

Derek raised an eyebrow at him and then poured in two heaping spoonfuls of sugar and enough milk to make the coffee a light tan before handing it to Stiles. Stiles smirked, laughing quietly to himself, and took a sip. It was perhaps a bit sweeter than he normally took it, but it was pretty acceptable otherwise.

He gestured to the eggs while taking a drink.

Derek shrugged. “No preference.”

Nodding, Stiles set his mug down and scooped the bacon onto a paper towel covered plate--on his other side to keep out of reach of werewolves--and then cracked a few eggs onto the pan to be cooked with the bacon grease. He fried them up the way he liked them, added a touch of salt, and then put them on a plate. He added five strips of bacon and three sausages to the plate and then handed it to Derek before cracking two eggs for himself. When they were done, he took the remaining bacon and sausage and enjoyed a tasty and wholly unhealthy breakfast.

Derek was already done by time Stiles had finished cooking.

“You didn’t have to wolf it down.” Stiles tried not to smile at the unintended pun.

Derek rolled his eyes and finished his coffee without comment.

“So, other than the grocery store, what are your plans?” Derek asked.

“I need to see Deaton.” Stiles said, gathering the dishes and putting them in the sink. He’d do them later.

Derek raised an eyebrow, “What for?”

“Training.”

The other eyebrow joined the first.

Stiles sighed. He didn’t want to explain. If he explained and Derek thought it was a good idea then he’d have no excuse to not go through with it. Not that he was really planning on bailing, but he liked to trick himself into believing he could. He was nervous. So sue him. Magic had the potential to be highly destructive and corrupting. It was not something to be taken lightly.

“I’m a liability as I am.” Stiles admitted. “This might give me a fighting chance.” It was true, too. Which, bonus, he didn’t have to lie to a werewolf about why he was going to be trained in magic.
“We’re not going to let them--”

Stiles cut him off. “I know you guys aren’t going to throw me to the Alpha Pack or anything, but you can’t be everywhere. Even if you can, even if I’m under werewolf guard 24/7 until this is done, when it comes to getting Erica and Boyd back? We can’t afford to give me my own personal bodyguard, I have to be able to defend myself. And if you think for one second that I’m not going to be there when we get those two back from those bastards, then you’re wrong.”

Derek growled. “Stiles--”

“I failed them once. I won’t do it again.”

He resolved himself then to do whatever it took. He couldn’t afford to be hesitant in training, not if he wanted it to work. Arguing for it had made him realize that it was something that had to be done. That it was maybe something that he wanted.

Defend at All Cost.

He shook his head; his protests had been childish. He was burying his head in the sand and it needed to stop.

When he dared to look at Derek again, Stiles saw a mix of emotions vying for dominance. Anger, certainly, but also concern, determination, and one that Stiles wasn’t familiar with. Not on Derek’s face anyway. If he had to guess, he’d say it was something akin to pride. But that was ridiculous.

Finally, Derek sighed and stood up. He downed the rest of his coffee and then gestured toward the door. “Let’s get on with it.”

Stiles grabbed the list off the fridge, and pulled his keys out of his pocket. “Grocery store first.”

“Fine.”
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

*The update yesterday is because I reached 32k and I said I would if I reached that. This is your regularly scheduled update. :)*

*Cionnfhaoiladh is pronounced ken-AH-lee. Just so you know when you see it.*

Stiles was an efficient grocery shopper. He knew where everything was and what order to go in to save the most time. He went quickly, muttering to himself along the way, because that was just something he did. Stiles liked talking, hated silence, and sometimes when he was alone, he’d work his problems out aloud.

Of course, he wasn’t alone at the moment. Derek was a lurking shadow who somehow managed to look inconspicuous and like he wasn’t following Stiles in the store. Stiles was suitably impressed, and also a bit disturbed. How much time did the guy spend practicing his creeperness? Because he was kind of a pro.

When Stiles had everything on the list--and a few things that weren’t--he paid and went back out to his Jeep. Derek joined him once everything was stashed in the back. Stiles sent him a small glare for his obvious timing. Derek just raised an eyebrow at him.

Back at the house, Stiles unloaded the groceries and put them away as efficiently as he’d procured them from the store. He was well practiced in the art of grocery shopping.

Once the mundane portion of the day was done, Stiles and Derek headed to Deaton’s.

“Are you going to go back to your place at some point?” Stiles asked.

“Pack meeting tonight.”

“Okay. What about after? Will it be you on babysitting duty again, or someone else? Is there a rotation? Kaper chart? Should I have bought star stickers?”

“Haven’t decided.” Derek growled.

Stiles wasn’t looking forward to the foreseeable future if the company didn’t get a little less snarly.

When he pulled up to the clinic, he parked in the back per usual. If he was right in his guess, Scott should be working today, possibly Isaac too. He hoped that if they were there, they’d keep Derek occupied. He was sure he didn’t need an audience for this.

He made his way to the door and knocked. Isaac answered before he’d finished ‘shave and a haircut’. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Derek told him. “Stiles wants to talk to Deaton.”
Deaton appeared over Isaac’s shoulder. “What can I help you with, Stiles?”

As Isaac let them in, Stiles shot both him and Scott nervous glances. In an oddly perceptive moment, Derek gestured for both Isaac and Scott to follow him back outside to give Stiles privacy to talk to Deaton. The vet nodded at them to go with Derek, when Scott turned to him for permission.

Once they were gone, Stiles turned to Deaton. “I want training.”

Deaton gave him an assessing once over. “Are you sure? There is no going back up the rabbit hole, Stiles. Once you know, there is no turning back.”

“Give me the red pill, Morpheus; I’m ready.”

Deaton smirked and nodded. “Very well.” He moved to the front of the clinic and flipped the open sign to closed. Once the door was locked, he came back and led Stiles to his office. “How much do you know about magic, Stiles?”

“Magic uses intent along with material components to weave a desired result. And I know that a lot of people who use it, abuse it. It’s a power source for those who can tap it and it corrupts easily.” Stiles said.

“That is because a lot of people who discover that they have the ability to use magic are left to their own devices, unable or unwilling to seek out help for fear that they’d be considered deluded. The ability also frequently surfaces in young adults, such as yourself, when emotions run hot and patience is in short supply. It is not a very healthy environment to encounter a sudden ability to manipulate magical energies. However, as understandable as your hesitation is, you need not worry too much about becoming corrupted.”

“Because I’ll have my own Yoda?”

Deaton smirked again. “Having a mentor is a big help, yes. Your friends will keep you grounded as well. Much like a werewolf’s anchor, if you have something to keep you grounded, you are far less likely to become corrupted.”

Stiles thought about it. “That makes sense.”

Deaton gave him a tiny, pleased smile before continuing on. “Do you remember what I said when I gave you the mountain ash?”

“To believe it would work.”

“To be the spark.” Deaton reminded him. The vet adjusted his seat and looked at Stiles, and if Stiles was a gambling man, he might have said Deaton looked nervous. That was ridiculous, however. “How much do you know about your mother’s side of the family?”

Stiles’ throat tightened a bit, as it normally did when he thought or talked about his mother. Other than being named for his grandfather, though, Stiles had to admit that he didn’t actually know that much about his mothers’ side of the family. He hadn’t met any of them, couldn’t recall his parents really talking about them. From what he could remember, the ones that were still alive, lived in Ireland or Wales or Scotland. He couldn’t remember which.


“You should take the time to research your family tree, Cionnfhaoiladh.” The use of Stiles’ real name was a little shocking, and he definitely would not have recognized it if he hadn’t made his mom tell
him how to pronounce it when he was younger. Because there was almost correlation between how
it was spelled and how it was pronounced.

“How about you give me the short version for now.” Stiles said.

Deaton nodded. “Your mother’s family is one descended from the ancient Pict of what is now
Ireland and Scotland. They were a people very connected to the land and were singularly excellent
warriors. There are very few people in the world with more than a drop of Pict blood, but your
maternal line is one of the purest still in existence.”

“Well. Aren’t I special.”

“More than you realize.” Deaton told him seriously. “You’re a Spark with Pict descent. Two things
that, separately can be powerful, but together are an impressive force to be reckoned with. A Bruxa.
Your innate magical abilities are already stronger than most magic users that have been practicing for
years.”

Stiles sputtered. “Uh... That doesn’t... I mean... What? I’m just... I mean you said that the mountain
ash trick was basic!”

“It is. Putting enough belief into a ring of mountain ash to trap a shapeshifter is a basic cantrip.
Walking through elven wards, and bypassing witch protection spells, however, are not simple
magicks.” Deaton pinned him with a look.

Stiles felt his blush tinting his ears. It hadn’t really occurred to Stiles that what he’d done had been all
that difficult. Because it hadn’t been. The first one, he didn’t even know he’d done! Which... he
supposed, only added to Deaton’s argument.

“So, how does that affect my training?” Stiles asked finally.

“There has not been a Bruxa in centuries.” Deaton told him seriously. “I don’t know how strong you
will be, but it will be impressive by any standard.”

“I... don’t think I really like the sound of that.” Stiles shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“Good. A reluctance to wield that much power is a healthy thing.” Deaton said. “Be assured,
however, that even to the most powerful magic user, there are limitations. Magic is not a cure-all.
You will need components or glyphs or wards to do any magical working, and your belief of
course.”

“That’s... good to know.” Stiles was still uncomfortable about this. Absolute power corrupts
absolutely, as the saying went. He didn’t think anyone should be trusted with so much potential for
corruption.

“And as you’re already aware, spells that backfire can be destructive. Be aware at all times of what
you’re working and what is happening around you.”

Stiles nodded. He remembered quite clearly the image of the burnt out corpses of those witches.

“I realize this is a lot to take in at once.” Deaton smiled at him again. “Today is just a brief overview.
We will get to specifics later. I suggest coming in at least three times a week; do you have a preferred
time?”

“Early afternoons. The faster I learn all this the better, though. How often can we do this?”
“We’ll start with four days a week, making Sunday an extra long session. Does that satisfy?”

Stiles nodded again.

“Good, any last questions before you go?”

“You said a Bruxa is a Spark with Pict descent and that there hasn’t been one in centuries. I get that people of Pict descent aren’t all that common, but there’s a whole line of them just in my family alone, so it seems like a long time to me since the last Bruxa... So I guess, my question is, what makes a Spark?”

Deaton smiled. “A good question, and not one that has a definite answer. There are theories of course, some bordering on the ridiculous. I bet you can guess what the most common theory is though.” Deaton raised a humorous eyebrow at him.

Stiles took a second to think about it. It didn’t take him long to understand what Deaton was getting at. “The ley lines.”

“Exactly right. There are other circumstances, of course, that vary as widely as you please, but it does seem to require proximity to ley lines. You, Cionnfhaoiladh Stilinski, were conceived, born, and raised on the largest crossroads of ley lines in the country. Even were you not of Pict descent, I suspect you would be a powerful Spark for that reason alone.”

Stiles sat back heavily in his chair. He ran a nervous hand through his hair as he absorbed that information. “I’m not the only person who was born and raised in Beacon Hills, though.”

“Of course not. This is a relatively small town, after all. However, there are other factors besides location that determine the creation of a Spark, but, as I said, the theories are many. I could not tell you which is true and which is speculation.”

“Okay.” Stiles was already thinking ahead. He knew Deaton expected him to do his own research, he would have done it anyway, but he suspected that the vet was letting him learn things on his own. He retained knowledge better that way. “What time tomorrow should I swing by?”

“One O’Clock, if you please. I think we can get in a good hour of training.” Deaton seemingly penciled him in to a scheduler on his desk as Stiles nodded agreement.

He stood, waving to Deaton in thanks on his way out the door. Isaac, Scott, and Derek were waiting, watching the door apprehensively.

“So, you guys heard all that?”

“Not a word.” Derek growled. “That door is sound proofed.”

“You freaked us out, dude! Your heartbeat suddenly stopped and then we couldn’t even get the door opened to check on you.” Scott whined in concern.

“My apologies, Scott.” Deaton said from behind Stiles. “I should have told you that I would ward the room against eavesdropping.”

Stiles turned to look at the door again, examining it closely. “This is mountain ash, isn’t it?”

“It is.” Deaton agreed.

“Sweet. Wonder if I can get one for Dad’s work.” Stile muttered idly.
Deaton instructed Isaac to open the clinic again, and told Scott to help him prep someone’s dog for surgery. It was obviously time for Derek and Stiles to leave. Stiles gave Scott a hug since his friend was still a little distressed from hearing Stiles’ heartbeat suddenly stop, and waved to Isaac on his way out.

Once they were back in the Jeep, Stiles turned to Derek. “Where to now?”

“Pack meeting isn’t for a few hours.” Was his only answer.

Stiles took that to mean Derek didn’t care where they went, so he drove back home. He wanted to get started on research. He wasn’t sure what Derek would do for the few hours between now and the Pack meeting, but if all else failed, the werewolf could sleep.

Stiles launched himself up the stairs, eager to get started. Derek followed at a more sedate pace. Stiles was already opening up a few tabs on his browser when Derek finally got to his room. He watched, out of the corner of his eye, as Derek paced the length of the room once before selecting a book off of Stiles shelves and sitting down to read.

They sat in silence for a few hours while they both read. Stiles had found a lot of Pict lore and history and was immersing himself in it. It was really fascinating stuff, actually. His ancestors were apparently fierce warriors that would paint themselves in wode and dye for battle to intimidate their enemies and grant them favor and strength. There were a few sites that alluded that this painting was also used by the witches of Pict tribes. Some scholars believed that the Pict tradition of painting could be an early form of tattooing, using stupidly sharp daggers instead of needles to get the ink beneath the skin.

He also looked up his name, since Deaton had said it as if it meant something. Cionnfhaoiladh was Gaelic and meant Wolf Head.

Stiles closed his computer.

There were still a few more hours before his dad would be home and he wanted to move. He stood, stepping away from his computer and moved to his dresser. “I’m going for a run.” He said, grabbing the clothes he’d need and heading to the bathroom to change.

When he stepped out, Derek was waiting for him halfway down the stairs. He let Derek lead the way out of the house, turning to lock the door before he started jogging. Derek kept a steady pace next to him, allowing Stiles to set the speed.

They moved through the backyard, headed to the less tamed area of the neighborhood. It was Stiles favorite running path and started near his house. He had others around the school or around the Hale House, but this one was the one he used most frequently. He liked it because of the varied terrain and almost completely overgrown trail; it ensured that he wouldn’t run across anyone on his runs.

He increased his speed as they neared the trail and allowed himself to fall into his routine of thinking as he ran. He still wasn’t sure if he liked the idea of being some kind of über powerful wizard or Bruxa, whatever. He’d never thought of himself as anything other than human, and maybe he was still technically human, but there was now an unignorable supernatural quality to his identity.

“Can I ask you a question?” Stiles asked, unable to look at Derek as he spoke.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the alpha watch him. “Nothing’s stopped you before.”

Stiles gave a self-deprecating smirk. “Normal threat of being thrown into a tree notwithstanding, it’s a fairly... personal question. You can feel free not to answer.”
Derek was quiet for a few minutes, long enough that Stiles figured he didn’t want to answer whatever personal question Stiles was about to throw at him. Finally, though, he sighed. “Ask.”

“Do you consider yourself to be human?” Stiles forced himself to make eye contact as he asked which is the only reason he saw Derek stop. He pulled to a halt a few feet in front of him and waited, braced for a physical reaction or flat refusal.

Derek scowled. Stiles hoped he hadn’t just pissed off the alpha--more than usual--and that if he didn’t want to answer, he wouldn’t respond violently. To his surprise, however, Derek seemed to consider the answer, considered Stiles, and then spoke.

“If you had asked me a year ago, I would have said no.”

Stiles waited, when it seemed like Derek wasn’t going to continue, he prompted, “That’s it? Can you not smell the odor of existential crisis over here?”

Derek held up a finger along with one of his bitchier bitch faces, telling Stiles to give him a goddamn minute. Stiles waited.

Finally his patience was rewarded. “Being a werewolf is all I’ve ever known. The wolf is a part of me; it’s instinct and it’s primal, but it doesn’t mean that I don’t have... thoughts and emotions and desires and needs like you do. It took me becoming the Alpha, bringing this group of teenagers into my Pack, to remember that. After... after the fire, I forgot for a time. I felt less human, I lost my anchor and replaced it with something... very primal. The Pack has helped me find my new anchor, helped me to regain my humanity--something I thought I’d lost forever. It helped me realize that the wolf, while a part of me, does not control me. And it doesn’t make me less human.”

Stiles was sure his jaw was on the forest floor because that was by far the longest string of sentences that had ever come out of Derek’s mouth since they met almost a year ago. It was also the most open Stiles had ever heard Derek speak. There was serious soul-baring in that paragraph!

It went a long way toward Stiles believing that Derek might actually... trust him. With things. Important things. Stiles... didn’t know quite what to do with that. He hoped that it was a step in the right direction. Where that direction led, though, Stiles wasn’t sure.

Derek was staring at him, stance defensive, but face more open, less hostile. He seemed to be waiting for Stiles to say something, so Stiles thought a little more on the words themselves rather than the quantity.

Derek had thought of himself as a werewolf, had thought he wasn’t human for years. Had relied on an anchor he described as primal, a word he also associated with his wolf. Stiles remembered that Derek was only sixteen when the fire had happened, and he understood how loss affected a young mind. He could see why Derek might have relied on something easier, something that the wolf understood. It wasn’t healthy, but he definitely understood it.

Now though, apparently due to a bunch of annoying teenagers, Derek’s view had shifted. The Pack had reminded him what it meant to be human, and how just because he had something a bit different about him, didn’t mean it had to define him or control him.

It was a good answer.

Stiles drew the conclusions about his own quandary that he was sure Derek had wanted him to. Just because he had a power, just because he was different, didn’t mean he wasn’t human.

“Thank you.” Stiles said at last. “That... meant a lot.”
Derek nodded, relaxing his stance a little.

Stiles started the run again, this time, opting for conversation. “Deaton said I needed to find an anchor, something to keep me from letting the magic corrupt me.”

“I didn’t realize that was a danger.” Derek grunted.

Stiles shrugged. “Magic is power, power corrupts, etc. People like Mab and her coven allowed the magic to change them, probably. I’m betting they weren’t all crazy psychopaths originally. She might have been. That would not surprise me.”

“Are you worried?”

“Of course I’m worried. It would be stupidly dangerous to not be worried.”

Derek nodded. “Are you afraid of the magic itself?”

Stiles thought about it. He was afraid of becoming evil overlord of the world, yes. Seriously, no one should want the job. But was he afraid of the magic itself? “Not really. It is useful and it seems like I won’t really be able to avoid using it. I can’t be afraid of it and expect to be able to control it.”

“Do me a favor? Explain that concept to Scott?” Derek smirked.

Stiles laughed. He could see Derek’s point. It was much like what a newly minted werewolf had to realize. If Scott couldn’t accept his wolf as a part of himself, learn to not fear it, he would always have problems controlling it, especially now that his anchor wasn’t as strong as it could be.

“He should do us all a favor and find a new anchor.” Stiles admitted. He hadn’t shared his opinion on the matter with anyone, especially not Scott. “Allison is sweet, I guess, but she has a serious case of Heel Face Revolving Door and has tried to kill the Pack a few times too many for my sanity.”

Derek’s lips quirked briefly up like he was trying to suppress a smile, before he asked calmly, “Why did you go to her for help, then?”

“She came to me first, and while I don’t trust her, I wouldn’t leave anybody to the mercy of those shades. And I wasn’t dumb enough to turn down an arsenal when offered.” Stiles said.

Derek accepted that answer, grudgingly nodding.

After that, the run continued in silence. Stiles eventually lead them back to the house and up to his room. Stiles offered to let Derek shower first, but the werewolf shook his head, claiming he was fine. He did insist that Stiles shower though, wrinkling his nose. Stiles threw a random book off his shelf at him for the insinuation, but he grinned as he made his way to the bathroom.

As he showered, his mind wandered back to his research. One of the iconic features of Pictish peoples were the paints that they used in battle and in magic. He actually really liked the idea of painting protection onto the skin, of not hiding what they were, of embracing it, broadcasting it, and knowing that that act of acceptance and pride made them better, made them safer.

It was something that, for the most part, today’s society lacked, especially for those of the geeky persuasion as Stiles was.

He wondered if the practice would hold true today, and if it did, if Deaton could teach him. Not that he usually got a lot of advanced notice before shit went down, but there were ways around that now. Stiles chuckled quietly to himself. He’d always wanted a tattoo.
Get got out of the shower, dried off, and got dressed just in time to hear his dad come in through the front door. He went downstairs to say hey and to keep his dad from coming up to check on him and possibly running into Derek.

“How was work?” Stiles asked.

“No horrible catastrophes.” The sheriff murmured. “I guess I’ll count it as a win.”

Stiles smirked. His dad’s dry humor was a good sign. “What do you want for dinner?”

“Bacon.” He said wistfully.

“What do you want for dinner that won’t clog your arteries?”

The sheriff sighed dramatically. “Surprise me.”

Stiles nodded and got to work pulling out ingredients. He wasn’t the best cook in the world, by far, but he could do simple things. Really simple things. Spaghetti simple. He could bake all the damn day and everything would be butterflies and rainbows and unicorns frolicking merrily on your taste buds, but outside of sugary delights, he was almost hopeless.

But he was still better than his dad.

So it fell to Stiles to do the cooking. He didn’t mind. This way, he could keep track of what his dad was eating, making sure it was healthy. So whole grain pasta, low-sodium sauce, 97% lean ground beef--he could use turkey, but even he had his limits on sacrificing taste--and garlic were the ingredients for the evening. It was quick too.

When it was ready, he put a plate down for his dad, who was reading the paper, and then grabbed a heaping plateful for himself, and climbed his way back to his room. He’d ninja’d a second fork without his dad noticing and felt rather proud of himself.

“Hey, dude. Don’t know how much of this you’re going to want, but I got enough for three people, so feel free to dig in.” Stiles set the plate down on his bed in front of Derek and then hit the computer. He needed to look up a few things to run by Deaton tomorrow.

After a few minutes, and if he bothered to listen close enough, he could hear the sound of Derek eating quietly. Stiles was content to let Derek eat the whole thing if he wanted, he wasn’t terribly hungry--though he knew he should eat after the run--and Derek had had to put up with him for the better part of 24 hours, so he figured some kind of penance was in order.

When the plate was placed on his keyboard, two thirds empty, Stiles looked up at Derek to berate him for endangering his laptop.

“Eat.” Derek told him.

Stiles frowned at him, but picked up the plate off his keyboard and started eating. Derek walked back over to the bed, apparently satisfied that Stiles wasn’t going to starve. He finished it off and then ran it downstairs to put in the sink for later. When he came back up, Derek looked ready to go.

“Pack meeting?” Stiles asked, making sure it wasn’t some kind of emergency.

When Derek nodded, Stiles grabbed his keys and gestured for Derek to meet him at the Jeep. Then he rushed back downstairs, told his dad he was going out for a few hours, and then left, Derek riding shotgun.
When they got to the Hale House, Derek disappeared, almost immediately, to go down to the basement where the alpha prisoner was being kept.

“Is anyone else bothered by the fact that we have a hostage werewolf downstairs?” Stiles asked the room at large.

“Not overly much.” Peter hummed from his seat in the living room.

Stiles glared at him, but looked expectantly to the others.

“They have Erica and Boyd.” Isaac shrugged. “So no, I don’t feel bad about it.”

“He’s not torturing him, Stiles.” Lydia said matter-of-fact. “He’s asking questions, seeing if he can get anything off of him, but he isn’t torturing him.”

“Unless you count the occasional hit of bear mace to the face when he gets annoying.” Jackson added, smirking.

So that’s why Derek had taken his bear mace. Stiles had to admit that he felt better about the no torture thing. It was not an experience he’d wish on anyone, and it wasn’t something he could condone his friends doing. Stiles nodded, accepting their assurances.

Once Derek came back up, the Pack meeting started. Derek took the wolves out back to train, while Lydia and Stiles stayed in the house to research. Or gossip. Whichever.

They waited until the wolves were into the forest and out of earshot before Stiles turned to Lydia and said, “I met with Deaton today.”

“So I heard.” She smiled. “How did it go?”

Stiles waved his hand in a so-so fashion. “Some interesting family history aside, not much happened. I’m going back tomorrow to start training.”

“That’s great Stiles. I feel like this is a good move for you, I really do.”

“It’s not without risks.” He reminded her.

“Of course it isn’t. Nothing ever is, but the benefits will outweigh the risks if you’re smart and careful.” She lounged primly on the couch. “I really think this is what you were meant to do. It’s certainly something only you can do; the others physically can’t handle some of the stuff you’ll be using, and I don’t have a talent for it. Even so, you shouldn’t let that be an excuse to be less than the best.”

Stiles gave Lydia a look. “You’re presuming that I’ve somehow gotten my Pack membership renewed.”

“You’ve drawn conclusions that are erroneous and based on outdated and false information; that you persist on behaving as if your hypothesis is correct is just sad. Hurtful really.” She informed him while examining her manicure. “The sooner you comprehend that, the better off everyone will be.”

Stiles sighed and flopped back heavily into the couch. He didn’t want to talk about his non-existent Pack status. It had been made perfectly clear to him that he was not Pack, he was just a resource they were using until they got Erica and Boyd back. He was fine with that. Really. He did not need Lydia to bring it up every chance she got.
He decided to change the topic and used the next hour or so to talk to her about what he’d learned regarding Pict magic and history. She was surprisingly interested in it, and happily allowed herself to be used as a sounding board for ideas. He decided to not mention his plans regarding tattoos though, since he wasn’t sure if they’d even pan out yet.

When the wolves came back, it was Isaac’s turn to fetch food, so he took Scott with him and departed. While they waited, Stiles asked what kind of training they were working on. He hoped it wasn’t just fighting techniques because defense was really important too. He explained that to them when they told him that they were, in fact, focused on offense. To his surprise, Derek said he’d take it into consideration.

Food arrived quickly and they feasted upon greasy burgers because Scott and Isaac were perpetually lazy and viewed grocery stores like lost puppies viewed scary hedge mazes. Stiles was full anyway from dinner earlier, so he abstained from everything but the curly fries.

When it was time to go, Derek retrieved a duffle bag from elsewhere in the house—his room, supposedly—and then moved to the door as Stiles did.

“Again?” Scott asked. “Wouldn’t it be better if I—”

“For now, we’ll keep the same pairs.” Derek told him firmly.

“You have work, Scott; you can’t be with me all the time, but Isaac and you have the same shifts. It’s easiest.” He defended Derek’s choice, because it did make sense. Derek was good at hiding from his dad and the power dynamic was mostly even this way. Alpha with human was about as capable as two betas. Probably.

Scott sighed, resigned and didn’t disagree with Stiles’ logic. He’d learned that lesson often enough that it was almost reflex for Scott, unless the topic was Allison or joining Derek’s Pack. He was bull-headed about those.

When they got back to the Stilinski abode, Derek did a sweep of the perimeter while Stiles went inside. His dad was watching TV in the living room, so he chilled with him for an hour of solid father-son bonding time over a game. When the game was done, he bid his dad goodnight and headed up to his room.

Derek was just climbing through his window when he closed the door.

“Your job will get a lot easier once I learn how to ward this place.” Stiles told him.

Derek shook his head. “Still a good idea to check the perimeter.”

Stiles shrugged. “Better safe than sorry, I guess. Sorry you’re stuck with me again, by the way.”

“It’s fine Stiles. Don’t apologize.” Derek shoved his duffle bag under the bed, and then pulled a book out of his jacket pocket. Stiles wondered if it was the same book he’d seen him pick off the bookshelf yesterday.

“What’re you reading, anyway?” Stiles asked.

Derek held up the paperback.

Stiles felt himself grin. “You know that’s book two right?”

Derek nodded. “Read the first one yesterday.”
“So how do you like it?”

“I like that not all the werewolves are monsters.” Derek told him.

Stiles smiled. “At least someone gets it right.” He left Derek to his reading and booted up his computer to start his research of inks.

When his dad tapped on his door, Stiles dashed over to answer before he just came in. “Headed to bed?”

“Yeah. Thank you for going to the store like I asked.”

“No problem.”

“And thank you for staying out of trouble, Stiles. Really. I feel better knowing you’re not out at all hours with these animal attacks.”

Stiles shifted uncomfortably. “No problem.” He said again, this time with a bit more sentiment.

“I have a double tomorrow, so I won’t be back until late. Goodnight, Son.”

“Night, Dad.” He closed his door and leaned his head against the wood. “Can I just... wrap him in a cocoon of blankets and never let him outside ever? He has no idea what he’s up against.”

“You could tell him.” Derek was closer than he had been when Stiles had opened the door.

Stiles glanced sadly at him. “Somehow, I don’t think that would go over well. He’d probably have me committed.”

“You have proof.” Derek reminded him.

Stiles sighed. “I know. I just... feel like he’s safer not knowing, you know?”

Derek shrugged with one shoulder, “I’d agree with you, if we didn’t already know that wasn’t the case.”

“Stupid faerie.” Stiles sighed again and wanted to bang his head against the door. “I know you didn’t tell me and Scott about the Alpha Pack because you thought knowing would make us a target. Tell me I’m wrong if the same thing doesn’t apply here.”

Derek seemed to think about it for a bit before relenting. “For now. But do you want him to find out the way you did?”

Stiles groaned. “Go away with your logic.”

Derek grabbed him gently-ish and pulled him away from the door. “Just think about it.”

Stiles was pushed towards the center of his room, so he decided to collapse face-first onto his bed. That seemed like a stellar idea. The bed was comfy and he didn’t care that he was half off the mattress and fully dressed, he was ready to just fall asleep and ignore the world for a while.

“You fall asleep like that, and I will have no sympathy for your sore muscles tomorrow.” Derek told him calmly, taking the desk chair for himself and pulling the book out again.

Stiles sighed into the comforter and hauled himself up to his pillows. He kicked his shoes off and called it acceptable, falling asleep with his head buried in his awesome smelling pillows. He’d
seriously have to figure out which detergent his dad had found so he could remember to keep buying it.
He woke up a few hours later, in the middle of the night. The blanket had been pulled out from under his unconscious body and had been placed over his shoulders at some point, which was nice, but with his clothes, he was a little too warm now, and the jeans he was wearing were uncomfortable. He looked around, but the room was dark and he couldn’t see if Derek was hanging out. He shrugged. Stiles was pretty used to changing in the locker room in front of the lacrosse team, so he just flung the covers off and moved over to his dresser. He pulled out a pair of sleep pants and shimmied out of his jeans before tugging them on and crawling back into bed.

“Goodnight, Derek.” Stiles mumbled, trusting that the werewolf could hear him.

He thought he heard a quiet, “Goodnight.” in reply, but he was already drifting off again.

When Stiles woke up again, it was well and truly morning. He rubbed his eyes, blearily, and looked around. Derek was asleep in the desk chair. Stiles knew that to be highly uncomfortable, so he nudged the wolf awake. He gestured to the bed when Derek opened his eyes, and then gathered what he’d need for his morning shower.

He took the shower a little hotter than normal to get himself fully awake, but he didn’t dawdle too much. It was late enough that they’d have just enough time for lunch before heading over to the clinic.

He trotted downstairs to reheat leftovers for lunch, but he made a pot of coffee too. Stiles heard the shower start upstairs, so he ate his portion of lunch while he waited. Derek didn’t take too long, and soon he was coming downstairs and beelining for the coffee. Stiles slid the leftovers across the counter towards him and started a quick clean as Derek ate.

When Derek was done, Stiles grabbed his keys and they left.

They got to the clinic at one and Stiles hurried to park and get inside. Scott let him in with a smile and Stiles leaned against the exam table as he waited for Deaton. Isaac and Derek conversed quietly, leaving Scott and Stiles alone for a time.

“How’re you holding up, man?” Scott asked him seriously.

Stiles raised a confused eyebrow. “I’m alright. A little impatient and scatterbrained, maybe, but when has that never been the case?”

“I meant...” he lowered his voice, “with Derek. You’ve been with him for two days straight, Stiles. Are you okay?”

“Am I okay?” Stiles asked, confused again. “Yeah. Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Dude! It’s Derek.” Scott was still keeping his voice lowered, but Stiles knew that it wasn’t enough to keep the alpha from hearing him. “He’s thrown you into how many hard surfaces?”
“None recently, and it’s not like that’s an exclusively Derek activity.” Stiles told him, annoyed. “He’s not a bad guy, Scott. He’s trying to help us.”

“But why? He’s got to have ulterior motives.”

Stiles sighed, letting go of his annoyance toward Scott. His friend saw the world in black and white and Derek had not made a good first impression. It would take a long while before Scott saw Derek as anything other than a Bad Guy. Stiles could be annoyed with him for it, and was on occasion, but it got exhausting. Instead, he tried to give Scott something to consider.

“Maybe he’s just tired of seeing people get hurt or die.”

Scott shifted nervously, opened his mouth to argue, but just then Deaton came in through the door, and Scott swallowed whatever it was he was going to say.

“Are you ready to get started?” Deaton asked.

Stiles stood up straight and nodded. “Absolutely.”

“Do you mind if I borrow Scott and Isaac?” Derek asked.

Deaton shook his head and shooed Scott out the door with Derek and Isaac. “I’m warding this room; try not to worry when you can’t hear anything.”

Derek nodded.

When they left, Deaton turned to Stiles. “I assume you’ve done some of your own research.”

“That can always be assumed.” Stiles agreed.

“Did you have something specific you wanted to start with?”

“Protection glyphs.” Stiles told him and Deaton nodded, unsurprised.

“Very well. Keep in mind Stiles, that creating something is more difficult than destroying it. Do not get discouraged if you don’t do it correctly for a time.” Deaton warned him.

“I won’t.”

Deaton began explaining the concept to him. Stiles had already researched the theory behind glyphs and runes and wards, but he listened to what Deaton had to tell him because it was always a good idea to get more information. He followed along, taking notes occasionally, for the first half hour. When he was done with the theory, Deaton pulled out a book and opened it to a page that had glyphs and their purposes drawn on the pages.

“Ooh, shiny.” Stiles resisted the urge to make gimme, gimme motions.

Deaton smiled. “Let’s try one of the simpler ones.”

“That’s a triskele.” Stiles pointed to a familiar symbol. Derek’s tattoo.

“It is. The triskele is one of the stronger glyphs, more adaptable, because it can hold many meanings. The glyph itself also has many variations. We’ll start with something simpler for today, though.” Deaton told him.

“Right.” Stiles agreed absently. He wondered if Derek’s tattoo was just a tattoo or if he’d had
someone capable of imbuing it put magical protection behind it.

Deaton had him trace three different glyphs over and over again until they looked like the images in the book. Once he’d gotten that down, he repeated them free-hand until Deaton deemed them acceptable. Once he’d done that, Deaton handed him a fresh piece of paper, and told him to believe, to fill the glyphs with a touch of magic.

“What am I supposed to be believing? What do these do?”

“They’re fire protection. If the enchantment is done correctly, the paper should remain unburned.” Deaton told him.

Stiles drew the glyphs as instructed and believed with each stroke of his pen that the paper would not burn. When he’d finished, he pushed the paper to Deaton where he had a match ready.

The pile of ash on the exam table was a little disheartening.

Deaton gave him another piece. “Again. Remember that creating is harder than destroying. It will take more than simple words.”

Understanding, Stiles tried again. This time, rather than repeating a mantra in his head of “don’t burn”, Stiles thought about things that didn’t burn and tried to imbue the paper with the same property. Finished, he stood back as Deaton lit the second match.

If anything, Stiles felt like the paper caught faster this go around.

“Again. Don’t try to change the paper into something it isn’t. It is just paper. It’s the glyphs that need guidance. They need your emotions, your belief that the paper should be protected, should be saved.”

Stiles would one day ask how Deaton was so damned perceptive and seemingly a mind reader.

He clicked the pen a few times before releasing a slow breath. Give them emotion and belief that the paper should be safe and protected. Give them guidance. Stiles closed his eyes and pictured the burnt out remains of the Hale House. As he drew the glyphs he held the image in his minds’ eye, guiding the glyphs to understand that fire was bad. He flashed through emotions of pain and loss and fear, connecting them with fire. As he inscribed the glyphs, Stiles willed them to save their target from those things.

As he penned the last line, he felt a gentle tug from somewhere low in his gut. Not physical, not tangible, but something.

He allowed Deaton to light the match and hold it to the paper again.

The fire didn’t take.

The match burned all the way down and not so much as a scorch mark marred the page.

“It worked.” He breathed out, surprised. “Holy crap.”

“I’m impressed.” Deaton told him. “I did not expect you to get it right so soon.”

“Will those protect anything? How many would I need to cover something bigger? Are there benefits to other mediums to write the glyphs? How permanent is the enchantment?” Stiles fired question after question as he thought of them. If this could be done to buildings, it was something he would be
doing to both his house and the police station, probably wherever the Pack actually slept too.

Deaton handed him the book that the glyphs had come out of. “This should answer most of your questions. Let me know if it leaves something out.”

“Will they work on a person?” Stiles asked, seriousness back.

“These glyphs specifically, or were you speaking more broadly?”

“Both. I looked up some history about Pict people and magic. They painted themselves; it’d grant protection and strength, keep them safe. It was an early form of tattooing and I want to know if it can be done now. With real tattoos.” Stiles explained.

“It’s not unheard of.” Deaton nodded. “I, myself, have a few.”

“I want to do it.” Stiles told him. “But not just one or two. I want the full monty on this one.”

Deaton looked him over very seriously. “Read the book. Decide very carefully which glyphs and runes you want to use. What you’re asking for is a very complicated and drawn out procedure; make sure you know exactly what you’re doing.”

Stiles clutched the book to his chest, eager to start reading. He understood what he wanted would be difficult, he was just glad it was physically possible.

“Hour’s up.” Deaton said.

There was a knock at the door, so Stiles opened it. Isaac and Scott slipped into the clinic with a wave. Stiles waved back before heading back to his car. Derek was already there, leaning against the passenger side. Seeing him reminded Stiles that the tattoo on his back was in his new book, but he decided to forego commenting on it for now.

Derek did not look like he was in a good mood.

“Something happen?”

Derek shook his head, clearly unwilling to talk about whatever had made him grumpier than usual. Stiles heaved an internal sigh at the renewed lack of communication. He’d kinda hoped these hours spent in each others company would help bridge the trust gap. Derek had shared a few things, Stiles shared his books, it had been a good start in Stiles’ opinion.

Derek remained silent the whole car ride back to Stiles’ house. It seemed like the uncommunicative Derek was back.

“I’m going to be reading this all day,” Stiles held up the book Deaton had given him as they approached the front door. “If you need to go do something, or blow off steam, or whatever, I’ll be here. Staying out of trouble. I promise. You look like you need to do something before you lose it, sourwolf.”

Derek gave him a ‘yeah, right’ face, which... fair. Stiles had a bad habit of getting into trouble even when he didn’t try.

“If I get someone else to stay with me, will you be appeased?” Stiles asked, someone already in mind.

Derek sighed. “Is it someone who can actually help you if the Alphas show up?”
“Probably?” Stiles didn’t actually know. “She’s certainly better than nothing.”

Stiles heard Derek groan, and while it had a hint of a growl to it, it didn’t seem hostile. The wolf finally nodded. “Call her.”

Stiles whipped out his phone and hit 6 on his speed dial while he and Derek climbed the stairs to his room.

“Ah, Stiles, how oft I have missed your dulcet tones.” She greeted.

He smiled. “How about my my nubile young body? Be honest, you want me. You’ve been pining for my presence.” He teased.

Her cheery laugh over the line was almost enough to cover up a small growl from Derek. Stiles raised his eyebrow at him. He thought that Derek was cool with Leeloo in his territory; he hadn’t complained when she’d shown up before.

“I think I can sneak away for a while. Where shall our secret tryst transpire tonight?”

“My place.” He palmed his keys, already inching toward the door. “Can you get here on your own, or do I need to whisk you away?”

She laughed again. “The mighty steed can stay in the garage; I’m on my way.”

She hung up and Stiles put his phone back in his pocket. When he turned back around, Derek was laying on the bed reading. The sheets looked significantly more rumpled than he remembered walking in.

“Dude, did you do the circle thing before you laid down? Did I miss you actually doing the circle thing?” Stiles asked amused.

Derek glared at him over the top of his book.

“Alright Mr. Grumpy-Gills.” Stiles held his hands up in defeat. He sat at his desk and started reading the book on glyphs while he waited for Leeloo to arrive.

About ten minutes passed before Derek stiffened and put his book in his jacket. “She’s here. I’ll be back in a few hours. Tell me if she wants to leave before I get back.”

Stiles started to say something, but Derek was already out the window.

He sighed and ran downstairs. He flung the door open to see Leeloo on the other side ready to knock. She smiled and put her hand down. “Can’t sneak up on werewolves, I see.”

“There are ways I’m sure.” Stiles told her. “Come on in, I actually have something I want your help on.”

“Mixing business with pleasure?” She smirked at him as she stepped inside.

“I’m a multitasker.” Stiles led the way up and let her enter first, all gentlemanly.

She held a hand to her face, but her eyes were dancing, which meant she was trying to hold in a laugh. “Oh my. Have you been holding out on me?”

“Huh?” Stiles asked. She was glancing between him and the bed.
“Your bed, Stiles. It positively exudes Eau d’Derek.” She chuckled.

Stiles looked at his rumpled sheets and realized what she must be assuming. “Uh, no. Believe me, no sexy fun times have been had in this bed. Not that Derek and I--I mean, he was just... laying there earlier. Reading.”

“And had to roll around to get comfortable first?”

“I asked him if he did the circle thing. I don’t know why he messed up the bed.”

She hummed, “Mhmm. I see.” She had a knowing smirk on her face. He did not approve of the knowing smirk.

He decided to distract her with the whole point of her visit. “Have you ever heard of a Bruxa?”

She stilled. “Figured it out, did you.” When she glanced at him, she wasn’t smiling anymore.

“Decided to get my head out of the sand and out of my ass and go to Deaton for magic training. He told me, then I did a little of my own research.”

“I wanted to tell you, Stiles. I thought it might be dangerous to keep you in the dark, but the Elders... there are rules when dealing with Bruxa; rules that are far older than I am.” She told him seriously.

“What rules?” He asked.

“Rules to keep my kind safe.”

“From me?” Stiles frowned.

“From the Pict witches and Bruxa. We’re from the same place, we worked together occasionally, but it was rarely... amenable. The stronger witches could command the elves to do as they wished. When the race started to fade and mingle with the other humans, the Elders came up with rules for our kind if we ever encountered one of their Bruxa descendants.”

“I’d never--”

“I know! You’re not the type to do that, but there have been others.” She shrugged sadly.

Stiles gave her a hug. “I will never do that. I promise.”

She returned his hug briefly before letting go. “So, what do you need?”

“There’s a situation in town.”

She nodded. “The Alpha Pack.”

“You knew? You knew and you didn’t tell me?”

“I thought Derek would’ve-- He didn’t tell you?” She looked confused.

Stiles sighed. “Not until recently, and he didn’t have much choice. One of the alphas attacked while Scott and I were hanging out.”

“How long ago was this?” She started turning him, bodily, this way and that, examining him for injuries. “Where you hurt? Is Scott okay? Why didn’t he tell you?”
“Eight days. I’m fine, so is Scott. He didn’t tell us because he didn’t want to make us targets. Didn’t go quite as he planned. Also, two wolves, Erica and Boyd, have been taken by the Alphas.” Stiles tried to keep his temper down, but talking about it was reminding him of all the reasons he’d been mad. “They went missing at the end of the school year, and we all thought they’d decided to leave the Pack, since they’d told Derek as much, but there were taken by the Alphas. Derek’s known for six weeks that they’d been taken, and he didn’t... He should have brought me in on this six weeks ago.”

She laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. “You’re in it now. Focus your energy on saving your friends rather than your anger.”

He sighed. “I’m not even angry at him anymore. Not really. I want to be, but I understand why he did what he did. Now I’m just mad at the situation.”

“As you should be.” Leeloo squeezed his shoulder. “Focus on it.”

“I... have kind of a crazy rescue plan, actually.” He told her shyly. He was sure she’d react to it about as well as Lydia had.

“Crazy can be good. Let’s hear it.”

He told her.

“I don’t like this plan. There are so many things wrong with this plan.”

“I know. I’m working on it. Lydia said she’d only help me if I got trained by Deaton and used magic in the plan.”

“She’s a smart girl.” Leeloo said. “You are incredibly dumb if you thought you had any chance of success without magic.”

He sighed. “I know! I’m altering the plan; I even already have ideas... Less crazy, I promise.”

“I’d love to hear less crazy.”

“I was doing research on my ancestors, like I mentioned. You’re familiar with how they’d paint themselves for battle?” She nodded. “Well, I want to do something similar. Deaton gave me this book on glyphs and I’ve started looking at the protection ones. He said that it’s not unheard of for magic users to get tattoos of the glyphs, but I figure one or two won’t really be enough. Not for what I’m planning.”

“You want something more intricate, an homage to the ancestors.” Her eyes glinted with something like excitement. “You realize that’s quite the undertaking.”

“I know. I still have to come up with a design, chart out he glyphs, and the ink, and then find someone able and willing to help me actually apply it. I won’t be able to reach everywhere, even if I trusted myself to do it. Which I don’t. For the record.”

She smiled. “I could do it.”

He blinked. “Really?”

“You think the Pict were the only ones to paint themselves for battle?”

“I... guess... not... but, I mean... Can you tattoo?”
“I’m apprenticed to the best in the clan. Wode is a little hard to come by these days, tattooing is easier, and who doesn’t appreciate a little body art.” She lifted the corner of her shirt to show him a tattoo of a Tree of Life on her side. “We’re all very modern.” She winked, lowering her shirt.

“Huh.” Stiles was a little stunned at the luck that had been dropped on him. He waited for the other shoe to kick him in the gut.

“It won’t be easy, Stiles.” She told him, as if reading his mind. “Magical tattoos are not simple and will require a lot of effort on your part, especially one this complicated.”

“Deaton mentioned that.”

Leeloo nodded. “Good. What did you have in mind for the design?”

“Still working on the details.”

“Would you like my help?”

“Professional consultation? Yes, please.” Stiles breathed out, relieved.

She pulled out a sketch pad from her purse and began a rough sketch of a torso. While she worked on that, he went back to the book. He wanted to look up more glyphs and there were a lot to go through. He wouldn’t use all of them; there was no real need for a glyph protecting him from the plague, but there were a lot that were appealing. His particular favorites included protection from stabbing, burning, poison, and drowning. Those were definitely on the list.

“Does this look about right to you?” She held up the sketch pad and showed him a detailed back and front drawing of him from neck to knees. She gave him pants, though. He was grateful.

“Except for the odd scar here and there, yeah.”

“Where are they?”

He gave her a brief rundown of the visible scars on his upper body and watched her add them. It now looked eerily like him, but he supposed that was the point.

“Alright, we’ll definitely need to avoid inking over those.” She commented absently.

Stiles agreed.

“Keep reading; I’ll test a few design ideas while you study.” She sat on the floor rather than the bed, which Stiles would have commented on, but he opted to ignore it instead in favor of reading.

That’s how Derek found them. Stiles reading at the desk, Leeloo sketching on the floor by the bed. When he came in, Stiles noticed that he seemed to sniff the room a bit before relaxing. Stiles, again, decided to ignore that.

“Hey, did you have fun?” Stiles asked.

“I forgot to grab book three before I left.” Derek said, walking over to the bookshelf.

Stiles winced in sympathy. “Hate it when that happens. You’re like, that was great, what happens next? And then you remember that you left the next book at the house or something and it’s a sad moment. I’ve cried because of this on occasion; I’m not ashamed.”

“Your fanboy moments make me sad.” Derek smirked.
Leeloo chortled.

Stiles put a hand to his chest, mockingly hurt. “I’m affronted.”

Derek just pulled book three off the shelf and hid his stupid smiling face behind it as he sat on the bed to read. Stiles tried to go back to his own book, but the image of Derek smiling, a real, genuine smile, kept popping into his head.

He glanced at the werewolf to see him sprawled casual as could be on his bed, nose in his book. Leeloo caught him staring and smiled slyly at him. He shot her a glare and returned to his book.

He was going to have an entirely different problem on his hands if he wasn’t careful.

That night, everyone sort of just... fell asleep where they were. Derek was the first to slip away into dreamland, Leeloo followed shortly after, head pillowed on her arms on the bed. Stiles let them rest, turning off the lights, reading with a book light. He didn’t care if they caught a few winks.

Stiles drifted off at some point though, because the next thing he knew, he was being shaken awake by Leeloo.

It was dawn.

“Sorry about falling asleep.” She whispered. “I have to go, but I’ll send you a text when I’m free to come over.”

Stiles nodded, already threatening to fall back into oblivion.

She left out the window like Derek or one of the wolves would. He waved blearily and then put his head back down on his arms and went back to sleep.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

I love the feedback I've been getting you guys. You're all awesome!

The days advanced much the same way for the next two weeks. Stiles read the book of glyphs every night, he practiced sketching them out as he read, he and Leeloo texted about design ideas, and lessons with Deaton varied between glyph practice and component magic. Component magic was ridiculously easy and Stiles found he enjoyed most of it once he’d stopped worrying about becoming corrupted by it. The magic itself was not evil, using it would not make Stiles evil, and he reminded himself of that by remembering why he was doing it. For Erica and Boyd, for the Pack in general.

Deaton gave up commenting on how quickly Stiles was mastering it by the end of their first lesson on it.

By the end of that second week, Stiles had enough confidence in his ability to craft a working glyph that he brought it up with Derek.

“I want to ward the basement.” Stiles told him, setting his practice paper aside.

Derek set his book down--he was on book five now--and raised a questioning eyebrow at Stiles. “What?”

“The alpha in the basement. It’s not safe to keep him there, and you know it. It is a miracle that they haven’t come for him yet, and I don’t know how long you’re planning on keeping him down there, but everyone is in danger when they’re at that house so long as he’s there.”

Derek glared at him, growling quietly in frustration. Stiles guessed that Derek knew he was right, but that he was still going to debate with himself whether or not he was going to let Stiles do something about it. Stiles let him think because it would be better if Derek came to the decision without Stiles prompting him repeatedly.

Finally, he went back to his book and grumbled, “Fine. Tonight at the Pack meeting, but you won’t go down there alone.”

Stiles nodded and started preparing what he’d need.

That night, Derek let Stiles follow him into the basement where the alpha was being kept. Stiles stared at him as he paced the small cell he was kept in. It was barely wide enough for him to go two steps before he reached the wall, but he was--literally--a caged animal and that was how he acted.

Until he caught their scent. Then he stopped, turned to look at Stiles, and smiled. “Well, well; if it isn’t Little Red Riding Hood. I was wondering if you’d find your way down.”

Derek started a low warning growl, flashing Alpha red eyes, but the caged alpha ignored him.

“I was starting to think he was keeping you from me.”

Derek followed along the edges of the room to give Stiles space to work, but he kept his eyes trained
on the alpha in the cage. Stiles pulled his bag off and started fetching what he’d need, pulled his red hoodie tighter against the basement’s natural chill, and did his best to ignore the alpha’s taunts.

“What’s this?” The alpha’s tone went from teasing to curious. “Dost mine eyes deceive me? Are you a Spark, Little Red? Oh, but I knew I liked you for a reason.”

Stiles continued to ignore him as he started etching the glyphs onto the concrete floor with chalk. He made sure to be precise as he traced and retraced the glyphs, adding his magic so that he felt the tug that meant the glyphs were working.

Three glyphs. Always three. There was power in the number, and the glyphs drew power from it, each representing different aspects of what the overall desire was. It was why the triskele was the most power glyph, because it didn’t need others. The triskele represented all three aspects in one.

When it was done, he chanced a look at the alpha in the cage. He was smirking at him. His eyes flashed red as he smirked and Stiles did not like the way he was looking at him.

“I’m impressed. Shame we didn’t find you sooner. We could have had a lot of fun.”

Derek decided that that was enough. He ushered Stiles out and slammed the door behind them, cutting the sound of the alpha’s laughter off abruptly. Stiles realized the door was sound proofed.

“Overall, not what I expected.” Stiles commented. “I mean, cheap shot with the red riding hood jokes. He could at least be imaginative.”

“Set set yourself up for them.” Derek told him tugging gently on the hood.

“I like my hoodie; the analogy even makes me giggle occasionally. I’m just saying, he could work on making his taunts more original.”

Derek grunted.

“Anyway, he can’t get out now, and if someone tried to bust him out, they’ll be in for one hell of a wallop. I also added a scent masker; hopefully they’ll think we’ve moved him when they do come looking.”

“Deaton finally teach you that one?”

Stiles shrugged. He had gone looking for it since he knew Deaton had done something to make it possible for Derek and the others to sneak up on the vampires. He’d found it on his own and had immediately started practicing it since he knew he’d need it when it came time to rescue Erica and Boyd.

“He gave me the book it was in.” Stiles admitted.

Derek cleared his throat, “Speaking of...” he the book he was reading out of his jacket, bookmark set between the last page and the cover indicating he’d finished it.

“Admit it. Fanboy moment; you’re sad you forgot to grab book six off the shelf.” Stiles laughed, but he pulled his bag off an arm so he could dig through it. “Lucky for you, I hate to see a werewolf cry. Here.” He handed Derek the next book in the series and put book five in his bag.

Derek opted to start reading rather than comment. Stiles waited for it and hoped the reaction would be good rather than horribly, horribly bad. Blood Rites had probably the most memorable first lines to a book ever: “The building was on fire, and it wasn’t my fault.” Stiles had laughed for a good two
or three minutes when he read it the first time, but he understood how Derek might not find it as amusing as he had.

Derek huffed out a laugh.

Stiles relaxed.

It was maybe a little ridiculous to say that he and Derek had sort of started to bond over a book series, but Stiles couldn’t help but feel that was the case. He and Derek would often talk about the books—Stiles trying really hard not give away any spoilers—while going for their, almost daily, runs and their discussions of the series would often turn into just... conversation. He’d learned more about Derek in the past two weeks than he’d ever expected to know.

His new-found knowledge was in no way helping him stop the serious crush that had started to develop. It, in fact, made it worse and worse every day. The straightest straight man to straight-walk out of straight-town could see that Derek was attractive, and Stiles had long ago come to terms with the fact that he looked at men as often as he looked at women; getting to know Derek had been what really did him in though. Not that the attractiveness wasn’t a bonus. The day Stiles had realized that the awesome new scent on his bed wasn’t a new detergent, but was, in fact, just Derek, had been enlightening. He’d caught a whiff of it as Derek had moved passed him to get another book off the shelf and he’d nearly flailed out of his desk chair in surprise. Once he’d accepted his deep and unbidden attraction to the alpha, he’d added a new step to his shower routine in an attempt to avoid awkward Derek related arousal.

He wasn’t going to panic though, because that would be the fastest way for Derek to notice something was up. Which... no. He did not need that conversation. Stiles realized that it probably spoke volumes as to exactly how deep his feelings for Derek went when he refused to face that rejection. He’d faced it every day with Lydia for years, but he couldn’t... he didn’t want to hear that Derek only spent time with him because of some obligation to keep him out of trouble, didn’t want to hear that he’d only been humoring him with conversation and didn’t actually care what Stiles had to say. So he kept it to himself.

See? Self-preservation instinct. He had it.

Deaton gave Stiles a small book the next day at the end of Sunday’s lesson. “This is about a specific type of component magic. You’ve shown remarkable progress and I think you’re ready for this, but I want you to remember what you’ve learned about anchoring and grounding yourself. If there is a magic that corrupts easily, it is this.”

Stiles took the book and looked it over. It was about using blood. He figured this would come up at some point. There were hundreds of different theories about magic and how it worked and almost all of them used or mentioned the use of blood in spells. From what he’d already read on it, he could see how it would be one of those things that easily corrupted. He wasn’t a bastard, however, most days, so Stiles felt reasonably sure he wouldn’t abuse the practice.

He read the book in its entirety that night. It wasn’t terribly long, but it was enlightening. He already knew a lot of what the book had to say on theory, and a little of the spells it had mentioned, but there were a few things that it had suggested that were completely new. He never would have thought about mixing blood with ink to tattoo a glyph before, but after reading about it, about the benefits, he liked the idea. Liked, especially, the symbolism that came with it when used as part of a good glyph.

He texted Leeloo about it. She was currently on the hunt for the right type of ink, said she’d heard of one that sounded perfect and was looking into seeing if she could convince her patron to let her use it for Stiles’ tattoo. If she could, the tattoos would be invisible—except when Stiles used his magic—
which was great because he didn’t want people not in the know to ask him about it when they caught
glimpses of it.

TO: Leeloo
7:45pm

Idea! Tell me yea or nay: for the last glyph, mix blood with the ink?

FROM: Leeloo
7:47pm

You still haven’t told me what that glyph means...

They’d finally settled on an overall design and Stiles had started telling her which glyphs would go
where. The design included two binding glyphs–triskeles. The first one was an insular triskele that
had the swirls moving toward the center rather than branching out like Derek’s; it represented the id,
ego, and superego reminding him of balance and control in regards to himself and how he used his
magic. The second triskele was the same as Derek’s, just smaller. It represented why he used his
magic.

TO: Leeloo
7:50pm

I will. Can it be done?

FROM: Leeloo
7:51pm

It will be visible...

TO: Leeloo
7:51pm

That’s fine. It’ll be hidden by my pants.

FROM: Leeloo
7:52pm

That one will be fun ;)

Stiles groaned. That one would be awkward.

***

Stiles was very glad no one actually slept at the Hale House. For many reasons, most of which
involved things like structural integrity and inhaling ash, but today, Stiles was glad no one slept at the
Hale House because that meant no one was there when the Alphas came and took back what was
theirs.

The alpha that Derek had captured had given him no information, at least, none that Derek had
decided to share, and he had been rather belligerent in his taunts when Stiles had gone down to
check on the glyphs he’d put up.

It was because of those glyphs–up for only a few days–that no one had been keeping watch when
the Alphas showed up. For that, Stiles was very grateful.
“You said it would stop them!” Derek shouted.

“It should have! It would have stopped any of you... Look,” Stiles ducked down and pointed at the blood splatter, “it hurt them, like I said it would. They’re stronger than I thought, I’m sorry.”

Derek huffed, annoyed.

“I can use this.” Stiles pointed to the blood. “Can you get my bag from upstairs?”

Isaac ran up and returned with Stiles’ new bag that Lydia had bought for him that day. It was much more organized than his backpack had been, and she’d been helping him transfer all of the various tools he used when Derek had called--roared was probably more accurate--for him to come downstairs. Some of the group had followed, ever curious.

Stiles opened up the bag and retrieved a small vial and an eye dropper. He got up as much blood as he could from the floor and put it in the vial, stoppered it, and then placed it in the bag.

“What are you going to do with it?” Isaac asked.

“A lot can be done with blood.” He cautioned the room. “Don’t ever leave your blood for someone else to find and use.”

Isaac and Scott both looked a little worried, Lydia looked smugly proud. He shook his head at her. Yes, fine, he was good at magic; she needed to stop rubbing it in his face that she’d been right.

“Can you track him?” Derek asked, anger no longer apparent in his voice.

Stiles fought a smirk because he knew exactly where that idea had come from. Dresden, Stiles’--and Derek’s--favorite wizard detective, could track someone using a part of them like hair or blood. Stiles found it really endearing that Derek considered the Dresden Files as a source of research.

Didn’t make him wrong though.

“I can try.” Stiles told him. “I don’t know if they’ll have a defense against it, because they’re clearly doing something to block Erica and Boyd’s scents, but I can definitely try. It’ll take me a few days to research the spell.”

Derek accepted that answer and made everyone go back upstairs so the Pack meeting could commence. Stiles participated in training that day, sort of. He used the time that Derek took the wolves out to practice fighting to exercise. He’d been running with Derek every day, but he’d been neglecting his other strength training exercises. So he did push ups, sit ups, planks, and pull ups, much to Lydia’s amusement.

“You know, Stilinski, you’re not half as wimpy as you look.” She told him using him as a footrest while he did planks.

“Your approval is all I yearn for,” he grunted.

She chuckled. “And see, you’ve succeeded. The world makes sense again.”

Had laughing not been slightly difficult at the moment, he would have laughed more at the reference. “You would quote Kat Stratford.”

She smirked and went back to doing her nails.

Leeloo texted him that night telling him that she’d managed to get ahold of the magical ink. They
decided to break it up into three sessions since it would take enormous effort on his part to infuse the
tattoos with magic. Once it was done though, he would be protected from a great deal of possible
injury. It wouldn’t make him immune to damage, by any means, but it would protect him from most
of it. Make it harder to inflict permanent damage, make him heal a bit faster—not werewolf fast,
sadly, but faster than normal—and would protect him from magical assaults.

She suggested the first round of tattooing start the next day. He agreed.

“Derek.” Stiles looked away from his phone to find Derek in his usual spot, reading.

“Stiles.”

“I’m going to be doing something tomorrow that’s going to take some time. I’ll be with Deaton and
Leeloo, but we’ll all be pretty distracted...”

Derek put the book down. “You want me to run the perimeter rather than be in the room.”

Stiles nodded. Other than a quick check around the house when they arrive, Derek had taken to
staying in the room with Stiles for the majority of the time. But Stiles, Deaton, and Leeloo would all
be focused on what they were doing and it would be Very Bad if they were interrupted. It would be
safest if Derek ran the perimeter while the session went down so he could stop any threats from
interrupting before they got to the room.

“If we can get the others to assist too, that would be best. Interruption would be... not good.” Stiles
told him.

Derek nodded. “What time and where?” He pulled out his phone to text the Pack.

“The clinic at 1. It’ll take about three hours.”

Derek sent his text and told Stiles as each member responded in the affirmative.

“You’re nervous.” Derek eyed him, concerned.

Stiles released a nervous little laugh, “Yeah. A bit. It’s kind of the biggest magical working I’m ever
likely to do in my life... I’m a little worried.”

Derek was at his side in an instant, crouched down so his eyes were level with Stiles’ as he sat in his
desk chair. “If you’re worried, you don’t have to do it.”

“Yes I do.” He said seriously. “I was serious when I said we couldn’t afford to have someone watch
me when we get Erica and Boyd back. This will help.”

He hung his head a little, ashamed. Not of being human, he liked being human, but of being a
weakness to others. Gerard had beat the crap out of him as a lesson—to Scott maybe, but probably
Derek, since he had been his alpha.

He wouldn’t let something like that happen again. “I... I can’t be a liability, Derek. I have to be
stronger; for them, for y--for everyone.”

Derek didn’t seem to notice his almost slip. “You don’t have to risk your life--”

“Why not? I cannot expect others to do for me what I would not do for them.” Stiles explained.
“You and the others have risked your necks for me, and I’ve gladly done the same. This is no
different.”
“It is different!”

“Why? Because I’m not Pack?” Stiles snapped. “Have I lost the right to protect the people I care about because I’m not a member of the cool kids club?”

“No, dammit Stiles... That’s not what I meant.” Derek stood up quickly and paced, frustrated.

“Then what did you mean, Derek? Help me understand--”

“Because you’re right!” He shouted, and Stiles was glad his father was on duty right now, because there was no way he wouldn’t have heard that. “You were right: I’m tired of seeing people—the people I care about—get hurt and die.”

“I don’t want Erica and Boyd to be with those bastards any more than you do. That’s why I’m doing this.” Stiles stood calmly. “When Gerard threw me in that basement, I found Erica and Boyd strung up, attached to some kind of generator being fed a constant stream of electricity, arrows still sticking out of them from where they’d been shot, bleeding all over the damned ground. I tried to get them down, but I couldn’t. Then they had to watch as that crazy geezer beat the crap out of me, because I was too weak to defend myself against an old man, too weak to crawl ten feet and unplug that generator so they could save themselves. I failed them. I won’t fail them, or any of you, like that ever again.”

“You didn’t.” Derek said quietly, but firmly.

Stiles shook his head. “Agree to disagree on that one.”

“Stop being stubborn and listen!” Derek got in his face. “I don’t want to see you get hurt any more than I want to see Erica or Boyd or Isaac or Jackson or Lydia or Scott or Peter get hurt. You are not worth less than them, you do not have to sacrifice your safety for theirs--”

“You’re not listening.” Stiles interrupted him again. “That’s not what this is about. I don’t want to get hurt. I’m not painting a target on my chest. I’m trying to protect myself from getting hurt; that’s what this thing is about tomorrow. I’m protecting myself, so that I can protect you. All of you. When you didn’t tell me what was going on, you took away my ability to protect myself. You thought you were protecting me, but you made me more vulnerable. I’m tired of being vulnerable.”

“That’s rich coming from you.”

“I know that, damnit! You think I don’t realize how much of a hypocrite I’m being right now? But you still shouldn’t have done it.” Stiles glared. “You shouldn’t have to hurt people to protect them.”

Derek blinked. “Hurt you...?”

“You lied to me. Excluded me. You made me an outcast again, Derek. You didn’t think that would hurt?” Stiles held a hand up to forestall Derek’s comment. “I tried to ignore it. I tried to let it go. But this... can’t happen again. We all need to work together, which means we all need to be on the same page.”

Derek scowled and then sighed deeply. “What, exactly, are you doing?”

Stiles smiled. Derek had as much as admitted he was right. “Warding myself.”

“And that’s going to take three hours? You whipped up the glyphs for the basement in less than ten minutes.”
“Well, this will be quite a bit more intricate, will require extra effort to make sure it’s all precise and perfect. Plus, there will a lot more glyphs involved.” Stiles told him. “Also, it’s just step one.”

Derek stepped back a bit, as if realizing he was still in Stiles’ personal space. “Step one?”

“Of three. Too much to do all at once. Have to break it up. Few days in between to give me time to recoup.” Stiles anger faded in wake of the worry that started settling over him again. He made no mistake, he knew it was going to be hell getting the tattoos done, but it would be well worth it.

Derek seemed to let go of his own anger as Stiles did. He sat on the edge of the bed, shoulders slumped a little. “Do you know what you’re doing?”

“I got this.” Stiles assured him. “You gotta trust me, sourwolf.”

Derek sighed. “I’m trying.”

Stiles believed him, and he knew how much that meant for Derek. Trust came almost impossibly hard for the alpha, and Stiles suspected he knew why. He didn’t have all the details, but he’d pieced a lot together when he’d helped his dad solve the Hale House arson case and from little comments here and there in their talks. So Stiles was pretty happy with Derek trying. Trying was big improvement.

That night, when Derek was asleep, Stiles stayed up arguing internally with himself. He went over the conversation he’d had with Derek. He went over the conversation he’d had with Derek. He’d been right on the money when he’d accused Stiles of being a hypocrite. He was hiding the whole werewolf thing from his dad for the exact same reason that Derek had hidden the Alpha Pack from him and Scott, but it was wrong then and it was wrong now, and it needed to stop. If he was really honest with himself though, Stiles wasn’t sure it was his dad he was protecting anymore. He was protecting himself from the fallout. Which was even worse. It needed to end.

He just didn’t know how to tell him.
The next day, Stiles slept in. He would need all the energy he could get and sleep sounded awesome. He woke up to the smell of freshly brewed coffee.

“Mmm...” Stiles sniffed the air, eyes still closed. “Coffee... Give!”

His grabby motions were ineffectual, so he opened his eyes. Derek was leaning against the wall, steaming mug of coffee in hand, drinking quietly. Ignoring Stiles.

“Dude. Caffeine me!” Stiles grunted.

“No! Nope, uh huh. No caffeine!” Leeloo called bursting through his door.

“When did you get here? And I didn’t sign up for that! Why can’t I have coffee?” Stiles demanded.

“You don’t want to bleed excessively when you get your tattoo.” Derek said. Voice calm.

Crap.

Stiles had never really understood the phrase glaring daggers, until now, as he felt the impact of each tiny blade centered on his chest.

“Oh crap.”

“I didn’t know you hadn’t told him! Why you thought you had to hide what you were doing, I don’t really understand.” Leeloo reprimanded him.

“You should have told me.” Derek told him, still drinking calmly from his mug. “The permanence of the ritual explains why it’s going to take so long and why it’s going to take so much energy. I would have understood, if you had told me.”

And that made sense. Derek had a tattoo, he probably wouldn’t have freaked out about Stiles choosing to get one--especially one for magical protection--if Stiles had explained it right away. He wasn’t sure why he expected him to freak out.

In retrospect, Stiles felt like an idiot.

“I get it. You’re punishing me for not telling you by flaunting your ambrosia in my face.”

Derek just quirked an eyebrow and hid a smirk behind his mug of coffee.

“Get dressed. We’re running late as it is.” Leeloo told him, leaving his room to go back downstairs.

Derek saluted Stiles with his coffee and followed her out.

“You’re both cruel bastards.”

When he finally made it down stairs after showering and getting dressed, Leeloo rushed him out the door insisting that he took forever to get ready. Stiles just shrugged. He missed caffeine already.

When they arrived at the clinic, Deaton had already prepared the room. Leeloo went straight in to set up her equipment.
Stiles took a deep shaky breath, nerves buzzing.

A warm hand landed on his shoulder. “Relax.” Derek murmured.

“Any advice?”

“Remember to breathe.” Derek squeezed his shoulder before releasing it and walking away.

“I will be warding the room against sound for the session; for Stiles’ privacy as much as protection against worrisome werewolves; I will only release the enchantment in case of emergencies,” Deaton told them. “I must remind you that the ritual cannot be interrupted. It could be very dangerous for Stiles, and for everyone else in the room.”

“Understood.” Derek said. “We’ll make sure nothing gets through.”

“That would be ideal.” With gloved hands, Leeloo pulled a few lightly glowing bottles out of a case and set them on a counter.

“Ooh, shiny...” Stiles wandered over and picked up one of the bottles. It glowed brighter in his hand and he nearly dropped it when he flailed in surprise. He caught it, in both hands inches from the floor and gently set it back on the counter with the other bottles.

He resolutely ignored the looks the others were sending him.

“The others are here.” Derek broke the silence. “Let me know when it’s done.” With that, he left.

Leeloo finished setting up and Deaton guided Stiles to the slightly modified exam table. He’d added some cushions and a sterile oversheet to make the table a bit more comfortable and told Stiles to lay down on his back. This session was going to detail the string of glyphs that wrapped like a mantle around his shoulders and along his collarbone starting with the binding glyph, the insular triskele, on his breastbone, and ending with the glyphs that would lead to the line along his spine.

Those would be detailed during the second session in three days.

Assuming this session didn’t go horribly wrong and kill them all.

He took off his shirts, handing them to Deaton, as Leeloo came forward with alcohol wipes to disinfect the skin.

“Relax, Stiles. Nothing is going to go wrong.” Leeloo whispered.

He nodded.

“Okay, now, I need you to not drop these.” She handed him another of the ink bottles. He took it, it started to glow brighter, and she took it back. She repeated the process with the remaining bottles of magic ink.

“What just happened?”

“You keyed the ink to your magic.” She told him. “This ink is very special, like I told you. Each person who bears it, must first key it to their magic for it to work. Otherwise,” she shrugged, “it’s just invisible ink.”

“What does keying it do?” Stiles asked.

“I already told you that the ink will remain invisible unless you use your magic; the reason it does
this is because it becomes a well of magical energy inside you, to enhance what you already have, and to be called upon when you need it.” She explained. “A lot of our warriors use it as an emergency backup in case they need to heal a fatal wound in battle. Others call upon it to use like a shield. It can be used in a variety of ways depending on the bearer and how much of it you have.”

“Magic like that is not without cost.” Deaton challenged.

Leeloo shook her head. “No, it isn’t. The magic has to replenish before it can be used again, and it’s only source is--”

“Me.” Stiles finished.

She nodded. “It won’t kill you, or even hurt you, but it will leave you weak. That’s why it’s for emergencies only.”

“Got it.” Stiles sighed.

She tested her apparatus briefly and hooked up the ink. “Are you ready?”

Stiles took a few deep breaths and then nodded.

The ritual proceeded. Stiles had to focus through the pain of physically getting a tattoo as Leeloo inked each glyph. He filled his mind with the appropriate images and emotions that he needed to guide each glyph into function. As she finished one, Stiles would feel the tug that meant it was working, and Deaton would inform him of the next one as she started it.

It was, more than anything, exhausting. It hurt, too, certain areas more so than others, but feeding a constant string of magic into the ritual was tiring. By the time the glyphs on his chest were done, Stiles was sweating, hungry, and feeling a dull throbbing ache where the tattoos were.

“That was very good Stiles.” Leeloo assured him.

“Excellent control. I’m impressed.” Deaton added.

Stiles looked at him. “You didn’t think I could do it?”

“I would not have let you try if I didn’t think you were capable.” Deaton told him seriously. “No, I meant in regard to your stamina. Most first timers do not last through nineteen glyphs without a break.”

“Speaking of, can I get one of those?”

Leeloo smiled. “Of course. Let me put ointment on this first, hold on.” She pulled another jar out of her bag and applied the ointment to the tender skin. The achey throb started to lessen as she put a layer of ointment on his skin.

“Is that magical?” Stiles asked.

She hummed. “A bit. It’ll help speed the healing process, and it’s much better at preventing infections than your medicine.”

“Daumelladnel, if I may?” Deaton would, of course, call her by her real name. Show off. “These are not common supplies. How did you procure them?”

Leeloo glanced briefly at Deaton, before looking away. “It... was not easy, but I made a deal with the my patron. She gave me the supplies.”
Stiles didn’t like the sound of that. “What deal?”

“I... do not wish to tell you.”

He stilled her hands with his own as they applied another layer of ointment. “Leeloo, what deal?”

She looked down, sighed heavily, and whispered. “A decade. Once my apprenticeship is done, I am indentured to her service for ten years.”

“What? No! I’d never-- Why did you--”

“It was the only way to get the supplies.” She told him.

Stiles shook his head. “I would have used regular ink; this is wrong--”

“It would not have worked, Stiles.” She told him, meeting his gaze at last. “It would not have been enough. You need this for the plan to work. Besides... ten years isn’t so long to an elf.”

“I wish you hadn’t...”

“I know.” She told him. “But believe me when I say that it is worth it.”

She finished applying ointment while he ate the sandwich that Deaton gave him, and then applied a sterile bandage. He drank a full bottle of water over the next fifteen minutes and then took another five to just breathe before turning over so she could continue the ritual.

As Leeloo moved to begin, she stilled. Stiles turned his head to look at her, wondering what was up. She had her head cocked, like she was listening to something.

“What is it? What do your elven ears hear?” Stiles asked, once again using a joke to mask his worry.

She paused, listening, and then smirked. “We should continue.”

“What the hell? What’s going on?” Stiles objected.

“Just curious busy-bodies. They mean no harm.” She told him.

“Do the wolves know that?” Stiles squeaked. “And what the hell are they?”

“Brownies. The ritual and magic ink attracted them; I figured they’d stay away since we weren’t in the forest. I guess they’re more curious than I thought.” Leeloo smirked.

“Really? Those exist too? That is it! I want a list! No scratch that, I’m going to pull out my Monster Manual and you tick mark the shit that’s real. Sound good? Awesome.”

She stood with a laugh and went to the door. She opened it up and stepped out. “It’s all right guys; they mean no harm.” Stiles heard her explain cheerfully. “They’re drawn to the magic.”

Stiles didn’t hear any screaming or snarling so he figured Derek and the others hadn’t attacked and started an interspecies incident. That was good. He relaxed a bit. But brownies? Really?

Leeloo returned and took up position again. She asked if Stiles was ready to begin again, and started when he gave the affirmative. They continued as they had before, filling the glyphs as they were etched, Deaton telling him which glyph was next, until it was all done.

Leeloo spread more ointment over his back and put a non-stick sterile bandage on it. “All done,
Stiles. You did fantastic.”

“Awesome. Imma pass out now.” He was exhausted!

Deaton helped him into a sitting position, mostly against his will, and handed him his shirts. Stiles pulled the t-shirt over his head and felt like he was ready to sleep for a year. Deaton gave him another bottle of water and warned him to drink slowly. He obeyed only because he sensed Deaton wouldn’t let him sleep until he’d complied.

Scott burst in half way through Stiles’ water. “Dude! You look like shit.”

“Thanks Scott. You try performing a complex magical ritual while simultaneously getting stabbed repeatedly by tiny needles. See how you look afterwards.” Stiles sent him a half-hearted glare.

“Why were you getting stabbed?” Scott asked.

“Part of the ritual.” Stiles told him, rolling his eyes. “Blood of virgins, all that jazz.”

“Dude.”

“Kidding, Scott. Relax.” Stiles got down from the exam table, still a little wobbly, and then Derek was just... there. Helping to steady him.

“You should rest a bit before you try walking around.” Derek suggested.

“I heard you met brownies. Were they tasty? Oh! Better, were they selling cookies? I could go for some sugar...” Stiles teased.

“The last thing you need is sugar. Ever.” Derek grunted.

“Seriously, Stiles. Why were you getting stabbed. I don’t think I approve of you getting stabbed.”

“Scott, I was getting a tattoo.” Stiles told him patiently. Sometimes Scott fixated on one word out of a sentence and would forget to look at the rest of it.

“You got a tattoo?” Scott’s face split into a grin. “Can I see it?”

“No in fact; it’s invisible.”

“Dude... What’s the point?”

Stiles laughed quietly. “It’s a ward. It’s meant to protect me so I don’t break quite so easily.”

Scott contemplated this. “That’s pretty awesome.”

“It will be.” Leeloo commented. “When it’s all complete.”

Stiles nodded in agreement. “What sounds awesome right now, is sleep.”

“Come on.” Derek huffed, helping Stiles along to the Jeep.

The others were there to greet him. Isaac looked concerned, as did Lydia; Jackson and Peter both seemed rather indifferent, but it was hard to take them seriously when they had two foot tall miniature people gathered around their feet. The brownies seemed to care very little that Jackson and Peter both snarled at them if they got too close. They were much more interested in Stiles.
“Bruxa.” One spoke, awe in its tiny voice. “Did not know Bruxa, thought just Spark.” His english was stilted. He smiled and clapped his hands in excitement. “Bruxa is learning. Bruxa is good?”

“Bruxa is tired.” Stiles muttered, barely loud enough for Derek to hear.

Leeloo spoke for him. “Yes, this Bruxa is good. Your people have nothing to fear from him.”

They chattered happily and then poof, disappeared. Stiles was beyond caring. He was too tired.

He fell asleep as soon as Derek settled him in the Jeep.

When he woke up, he was in his bed. He checked the time and saw that it was now morning. The sun was up and he was hungry. He changed clothes, changed his bandages--the redness was much less than Stiles thought it would be, but it was definitely not fully healed--and made his way downstairs. His dad was making pancakes.

“Mm... pancakes...” He drifted over to the stove and inhaled deeply over his dad’s shoulder to get more direct access to the deliciousness wafting from the sizzling batter.

His dad chuckled. “Good morning to you too.”

“Good morning.” Stiles said before wandering over to the coffee pot. He poured himself a cup and thought about maybe sneaking one out to Derek, who couldn’t be far because he was still under Werewolf Watch.

His dad handed him a plate of deliciousness and he devoured it in earnest. While he stuffed his face, he thought about Derek, off patrolling the perimeter and not enjoying the awesome coffee and pancakes. Stiles felt that was rather unfair. There was, honestly, a lot about the situation that was unfair. Derek was giving up all of his time, literally, all of it, to protect Stiles from a threat that hadn’t bothered to present itself since the first attack.

They were headed into week three of Werewolf Watch. He felt bad.

“Something on your mind?” His dad asked, breaking him out of his thoughts.

Stiles shrugged. “Just thinking about how to thank someone for something.”

“Dare I ask who and for what?”

And there was the healthy serving of guilt his balanced breakfast had been missing. He really, really hated lying to his dad. For uncountable number of reasons, hated lying to his dad, but he could not tell him the truth about what was really happening yet. Stiles wanted to, but he hadn’t figured out how to do it.

He decided to go with a grain of truth, just to make him feel ever so slightly less like a douchbag. “Derek helped with a quick fix for the Jeep a little while ago. I wanted to thank him.”

His dad sucked in a large breath and released it slowly. “Derek Hale?”

Stiles nodded.

“Same Derek Hale you accused of murder? Twice.”

“You know, I feel bad about that. I really do.” Stiles winced.

“So bad you felt the need to solve the six year old arson/murder case of his family.” It sounded a lot
like his dad was starting to piece together some facts.

Stiles winced again and hoped that Derek wasn’t within earshot, because that little fact was not one that Stiles had shared with the class. He wasn’t entirely sure how Derek would react to finding out either.

Regardless, he needed to derail his dad’s current train of thought before he landed at an inconvenient conclusion.

“So I was thinking cookies. Nothing says thank you like awesome cookies; how many should I leave you?” Stiles began chugging his still fairly hot coffee in order shut his own mouth.

His dad gave him a “I saw what you did there” face, but sighed and shook his head. “Three is fine. I know you won’t leave more than that anyway.” He took a sip of his own coffee. “Fascist.”

Stiles grinned.

“Alright. I have to run to the store. You going to work soon?” Stiles picked up his plate and put it in the sink.

The sheriff nodded. “I’ll be gone before you get back.”

“Okay.” He gave his dad a quick one armed hug, careful to avoid the healing tattoo as much as possible, on his way out the door.

Derek met him at the Jeep.

“Sorry you missed the coffee this morning. We can stop somewhere if you want a cup.” Stiles offered.

“Stiles.” Derek sounded very controlled, like he was trying to keep some kind of emotion out of his voice.

Stiles climbed into the Jeep. “Got to get moving, Derek, before my dad catches you out here.”

Derek got in. He kept his eyes front, and he didn’t try to pick up the conversation. His brow was furrowed and Stiles wanted to say something, wanted him to say something, because he had no idea what was going through Derek’s mind at the moment. He suspected that Derek had overheard the conversation with his dad, but there was a chance that there was something entirely different going on, and he didn’t want to bring up the topic if it wasn’t what Derek wanted to talk about.

“So what are your favorite cookies? I guessed last time, but since you didn’t get to try them, I have no idea if I was right.” Stiles asked, desperate for some kind of conversation.

“You don’t have to bake cookies.” Derek sighed.

“You don’t have to guard my ass 24/7.” Stiles countered. “You could get someone else to do it, or just leave me to my own devices, but you don’t. So. Cookies.”

Derek rolled his eyes, but relaxed a little. He didn’t answer the question though. “What did you do with the last batch?”

“Gave them to Scott’s mom at the hospital.” Stiles told him. He’d dropped them off on his way back to his house; she’d been kind enough not to ask why he was so upset, but she made him come with her to dish out a few cookies to the patients who were allowed to have them. It had cheered him up a
little to see his mother’s recipe not go to waste.

A few more minutes ticked away in silence. Stiles didn’t want to pressure Derek into giving him an answer, but he did want an answer. Cookies were better than words at saying thank you, but they were personal too. They had to be catered to their intended audience to be really effective.

Stiles took his baking seriously, okay.

“Mint chocolate chip.” Derek finally said.

Stiles shot him a questioning look. “You realize that’s an ice cream flavor, not a cookie.”

“Well, if you can’t do it...” Derek teased.

“Challenge accepted.” Stiles pulled into a spot at the grocery store and cut the engine.

He dashed away, man on a mission, to get what he’d need. He ran through his mind how best to go about making mint chocolate chip cookies as he gathered the basic necessities. When he’d settled on a plan, he picked up the specific ingredients he’d need and then headed to the register. He paid, gathered his bags, and then ran back out to the Jeep.

Derek was still sitting in the passenger side. Like he’d trusted Stiles not to get attacked in the grocery store. It was heartwarming.

He placed the bags in the back and then started the Jeep, driving away. “Just so you know: I have a... thing I do. When baking. Don’t freak out.”

“Should I be worried?”

Stiles grinned. “No.”

“I’m so reassured.”

Stiles laughed a little, “Just trust me, dude. It’s nothing bad.”

“Okay.” Derek sighed.

Stiles felt his breath hitch a little. It was casually said, he hadn’t expected any real response to it, and he probably shouldn’t be making any kind of deal out of it whatsoever, but he’d asked Derek to trust him and he’d said okay. It was more a big deal to Stiles than it should have been, he was sure. He carried on as if nothing happened, because he knew that Derek had probably heard the slight hitch to his breathing and the ever so slightly increased heart rate, but he got that shit back under control quickly, and Derek didn’t comment on it, so he figured he was okay.

When they got back to the house, his dad was gone like he said he would be. Stiles carried the bags into the kitchen and set everything down on the table before he shuffled around looking for the mixing bowl and utensils he’d need. When he had it all ready, he moved over to the small sound system he’d set up just for moments like this. He plugged in his phone, turned on his baking playlist, and cranked it. He was mindful of neighbors and werewolf hearing, though, and didn’t turn it on as loud as he normally would have. He kicked off his shoes and slid back over to the table, and started making cookies while he danced. He did not care one iota that Derek was watching him because this was part of the recipe, dammit, and nothing would stop him from following it.

So he danced and he sang and he made cookies. Every so often he would steal a look in Derek’s direction, and the wolf would always be staring at him, expression one of restrained amusement.
Stiles put more enthusiasm into his dancing, drumming out a complicated rhythm with his wooden spoons when a particular song came on. It was completely counter to what he expected. He'd never baked cookies in front of anyone except his dad. He'd half expected himself to freeze up or be subdued in his routine with an audience, but such was not the case.

When it finally came time to put the cookies into the oven, Stiles took extra care in making sure they were perfectly spaced on the cookie sheet before setting the tray in the oven. Once that was done, he took the now mostly empty bowl and, performing a move he hadn’t tried since he was young, took a running start and slid on his knees the rest of the way to Derek to present him with the bowl in order that he may do with the remaining dough as he pleased.

It did not occur to Stiles until after, how very suggestive a move that was.

He blushed, cursed his mortal anatomy and fair skinned ancestors, but Derek just plucked the bowl out of his hands and leaned back in his chair as he swiped one finger along the edge of the bowl to pick up a bit of dough that clung to it. He licked it off, and if Stiles hadn’t already been blushing, he would have flushed scarlet as the image led him to other, less innocent thoughts.

He needed another shower.

He stood quickly, managing not to stumble and fall on his ass, and moved to the counter to start cleaning.

“It’s good.” Derek commented, taking another bit of dough from the bowl.

“I was rather proud of it.” Stiles agreed.

The only noise for the next few seconds was the sound of Stiles cleaning and the still playing music.

“Why the music?” Derek asked finally.

Stiles blushed faintly again. “Part of the recipe. Something my mom used to say: Enjoy the making of joy.”

There was a knock on the door. Stiles quirked an eyebrow at Derek. “It’s the elf.”

“She has a name.”

“Not one I can pronounce.”

Stiles smirked as he made his way to the door. He opened it up and let Leeloo inside. “You have good timing. I’ve got cookies in the oven.”

“Lucky me.” She smiled. “I came to check up on you. Make sure you’re doing alright and that the ink is working.”

Stiles nodded. “Sure. Hey, Derek. Take the cookies out of the oven when the buzzer goes off, but don’t touch them until I say so.”

Derek grunted at him in acknowledgment, hand in the bowl once again.

“Wolf’s got a sweet tooth.” Stiles muttered as he led Leeloo up to his room.

When he ushered her in, he went straight for his bookshelf. He pulled out five books after about ten seconds of searching and set them down heavily on the bed in front of Leeloo. “Get started.”
“What’s...” She pulled the top one off the stack. “Monster Manual.”

“You thought I was joking. I wasn’t. I want to be prepared.”


“Every day of my life!” Stiles told her. “I just don’t use dice anymore.”

She smiled at him, attempting to hold back a laugh. “You know, even if something in here has the same name, it likely won’t be exactly the same creature.”

“No, but it’ll be a good place to start.” Stiles told her.

She nodded. “First things first.”

Stiles pulled his shirt off with a sigh. Leeloo peeled the bandages off and ran feather-light fingers over the reddened skin. She pulled the ointment out of her purse and applied another layer. “This is healing nicely. You should be good to go without the bandages tomorrow.”

“Wonderful. The tape itches.”

She smiled. “It’ll do that. Try channeling your magic.”

Stiles complied, drawing forth magic like he would if he were doing a component spell. A soft blue glow filled in where the ink was beneath his skin, illuminating the tattoos. It was dimmer than he imagined it would be.

“Hmm...” Leeloo looked him over. “Looks like your magic still isn’t fully recovered from the ritual. That’s to be expected. We’ll try again day after tomorrow and see how much improvement there is. For now, try to avoid using it at all.”

“Okay.” Stiles agreed, releasing the magic he’d gathered. He let Leeloo apply fresh bandages before tugging his shirt over his head. He gathered the books, handing the first one to Leeloo, and brought them downstairs so he could make sure Derek didn’t try to sneak any cookies before they were ready.

He set the stack down on the kitchen table next to the clean mixing bowl. He picked up the bowl and raised an eyebrow at Derek. The wolf shrugged and then started looking at the books.

“What are these?”

“My very own bestiaries. Leeloo is fact checking them.” Stiles told him as he put the mixing bowl in the sink.

“They’re D&D books.” Leeloo corrected him wryly. “He wants to know if any of the monsters within are real.”

“Same thing.” Stiles bent down to check on the cookies in the oven.

Derek picked up the Monster Manual II and started flipping through it, probably just casually glancing at the images Stiles thought, until he dogeared a page and kept going. Stiles considered that for a moment and then scolded himself for not having Derek go through them earlier. He’d recognized the Kanima without a bestiary, he obviously had some idea of what was out there.

“Some of these are rather ridiculous.” Leeloo smirked.
“A lot more of them are terrifying if real. Keep going.” Stiles told her.

The cookies finished baking before either of them were done with their first book. Stiles took the cookies out and set them aside to cool, shooting Derek a look when he made for the fresh gooey deliciousness. Derek went back to his book and finished right as Stiles was about to deem the cookies ready to be devoured.

Derek slid the book to Leeloo and then moved to the cookies. He crowded Stiles’ space as he tried to save three for his dad like he promised.

“Dude. Does mint have catnip-like properties for werewolves or something? Back up, you’ll get your cookies as soon as I save a few for Dad.”

“Your fault for giving him sweets.” Leeloo muttered.

Stiles chuckled. “if you give a werewolf a cookie...”

“You haven’t yet.” Derek growled.

“Relax, here.” Stiles handed him the plate of perfection and Derek picked one up and bit into it as he made his way back to the table with the rest.

Derek half growled at Leeloo when she snagged a cookie off his plate. Stiles laughed.

“These are really good, Stiles.” She acknowledge while marking a page in the book.

“Thanks.” He snagged a cookie of his own. For an experimental recipe, they had actually turned out really good. He felt very proud of himself.

They spent the next two hours going over the books. Leeloo’s knowledge seemed to outstrip Derek’s, so she’d mark ones that he’d missed in the books he’d gone through, but Derek seemed to expect that since he handed them to her once he was done with them. Stiles took the finished books from Leeloo and made a damned list of all the stuff they’d marked. He did not like the list. There was too much on the list for his comfort. It did give him a good place to start further research, however.

In the future though. There were other problems to deal with at the moment.
That night, after Leeloo had left and all the cookies were gone, Stiles went up to his room to read more on the blood component spells. He hoped that he could track the Alpha’s using the blood, but he didn’t think it would be likely since they were blocking Erica and Boyd’s scents. It implied at least a little magical intervention.

He did find something that caught his eye, however. He set about practicing it--without the blood--so that he’d get it right when the time came. With it and the bare bones of the original plan, Stiles was able to start formulating a new one. Definitely a better one.

It would still be risky.

Worth it though.

The hard part now would be the waiting. The wards needed to be completed before he could attempt anything. That meant at least a week, longer depending on how much time he’d have to spend recuperating from the final session.

“I hate waiting.” Stiles sighed, frustrated.

He heard Derek shift on the bed behind him. “Better to go in prepared, isn’t it?”

“You, seriously, you’re being the voice of reason?”

“I have my moments.” Derek agreed. Stiles heard the bed creak as the massive werewolf got off, and then muted footfalls as he made his way across the carpet. Stiles felt his looming presence before he saw the hands land on the arms of the desk chair. “I know you’re planning something.”

Stiles flinched, but tried to keep his heart rate less than mach five. “Planning--?”

“I don’t know what it is, or why you won’t tell me about it, but I know you are planning something.” He was so close, Stiles could feel the heat radiating off of him as he hovered.

Stiles felt the urge to lean his head back and rest it on Derek’s shoulder. He knew the Pack liked physical touch, and Derek probably wouldn’t freak out if he did lean back, but... He couldn’t. He wanted, which meant he shouldn’t. He wasn’t Pack, he shouldn’t take advantage of the werewolf instinctual approval of physical contact.

“The plan is still in the early stages of development.” Not a lie. “It wouldn’t do any good to tell you right now when the details could change.”

“I could help.”
“I’ll let you know when there’s something you can help with.” Stiles promised. “Let me slog through the foundation first.”

He felt Derek’s sigh more than heard it. It was oddly intimate feeling his breath hit the back of Stiles neck, and Stiles had to force himself to think of completely random and not at all attractive things to prevent awkward arousal from wafting up to Derek’s sensitive senses.

It was getting harder to fight the attraction.

Mostly because he didn’t want to.

Derek backed off after a moment and moved to the area of the floor he’d been crashing on. Between the window and the bed. No, it’s placement wasn’t lost on Stiles. Anything that tried to get through the window would have to get through Derek before it could get to him. Derek was using a fluffy sleeping bag and a shit-ton of blankets as a bed; Stiles referred to it as his nest because it amused him to see Derek glare or roll his eyes at the comment.

“Go to sleep Stiles. You still need to rest.” Derek told him.

Stiles sighed and nodded. Leeloo had told him more sleep would speed the regeneration of his magic, and not sleeping was a huge no-no. He felt kinda tired anyway. He put the book away and kicked his shoes off.

“I’m going to take a shower first.” He grabbed his sleep stuff and shuffled off to the bathroom.

His shower routine included releasing of tension. He bit his lip as he came, hoping like hell Derek couldn’t hear him and that the sound of the shower covered his rapid heart rate. He finished cleaning, dried off, and slipped into his pajamas before walking calmly back into the bedroom.

Derek was already lying down in his nest, in his sleep clothes--which was just a pair of pajama bottoms because shirts were clearly overrated and he secretly delighted in torturing Stiles--and apparently asleep. Stiles shut the door behind him, flipped the light off, and climbed into bed. He sighed out, “Goodnight, sourwolf,” before closing his eyes and falling asleep.

The next day held another Pack meeting, this one at Stiles’ house because the sheriff was out, and Stiles wanted to work with Lydia upstairs while the others trained. Plus, he had food in the fridge.

Stiles did begin the training session by doing his workout routine, again, much to Lydia’s amusement, but the wolves were outside and headed to the woods, that Derek was now as familiar with as Stiles was because they ran it so frequently, by the time he finished. Which was fine because he’d told them to go. He certainly didn’t need an even bigger audience.

“So, how’s the new plan coming along?” Lydia asked as they made their way up.

Stiles shrugged. “Better. I have a few ideas, but I still need to distract them long enough for me to actually do what I need to.”


“Good enough to fool werewolf senses?” Stiles shook his head. “I can use a glyph to hide my scent, but if I’m in line of sight? Not so useful.”

“You telling me you can’t become invisible? There’s seriously no invisibility spell? I find myself highly disappointed.” She frowned.
Stiles chuckled. “Not one that I’ve found.”

“What are your options?” She asked.

“Well, I could ask Deaton if he knows of any invisibility spells or potions, but even if there is one, I don’t know if I’d have time to learn it effectively. I could orchestrate a diversion, with a little help,” he gestured meaningfully to her, “but if that fails then it would be a whole other can of worms to deal with. And then there’s the gixies.”

“The little faeries you freed?”

He nodded. “I haven’t used my favor, but I was hoping I wouldn’t have to. Ever. It’s not like I intentionally set out to free them. I didn’t even know what they were.”

“No, but you did free them. From what I’ve read of faerie culture, owing a debt is not a good thing. I don’t think they’d appreciate never being released from their debt to you,” Lydia pointed out.

“Ugh.” Stiles rubbed his hands over his face. “I know. I just don’t like it. Feels wrong.”

She patted him on the head, patronizing. “Your idealism is kind of idiotic. They want you to release them from their debt, Stiles.”

He flopped down on his bed. “I’ll think about it.”

“Good. Now, tell me the rest of it.”

He laid it out for her as he currently had it. Even as he was saying it, it sounded less suicidal than the last one, which was very good. It still didn’t sound fool-proof though. Probably never would.

“It’s better.” She admitted. “I feel less like you’re signing up to die with this plan.”

“Thanks.”

“It actually sounds like you have it all settled except for that one bit. You should think of contingencies though, for when it inevitably goes pear-shaped.”

Stiles agreed. “I have a few. None of them are particularly pleasant and, in truth, everything kind of relies on Derek and the others. If it goes wrong on their end, there’s nothing I will be able to do.”

“Sucks that you won’t tell them what the plan is.” Lydia was not subtle.

“I feel your judgement. It’s hurtful.” He told her.

“Just calling it like I see it.”

His cell phone rang. Stiles picked it up and looked at the caller ID, confused as to who would be calling him since the whole Pack was here, plus Scott. It was Mrs. McCall.

“Mrs. McCall?” Stiles answered, trepidation filling his bones.

“Stiles, I want you to realize how uncomfortable I am with this, and I wasn’t-- I wasn’t going to call even though I said I would when you asked, but...”

“Someone’s been attacked.” Stiles guessed, he gestured frantically to Lydia to round up the others. “Who? When? What happened?”
“Stiles. It’s your friend, Danny...”

Stiles froze halfway down the stairs. “Is-- is he dead?”

“No--”

“Mrs. McCall, I need you to tell me what happened.” Stiles vaguely registered that Lydia was howling in the backyard to get the others back to the house.

“It happened early this morning. A weird hiker found him; brought him in, but he wouldn’t give us any straight answers. Just dropped him off and left with a salute. He gave me a weird feeling, which is one of the reasons I decided to call.”

“Can you describe him?”

“Tall, maybe a few inches taller than you. Dark hair, dark eyes. Well built, and really strong. He was carrying Danny like he weighed nothing.”

Sounded like the Alpha that they’d had in the basement, but it might not be. “Did he say anything at all?”

“Yes. He said he’d been looking for Little Red Riding Hood when he found Danny. Didn’t make any sense to us, but he wouldn’t elaborate.”


“We spent an hour getting Danny stable, and he only just woke up a half an hour ago. He said he was out on his morning run when something attacked him. He won’t give specifics.” She told him quickly. “Stiles, your Dad is here questioning him.”

“Of course he is.” Stiles groaned.

“He still doesn’t know, does he?”

“No.”

She sighed over the line. “You can’t keep him out of the loop like this.”

“I’m... working on it. One thing at a time.” Stiles finished climbing down the stairs. “Tell me, is it just scratches, or was he Bit?”

Lydia looked at him imploringly. He shook his head; he’d tell them all at once.

“Both.”

“Sonova-- Ok. We’ll be there soon.”

“This phone call never happened.” She told him before hanging up.

Stiles gripped the phone tightly in his hand. Danny had been hurt because of him? What kind of messed up logic were these Alphas operating on?

He heard the Pack arrive. They burst into the room ready for a fight, but there wasn’t one. All the damage had already been done. He looked up when Derek put his hands on his neck, making him look up.
“What happened?” Stiles noted that Derek was looking him over for signs of injury.

“We have to get to the hospital.” He said sadly. He pulled his eyes away from Derek to find Jackson. He and Lydia were hugging, he was just as clearly checking her for injuries as Derek had been. “The Alphas attacked Danny this morning. He’s been Bit.”

There was dead silence for a beat before Jackson roared, wolfed out, and ran for the door.

“Jackson!” Derek and Lydia shouted, calling him back.

Whether it was his alpha or his anchor or both that got through, Stiles didn’t care, but whichever it was worked. He stopped, hands braced against the door frame as his whole body shook.

“He’s stable now and he’s awake, but he isn’t saying anything to the cops, who are there, by the way. But there’s more.” Stiles explained. “The Alpha that attacked him is the one who brought him into the ER.”

There was a flurry of questions after that.

“How do you know?”

“Is he still there?”

“Why would he do that?”

“Why Danny?”

“Mrs. McCall gave me the heads up, like I asked her to. She described the guy who brought him in, believe me, it’s him. He isn’t still there, unless he’s hiding, which is possible. As to why... He said that he was looking for Little Red Riding Hood when he found Danny.”

“So... it’s a message. For you?” Lydia asked.

Jackson was suddenly away from the door and in Stiles’ space. Derek threw him back almost as soon as he was there, slamming him into the floor and snarling him into submission. Once Jackson was whimpering on the floor, Derek eased up.

“The Alphas are testing all of us.” Derek snapped. “Attacking Danny is just another test and it is no one’s fault.”

“We have to go to the hospital.” Scott whined. “If Danny Turns...”

“I know.”

“He’ll be drawn to the Alpha that Bit him, just like I was with Peter.”

“I know.” Derek growled.

“That’s it.” Stiles and Lydia said at once.

The others looked at them.

“They’re testing Derek’s ability to pull Danny away from the Alphas.” Lydia explained.

“If he survives.” Peter pointed out.
Stiles glared at him. “Negative Nancy. No comments from the loony bin.” Peter just smirked, but he did shut up. Stiles turned to address the room. “Look, I can distract my dad while a few of you guys go in and talk to Danny.”

“I’m going.” Jackson said at once.

“That could be difficult.” Isaac pointed out. “You’re dead, after all.”

“I don’t care. He’s my best friend. I’m going.” Jackson was tense and struggling not to wolf out while also snarling at Isaac.

“I have a plan; if anyone’s interested.” Stiles stated.

“Enlighten us.” Jackson barked.

“There is no way to get you into the hospital, so we get Danny out instead.” Stiles started. “I’ll distract my dad. Once he’s away, Lydia and Isaac will go in as concerned friends, and give him the run down, convince him to leave. While they’re doing that, Derek will create a distraction by walking into the ER as a wolf.”

Derek grunted. “I don’t like this plan.”

“Hear me out! It’ll get the security guards and the nurses distracted and if you howl, it might register with Danny as the call of his Alpha.” There was a moment of silence as they all looked at Stiles like the crazy person he was. “While everyone is thusly distracted, Lydia and Isaac will sneek Danny out and take him to the Hale House where we can all meet up. There might be some timing concerns, but with werewolf hearing and the wonders of text messaging, I think this could work.”

There was another moment as everyone let it all sink in. Finally, Lydia pipped up. “Well I’m in.”

“Me too; sounds fool-proof.” Isaac nodded.

Jackson nodded. “Fine.”

“What about me?” Scott asked.

“You’ll be with me, distracting my dad.”

“And just how do you plan on pulling your dad away?” Lydia asked.

Stiles sighed. “Like this.” He stood up and walked over to Peter, holding out his left hand. “Hold on, and don’t let go.”

Peter smirked and took his hand firmly. When he had a sure grip, Stiles took a deep breath, dropped his weight, and twisted, wrenching his wrist in the process. It hurt. A lot. He knew it would. It also caused a tizzy of objections and outcries from the others. Peter nodded to him, though, Stiles grit his teeth through the pain and nodded his thanks in reply.

“What the hell Stiles?” Scott yelled.

“Two things would pull my dad away from questioning a witness. I land my ass in jail or in the hospital. Guess which one is less permanent?”

“You just broke your wrist!” Scott protested.

“Wrenched it actually. It’ll turn a lovely shade of purple, which will clash horrendously with that
overshirt, but no permanent damage.” Peter corrected.

Derek let out a sigh that was more growl than anything. “Fine. Let’s go.”

Stiles and Scott burst through the automatic doors to the ER thirty minutes later. Scott’s mom was there and she immediately pulled them aside, about to question why they were there when she noticed Stiles wrist. She gave him the stink-eye and pulled them both into a curtained off exam room, told them to wait while she fetched the sheriff.

“This is not going to go over well.” Scott cautioned.

“No joke.” Stiles laughed weakly. “If he connects the dots, I’m going to have no choice.”

Scott sighed. “Probably overdue anyway.”

“You got my back?”

“Always.” They fist bumped to seal the deal.

“Stiles!” The sheriff made his presence felt a few seconds before he slid the curtain open. “What happened?”

“Was practicing lacrosse with Scott. Tripped, tried to steady myself, didn’t really work.” Stiles showed him the purple bruise that was his wrist, wincing as he had to move it.

“Stiles.” Mrs. McCall hissed in sympathy. She picked up his wrist. “This doesn’t look broken, but we should x-ray it just to be sure.”

The sheriff nodded and followed Mrs. McCall and Stiles to x-ray, leaving Scott behind to text Lydia with the sheriff’s location. Stiles followed Mrs. McCall and submitted to the x-ray while his dad waited on the other side of the lead door. When the radiation bombardment was done, Stiles and Mrs. McCall rejoined the sheriff in the hall and made their way back to the curtained room.

On their way there, a wolf’s howl echoed eerily through the halls.

“What was that?” Mrs. McCall asked.

Stiles suppressed a grin. “Sounded like a wolf.”

“There are no wolves in California.” The sheriff muttered, but he was already moving ahead of them down the hall. “Stay with him.”

Once he was around the corner, Mrs. McCall turned to him. “This was your plan?”

“It’s... multifaceted.” Stiles hedged.

She sighed. “You nearly broke your arm--”

“I knew what I was doing.” Stiles defended.

“Yeah. That’s what scares me.” She gestured for him to continue down the hall to the room where they left Scott.

They heard a commotion as they neared the ER, but it sounded as if it were moving away from them. Stiles and Mrs. McCall slipped into the curtained room. Scott was pacing while he waited, phone in hand.
“Where’s the sheriff?”

“Left to handle the uninvited guest.” Mrs. McCall told him. “Can I mention that I don’t like that you boys brought a wolf into my ER.”

“His idea.” Scott said immediately.

“Dude.”

“Well it was.” He shrugged.

“I don’t want to hear it. Tell Derek if he tracks muddy paw prints, I’m making him clean it up.” Mrs. McCall turned and left them in the exam room.

She returned about fifteen minutes later.

“Well, it’s not broken.” Mrs. McCall reported. “I have a brace for you, should help you keep weight off of it while it heals.”

“Thanks.” Stiles let her put it on for him. “Any news about what’s happening?”

“Danny escaped, which I’m sure was your plan. Your dad is not happy, Stiles.” She warned him.

“I figured.”

“You have to tell him. You cannot keep hiding this from him.”

“I know. I will.”

“Tonight.” She insisted.

Stiles sighed. “Yeah, tonight.”

“Good. Now go home. Both of you.”

Stiles and Scott left. Stiles popped a few aspirin to take care for the lingering pain in his wrist and they booked it away from the hospital. Stiles got them to the Hale House and breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Lydia’s car.

They ran to the house, but Isaac met them on the porch. “Isaac. How’s he doing?”

“He handled it well at the hospital, but he and Jackson are... having a moment. Give them some space. Derek’s around back.” Isaac led them around the house to the backyard where Peter and Derek were both waiting.

“Smooth sailing?” Stiles asked.

Derek nodded. “I ended up being chased by the cops, again, because of you.”

“They chased a wolf, not person of interest Derek Hale. You’ll be fine.” Scott corrected.

Derek rolled his eyes. “Did you have a plan for explaining why he left when he does return to town?”

“Freaked out when he heard the wolf. Traumatic flashbacks related to his recent injury caused him to flee instinctively from the sound.” Stiles explained.
“This is why Stiles is my favorite.” Peter said.


Peter just smirked.

“How is he?” Scott asked, changing the focus back to Danny.

“He’s already starting to heal a little.” Derek told them. “The Bite will be the last thing to heal, but he is Turning. We’ll have to keep an eye on him to make sure he doesn’t try to run off and join their Pack.”

“That won’t be a problem.” Danny said from the door. He had Jackson in a side hug and Lydia holding his other arm. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Nice sentiment, but you may not have a choice.” Derek cautioned. “The pull of the Alpha that Bit you is going to be strong.”

“No.” Jackson growled. “Don’t you feel it? He’s Pack... I can... feel it.”

Derek looked them over and then closed his eyes. He took a deep breath and held it for a moment. When he opened his eyes again, they were Alpha red. He walked over to Danny, who immediately bared his throat in a sign of submission. Derek’s eyes returned to their normal color and he nodded.

“I didn’t think it would happen that fast.” He commented.

“I don’t think the Alphas anticipated Jackson.” Stiles said. “Bonds like theirs are strong, and very hard to break.”

“Stiles is right, again,” Peter smirked. “It was difficult to control Scott when I pit him against his friends, and they weren’t even werewolves capable of feeling the Pack bond.”

Scott growled reflexively.

“He’s baiting you, dude. Chill.” Stiles muttered.

Peter’s smirk was very high on Stiles’ shit list.

“Derek,” Stiles got his attention, “may I suggest something?” He figured it was good to establish that Derek was in charge, and that Danny should defer to him. Stiles was human, and outside the Pack, but Danny wasn’t anymore and needed to see how things were supposed to be handled as much as possible.

Derek gave him the go ahead, so Stiles continued. “Danny, we need to get you back to town as soon as possible, before your injuries heal. We had to get you away so that we could explain what was happening before you wolfed out, but your absence will be easier to explain if it’s short. You’re gonna need to sign yourself out of the hospital as soon as you can, though, so that they don’t get suspicious.”

“Agreed.” Derek nodded. “Lydia, take him back to the hospital. Bring him back once he’s released.”

“Will do.” She tugged Danny away from Jackson and pulled him through the house towards her car. Jackson slumped against the door frame when Danny and Lydia left. “Now what?”

“Full moon is next week.” Derek said. “We have to start teaching him control as soon as he gets
“His alpha should do that.” Stiles pointed out quietly. “I can’t stay here tonight, Derek.”

“I’ll go with Stiles.” Scott said without hesitation. “I don’t have work until tomorrow.”

“At which point, I’ll be at Deaton’s anyway for my next session.” Stiles agreed. “Makes sense this time. Besides,” he sighed, “it’s time Dad and I had a conversation.”

“You’re sure?” Derek asked.

Stiles nodded sluggishly. “He needs to know what’s happening. Next time this happens, we won’t be as lucky as we were with Danny,”

“Why so sure there will be a next time?” Peter asked.

Stiles gave him a don’t-be-stupid look and walked back around the house, Scott following behind like an eager pup. “You guys have fun with Danny, and give me a call if you need anything.” He said, knowing they would hear him.

Scott climbed into the passenger side when Stiles unlocked it for him and buckled up as Stiles started the Jeep. “Do you really think there will be others Bitten?”

“A few dead animals and missing pets is disturbing, but nothing drives people crazy with fear like humans being shredded. The Alphas are escalating, which means we’re nearing the end of their patience.” Stiles said, recalling the research about other areas that had been visited.

“It’s only going to get worse, isn’t it?” Scott whispered.

Stiles dropped into second gear to speed around a slow car. “Yeah. It is.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I'm going to be straight with you guys. I'm a crap artist. My ability to draw is limited. Give me a live model and I'll be... passably good, but getting shit in my head onto paper is not going to happen well enough to please anyone. That being said, I have the exact detailed image of what Stiles' tattoos look like in my head. I'd love to get it in image form so that I could show you guys what it looks like, because as much as I'm going to detail it in the story, it would still be pretty kick ass to see it.

So this is me apologizing for my inability to draw. I will try my best to make it as detailed as possible in the story (when we reach that point).
That night, Stiles waited at the kitchen table for the sheriff to get home while Scott waited upstairs. He’d be called when it came to the proving it part of the story, but Stiles wanted to talk to his dad first.

When the cruiser pulled up, Stiles took a few calming breaths before he stood up as the front door opened.

“Stiles!” His dad did not sound happy.

“In here.” Stiles answered.

His dad came into the kitchen and took a second to look relieved before his anger came back.

“We need to talk.” They said at the same time.

His dad looked surprised for a moment, “You want to tell me what really happened today?”

“That, and a whole lot more.” Stiles agreed. He gestured to the kitchen table, requesting that his dad take a seat. The sheriff moved cautiously to the table, but he didn’t sit.

“What’s going on?” His dad asked, keen investigator mind picking up on the obvious tension.

Stiles sighed. “No more lies. Everything I’m about to say is the full honest truth, hand to God. It’s going to sound unbelievable, but I can prove everything. I promise.”

“Stiles—”

“I know you don’t trust me. I haven’t exactly given you reason to, and I am sorry. Above all else, I am sorry that I’ve lied to you for so long. I want— I need you to believe that.”

The sheriff nodded slowly. “Okay.”

“Okay. The rest of this is going to sound crazy, but I want you to let me finish before you jump to sending me to the loony bin.” Stiles winced.

“Should I be sitting down for this?”

“Yeah, probably.”

The sheriff sat down, but Stiles remained standing. “Okay. From the beginning.” The sheriff prompted.

“That night you found me in the woods looking for Laura Hale’s body. Scott was with me.”

“I figured that out for myself.”
Stiles winced again. “I know. What you don’t know is that he was attacked that night. By a werewolf.”

“Stiles—”

“Dad, I know what I’m saying is crazy, believe me, I didn’t believe it at first either, but I can prove it.” Stiles rushed. “Scott, come on.”

Scott was down the stairs seconds later. “Sheriff.”

“Scott.”

“Dad, do me a favor and remember that this is Scott. Not everyone reacts well to seeing this.” Stiles requested.

The sheriff gave him a Look.

“It’s okay, Stiles. I’ll be fine.” Scott assured him. He held his hands up in the universal sign for unarmed. “Sheriff, it’s true. I was Bitten, and…” He shifted, slowly so that the sheriff could have time to adjust to what he was seeing, just like Stiles had asked him to.

“Oh my God.” The sheriff didn’t draw his gun, but he did stand up in surprise.

Stiles moved over next to Scott so that he was in his dad’s line of sight while he continued talking. “Dad, Scott is a werewolf, and he’s not the only one in town.”

“Are you?” His dad asked.

“No.” Stiles shook his head. “I’m not a werewolf.”

Scott shifted back. “Stiles helped me learn to control it when I first Turned. He’s the one that figured it out first.”

“That, somehow, doesn’t surprise me.” The sheriff muttered. Stiles watched as his dad added this new piece of information into his world view. He waited while his dad started to put the pieces together one by one; he could tell that was what was happening by the way his dad closed his eyes and put his hand to his forehead like he did when he was thinking about a case.

When his dad looked at him again, Stiles asked, “Ready for the rest of it?”

“Let’s hear it.”

“The animal attacks last year weren’t the work of a mountain lion; it was the Alpha that attacked Scott in the woods.” Stiles started.

“When you say Alpha, you mean—”

“Large and in charge.” Stiles nodded. “An Alpha is the only one that can Turn someone; Scott’s a Beta. There are also Omegas; loaners who drift around without a Pack. The grave robber who stole that woman’s liver, and attacked the ambulance was an Omega.”

“Ok. Go back to the animal attacks last year. Chris Argent shot a mountain lion in the school parking lot.”

“He did, but it was coincidence.” Stiles corrected. “A very convenient coincidence, but a coincidence nonetheless. Those deaths were all connected, you and I both know that. They were all
connected to the Hale fire.”

“You’re telling me it was Derek Hale--”

“No!” Stiles defended. “No, Derek is innocent. It was Peter, his uncle.”

“His catatonic uncle?” The sheriff raised a disbelieving eyebrow, then he shook his head and sighed. “His now missing, catatonic uncle.”

“Werewolves heal really fast. You could shoot Scott right here, right now, and he’d be fine before you could get the first aid kit out of the cabinet.” Stiles explained.

“Can we not test that one?” Scott asked. “It still hurts, man.”

Stiles patted him on the shoulder. “I know. Anyway. After the fire, yes, Peter was catatonic for years. It took awhile for him to heal that much damage, but he did, physically. Mentally, there were some scars. He was...”

“Insane?” Scott offered.

“I was going to go with clinically interesting.” Stiles mumbled. “But yeah, insane is accurate. He killed Laura Hale to get her Alpha powers and then started killing everyone involved in the Hale fire.”

“What about the janitor at the school?” The sheriff asked.

They both winced for that one. “That was a case of wrong place, wrong time. Peter was after Scott, trying to convince him to join his Pack. The janitor got in his way.”

“Why did you pin it on Derek?”

“For the record, I want to point out that that was Scott’s brilliant plan.” Stiles accused.

“We thought he was dead!”

“Why did you think he was dead?”

“Peter attacked him.” Stiles cringed at the memory. “Pretty much eviscerated him in front of us.”

“Does lycanthropy run in that family or something?”

“Actually yes.” Stiles said. “Derek was born a werewolf, he wasn’t ever Bitten.”

“So his entire family--”

“No.” Stiles shook his head. “He said that there were humans in his family too. I don’t know how the trait works exactly, but they weren’t all werewolves.”

“Did Kate Argent know? Is that why she...”

“Yeah. Okay. Factoid number two: the Argents are Hunters. Werewolf hunters. I was getting to that.”

The sheriff took a moment with that one. When it seemed like he’d processed it, he turned to Scott. “Aren’t you dating--”
“The situation with Allison is... complicated.” Scott said.

“To say the least. It’ll make a bit more sense in order.” Stiles added.

The sheriff motioned for them to continue. “Please. Do tell.”

“From what she’s told us, Kate told Allison about the family business against her parents’ wishes. She manipulated Allison into believing that werewolves were less than human, that they deserved only death, didn’t matter that they hadn’t hurt anyone. When she went after Derek and Scott, Allison went along.”

“When did this happen?” The sheriff asked.

“The night of the dance.”

“When Lydia Martin was attacked?”

“That was also Peter, and happened a little bit before all this. The reason I wasn’t at the hospital right away--yes, I know that’s what you were leading up to--is because Peter wrangled me into helping him find Derek. That’s a whole other long story that I will happily explain in detail if you want, but after we get the short version out of the way.”

“This is the short version?”

“Yeah.” Stiles and Scott nodded.

“Anyway, Chris Argent found me once I got to the hospital and wanted me to tell him where Scott and Peter were. I told him where I sent Peter off to, and he left. I took Jackson and followed.”

“Why Jackson?”

“He knew about Scott. Figured it out on his own, which is much smarter than I would have given him credit for, but he wanted the Bite too. Kept trying to get Derek to give it to him, even though he couldn’t. Anyway, we left to go help Scott because I didn’t want my best friend to die. One big showdown later, Kate was dead, Peter was dead, Derek was the new Alpha, and Allison no longer wanted to kill werewolves.”

“Her dad also agreed not to kill me.” Scott added helpfully.

“I have an increasing desire to put Chris Argent behind bars.” The sheriff commented.

Stiles nodded. “If we could have proved any of it at the time, we would have let you, but he saved Scott’s life that night, so probably better that we didn’t.”

“Continue.”

“Like I said, Derek became the new Alpha. He started building a Pack of totally informed, fully consenting teenagers.”

“Teenagers.” His dad did not look reassured.

“He doesn’t always make the best choices.” Stiles agreed.

“He thought he was helping them.” Scott added, though it sounded more like an accusation.

“Do I get names?”
“Jackson was first, but it didn’t work right. Isaac Lahey was next—”

“No. Wait. Go back. What do you mean it didn’t work right?”

“Jackson turned into a Kanima.” Scott explained. “A lizard thing controlled by a master out for revenge.”

The sheriff looked between the two of them, looking for any sign that they were lying or joking probably. Finally he sighed. “The swim team murders?”

“Yeah.”

“I thought Matt—”

“He was controlling Jackson.” Scott supplied.

“What happened when Matt died?”

“Going back a bit, Gerard Argent came to town for his daughter’s funeral.” Stiles scoffed. “If we thought Kate was a psycho, she didn’t hold a candle to Gerard. Turned out he was on a mission to trick Derek into giving him the Bite so that he wouldn’t die of cancer, hypocritical bastard.”

“There’s more to this, I’m sensing.”

“Allison’s mom tried to kill me.” Scott explained. “Derek saved me, but he Bit her accidentally in the process. She killed herself rather than be a werewolf. Family rules, apparently.”

“I don’t think I like this family.” The sheriff groaned.

“Join the club.” Stiles nodded.

“Anyway,” Scott got them back on track, clearly offended on Allison’s behalf. “When Matt died, Gerard took control of the Kanima and used him to make sure I did what he wanted me to, but I tricked him.”

Stiles shook his head. “You’re very proud of yourself for that one.”

“I am.” Scott agreed. “I swapped his meds for mountain ash pills.”

“Mountain ash in a bane for werewolves.” Stiles explained when the sheriff looked confused. “By making him ingest it continuously for days before he got Bit, Scott essentially ensured that when he got Bit, that his body would reject it. Good plan, overall. We’ll ignore the part where he didn’t tell anyone else what he was up to.”

“He threatened my mom!”

“You still should have told someone instead of making us think you’d gone Dark Side!”

“How could you think I’d go Dark Side?”

Stiles flailed. “Seriously? You held Derek down and made him Bite the crazy evil patriarch of the Codeless Hunters so he could kill him and be the crazy evil Alpha of the Codeless Hunters!”

“I had a plan!”

“Which you didn’t share with the class!”
“Boys!” The sheriff put a hand on both their shoulders. “An argument for another time, perhaps?”

They nodded after a moment. “Right. Sorry.”

“Anyway, we’re actually not sure what happened to Gerard. He crawled away after telling the Kanima to kill us.” Scott said. “We were all a bit distracted.”

“But I figured out how to... fix him essentially.” Stiles picked it up. “I brought Lydia with me to the fight and she... calmed him. He stopped fighting, finally remembered everything he’d been doing as the Kanima, and let Derek and Peter kill him.”

The sheriff held up a hand to pause the story. “There are several things wrong with that sentence. Jackson died on the lacrosse field, not in some fight—”

“He didn’t die.” Scott corrected. “Gerard had him try to kill himself on the field and then he started... changing. I think we interrupted the process though since he didn’t change fully.”

“Be glad.” Stiles shuddered. “Derek showed me what he was supposed to turn into. That would not have been pleasant.”

“You said that Peter died last semester.” The sheriff dragged them back to the explanation. “Did I miss something?”

“Uh, right. Short version? Lydia didn’t Turn when she was attacked. She started having hallucinations and visions of Peter, and he used her to complete a weird ritual--that I still don’t fully understand--to come back to life. It was a shock for all of us, but he does seem to be less batshit crazy now.” Stiles said quickly.

“Oh. Well. I’m so relieved.” His dad looked like he needed a stiff drink. Stiles felt for him, he really did. It was a lot to take in.

“And, bonus, he hasn’t murdered anyone since he came back, either.”

“Except Jackson.”

“Jackson’s not dead.” Stiles admitted. “For whatever cosmic reason, he finally finished his transformation and is now a werewolf.”

The sheriff blinked a few times. “You’re telling me that Jackson Whittemore is alive? You didn’t think this was information his parents might want to know?”

“How would we explain that their son wasn’t dead without telling them everything? Telling everyone everything? He couldn’t just waltz back into class and act like nothing happened.” Stiles countered.

The sheriff rubbed his temples. “Fine. Continue.”

“Right, where were we? Right! So, Derek started building his Pack. First was Jackson, then Isaac—–”

“That night we arrested him, why were you really there?”

“The Argents sent someone to kill him; I went to stop him.” Stiles said.

“Admirable, if terrifyingly misguided.” The sheriff sighed. “Stiles, why are you always in the middle of things?”
“Someone has to help them.” Stiles answered immediately, unapologetically. “I’m in the know and am actually halfway decent at handling high risk situations, as it turns out.”

“And you’re a--”

“Ixnay!” Stiles shushed Scott.

“Stiles.” Not amused voice was not amused.

“I’m getting there. One thing at a time.” Stiles promised. “Right, so. Isaac, then Erica Reyes and Boyd.”

His dad crossed his arms. “Erica Reyes and Vernon Boyd, the two runaway teenagers?”

“His name is Vernon?” Scott asked.

“Off topic, Scott. Focus.” Stiles redirected. “Yes. We thought they’d just run away when stuff started getting really heavy with the Kanima and Argents, but that wasn’t the case. They’ve been kidnapped.”

“By the Argents? Give me a reason--”

“No, Dad. I wish it was as simple as the Argents.” Stiles stopped him before he got too ready to burst into the Argent house with an arrest warrant. “There’s another Pack in town, made up entirely of Alphas.”

“That doesn’t sound like it would function very well.” His dad pointed out. “Large and in charge, right? Wouldn’t a whole group of them butt heads?”

“That’s what we thought, too, but they work together. The go from Pack to Pack, testing new Alphas. It... doesn’t usually end well.”

The sheriff frowned. “I don’t like the sound of that.”

“They’re the reason for the recent animal attacks, and they attacked Danny this morning. He was Bitten, so we got him out of the hospital long enough to give him the rundown about what was going on.” Stiles explained. “He went back after so that he could officially check himself out and leave before his wounds started to heal.”

“Wait, so you were there because he got attacked. What actually happened to your wrist?”

Stiles lifted the offending limb. “I did this as an excuse to get you away from Danny. Sorry.”

“And the wolf?”

“Derek.” They said together.

One incredulous eyebrow went up.

“Alphas can learn to shift into full wolves or really scary hybrid forms. Only Alphas though, you saw the extent of Scott’s furriness.” Stiles told him.

“Anything else?”

Stiles and Scott traded a look. A few non-verbal communications later and Scott managed to convince Stiles to tell his dad about the magic. It was important, considering, and he had promised.
“One last bit before the Q&A; I can do magic.” Stiles braced himself for a negative response.

“Really?” His dad clearly did not believe him.

“Oh my god! I tell you the things that go bump in the night are real, and me doing magic is the part you don’t believe?” Stiles accused.

“You had me to prove it...” Scott offered.

“Oh, for the love of...” Stiles, pulled a fine-tipped Sharpie out of his pocket and quickly drew the glyphs for diverting trespassers on his palm. He’d been practicing them over and over to make them stronger to face the Alpha Pack since they had failed the first time, so they were fresh in his mind. When he finished sketching and felt the tug, thankful that his multiple layers of shirts covered up the glow from his glyphs, he held up his hand. “High five Scott.”

Unwaveringly trusting, Scott reached up and attempted to give Stiles his requested high five. Stiles expected that their palms would simply not connect, that try as he might, Scott would be unable to close the gap between them. What actually happened, was that Scott went flying into the wall when he tried to hit Stiles’ palm.

There was stunned silence all around for a moment.

“Huh, that was a bit stronger than I expected.” Stiles mumbled, looking at his glyphs.

“That was totally awesome!” Scott shouted gleefully as he pulled himself up off the floor. “Do it again!”

“No!” The sheriff stopped Scott from charging Stiles’ hand. “My walls were not built to withstand flying werewolf.”

Scott hung his head, dejected.

“So. Believe me?” Stiles asked.

His dad nodded. “Magic. Got it.”

“Excellent. The story telling portion of the evening is now concluded.” Stiles leaned heavily against the wall. “You no doubt have questions. We will answer what we can.”

The sheriff finally took his seat again. “Who else knows about... everything?”

“Mom knows. She found out that night at the police station with Matt.” Scott supplied.

“Dr. Deaton, Scott’s boss. He’s... weird. No one’s exactly sure what he is, but he’s the one helping me with my magic.”

“Mr. Argent, obviously,” Scott listed, “and the other Hunters.”

“Lydia was told everything eventually.” Stiles added. “The wolves, again, obviously, but I think that’s it. I don’t know how much Erica and Boyd told their families, if anything, before they were taken, and I’m pretty positive Lydia hasn’t told her family anything either.”

The sheriff nodded. “Okay. Why were you really at Jungle?”

“Tracking the Kanima.” Stiles replied. “That’s what happened to the people at the club; the Kanima had a paralytic venom. Which is, buckets of fun, let me tell you.”
“Voice of experience?”

Stiles nodded. “Twice.”

“Pretty much every time you’ve caught us at a crime scene has been because of something supernatural.” Scott offered. “We’re trying to keep everyone safe.”

“That’s not your job, Scott. Either of you.” The sheriff told them sternly.

“Actually, it is.” Stiles said, resolute. “We’re the only ones who can do it, so we do. No one else was equipped to take on the Kanima, or a rogue Alpha werewolf, or any of the other supernatural baddies that have decided Beacon Hills is their new playground, and especially not the Alpha Pack. The entirety of the Beacon Hills police force wouldn’t be a match for these guys.”

“That sounds like an exaggeration.”

“It’s not.” Scott and Stiles said.

The sheriff frowned. He looked them both over to see if they were lying. Finally he sighed. “What other supernatural creatures--”

“Faeries, evil witches, vampires--”

“Elves.” Scott added.

“Leeloo isn’t a baddie.” Stiles shook his head.

“Her boyfriend tried to kill me!”

“You were fighting a duel.”

“Boys!” The sheriff looked between the two of them again, a little plaintively.

“Sorry, Sheriff.”

“At any rate, Beacon Hills gets a lot of visitors. We help keep everyone safe.”

“You two?”

“Well, us and the Pack.” Stiles amended.

“That sounds unbelievably dangerous, Stiles.” His dad looked at him imploringly. “You’re going to get hurt.”

“It happens.” Stiles agreed, unconsciously shrugging the shoulder that still bore a scar from his time with the vamps. “But it’ll happen less once I’m done with the wards.”

“Wards?”

Stiles nodded. “To protect myself. Little project I’ve been working on.”

His dad sighed heavily and put his head in his hands. “I’m not going to be able to stop you, am I?”

“No.” Stiles stated simply.

When the sheriff was quiet for awhile, Scott added, “He’s saved all our lives at least once, Sheriff. I know I wouldn’t still be here if it weren’t for Stiles.”
Stiles gave him a small smile of thanks.

The sheriff stayed quiet for awhile, thinking. The boys let him get his thoughts in order. Unless they heard from Derek, they had nothing else to do but talk to Stiles’ dad and help him understand what was happening.

Finally, after about ten minutes of silence, the sheriff looked up from the table. “Okay. I think I’ve got most of it now. Last question.”

“For now. Go ahead.”

“Why did you finally decide to tell me all this?”

“A couple reasons. One, I really was tired of lying to you. Two, the attack on Danny means that the Alphas are escalating. They’re going to start attacking people, probably starting with people we know. It’s flat out too dangerous for you not to know what’s going on.” Stiles told him.

“Shit.”

“My thoughts exactly.” Stiles replied before hoisting himself off the wall and sitting next to his dad at the table. “First things first, a new curfew should probably be instigated. They attacked Danny in the morning though, so it won’t be enough. Certain areas should be blocked off, too. We don’t know yet exactly where they are, but I’m working on that. For now, the woods should be no-go zones. If their pattern holds, they’ll be unwilling, or at least hesitant, to attack within the town itself. Probably in order to avoid normals getting wind of their existence—”

“Stiles.” His dad interrupted him.

“Yes Dad?”

“I do know how to do my job.” There was a hint of a smile, so Stiles didn’t take the rebuke too harshly.

“Sorry.” Stiles rubbed the back of his neck nervously. “I’d like you to start carrying wolfsbane bullets, though.”

“Wolfsbane bullets?”

Stiles nodded. “You can get them from Chris Argent.”

“The Hunter.”

“He’s not so bad... mostly. Now. He’s actually the sanest in that family.”

“Hey!” Scott was, again, offended on Allison’s behalf.

“Scott, man I love you, but just... don’t.” Stiles insisted. He did not want to get into that argument.

Scott hung his head, the picture of kicked puppy.

“Do I want to know?” The sheriff asked.

Stiles shook his head. “She’s working through some stuff. If it becomes important, I’ll tell you.”

“Okay.” He shot Scott one more look before focusing back on Stiles. “Why wolfsbane bullets?”
“When I said that Scott would heal if you shot him, I wasn’t kidding. A regular bullet won’t do anything but piss a werewolf off. Wolfsbane bullets will slow them down, and potentially kill them if they don’t get the antidote in time.”

“How long do they have?”

“Depends on where you shoot them.” Stiles replied. “Closer to the heart, less time they have.”

“Understood.” He said slowly, absorbing the new information. “Now, then. About Erica and Boyd...”

“There is a plan in the works.” Stiles said quickly. “We’ll have them back in a week. Tops.”

“Stiles--”

Stiles shook his head. “I’ll tell you what I told Derek: I’m going, you can’t stop me. Once the wards are finished, I’ll be fine.”

“Maybe I’m missing some vital piece of information, then, because from what you’ve said it sounds like it would take an army to stop these guys! I won’t let you walk into that!”


His dad froze. “What did you say?”

“Bruxa. You’ve heard of it?” Stiles asked curious.

He nodded faintly, thinking. “Something your mother said...”

“It’s a term for a Spark with Pict blood. Mom’s side of the family was descendant--”

“Of old Pict warriors; I remember her mentioning that.” The sheriff nodded. “Spark is a magic user, I take it?”

“In general terms, yes.” Stiles agreed. “I get the sense there’s more to it than that, but Deaton either doesn’t know or won’t say. Did Mom talk about Bruxa?”

“Just once, I think.” His dad stared pensively at the table as he tried to recall the conversation. “She was on the phone with one of her family in Scotland, I don’t remember who anymore. It was just after you were born.”

“You overheard her? What did she say?”

“Something about wondering if it was even possible, old stories, and training. It didn’t make a lot of sense.”

Stiles sighed. “Possible she knew about the supernatural, at least a little. Wonder what she would have said to me being a Bruxa...” He thought back to the ghost of his mother appearing before him while he’d been fighting the witches, how she’d known how to disrupt the ritual. He’d wondered how she knew.

“She would be proud of you, no matter what, Kiddo.” The sheriff told him. “Though I think she’d have a problem with how willing you are to throw yourself into harms way.”

“Subtle hint is not so subtle.” Stiles countered.
“Wasn’t trying to be.”

“I know you’re worried. I get it, but I have to do this.” He insisted. “Dangerous or not, the Pack needs me.”

“I need you too, Stiles. You’re all I’ve got left.” His dad whispered.

Stiles hung his head and took his dad’s hands. “We’re not going to die. Do you know why?”

“Don’t--”

“Because I am way too stubborn to die--”

“Stiles--”

“Scott is too pretty to die--”

“I know what you’re trying--”

“And most importantly, Dad, because polka will never die!” Stiles declared happily.

“I think I missed something.” Scott muttered.

“I have a lunatic for a son.” His dad bemoaned.

Stiles smirked. “Actually, Scott’s the lunatic. I’m the fruit loopy wizard.”

“Stop quoting. You are not Dresden; please if there is a God, you are not Dresden.” He hit his palm on the table, “Henceforth, new house rules. No fire throwing, no talking skulls, no cursed coins, no deals with Faeries, no criminally inclined adolescent pupils, and no vampire girlfriends. Capise?”

Stiles thought it over. Lydia could handle the actual physical throwing of fire; Deaton probably wasn’t quite as useful as Bob, but he did have flesh covering his skull, so that was a bonus; Stiles had no desire to break rules three through five, and--curse his imagination--Derek was neither a vampire nor a girl, so technically, rule six was safe too.

“Agreed.” Stiles said.

“Good.” The sheriff mumbled. “Now go to your room while I finish processing... everything.”

“Sounds like a solid plan.” Stiles stood up, Scott followed. When they reached the living room Stiles looked over his shoulder at his dad.

“I think that went well.” Scott said quietly.

“Agreed.” Stiles smirked. “High five.”

Scott landed on the couch this time.
The next day Stiles woke up to Scott sprawled across his legs, snoring softly.

“Dude.” Stiles laughed. “Get up.”

“No. Five more minutes.” Scott whined.

“It’s,” Stiles checked his watch, “10 o’clock, man. Awaken and greet the day.”

Scott glared at him. “You’re chipper.”

“Misplaced anxiety, I’m sure.” Stiles kicked him off the bed. He landed with a muted thud onto Derek’s usual nest. “Come on, you have work in an hour.”

“Ugh, dude. This reeks of Derek.”

“Yeah, that’s where he sleeps. He probably won’t like you getting your funk all over it; get up.”

Scott peered up at him. “He sleeps in here?”

“You thought I was going to make him sleep outside?”

“Kinda.”

Stiles rolled his eyes. “I’m going to shower.”

Stiles made sure to get his back really clean for the ritual that would happen later that day, and he opted out of masterbratory routine for the day since, also, ritual. He finished up, brushed his teeth, dried off, and got dressed. He kinda wished for some coffee, but no caffeine since, yet again, ritual.

Stiles sighed while he poured himself a glass of orange juice. Scott joined him after his own showering was completed and drank nearly half the carton of milk. Stiles gave him a look and he shrugged apologetically.

“Is your dad home?”

Stiles looked at him again. “Which one of us is the werewolf?”

Scott ducked his head and smiled, sheepish. “Sorry.” He listened for a moment, then shook his head. “I don’t hear him.”

“Also, the cruiser is gone.” Stiles pointed to the window. “He’s at work.”

“You could have just said that.”

“I could have, but you should be able to use your senses without prompting.” Stiles told him.

Scott gave him a look that time. “You sound like Derek.”

“No, I sound like your Yoda.” Stiles corrected him. “You have to keep practicing control; I don’t want a repeat of last full moon, man. My body is still fragile.” Stiles hadn’t told Scott, but there was a scar from that night. Three small lines where his claws had dug into Stiles’ tricep.

Scott did his kicked puppy impersonation again. “I’m sorry.”
“I know. I’m just saying: practice.”

Scott nodded and they headed out. Stiles parked in the back and was not at all surprised to see the Camaro already there. Scott went inside to start work and Stiles pulled out one of his books on component magic and hopped up onto the Jeep’s hood to read. Derek found his way over not too long after.

“How’d it go last night?”

“He took it really well.” Stiles answered. “Didn’t ground me or anything.”

Derek huffed. “Wouldn’t have stopped you.”

“No. I think he realized that. Which is probably why he didn’t try.” Stiles agreed. “What about your night? How’s Danny?”

“You mean once he stopped calling me Miguel?”

Stiles nearly fell off the Jeep he laughed so hard. “Oh, man. I wish I coulda been there for that. Oh my god, that must have been priceless.”

“You’re a horrible person.”

“I know,” he laughed. “Oh, it keeps me up at night.”

Derek rolled his eyes. “He’s adjusting. He was healed by midnight, and his senses kicked in this morning.”

“He coming today?”

Derek nodded. “We’ll all be here.”

“Good.”

Stiles and Derek spent the next couple hours reading. The Pack trickled in as one o’clock neared. Lydia arrived first, then Danny and Jackson, and Peter showed up just as Stiles watch ticked over to 1:00. They were all gathered around Stiles’ Jeep since that’s where Derek and Stiles, himself, were, talking quietly amongst themselves. Finally, a few minutes after 1, they all perked up.

“She’s here.” Derek told Stiles helpfully.

Danny sniffed the air. “Who is that? Doesn’t smell…”

“Human?” Leeloo smiled pleasantly, coming around the back of the Jeep.

Danny jumped slightly. He looked her over quickly, eyes settling on her pointed ears. “You’re--”

“Not human, no.” She was pleasant, not at all upset by Danny’s curiosity. “You’re new to the Pack. I’m Daumelladnel, but you can call me Leeloo; the rest of the Pack does.”

Danny shook her hand, small, curious smile on his face. “What are you?”

“She’s an elf.” Stiles supplied. “She’s assisting me with the ritual.”

“One that we should begin.” She suggested, motioning toward the clinic.
Stiles hopped off the Jeep and walked with her as she made her way to the door. Isaac opened it for them before they could knock, and let them in while he and Scott stepped out to join the other wolves.

“I’ve spoken to the fey in the area,” Leeloo stated. “We shouldn’t get any more curious visitors.”

Isaac and Scott nodded before closing the door and giving Stiles privacy. He shucked off his shirt and set it on the back of a chair before Leeloo approached him. She gave his current tattoos a look-over to make sure that everything was healing nicely, and she asked him to channel his magic so that she could see if his reserves were back up. They were, so she proceeded with the preparations.

Deaton walked in from the front room. “I heard about Danny.”

“Small town. Word gets ‘round fast.”

“Is he handling it well?”

“He seemed fine to me.” Leeloo offered with a shrug.

Stiles added, “Derek stayed with him last night to help him adjust.”

Deaton nodded approval, but didn’t continue the conversation. He apparently heard all he needed to.

Leeloo told Stiles to lay down and get comfortable before she prepped his skin. The buzz of the tattoo gun told him that she was about ready to begin, so he took a few calming breaths and nodded that he was ready.

The session followed the same pattern as the first. Deaton informed him which glyph Leeloo was currently inscribing and Stiles filled it with purpose. The glyphs followed along the length of his spine, which meant that it was a bit more painful than the last session, but still manageable. It was also shorter since there were fewer glyphs, no binding glyph, and a straight path to follow. And no interruptions.

When it was done, she applied the healing ointment and bandages. He was surprised by how much less tired he felt this time. He was still tired, but he wasn’t ready to pass out at a moment’s notice.

“This shouldn’t take as long to heal, if you worked the glyphs correctly.” She teased lightly.

She was right though. They’d just finished the portion that would aid Stiles’ healing, making it better than a normal human, but not nearly as fast as a wolf’s. Stiles had been kinda bummed he couldn’t get it that fast, but he’d take what he could get.

Stiles gingerly put his shirt back on. The skin would heal faster, but for now it still hurt. “Thanks again.”

“This is truly my pleasure, Stiles. Very few artists are ever allowed the chance to create such a fine work.”

Stiles blushed. “Uh... you’re welcome?”

She bowed her head with a smile. When she straightened, she was serious once again. “You need to get the blood for the final session to me the day before so that I can properly treat it.”

“Right. Two days?”

She nodded. “I’ll be by that night to collect it.”
“Are there considerations for multiple donors?” Stiles asked.

Her eyes burned with curiosity, but she shook her head. “How many?”

“Three.”

She pulled three small, crystal vials out of her kit and handed them to him. “You going to tell me what that glyph stands for now?”

He shook his head. “Not yet.”

“When?”

“Day of, probably.” He told her. Because it could change; this late in the game, it was probably dangerous, or at least unwise, to not definitively know. He was taking a risk, but he hoped it would be worth it. Because there would be no turning back once it was done.

He pocketed the vials and moved to the door, throwing another thanks towards Deaton for the assist.

“Today’s ritual stabbing is now over; you can come back.” Stiles called out, needlessly, since the wolves would have known the ritual was done the moment they could hear his heartbeat again.

Scott was the first one to bound up, smile on his face. “I can’t believe you actually have a tattoo, dude. You’re dad would flip if he knew.”

“So don’t tell him, broheim.” Stiles gave Scott a fist bump in greeting.

“You have a tattoo?” Danny asked, walking up with Jackson.

Stiles shrugged, nonchalant. “Fragile human is fragile. These make me less so.”

“Magic and werewolves.” Danny shook his head. “Still wonder if I’m dreaming sometimes.”

“It can be a nightmare, too.” Stiles warned him. “This life isn’t all puppy piles and wand waving.”

“Especially since neither of those things happen.” Derek commented.

Stiles smirked. “Yet. You never know; anything’s possible.”

Derek rolled his eyes. He instructed the others that were not currently at work to meet back at the Hale House to continue training. Derek, himself, would ride with Stiles since Scott was staying at the Clinic. Derek nodded to Leeloo when he saw her before heading over to the Jeep to wait for Stiles.

“He seems like a fine leader to me.” Leeloo commented quietly.

Stiles nodded. “He’s gotten a lot better.”

“Probably has you to thank for that.” She told him.

“The Pack has more to do with it than me.” He disagreed.

“Everyone plays their part, Stiles.” She squeezed his arm gently. “Don’t sell yourself short.” She moved away, towards the forest. “I’ll see you in two days.”

He waved goodbye then headed to the Jeep. He climbed in a little stiffly, and then started her up. Derek climbed in as he did and pulled out his book to start reading while Stiles drove to the Hale
“So what’s on the schedule for today?” Stiles asked.

“Training, followed by training, and then after that I thought we could do a little training.” Derek replied.

“Simple. I like it.”

Derek huffed a laugh and shook his head. “Danny’s taking the whole thing surprisingly well.”

“I have found this to be a trend. When people are confused as fuck about what’s going on and then they figure it out, they tend to handle it well. Like finding the last piece to a puzzle and finally seeing the picture.”

“From what I heard, Mrs. McCall didn’t react well.”

“She wasn’t as aware of all the crap that had been happening. Danny had to deal with Jackson going a little nutzo and Dad... well, he’s really good at his job.” Stiles winced.

Derek nodded, then said, “You should train with us.”

“I just got done with getting a tattoo and working a complex magic. You’re lucky I’m driving.” Stiles told him.

Derek shot him a glance. “Not today, Stiles. I meant in general.”

“Okay. Tomorrow.”

“You can take more time–”

“Not sure that’s something we have a lot of.” Stiles shook his head.

Derek grunted in agreement.

When they arrived at the Hale House, the others were already there waiting for them on the porch. Stiles and Derek walked over and ushered them all inside. Once the door was close, Stiles found his way over to the couch and flopped down onto his stomach, mindful of his new tattoo.

He felt a not so gentle poke to his ribs. He grunted and eyed the offender, Lydia. “What?”

She poked him again, this time on his shoulder blade. “Just wondering where it is.”

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Derek and Lydia walked over and ushered them all inside. Once the door was close, Stiles found his way over to the couch and flopped down onto his stomach, mindful of his new tattoo.

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“Not sure that’s something we have a lot of.” Stiles shook his head.
“Do what?” She looked at him, eyes wide and innocent. She poked him again, on the other shoulder blade this time.

“It’s along my spine. Just ask, you she-demon.” Stiles glared.

She frowned prettily. “Spoil my fun.”

“My heart bleeds.”

She shoved his legs off the couch so that she could sit down. When she was situated, he put his legs in her lap and smirked when she squeaked a protest. He just got comfortable and settled in for a nap, lulled to sleep by the lullaby of Jackson’s groans and grunts as he was flung into the dirt over and over again.
Stiles talked to his dad that night over dinner. He’d asked that Derek give him some privacy while he had a conversation with his dad, so he knew that he was out of regular--for a werewolf--hearing range, that Stiles would have to shout or howl for him to hear.

“Dad, do you remember that ward thing I mentioned?”

His dad eyed him over the last few bites his greasy burger. Stiles had relented and let his dad bring home fast food for dinner since he’d wanted him in a good mood for his request. His dad was obviously catching on to that.

“What about it?”

“It’s sort of complicated to explain, but I kinda need your help with it.” Stiles told him.

“My help?”

Stiles nodded. “It’s a series of glyphs that are going to protect me from getting hurt, and they’re kinda intense, but the last glyph is a binding glyph that will help me to anchor myself to—”

“Stiles.” His dad interrupted. “Just tell me what you need me to do.”

He pulled one of the crystal vials out of his pocket and held it up. “I need a blood sample.”

His dad lifted one eyebrow and looked between his son and the vial. “Is this something I want to know the details of?”

“You’re essentially going to help me strengthen the wards. Make me better protected.” Stiles told him.

The sheriff nodded. “Okay. Let’s get Melissa to do it though; I don’t particularly fancy the idea of just opening a vein.”

Stiles agreed. They threw the trash away and Stiles sent a text to Derek saying that they were headed to Scott’s. He didn’t know if the alpha would follow, but he suspected he would. They took the Jeep since the sheriff wasn’t on duty and wasn’t in uniform, and pulled into Scott’s driveway a few minutes later.

His dad knocked on the door and smiled when Mrs. McCall opened the door. “Evening Melissa.”

“Eryk,” she smiled back, “what can I do for you?”

“Eryk? Uh, his first name is Sheriff.” Stiles insisted.

They both gave him slightly annoyed, slightly amused looks, and Mrs. McCall showed them in. “What can I do for you?” She asked again.
His dad gave her a brief rundown of what they needed and she brought them into the kitchen to wait while she fetched a few things. While she was gone, Stiles told his dad that he was going to find Scott for a bit. He handed the vial off and then headed upstairs.

He found Scott in his room, plugged into headphones, Skyping with Isaac. He loomed in the corner like he’d seen Derek do all those month ago when this all started, and motioned to Isaac not to say anything. When Isaac didn’t rat him out, he assumed that meant he agreed. Stiles was doing this for two reasons, one, it would be fun to see Scott flail, and two, because the kid seriously needed to learn to *use his senses*.

When a solid five minutes had passed, Stiles gave up on Scott noticing of his own volition and chucked a pen at his head. He knew better than to sneak up on Scott. He still had images of that baseball bat coming for his head...

Scott did in fact flail. Stiles laughed, and saw that Isaac was also laughing too. Scott ripped the headphones off and turned to look at Stiles.

“Hey man, didn’t hear you come up.”

“I noticed.” Stiles commented, still smiling. “I was standing here for five minutes, you seriously didn’t smell me or something?”

“I wasn’t looking...” Scott admitted.

“You shouldn’t just turn your senses off.” Isaac said. The headphones had come unplugged in Scott’s flailing.

Scott shrugged. “It gets a bit overwhelming, Dude.”

“You have to learn to tune out what you don’t need while still paying attention.” Stiles told him. “You should always be aware of your surroundings.”

Scott rolled his eyes. “I get it. This is the practice thing again, isn’t it.”

“Yes.” Isaac and Stiles said.

“Your control is slipping.” Stiles told him. “I worry about you, Dude. I’m trying to help.”

Scott sighed. “I know. I’ll work on it.”

“I think we should start up the obstacle course again... Actually...” Stiles pondered the idea for a few moments, grinning.

“He disturbs me when he grins like that.” Isaac commented.

Scott nodded. “He’s plotting. We should all be terrified.”

Stiles smiled brightly. “I actually came up here for a reason.”

“What’s up?”

Stiles held up another of the crystal vials. “I need your blood.”

“I thought you said not to let anyone get ahold of our blood?” Isaac asked.

“I did.” Stiles agreed, glad that he had been listening. “But I’m not going to do anything bad with it.
I’m mixing it with the ink for the final ritual.”

“Well, as long as you aren’t going to mind control me, I guess it’s okay.” Scott agreed.

“I’m offended you even joke I would do that.” Stiles held the vial out.

Scott smiled as he held his hand over the vial and used a claw to slice open his palm. Stiles caught the blood in the vial and stoppered it when he had enough. The cut healed easily and Scott used a tissue to clean up the mess.

“Thanks.”

“Anytime.” Scott shrugged.

Stiles saluted both of them and then headed back downstairs. Mrs. McCall and his dad were in the kitchen, sitting and talking, and his dad had a bandage on his arm. The vial was there on the table. Stiles picked it up and put it in his pack with the other one with a smile.

“Thank you.” He said. “This will be a big help.”

“I hope you know what you’re doing, Stiles.” Mrs. McCall cautioned him. “This all sounds so dangerous.”

“I know exactly what I’m doing.” Stiles assured her.

She walked them to the door. “Be careful. Both of you.”

“We will be. Take care of yourself, Melissa.” His dad nodded to her as they left.

When Stiles got back to his room, he placed the vials in a small rack on his desk. “Two down. One to go.” He sighed.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

The beginning of this chapter is a bit emotional, but the last half should be amusing. I found it amusing, at any rate.

Also, my sister suggested that I write an epilogue type chapter at the end of this to list all of the references that Stiles makes since he makes a lot of them, and not all of them are well known. So I think I'll do that once the story is over.

I expect that I will finish writing the story before the end of January at the latest. Once I have typed up the end, I will probably post a chapter every other day until it's over.

That's all; enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning found Derek in his nest when Stiles woke up. He grinned to himself as he looked over to see the werewolf sleeping, snuffling quietly. He wanted so desperately to take a picture, but moving around too much would wake Derek up and defeat the purpose. He sighed and got out of bed to start the day.

He had an idea about the Pack meeting today and wanted to run it by Derek as soon as he was awake, so Stiles ran to the shower, got dressed, and made his way downstairs to start coffee and breakfast. He was up early enough to catch his dad on his way out to work, so he gave him a hug on his way to the kitchen, wishing him a good day and reminding him to look into getting wolfsbane bullets from Chris Argent.

His dad promised he’d look into it before closing the door behind him.

Stiles whipped up a quick, bacon-centric breakfast and another pot of coffee, since his dad had made himself a cup earlier. When it was ready, Derek made his way downstairs. Stiles already had a mug poured for him and was piling bacon onto a plate when he reached the kitchen.

Derek took the coffee and the proffered plate and then sat down at the table to eat. Stiles joined him when his own coffee was made and his own plate had bacon. They sat quietly for a few minutes, just eating.

“I have an idea.” Stiles said finally.

“You have many, I’m sure.”
Stiles allowed that. “Yes, but specifically about training today. I want to set up an obstacle course for you and the betas.”

Derek eyed him briefly, but grunted. “Fine. When?”

“Meeting’s at five, so if we head over by one I can have it ready in time.” Stiles told him.

Derek nodded and finished his coffee.

It was just about ten now, so Stiles went to go gather what he’d need. He stored all of the equipment he’d used when training Scott in the attic since his dad never went up there. There were boxes of some of his mom’s things stored in the attic, so his dad avoided it. Stiles did too, but he’d needed somewhere to put supplies that wouldn’t get stumbled upon, so the attic it was.

He climbed the narrow staircase that led up and wrenched the door open. It stuck occasionally, old house and all that. He flipped on the light and made his way to the neatly organized supplies. Chains, trip wire, rope, smoke bombs--learning how to make those had been fun--, bungee cord, hooks, stakes, and his stopwatch were neatly placed, just how he’d left them. He started pulling it all into a large duffle bag when something caused a shift in the stack of boxes just behind his supplies. A box tower lost its base and the top box came tumbling down, spilling its contents everywhere.

Stiles sighed and shoved the duffle aside so he could start putting all the spilled items back in the box. They were shoe boxes mostly, but after lifting a few, he found that none of them actually held shoes. There were little trinkets, figurines, and jewelry in most of them. He ran a thumb over the edges of the boxes, wistfully remembering seeing a lot of their contents when he was younger. He’d close their lids and set them back in the box they’d come from gently before reaching for the next one. The last one, the smallest one, caught his eye though. It had a celtic knot painted on its cardboard lid and as he picked it up, he felt a little tug. Upon closer inspection, he saw that at the core of the knot was a triskele.

His breathing hitched, and he pulled the box closer to him. He could feel the magic humming faintly as it danced in the glyph. He ran his finger over the whirls of the knot a few times before he dared open the box. Inside were letters in their envelopes. Most of them were postmarked from Scotland, but one of them wasn’t postmarked, was addressed to him, his real name, in his mother’s handwriting, and was unopened.

His heart rate skyrocketed, he could feel it pounding in his chest as he picked the envelope up and looked at it. He was debating whether or not to open it when he heard footsteps thundering up the stairs. Derek burst through the door, looking around for a threat. When he only saw Stiles, his claws retracted and he looked at him askance.

“Your heart rate--”

Stiles held up the letter. “From my mom.”

Derek could see perfectly, of course, even in the dusty dim light, so he glanced at Stiles in slight confusion when he obviously didn’t recognize the name on the envelope.

“It’s my real name.” Stiles explained, throat a little tight.

Stiles could see a zillion questions in Derek’s eyes, but he didn’t ask any of them. He looked uncomfortable, like he’d intruded on something he shouldn’t have. Stiles understood. If he’d walked in on Derek uncovering something personal from his family, he’d be just as awkward and unsure as Derek was now.
“I should...” Derek edged toward the door.

Stiles was more than half tempted to ask him to stay, but he wasn’t sure if Derek would be woefully uncomfortable. “Don’t go far.” Stiles requested.

Derek nodded and shut the door, giving him some privacy. He didn’t hear him make his way down the stairs though, so Stiles guessed he was probably sitting just on the other side, waiting to see if Stiles needed him for anything.

With trembling hands, he broke the wax seal--another triskele/celestial knot--and opened the letter.

My dearest Cionnfaoladh,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this. My time is short and there is so much that I wish I could have told you. So much that I wish I could have helped you to understand. So many things I will never get to see you achieve and do. The most important thing I have to tell you is this - what happened was not your fault. I know you will blame yourself, but I beg you not to. It was my choice and one I would not change for the world.

Opening this letter means you know that you have a special gift. I wish I could be there to see you grow into your power. You have a very unique lineage; an ancient and powerful bloodline runs through your veins and with it comes a glorious burden. Our ancestor, Agnes Naismith, was executed in the Scottish village of Paisley on June 10, 1679 for witchcraft. Unlike nearly everyone murdered during the witch trials of this period, Agnes was the genuine article, though innocent of what she was accused of doing.

If I am right, you will come fully into your magic within the next few years. You've only begun to see the potential of what you can do. Believe me when I tell you that the world is even more fantastic than you imagine; there are secrets and truths that very few get to learn, but you are one of them. What you will be able to accomplish as Spark and Bruxa has not been seen in centuries.

In my absence, the best teacher for this new world I can suggest to you would be Peter Hale. The Hales are a very special family, and will be excellent guides for you as you come into your gift, and Peter especially is adept in the areas of magic. Do not be afraid of them when you learn their secret! You will come to no harm with them.

Alan Deaton is very knowledgeable as well, if a bit laconic. If the Hales are unwilling or--goddess forbid--unable to help, go to him. Tell them that I sent you, tell them you are a Spark and a Bruxa. Those words may not mean anything to you right now, but you’re a bright boy. I trust you’ll learn quickly.

It will not all be pleasant. The wonderful, secret, mysterious parts of our world also hold the darker aspects of it. Remember that you have a choice in how you use your gift; it doesn’t control or define you. You will always have a choice, Stiles; nothing is set in stone or written in the stars and it is your choices that will define you.

Your greatest gift has always been your heart, my beloved boy. Trust it. Listen to it. You are strong and a good person; I know you’ll be able to handle whatever life throws at you.

You can change the world.

Most importantly, know that no matter what, I am proud of you. I believe in you. And I will always love you.

Cerridwen Naismith Stilinski
Stiles carefully folded the letter and put it back in the envelope to keep his tears from smearing the ink. He gave himself a few moments to let it out before scrubbing his face and wiping the tears away.

The letter had answered a few of his questions, but it left him with a few more. He wondered how soon before she died she’d written it since it wasn’t dated. She wasn’t in the hospital for more than a few weeks before she’d succumbed to the pneumonia that had slowly drowned her. He pushed that thought away quickly before the guilt could consume him. She didn’t blame him; didn’t want him to blame himself. He probably always would, but he would try not to.

Clearly his mom had known the Hales, well enough to know that they were werewolves. He wondered if Derek knew that. He remembered a few occasions when he was younger when his mother would take him with her to the Hale House to visit the family. He would play with the twins while Laura and Derek would watch them. It was a long time ago, though, and he hadn’t gone too often. Often enough that he’d recognized Derek when he saw him in the woods the day after Scott was Bitten, though. He wondered how much of that time Derek remembered. Had he recognized him when he confronted them in the woods?

Ugh, and the idea of getting trained by Peter gave him the creeps. He supposed Uncle Bad-Touch was significantly less crazy before the fire, though, and he had managed to come back from the dead, so he obviously had some magical inclinations. He supposed it wasn’t unreasonable to assume that his mother would suggest him as a teacher. Still, just... no.

Stiles cleared his throat. “Derek...”

The door opened and Derek came in. He sat next to Stiles but didn’t speak. Stiles fingered the envelope, debating whether or not he wanted to let Derek read it or just tell him about its contents.

When Stiles ran his thumb over his name, Derek spoke up. “How is that even pronounced?”

Stiles smiled. “There’s a reason I go by Stiles.”

Derek grunted in understanding.

“Ken-AH-lee.” Stiles pronounced it clearly for him.

Derek blinked a few times and stared at the name written before him. “I would not have guessed that.”

Stiles laughed quietly. “Try learning how to spell it as a kid.”

“I don’t think I’d be able to spell it now.”

Stiles chuckled and took the letter out again, handing the envelope to Derek. He took it gingerly, as if he was afraid it would disintegrate if he held it too firmly. Stiles opened the letter back up as Derek examined the envelope a bit closer.

“She knew about your family.” Stiles told him. Derek looked surprised, so Stiles guessed that answered that question. “She recommended I get training from Peter.” He handed the letter to Derek.

“When did she write it?” Derek frowned, looking it over quickly.

“Couldn’t have been more than a couple weeks before she died, but judging on how shaky her handwriting is, I’d bet it wasn’t more than a week before.” Stiles answered.

“Why would she think you’d blame yourself?” Derek asked.
Stiles took a deep breath before answering. “There was an ice storm January of ’05. I saw that the lake had frozen over and decided to go skating. I ran over... Mom tried to stop me, the ice was too thin to hold weight. She caught up to me and pretty much threw me off the ice as it started to crack. She fell through. Dad pulled her out, but she got pneumonia from the exposure. She died just shy of three weeks later.”

Derek shook his head. “You shouldn’t blame yourself.”

“I’ll stop when you stop.” Stiles countered.

Derek looked at him, confusion evident for a moment before he registered what Stiles had really said. He shook his head, angry. “That’s different--”

“It isn’t.” Stiles told him. “You didn’t set the fire, Derek. You didn’t ask, tell, or force Kate to kill your family. It was her choice, not yours.”

“You don’t know what happened; what I--”

“I solved the arson case.” Stiles reminded him. “I know Kate used or threatened different people into telling her or doing what she wanted, and while you’re not mentioned as one of them in the police report... I put a few things together on my own. I know she manipulated you, and I can guess how. You were young and she used you. That makes it so very not your fault.”

Derek was very tense. Stiles could see the way he wanted to ball his hands into fists or let his claws out by the way the muscles in his hands twitched, but he didn’t, mindful of the letter that he still held. Stiles was grateful for that. He figured that talking about it would put Derek on edge, which is why he hadn’t before now. Plus, it wasn’t really his place. He’d dug into the arson case and analyzed things Derek said without his permission and had discovered what was no doubt Derek’s biggest secret.

Finally, Derek released a huge breath that seemed to drain him of tension. He just looked defeated now. Stiles didn’t like it.

“You never... said anything. To the others.” It wasn’t a question, but it sort of sounded like one anyway.

“It isn’t my place to tell anyone. Hell, it isn’t even my place to know.” Stiles explained. “I mean, I dug into your past without your permission. I’d totally understand if you wanted to throw me down those stairs.”

Derek shook his head. “I’m not going to throw you down the stairs.”

“Into a wall?” Stiles offered.

Derek shook his head again, but Stiles caught the small grin that he tried to hide. “Wouldn’t want to risk damaging your new tattoo.”

Stiles shrugged. “Nah. It’s healed, mostly. Little violent wall shoving won’t hurt it.”

“Well, in that case...” Derek rolled his eyes. He sighed, but it was less defeated and depressed than before.

“I could go for a run. How about you?” Stiles said.

He got that Derek probably wasn’t ready to share his story, and that he’d need time to absorb and
process the knowledge that someone other than him knew what happened. Stiles wasn’t going to push Derek for anything. If he wanted to talk, Stiles would listen. If he didn’t want to talk about it, Stiles had any number of other topics that he could extemporize on ad nauseum.

Derek nodded and handed the letter back after putting it in the envelope. They left the duffle and everything else in the attic as they headed down, but Stiles made a pit stop in his room to place the letter on his desk. He rejoined Derek at the bottom of the stairs and they went for a run along their usual trail.

Derek stayed quiet, so Stiles did too.

Finally, as they neared the house again, Derek spoke. “Do you want to know?”

Stiles could very clearly see the way that Derek’s shoulders were tense, the tick of his jaw as he tried to keep his face expressionless. Stiles waited until Derek made eye contact before replying, “I’m not going to make you tell me anything you either don’t want to or aren’t ready to. But. When you’re ready to talk, I’m ready to listen.”

Derek seemed to think it over a bit, then nodded slightly and led the way back into the house. Stiles gathered from the lack of further dialogue that Derek wasn’t ready, and thus the subject was dropped.

Stiles hopped in the shower, managing through a few clumsy turns and weird arm flailing to get the bandage off his back. The tattoo looked almost healed. There was some redness, but there wasn’t anything on the bandage, so Stiles went without once he was done with his shower.

When he was done getting ready, he ran back up to the attic to grab the duffle and supplies that he’d need for training. He slung it over his shoulder as he walked into the living room, and that seemed to be a cue enough for Derek that it was time to go. He took the bag from Stiles, carrying it easily, while Stiles climbed into the Jeep and started her up.

When they got to the Hale House, Stiles immediately dropped the bag on the porch and turned to Derek. “This defeats the purpose if you see me set it up.”

Derek frowned and got a little growly, “You’re not walking into the woods alone, Stiles.”

“I’ll be fine! I’m within hearing range, and I’ll put a scent scrubber on so that no evil monster lurking in the woods will sniff me out.” Stiles protested.

Derek stared him down, clearly uninterested in backing down from his argument.

“Why the huffing and the puffing?” Peter drawled from the doorway. “You’re only feeding the stereotypes, Derek.”

“Stiles--”

“I heard.” Peter interrupted, which Stiles thought was kind of a dumb move considering Derek was technically his Alpha. “If it’ll make you feel better, I’ll go with the him; make sure he gets to Grandma’s safely.”

“With you?” Stiles squawked, indignant.

“Of the lot of us, I am the most well trained.” Peter pointed out reasonably.

“You’re also the last person I’d trust to be alone with anyone.” Lydia snapped, moving her way past
Peter and onto the porch. “I’ll go with Stiles, since I’m not training, and you can all shut it.”

Stiles felt like hugging her.

“You two aren’t--”

“We’re hardly defenseless, Derek.” Lydia interrupted him, and really, by this point, Stiles wondered if Derek finished any sentences around the Pack. She pulled a—disturbingly pink—can of bear mace out of her purse along with a Tazer.

“Is that oil-based mace?” Stiles asked. His bear mace had been one of the newer, non-flammable water-based versions, but the way Lydia smirked, he guessed that she was carrying a slightly older, highly flammable oil-based version. A version that police officers stopped carrying because Tazers would ignite the spray and the victim.

“It’s multi purpose.” She grinned.

Derek released a low growl.

“We’re going to set up Stiles’ obstacle course.” Lydia declared. “Please refrain from snarling; we’re doing you and your betas a favor.”

She pulled Stiles away before Derek could respond.

The two of them—mostly Stiles—spent the next few hours setting up a trap littered obstacle course/maze, and Stiles silently thanked the healing glyphs that made his wrist almost completely better because otherwise all that setup would hurt. In addition to the usual, mundane traps, however, Stiles added a few glyphs to the mix. First he used the scent scrubbers on himself and Lydia so that the wolves wouldn’t be able to follow their scent through the maze of traps. He also etched a few of his—admittedly, more powerful than he’d realized—no trespassing glyphs into the dirt at completely random intervals and then covering them with debris from the forest. He was mindful of where he kept them however so that Lydia didn’t accidentally step on one. Alternatively, he placed hold glyphs—essentially claw traps without the tetanus—on the dirt as well.

“Think in three dimensions, Stiles.” Lydia patted a tree trunk affectionately as Stiles was mapping in his head where all his glyphs were going. When he looked at her, she smiled. “Have you actually seen them fight before?”

“Once or twice.”

“They like to bounce off of hard surfaces.” She reminded him. “Thinks it gives them an advantage, and occasionally it does, but...”

Stiles grinned. He got where she was going with this. If they were training them, they needed to learn something. If they used the same tricks over and over again, they became less effective because the enemy would know what they had planned. He looked over the trees in the area and tried to guess which ones would be used to rebound off of to avoid his other traps.

He chalked a few no trespassing glyphs and one really obnoxiously placed hold glyph before declaring himself satisfied.

“What’s the prize?” She asked. “What are they supposed to be looking for?”

Stiles smiled broadly and pulled out a blanket, setting it in the middle of his bungee cord web—where there were no bungee cords—and gestured for her to sit.
“Really Stiles?” Lydia looked at him unamused. “Casting me as damsel in distress?”

“You telling me you don’t want a front row view to this mayhem?” Stiles countered.

She pondered that. “Fine.” She settled herself comfortably on the blanket and allowed Stiles to remove the scent scrubber so that the wolves would be able to find her. He finished one last touch to the web on his way out, and then Stiles nodded and looked over everything a few more times to make sure that it was all good. Then he climbed up a tree and texted Derek.

**TO: sourwolf**
*5:07pm*

*Everyone there?*

**FROM: sourwolf**
*5:08pm*

*Yes. Ready?*

**TO: sourwolf**
*5:08pm*

*Absolutely. Put me on speaker!*

He grinned as he hit call. Derek answered and a flurry of voices over the connection told Stiles that he was really on speaker phone.

“We can all hear just fine when you talk on the phone, why did he have to put you on speaker?” Jackson asked.

“Ambiance. Shut it lizard lips.” Stiles cleared his throat and took a breath before continuing. “Good afternoon, Gentlemen. Your mission, should you choose to accept it,” Stiles ignored the groan that was no doubt from Jackson, “is to recover a stolen item designated ‘Archive.’ You must work together as a Pack. There are eyes on the target; if ‘Archive’ is reached by a solo member while other members of the Pack remain standing, the consequences will not be pleasant. As always, should any member be caught or killed, all knowledge of your actions will be disavowed and you will no longer be allowed to retrieve the target. You have one hour to complete your mission. This message will self-destruct—”

Derek hung up on him.

“Rude.” Stiles huffed.

“Archive?” Lydia asked.

“Book reference.” Stiles told her. “It’s a compliment, really.”

While he was thinking about it, he changed Lydia’s contact info from Athena to Archive in his phone.

In the distance, they heard the distinct sound of someone springing a tripwire and a snarl of angry werewolf. Stiles smiled. He expected that whoever it was would just cut themselves down and keep going. The only real way they’d be prevented from reaching Lydia was if someone stepped on a hold glyph. Derek, as the Alpha, *might* be able to break free, but the betas shouldn’t be able to until Stiles unworked the magic. If Derek could break free, he’d have to practice the glyphs like he had
with the no trespassing ones to make them strong enough to face the Alpha Pack.

Stiles didn’t actually expect it to take an hour; he was being very generous with his time. Assuming they figured out it was Lydia they were supposed to look for, or if they sniffed out her scent and decided to follow, then it shouldn’t take them more than twenty minutes to get through all of his traps, if they worked together, and if they paid attention. He hoped those ‘ifs’ weren’t too big.

After about half an hour, and more than a few loud crashing noises later, the first to actually enter his line of sight was Danny, and Stiles wanted to cheer. Close behind him, unsurprisingly, was Jackson. Lydia might be visible to them through the trees because of her bright hair, but they didn’t seem to see her yet. They cautiously sniffed the air, and Stiles saw the moment Jackson caught her scent. He froze a little before grinning, crouched down, and lept forward before Danny could stop him and landed smack in middle of one of Stiles’ hold glyph sets. Stiles had to stuff his sleeve in his mouth to keep from hooting with laughter at Jackson’s face.

“Jackson, you alright?” Danny asked, approaching carefully.

“I can’t move.” He grunted out.

Danny frowned and sniffed all around Jackson, trying to figure out what had him. “I don’t see anything.”

“It’s another of Stiles’ glyphs.” Peter said, emerging from a different direction than where Danny and Jackson had approached. Isaac and Scott were both with him.

“I like this one better.” Isaac said and rolled his shoulder, as if reminded of an injury, probably unconsciously.

“Yeah, it’s stupendous. Get me out.” Jackson growled.

“Don’t touch him.” Peter instructed. “You might get caught in it as well. Jackson may have to wait until Stiles frees him.”

Scott hid his smirk poorly. “Tough break.”

Jackson snarled again, but didn’t say anything coherent.

“So what do we do?” Isaac asked.

“Lydia is right there.” Jackson grunted. “Go get her so Stiles will end this.”

Lydia waved when the others turned to look at her.

“You really think he’s going to make it that easy?” Derek asked, from right below Stiles. He came walking through the forest, passing right by Stiles’ tree, stepping carefully, looking occasionally at the ground.

If Stiles so chose, he could probably jump down and tackle him, or if he had a ranged weapon, he’d easily be able to hit him from his current position. Stiles made a mental note to add “Look up” to his list of training tips.

“This hasn’t been so hard.” Isaac shrugged, already moving forward.

“Then come get me, Isaac.” Lydia taunted, bored sounding. “Shouldn’t be too difficult right?”

Isaac glanced to Derek. The alpha shook his head and they all—minus Jackson—moved closer to her.
and the bungee web that Stiles had spent an hour setting up. It was about an inch off the ground, using leaf covering and camo-colored cord to hide it. Built like an actual spider web, the strands were structured chaotically, but with strong support, and—as a special surprise—hold glyphs markered onto the cord itself to hold anyone who landed on it. Like flies in a spider’s web.

It was designed to trip and tangle up footing. They’d be forced to move through it carefully in order to not fall on their asses. Then, as an added bonus, because Stiles was evil, he placed several no trespassing glyphs and a full ring of hold glyphs right around Lydia. Any trees they might attempt to use were also glyphed.

Stiles hit record on his phone.

Scott was the first one to hit the bungee line. He tripped and went sprawling onto his ass. The others stopped and looked at him.

“What did you hit?” Danny asked.

Scott struggled to get to his feet, but couldn’t. “Ung... I don’t know. I’m stuck though.”

Derek and Peter knelt down to get a closer look. Derek spotted the bungee cord first. He pointed along the line of cord that Scott had tripped over. “What do you think?”

“He is clever.” Peter smiled.

Derek sighed. “New information, please.”

“How much can you move?” Peter asked.

“Uh...” Scott struggled for a minute. “My mouth. And I’m breathing, so...”

“Another glyph then.” Peter said.

“I’m not on the ground.” Scott supplied. “Is that relevant?”

Derek let out a soft growl. “Yes, Scott. What are you on?”

“Cord? I think?”

“A web.” Peter assessed.

“I think touching it is bad.” Isaac offered.

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Scott muttered.

“We’ll just bypass it.” Isaac glanced at the trees and then took a running leap. He hit one of the no trespassing glyphs and went sailing back, crashing into Jackson, knocking him down. “Ow.”

Jackson struggled for a bit before heaving a sigh, still unable to move. “That worked brilliantly.”

Danny gave Isaac a hand getting back to his feet. “You okay?”


“I’m peachy; thanks for asking.” Jackson scoffed.

“I think touching the trees might be bad.” Peter smirked.
Derek glanced around, assessing. “So touching someone trapped by a glyph won’t trap you as well.”

Isaac and Danny rejoined them at the web boundary. “Apparently not.”

“We should find a way to get the leaves off the ground so we can see the web.” Danny suggested.

Derek nodded. “Ideas?”

“Huff and puff?” Lydia teased.

Stiles shook with silent laughter and tried really hard to keep his phone steady so the image wouldn’t be blurry. He’d watch this whenever he was sad to make him happy.

Derek and Peter glanced at each other. Peter shrugged slightly in response to whatever he saw on Derek’s face, and they both crouched down. Isaac and Danny followed suit a beat behind them, and all together they roared. It would have been impressive under any other circumstances. It just made Stiles laugh all the harder.

It did work, though. The leaves in front of them dispersed to reveal the bungee cord; most of the leaves were now in the safe zone or beyond, and Lydia pulled more than a few out of her hair with disdain.

“Okay. Walk where I walk.” Derek instructed, taking his first step into the web. He carefully maneuvered his way between the cords, the others following a little behind, until he hit the first no trespassing glyph. He flew back, the others managed to dodge, and landed on his shoulder just outside the web line. There was a sickening pop sound and a pained grunt from Derek. He stood, and Stiles winced when he saw that his shoulder was dislocated. Derek just popped it back into place with another grunt and moved into the web again.

“Keep going.”

Isaac took point with a nod and started moving forward, careful to not step on the glyph that Derek had stepped on. Stiles could have told them that it was safe now since Derek had disturbed the dirt it was written in, but meh. Caution never hurt.

When Isaac found another no trespassing glyph, Stiles felt bad for him. He’d clearly found at least one before he’d reached this point, and Stiles hoped that he wasn’t too badly injured for it. Isaac was not as lucky as Derek however, and landed in the web.

“I’m stuck.” He whined.

“Are you hurt?” Derek asked.

“No.” He sighed. “Just stuck.”

“You guys are lucky Stiles isn’t playing the role of the hungry spider.” Lydia told them, grinning.

Jackson growled. “I’d like to see you do better!”

She just laughed.

Derek took the lead again, and paid very close attention to the ground. Stiles saw when he was about to step on another glyph that Derek seemed to notice something in the dirt and moved his foot further to the left to avoid it. He pointed it out to his betas and they dodged it too as they passed.

As they got closer, the spaces between the cords got thinner. As they continued, the wolves were
forced to step sideways to avoid the bungee cords. It made jumping to the center almost impossible from the angle they were coming. Convenient that there was a tree near them. They’d be able to jump to it to rebound off and into the safe zone if they desired. Of course, that was the tree that Stiles had placed the hold glyph, so that plan might not work out quite as they would hope.

Peter was the one to spot the ring of glyphs surrounding the start of the safe zone. “Wait.”

Derek stopped mid-step. “What?”

“Glyphs. There’s no safe footing.”

“Jump it?” Danny suggested.

“Not from this angle.” Peter shook his head. “Might be able to walk around, find a better one.”

“Be careful.” Derek cautioned.

Peter didn’t even nod as he began to move right, trying to find a spot that would give him a good footing for jumping. He found a glyph instead. Seeing Peter get tossed onto his ass gave Stiles happy feelings. He landed in the web as well and there he stayed.

“This is demeaning.” He groaned.

“And then there were two.” Lydia was obviously enjoying herself.

“You’re getting pretty obnoxious. Maybe we just decide not to rescue you.” Derek snarked.

“And let Stiles win?” Lydia smiled. “Beaten by a human, tsk, tsk, tsk. That’s quite pathetic, Derek.”

Derek growled quietly, and then sighed, glancing at the tree.

“There’s a chance it isn’t warded.” Danny offered.

“I’m going for it. Stay here.” Derek said just before he jumped.

Of course, he caught the glyph and was there, stuck to the tree.

“I stand corrected.” Peter chuckled. “That’s demeaning.”

“Danny!” Derek snapped, ignoring his uncle. “Jump off my back.”

Stiles applauded Derek in his head for coming up with that idea so quickly. Hooray teamwork! Danny complied, using Derek as a safe landing pad to bounce into the safe zone. He stood from his crouch and glanced at Lydia, offering her a gentlemanly hand.

“Bravo.” She took it and let him help her to her feet. “Now how do we get out?”

Danny glanced around. “I’m open to suggestions.”

“Use the blanket.” Derek suggested. “Cover up the glyphs and maybe they’ll be safe?”

Danny nodded and slid the blanket under the cords to cover a section of glyphs before leading the way out of the web.

“Congratulations!” Stiles smiled as he began climbing down his tree. “You did better than I expected.”
“Let us free before I kill you!” Jackson yelled.

Stiles frowned at him. “Don’t think you can do much like that.”

“Stiles!”

“Pushy, pushy.” Stiles shook his head and made his way to the web, ignoring Jackson. He crouched down and held a hand over the bungee cord. He concentrated on the magic in the remaining glyphs and dispelled it. Isaac, Scott, and Peter all got up--some more gracefully than others--and made their way out of the web.

Stiles moved along the edge of the bungee cord until he found an anchor stake. He yanked it from the ground and moved on to the next and the next until the web was loose enough not to trip anyone.

He made his way over to Derek in the tree. “Can you force your way out?”

“Can I?” Derek asked.

Stiles shrugged even though Derek couldn’t really see him at his current angle. “I’m not sure. You might be able to.”

Derek seemed to try for a bit before finally he was able to yank free. His claws slowed his way down the tree to stop him from falling onto Stiles. He landed and turned to look at him.

“Sorry about your shoulder.”

Derek shrugged. “It healed.”

“Asswipe! I’m still frozen over here!” Jackson snarled.

“No respect.” Stiles muttered, but made his way over to Jackson to free him.

Chapter End Notes

Credit for the letter goes to my own mother, who very graciously helped me write it.
Meaning I gave her my crap-ass rough draft and she made it motherly ad fantastic.
Thank you Mom!
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

You guys are so incredibly awesome with all your wonderful feedback. I make happy noises every time I get another comment or kudos. Thank you guys so much for reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Once all of the wolves were free, Stiles began gathering his supplies. Danny, Scott, and Isaac helped him get everything together and Stiles went through the course to find all of the non-triggered glyphs to dispel them. Once that was done, the four of them made their way back to the Hale House to find that dinner was already waiting for them. As teenage werewolves, they ate a truly impressive amount of food, and Stiles ate a rather large human portion as well. He made a mental note to double and triple some of his recipes for when it was his turn to cook.

When dinner was done, Stiles hooked up the video on his phone to the computer so that Derek could go over it while the betas cleaned.

“I think you all did fairly well.” Stiles offered.

“Only one of us made it to the target. I think we need to do better.” Derek told him.


“Still need more practice.” Derek shook his head, closing the laptop.

“Agreed.” Stiles said, putting his computer back in his bag. “We’ll do this again day after tomorrow.”

The Pack meeting ended and Stiles drove himself and Derek back to the house. He went inside as Derek did a sweep of the perimeter and put his supplies in the attic. When he made it back to his room, he glanced at the letter on his desk and the crystal vials in their holder.

He sighed. Now or never.

When Derek climbed in through the window, Stiles was sitting on the edge of the bed, empty vial in hand.

“Remember when I said I’d let you know when you could help with the plan?” Stiles asked.

Derek nodded. “What do you need?”

Stiles held up the vial and looked Derek in the eye. “I need your blood.”

Derek quirked an eyebrow at him and glanced between the vial in his hand and the two filled ones on his desk before looking back to Stiles himself. He stepped closer and nodded.

Stiles’ heart raced. This was Derek trusting him. This was complete trust. Derek had been there when Stiles had cautioned about others possibly using blood against the owner, Derek had listened to
some of the more gruesome spells that Stiles had described from the blood component spellbook, Derek was not an idiot. He knew the dangers. He could ask why Stiles needed it, could ask what he planned on using it for, but he didn’t. He just used a claw like Scott had to open a cut on his palm to fill the vial.

No questions.

Not even a questioning look.

Just trust.

This is what Stiles had hoped for, had thought would probably not happen. Derek trusted him.

“You alright?” Derek asked.

Stiles smiled up at him and nodded. “Sorry. This means a lot. Thank you.”

He stoppered the vial and put it gently with the others. Not two minutes later, Leeloo texted him asking if he had the blood. He replied that he did and she told him she was on her way to collect it.

“Your last session is tomorrow, right?” Derek asked, lounging on the bed again.

“Yeah.” Stiles nodded. “The waiting seemed like it took forever... I’m surprised it’s almost over.”

“So you do have a plan.” Derek crossed his arms.

Stiles looked at him and rubbed the back of his neck nervously. “I do, but you’re probably not going to like it.”

“I don’t like the fact that you’re joining us for this. It’s dangerous. But you’re insanely stubborn, so short of tying you down I don’t think I’ll be able to keep you out of it.” Derek allowed. “Even that probably wouldn’t stop you now.”

“Depends. I don’t know what I can or can’t do without the use of my hands.” Stiles said looking down at his hands thoughtfully. “All the spells I know require me to use them somehow...”

Derek frowned. “All of them?”

“Except for breaking things, apparently.” Stiles sighed. “I broke those wards without doing... anything.”

“What about training with Deaton? He hasn’t helped you with this?”

“That’s not really what we train.” Stiles frowned. “It’s more about theory and concept and getting the spells down normally, without any interference.”

“You’ve done that. I’ve seen you master a spell in ten minutes. Why aren’t you training--”

“For contingencies?” Stiles asked. He shrugged. “I don’t know. I think it has something to do with Deaton not knowing how... strong I am. There hasn’t been a Bruxa since the 17th century, so there isn’t any way to be sure.”

“Your mother... suggested Peter over Deaton.” Derek suggested.

Stiles winced. “I know. Obviously that was before the fire...” Stiles shook his head. “He gives me the creeps, Derek. I don’t trust him.”
“Good.” Derek sighed. When Stiles gave him an askance look, Derek elaborated. “He’s a psychotic murderer that found a way to come back from the dead. Does that sound like someone that can be trusted?”

“No.” Stiles said at once. “I’m just... You act like you... not necessarily trust him, but...”

Derek sighed again. “He’s my uncle. I don’t trust him completely, but there are things that I don’t think he’ll do. He’s... Pack.”

Stiles forced his features to relax. He didn’t want Derek to see that that bothered him. Peter was Pack, obviously. Stiles knew that already. It was just... If Peter, psychotic murderer undead Peter, was Pack, why couldn’t Stiles? He was more than halfway in love with the damned Alpha, but he wasn’t a part of the Pack.

“Stiles.” Derek was suddenly right there. He hadn’t heard him get off the bed, but off it he was and in Stiles space.

His phone beeped.

“Leeloo is downstairs.” Stiles said quietly. “I’ve gotta...”

He grabbed the blood and made his way downstairs. He opened the front door and gave her a smile.

“Hey Stiles. Have something for me?”

“Yep.” He held up the three vials. “All three present and accounted for.”

“Do I get to know yet?” She practically begged. “The suspense is killing me!”

“Tomorrow. I promise.” Stiles told her.

“Tease.” She sighed. “Okay. I’ll get these ready. See you tomorrow.”

“Thanks for your help.”

“Don’t mention it.” She smiled and then walked away with a wave.

Stiles shut the door and headed back upstairs.

“So. Once the session is done tomorrow, I’ll know how soon I can implement the plan.” Stiles began as he entered, ready to derail whatever Derek was going to say before Leeloo arrived.

“Let’s hear it then.” Derek sat on the edge of the bed.

“I track the Alphas with the blood I took. When I have the location, I find Erica and Boyd and glyph them to high heaven so that the Alphas can’t track them as they escape. Good old fashioned snatch and grab.”

Derek gave him a look. “That’s your plan?”

“Don’t knock it til you’ve tried it.” Stiles objected.

“What if you can’t track them?” Derek asked.

“Then plan B; I take a walk in the woods.” Stiles said.
Derek stared at him angrily. “Seriously?”

“They’ve already shown an interest in me.” Stiles said. “It isn’t unreasonable to think that they’d take me back to their base.”

“And do God knows what to you!” Derek shouted.

“I told you, you wouldn’t like it.”

“You’re damn right I don’t like it! That’s not happening. We are not throwing you to the Alphas!” Derek was in his space again, trapping him against the wall with his hands on either side of Stiles’ head.

Stiles sighed and placed a hand on Derek’s chest, not pushing him away; just a gentle show of force to emphasize his point. “I’m not defenseless.”

“I’m not saying you are.” Derek growled. “But Bruxa or not, you’re going to get hurt.”

“I know.” Stiles said. “I’ve been preparing myself for this, remember? The wards will protect me.”

“They won’t stop it all.”

“They’ll keep me alive.”

“They won’t stop you from Turning.” Derek warned him.

Stiles shook his head. “I’m more valuable as a human. The Alphas won’t Turn me.”

“You can’t know that.” Derek snarled.

“Hey, if they Turn me, it won’t matter. I won’t follow them.” Stiles said gently, trying to reassure or maybe even comfort Derek.

“The pull of the Alpha that Bit you—”

“Won’t be strong enough.” Stiles told him firmly. “They’d be stupid to try.”

Stiles’ phone ringing with his dad’s ringtone nearly made him jump, but he fished it out of his pocket and answered. “Dad, what’s—”

“Mr. Trolly’s just been attacked, Stiles.”

“My English teacher?” Stiles frowned confused.

“From the look of it...”

“Werewolf?” Stiles asked.

“I think I recognize the marks well enough by now, yeah.” His dad sighed.

“Is he alive?” Stiles held his breath. His English teacher would have absolutely no hold to the Pack, nothing to draw him away from the Alphas, and he’d be in a position of direct access to most of the Pack once school started.

“For the moment, but the doctors say it doesn’t look good.”

“Is it just the injuries or something else?” Derek asked.
“Was that Hale?” His dad asked.

Stiles put him on speaker phone.

“Yes, Sir.” Derek answered.

“Are you boys at the house?” His dad asked seriously.

“Yeah, Dad, why--”

“Trolly was found a block away from the house; they might still be in the area. You keep Stiles safe until I can get back, you hear me?” The sheriff ordered.

Derek’s eyes flashed red, “Yes, Sir.”

“Good.” His dad stated. “In answer to your question, the doctors seem to think it’s some kind of allergic reaction. They aren’t sure to what though.”

“He’s rejecting the Bite.” Derek answered. “If his body can’t accept it, he’ll die.”

They heard the sheriff released a deep sigh over the line. “How soon?”

“Hours.” Derek shook his head even though the sheriff couldn’t see it.

“Damn. Alright. I’ll see what I can get from him.”

“Let us know if he improves.” Stiles said.

“If.”

“Dad, did you get the wolfsbane--”

“I did. Came complete with a three hour long conversation about Hunting and certain persons of interest.” His dad grumbled. “I swear I nearly arrested his ass right then and there.”

Stiles smiled. “Thanks Dad.”

“Be careful, boys.” He cautioned.

“We will be.” Derek told him.

When his dad hung up, Stiles shoved the phone in his pocket, ducked under Derek’s arms, and grabbed his magic kit. “Should have done this awhile ago.”

Derek hurried after him as Stiles ran down the stairs. “What are you doing?”

“Warding the shit out of the house.” Stiles told him, skidding to a stop by the front door. He pulled out his book of glyphs to look up a specific set before pulling out his exacto knife and getting to work. He carved the protection from evil glyphs into the wood of the doorframe, filling them with thoughts and emotions and images—the few he had—that he connected with the Alpha Pack and all of the other mean nasties that Stiles could think of. One glyph an inch above the floor, one in the middle, and one an inch from the top, each glyph mirrored on the other side of the frame. To top it off, he decided to add a triskele to the top of the frame to represent whom the dwelling belonged to: his dad, his mom, and himself.

When the front door was done he repeated the process to every window frame and door to the
outside, finishing with the window in his room.

“This won’t stop you or any of the Pack from entering.” Stiles told him once he was done. “Should just keep the Alpha Pack from getting in.”

“Good to know.”

“Worst comes to worst, we should be able to use this as an emergency safe house now. Fall back to Casa de Stilinski when shit hits the fan.” Stiles put the exacto knife back in his pack and put the bag by his bed. “I should do it to the station too, since getting mountain ash doors will take too long. His cruiser too, if I can get away with it.”

“Your dad will be fine.” Derek gave his shoulder a squeeze. “He’s got wolfsbane now, they aren’t going to attack him.”

“You can’t know that.” Stiles hung his head.

Derek turned him around so that he was facing the alpha, “Nothing is going to happen to your dad. He knows now, he can protect himself. You did that. He’s not vulnerable anymore.”

Stiles nodded, taking several deep, calming breaths. “You’re right. He knows what he’s doing.”

“Good.” Derek gave his shoulder another reassuring squeeze before letting him go and pulling out his phone. “I’m going to talk to the Pack.”

Stiles nodded, pulling his own phone out.

TO: Leeloo
9:15pm

Are you safe? The Alphas attacked not too far from the house.

FROM: Leeloo
9:16pm

Am I safe?! Are you safe? Should I come back?

TO: Leeloo
9:16pm

Warded the house, Derek’s here. I’m fine.

FROM: Leeloo
9:17pm

Must be nice to have your own knight in furry armor.

Stiles chuckled.

He put his phone away and looked to Derek. He was talking quietly on the phone to someone from the Pack, so Stiles slipped out of the bedroom with his shower stuff. There wasn’t anything more they could do tonight other than wait.
Short chapter. :/ Sorry, but the next few are longer and filled with actiony goodness, and we start to earn that M rating.
The next morning, Stiles was awoken by Derek shaking him. Stiles came almost to instant awareness as soon as his brain registered that Derek waking him was abnormal. Stiles opened his mouth to ask what was up, but Derek held a finger over his lips telling Stiles to be silent. He then gestured to the window.

Stiles looked; the barest hints of dawn were just starting to show, but that wasn’t what Derek was pointing at. There on his window was the Alpha Pack’s symbol painted in what looked like blood.

Stiles paled and looked to Derek, frantic. Derek pulled him to his feet and ushered him out of the room and into the bathroom. He shut the door behind them and gestured to his ears with a questioning look.

Stiles nodded in understanding and yanked the tube of toothpaste off the counter. He quickly undid the cap and gathered a bit of the toothpaste to draw the silencing glyphs that Deaton had shown him on the door.

When they were done and he felt the tug Stiles turned to Derek and asked, “What the hell?”

“They were here.”

“Obviously!” Stiles yelled. “When did they leave? They did leave, right? Oh my God, they didn’t, they’re still out there... My dad!”

Derek caught Stiles as he tried to leave the bathroom. “Your dad is fine, he’s here, sleeping. There is still one of them out there, yes, but she can’t get in.”

“She?”

“Yes. Don’t sound so surprised--”

“No, I’m in no way surprised that one of the Alphas is a woman, just... We’ve only run into the one. Why someone else now?”

Derek shrugged. “There were three earlier, including Ennis; I think one of them was the leader.”

“The Alpha Alpha? Great. Why were they here? And why mark my frickin’ window? Wait. Ennis? You got the dude’s name?”

“One of the only things he told me.” Derek nodded. “As to the rest of your rapid fire questions, I don’t know. They might have been here for you, maybe just to scare you. I don’t know what the endgame is.”

“So what do we do? We can’t just stay in the bathroom.” Stiles gestured to their surroundings, accusatory.
“I know.” Derek ran his hand through his hair in frustration.

“Wake my dad. He’s got the wolfsbane specials; let’s get her off the property line.” Stiles suggested.

“Then what?” Derek demanded. “We have to get you to the clinic at some point.”

“And Dad has work, and we have the rest of the Pack out there, and all the other innocent people of Beacon Hills, not to mention Erica and Boyd. They’re all on the other side of the door, so we can’t stay in here forever. We have to leave eventually; better now than when we’re desperate.”

Derek snarled and hit the counter, putting hairline cracks in the stone. “Why now? Why are they here now?”

“I don’t know.” Stiles sighed. “Where I live can’t possibly be new information to them. All I know is that they’re escalating. Turning Danny, the attack last night, this? We are reaching the end of our time limit and we have to do something. Fast.”

Derek snapped to attention and looked at the door intently. “The sheriff’s awake. His phone is ringing.”

“Is it an alarm or a ringtone?” Stiles asked.

“Ringtone. He just answered.” Derek paused while he listened in. “There’s been another attack.”

“Crap.”

“He’s going into the station.” Derek announced.

“Damn it!” Stiles pushed his way past Derek to the door. He flung it open and rushed to his dad’s room. He pounded on the door. “Dad!”

The door opened revealing the sheriff already half in uniform, “I have to go into work, Stiles--”

“I know. Please, you gotta listen to me. There’s an Alpha outside, you can’t leave yet.” Stiles begged him.

The sheriff got his business face on. “Where?”

“She’s at the treeline.” Derek answered form over Stiles’ shoulder. He hadn’t expected Derek to follow him. “But she’s moving. She can hear us.”

The sheriff looked at Derek with a hint of surprise and more than a little resignation. “Don’t suppose she’s choosing to leave?”

Derek shook his head.

When it looked like his dad was about to say something else, Stiles shook his head. He pushed him into the room and then closed the door behind Derek. Stiles gestured for continued silence imploringly as he made his way into the master bath. He grabbed his dad’s toothpaste and repeated the silencing glyphs on the door, the window, and the door to the bathroom as soon as he closed it.

Once that was done, he turned to his dad. “I’ll clean it up, I promise.”

“What did you just do?” He asked curious. “Were you glowing?”

“Protection against eavesdroppers. She can’t hear us now.” Stiles said, ignoring the other question.
for the moment.

“With toothpaste?”

“I left my Sharpie on my dresser.” Stiles defended.

“Fine. Better than carving them into the wood I suppose.” He gave his son a pointed look.

Stiles shrugged unapologetically. “Stopped them from coming in.”

“Sheriff,” Derek started, “do you have the wolfsbane rounds?”

The sheriff turned to Derek and Stiles realized, suddenly, that Derek was just in his sleep attire with his hair mussed and barefoot. Stiles himself was in the same state and, boy-howdy, that must look suspicious as hell to his dad. Stiles cringed a little.

“I do.” His dad said. “You suggesting I shoot her?”

“That’s the current plan, yes.” Stiles replied.

“No.” Derek growled.

“What do you mean no?” Stiles asked. “That’s the best option!”

“No. The wolfsbane is just plan B. I should do it, she’s threatening my territory, I should be the one to get her off of it.” Derek said.

“No offense, Hale, but this happens to be my territory.” The sheriff said seriously.

“Dad--”

“No, Stiles.” His dad interrupted him. “I want to get something straight. I get that you’re the Alpha of the local wolves, Hale, but I’m not one of your wolves, I’m not in your Pack like Stiles, and I’m not an innocent bystander. I’m fully capable of protecting me and mine, and I’m not letting you risk your life. End of story.” He checked the clip of his gun, slammed it back in, put a round in the chamber, and then put it in his holster as he talked.

“Sheriff...” Derek frowned, concerned. “You’ve never had to deal with a werewolf before. I’m not doubting your ability to handle a mundane threat, but this is--”

“Monsters and magic and nothing you were ever trained for.” Stiles finished.

Both Derek and his dad turned to give Stiles a look.

“I deflect with humor! This is a thing that happens.” Stiles flailed.

Derek sighed. “Inappropriate timing, but the quote is accurate. You’re not trained for this.”

“Derek’s right.” Stiles admitted, frustrated at his limited options. “You go out there, and she’ll tear you to shreds.”

“A little faith, Stiles.” His dad rolled his eyes.

Derek tensed and whipped his head up to the ceiling. “She’s on the roof.”

His eyes seemed to track her movement across the roof, and he moved protectively in front of Stiles
as she got closer and closer to the edge of the house. Derek started growling and shifted into his Beta form, and the sheriff took that as a cue to draw his gun moments before her head came into view through the window. She smiled at them all as she lowered herself down off the roof and onto the windowsill. She traced the glyphs on the glass with a claw and smirked when the glass cracked.

“Crap.” She’d broken the glyph.

Her eyes flashed Alpha red. “Can Little Red come out to play?”

“Not by the hairs on your chinny chin chin!” Stiles snapped.

Her smirk vanished and she snarled, canines long and very pointy, eyes red once again.

“I don’t think she liked that.” The sheriff commented dryly.

“Well, no one likes having their blemishes pointed out.” Stiles allowed.

“Deucalion just wants to talk with you, Little Red.” She was back to being less snarly. “There doesn’t have to be blood.”

“Like the blood you left on my window?”

She grinned and ticked her head to the side in a small shrug. “Not your blood. Not theirs. Isn’t that what’s important?”

“Who’s blood is it?” The sheriff demanded.

She turned to stare at him and smiled coyly. “Just returning what was his.” Her eyes moved over to Derek.

Derek snarled again.

“Little Bo Peep has lost his sheep and doesn’t know where to find them.” She laughed merrily.

Derek crouched as if ready to spring forward, so Stiles put a hand on his shoulder to hold him back. He’d do too much damage going through the glass and falling, and she’d likely dodge anyway.

“Aww, do not weep for your lost little sheep. They’ll be back from the pit... bit by bit.”

“Dad.”

“Yeah, Stiles?”

“Shoot her.”

The Alpha jumped from the windowsill, but the sheriff had fired before Stiles finished talking. They heard the bullet connect with flesh, but she ran away into the woods and kept going.

When Derek looked more than ready to follow her, Stiles used his other hand to grab Derek’s arm and pulled until he turned around to face him. “Don’t follow her.”

“She could lead me to Erica and Boyd.” He growled, still wolfed out.

“She’ll lead you into a trap, is what she’ll do.” Stiles countered.

The sheriff holstered his gun. “Stiles is right. Don’t do anything rash.”
Derek sighed and shifted back to human. “She’s gone.”

“Good.” The sheriff said. “Now, explain to me what just happened.”

Derek covered the hand on his shoulder with his own, giving it a reassuring squeeze before slipping it off. He turned to address the sheriff, “The Alphas want Stiles to join them.”

“The blood?” He asked.

“They’re... marking him. Or trying to.” Derek said with a growl.

“What, they think tagging my window with their symbol is supposed to convince me to sign up?” Stiles asked perturbed. He did not like the sound of the Alphas marking him.

“They aren’t relying on powers of verbal persuasion, Stiles. If they get you, they’ll break you.” Derek snapped.

Stiles blanched. That sounded all types of unpleasant and like something to avoid at all costs, but he couldn’t freak out. No time for that.

“Why didn’t the wolfsbane stop her?” Stiles asked, deliberately changing the subject.

Derek sighed, frustrated. “She’s strong. She’ll fight it for as long as she can.”

“Fine.” The sheriff said. “She’s no longer a problem at the moment, let’s focus on that. Stiles, I want you to get that mark off your window while I’m gone. I have to head into work to handle whatever they did last night. Hale, not that I think you were planning on leaving, but stay with Stiles.”

“Thank you, Sir.” Derek said and began ushering Stiles out the door.

Stiles ran to his bedroom and grabbed his bag from by his bed. He yanked it open and pulled out a pallet knife and small vial. He pulled the window open and leaned out, sitting on the sill so he could reach the blood. A lot of it was dry, but there was some that was just coagulated. He gathered all of it that he could into the vial and then ducked back into the room.

“It’s Erica and Boyd’s, right?” Stiles answered Derek’s questioning look. “So maybe I can do something with it.”

Stiles labeled the vial before putting it back in the bag. It was a long shot, but maybe he could track them. More likely, though, was that the blood would be too mixed to pull off any spell. He’d try anyway.

Stiles put his magic kit back by the bed and then went to the bathroom to get a wet towel to get the blood off the window. When it was all gone, he threw the towel into the trash.

“You should go back to sleep.” Derek told him when he came back up to his room.

Stiles shook his head. “Too anxious.”

“Try. You need rest for the ritual.”

Stiles sat down on the bed, but he didn’t think he could get back to sleep. The desire to do something was too great. He felt like just waiting around was the worst thing he could be doing, that it wasn’t helping Erica and Boyd at all, that he should be doing something else, anything else. How could he sleep when the Alphas were literally tearing up the town and his friends were being tortured?
“How’s the Pack?”

Derek sighed. “None of them were attacked. No Alpha sightings either.”

“That’s good. What did you tell them?”

“That your dad shot one of the Alphas and she ran away.”

Stiles smiled. “Maybe he’s better at this than we thought.”

Derek nodded. “He’ll get better with training.”

“You’re not worried he’ll turn into another Argent?” Stiles asked curious.

He shook his head. “He’s too invested in you to ever be a Hunter.”

“Am I... on the Hunter watch list?” Stiles asked quite reasonably worried, thank you very much. He’d gotten enough shit from that family without actually being on the No Fly list.

Derek didn’t say anything for a moment, he just frowned. Finally he sighed. “I don’t know whether they’d hunt you or not, but they’d be stupid to try.”

“Because Dad’s the sheriff.” Stiles nodded, a little relieved.

“For many reasons.” Derek corrected.

Derek sat down next to him on the bed, brushing his shoulder and Stiles felt a little better at the contact. He was even reasonably sure that Derek coming for him was one of the reasons he was safe from the Hunters. Hell, after all this, he was actually pretty positive. Mutual life saving was a recurring hobby of theirs after all.

“All this waiting must be killing you.” Stiles commented morosely.

Derek growled a little. “Foolish to rush when we’re not ready.”

Stiles made his hands relax from the fists he’d been clenching. “It won’t be long now. I’m almost ready. I promise.”

“It’s not just you.” Derek shook his head. “Everyone could use more training.”


“Stiles—”

“No. I’m tired of sitting around, and I’m not just going to go back to sleep. I want to feel like I’m actually doing something to help them, so let’s train.”

Derek watched him for a few moments before he nodded and stood. “Did you have something specific in mind?”

“Contingencies.” Stiles said. “You’re right, Deaton and I should have been working on them.”

Derek grunted an agreement, and then, the next thing he knew, Stiles was on his stomach, on the bed, with both his wrists in one of Derek’s massive hands. Derek was pinning him with his superior bulk and werewolf strength and Stiles was pretty much incapable of moving.
“You go straight for the kinky stuff, don’t you?” Stiles huffed out a shaky laugh.

“Focus Stiles.” Derek’s breath was right there on Stiles’ neck and Stiles had to fight really, really hard to keep from making some ridiculously inappropriate noises, because damn. This was so getting added to his spank bank. “You said you didn’t know if you could free yourself if bound. Let’s find out.”

Stiles controlled his breathing for a bit so he could think of things that weren’t Derek and tried to come up with something. He could still move his fingers, and maybe they didn’t have a wide breadth of movement available to them, but they could do a bit. He cheered a little. The rest of him was immobile, however, so he kept thinking.

He didn’t have anything to trace a glyph unless he wanted to cut himself with his fingernail, which sounded like it would take too long anyway, so component magic it was. So what did he have available to him? What he could reach at this point was his blanket and pillow. Not a lot of options.

“Tick, tock Stiles.”

“Not helping.” He grunted.

He ran his fingers along the cloth of his blanket just for something to do, but when he felt a rough cuticle catch on a stray thread he got an idea. He gently pulled at the thread until he had about an inch and then he yanked it free of its brethren. He started channeling his magic into the thread, picturing it in his mind as a representation of Derek’s calf muscle.

“Apologies in advance, dude.” Stiles muttered before rapidly tying a knot in the thread.

He heard Derek grunt in pain and start breathing heavily. “Impressive.”

“You going to let me up?” Stiles asked.

“A muscle cramp is painful, but it’s not stopping me from holding you here.” Derek growled. “If one of the Alphas had you like this, they’d be clawing you to get you to stop.” Derek emphasized his point by running his claws down Stiles side with enough pressure to not tickle, but not hurt either.

It was actually doing wonderfully horrible things for his control and inconvenient arousal. Stiles frantically pulled at another thread until he had about an inch. He tied a loose knot in it and then channeled his magic again. This time the knot represented Derek’s hand clutching his wrists; as he channeled his magic, he untied the knot. He gave a startled cheer when the pressure on his wrists let up and he was able to yank free.

“You okay?” Stiles asked, suddenly worried he’d done something to Derek’s hand.

“I’ve got this really awful muscle cramp in my leg, actually.” Derek gritted out. “Oh, and I can’t close my hand. Other than that?”

Stiles let out another breathless laugh. “Awesome, am I free yet?”

“Undo the spells.”

“Right.” Stiles released the magic and then he was being roughly turned over. His hands were now pinned against his chest and Derek once again had most of his weight against Stiles, pinning him to the bed. “Um...”

“That was good.” Derek told him. “But you took too long and weren’t nearly ruthless enough. An
Alpha would have killed you easily.”

“I don’t want to break you, dude.” Stiles complained.

“I’ll heal.” Derek said firmly.

Stiles sighed and frowned. He had focused all of his energy into finding an escape, because he had no doubt in his mind that his traitorous dick would give him up before too much longer and he didn’t have a mattress to hide it this time.

So he applied his brain power to the task at hand. He no longer had access to stray threads on his ratty blanket, so that was out. Derek—holy mother of God, someone save his poor libido—still wasn’t wearing a shirt, so he couldn’t pull anything from there. He was wearing a shirt, though, so maybe... No. He couldn’t reach any stray threads. Did he still have the ones from earlier? He moved his hands around as much as possible to see if he could find one. Ah Ha! One had made the move with him. He grasped it firmly and tried to think of what to use it for. An idea flitted across his mind, but he hesitated.

“Derek?” Stiles asked quietly.

“Tick, tock—”

“No, dude. Important question.” Stiles glared. “Just how good is your healing?”

“Pretty good. I can handle it—”

“You’re going to have to be more specific, Derek, because if I make this,” he held the thread taut and tried to emphasize its importance, “represent your spine and then break it, I want to be reassured that you’re going to recover from that!”

Derek frowned and eased up. “Can you do that?”

Stiles decided to focus his gaze on the thread in his hands rather than on Derek’s crazy gorgeous eyes and the uncertainty that he saw there. He didn’t like the uncertainty; the uncertainty meant that he could have irreparably damaged Derek and he wasn’t okay with that. Worse, the uncertainty could be fear. Fear of Stiles. That would be really not good. Stiles didn’t want Derek to be afraid of him. Fear was worse than distrust.

“Stiles.” Derek sat up and pulled Stiles up with him. “Answer the question.”

“Yeah, probably.” Stiles whispered. “I’ve never tried it before, but... Yeah. I think it could work.”

“With a thread?”

“Component magic is about belief. Believe the object represents something and that what you’re doing to it happens to it’s counterpart, and it does.” Stiles frowned as he fiddled with the thread.

Derek’s free hand came up to cup Stiles cheek and guide his gaze back to Derek’s. Stiles almost collapsed with relief when he didn’t see anything put pride in Derek’s eyes. “Listen to me. If you’re ever in that situation, do it. They’ll heal, but it’ll take a while and give you the chance to get away.”

The intimacy of the moment was doing funny things to Stiles’ heartbeat. He tried to school himself, get his stupid heart to knock it the fuck off, but it was also just... a really nice moment. It kindled some kind of hope deep in Stiles’ chest and he needed to tamp that shit down before he started emoting all over the damn place. That was not what the situation needed.
“Guess I should keep some thread on me, huh?” Stiles deflected.

Derek dropped his hand and nodded. “Unfortunately,” he said before slipping his hands around Stiles’ wrists, “you won’t always be so lucky.”

Derek pushed Stiles back on the bed again, but this time his arms were apart, being held firmly in place by Derek’s. He positioned himself so that Stiles couldn’t really move his legs, though he definitely had more movement than before since Derek was keeping a good portion of himself off of Stiles this time.

Stiles saw where he was going with this. Stiles frowned and looked about trying to solve this latest conundrum. He couldn’t find a thread or tie a knot with only one hand... or could he? Worth a shot, he supposed. Stiles started groping around for a loose thread on his blanket, but he also started wriggling to try and free his legs from Derek’s hold, hopefully in an attempt to distract him.

When Stiles had a thread, he began trying to tie it. He went slowly, carefully, making sure he didn’t drop it while he got the motion down. When he finished, he ran his fingers over it, feeling that yes, he had in fact made a knot. Go him! He dropped the thread and plucked out another one. This time he channeled his magic and pictured Derek’s calf again. He got the knot in a bit faster than the practice round and Derek hissed in the sudden pain. Stiles used his new advantage to actually, successfully free his legs. When they were free he wrapped them around Derek’s waist and used all of his lower body for momentum to roll, letting go once he felt successful lift off.

They ended up on Derek’s nest, Stiles straddling Derek’s waist, hands braced on either side of his head and both of them panting. Stiles grinned and quickly released the magic so that Derek wasn’t in pain.

“That was awesome!” Stiles crowed.

“Not bad.” Derek admitted.

The alarm on his phone went off telling him it was time to get up. Derek let his wrists go and Stiles sat up.

“Guess that’s our cue,” Stiles sighed. He stood up and helped Derek to his feet before going over to turn the alarm off. Derek walked past him maybe a bit faster than normal. “Where’re you going?”

“Shower.” Derek exited the room and Stiles heard the shower turn on a few seconds after.

Stiles shrugged; he usually showered first, but whatever. He’d go make Derek some coffee instead. There was a knock on the door as Stiles pressed the start button for the coffee maker, so he shuffled over and looked through the peephole before opening the door.

“Good morning.” Leeloo smiled brightly.

“Morning.” Stiles answered, showing her in. “Coffee is brewing.”

“Excellent. I brought you a pastry.” She held up a brown paper bag with a smile.

Stiles took it and ate the buttery confection greedily.

“Last day. You excited?” Leeloo asked.

Stiles shrugged. “Today’s had enough excitement already; I think I’ll stick with anxious.”
Leeloo tilted her head in confusion. “What--”

“Alphas paid us a visit this morning.” Stiles told her. He gave her the rundown of what happened while she waited for the coffee to finish brewing.

When the coffee beeped that it was ready, Derek trotted down the stairs. He nodded politely to Leeloo and poured himself a cup of coffee.

“My turn. I’ll be back, talk amongst yourselves.” Stiles dismissed himself with a wave and headed upstairs.

He washed thoroughly and set about the task of getting rid of his happy trail. The binding tattoo was going to go fairly low, and Leeloo said she’d need a clean space to work, so shaving it was! Stiles grumbled the entire time about the things he did for werewolves.

When he was done and clean, he dried off and got dressed in pajama pants rather than jeans. He threw on his shirts and shoes and ran downstairs just as Leeloo started yelling that they were running late.

Derek raised an eyebrow at his state of dress, but said nothing. He did move around to the drivers side of the Jeep, however, and stared Stiles down until he handed over the keys. Apparently pajama bottoms were not driving pants.

When they got to the clinic, the Pack was already assembled.

“Did you just roll out of bed?” Lydia asked.

Stiles rolled his eyes. “No. I just decided to be comfortable this round.”

“Be extra careful.” Leeloo eyed the wolves. “The Alphas are making their presence felt recently.”

“You think they’d show up here?” Jackson asked.

“I think gathering us all in one place is written invitation.” Derek grumbled. “Let’s get this done.”

Stiles would love to just put a ring of mountain ash around the clinic and the wolves, but Deaton didn’t have enough. They’d have to hope the Alphas were too focused on getting the cure for one of their own to attack.

Leeloo guided him inside. Deaton was there, waiting patiently as always. He took Stiles’ shirts and helped him get comfortable on the modified exam table while Leeloo unpacked her kit.

She brought over three bottles. “You need to key these.”

She handed the first to Stiles and he could feel the... essence, he guessed, of the owner of the blood. He smiled and held up the bottle to Leeloo. “Father.” She handed him the next one and he smiled again when he felt Scott’s energetic essence. “Brother.” She handed him the last one and he felt his breathing hitch a little as he felt Derek’s essence. “Lover.” He whispered.

The wicked grin she threw his way did nothing to help stop the blush from painting his cheeks. “I knew you were holding out on me!”

He shook his head. “We’re not together. I haven’t... told him.”

“But... wow, Stiles. That’s an intense commitment you’ve signed yourself up for, are you sure you want to do this?” She patted him reassuringly on the shoulder when he nodded. “Also, fair warning,
I have no idea what werewolf blood will do to you.”

Stiles sighed. “I thought about that. All my research says it won’t Turn me, so I’ll take it.”

Leeloo nodded and set about getting everything ready. “We’ll start on your back, work our way around and finish with the binding. Sound good?”

“Let’s do it.” Stiles turned over so that he was on his stomach.

They got to work once Stiles’ skin had been disinfected. The glyphs would connect to the line down his spine to draw around and follow the line of his hip bones like a low-slung belt until they met in the center where the triskele binder would bind it all together, make the glyphs even stronger, and finish the ritual.

They worked like clockwork, Deaton telling Stiles which glyph while Leeloo inked it and Stiles filled it with purpose. The sensitive skin involved meant that this round was more painful than the last two, but Stiles could handle it, and soon all that was left was the triskele. It was kind of awkward to have another person so intently focused on an area so close to his crotch, but Stiles pushed it out of his mind as Leeloo told him whose blood she’d be starting with. He added thoughts and emotions of his father to his purposing, followed by Scott, and finishing with Derek as she switched out the inks.

When it was all done, Stiles felt several things at once. One, the tug that meant that the glyph had been successfully worked. Two, he suddenly felt like he could maybe sort of sense the Pack; it was faint and a little weird and totally explained the gut feeling he’d had about Erica and Boyd being alive, because, hello Pack bond, but that didn’t compare to: Three, he was fairly certain he may have just bound Scott to Derek’s Pack.

Whoops.

While he was sorting all of these feels, Leeloo had gone about with the ointment and the bandaging and Stiles was aware just enough of his actual tangible surroundings to pull his pajama pants back up where they belonged.

Just in time too, since there was an insistent pounding on the door. Stiles gave Deaton a nod to open the door as he slipped on his shirts. When he pulled his head through the hole he found both Derek and Scott looking at him with a hilarious mix of confusion, frustration, and what might have been awe.

“Hey guys.” Stiles waved shyly.

“What did you do?” They asked. At the same time. Stiles wasn’t sure if wanted to laugh or cry.

“Oh, man. If you guys are... then what the hell did it do to my Dad? Oh my God, what if he suddenly has the urge to howl at the moon? Or chase thumper? Pee on fire hydrants!? I have to call him!”

“Stiles!” Derek growled.

Stiles shook his head as he reached for his phone. “The number you’ve attempted to dial is temporarily disconnected, please try again later.” Stiles mumbled, beginning to dial.

“Stiles, calm down.” Leeloo said, smiling. “You haven’t Turned your father into a werewolf.”

“Says you!” Stiles shouted. “It’s like the Rule of Unintended Consequences had a bastard love child with Murphy’s Law and it’s biting me in the ass!”
Derek’s hand was suddenly on his shoulder and it went a long way towards calming him down.
More so that it usually did, actually. Which, awesome, another side effect. But, hey, he wasn’t going
to complain about this one. Stiles took several deep calming breaths and relaxed.

“You’re dad is fine.” He told him.

“You can feel him now.”

Because Stiles could feel him now if he concentrated, which was a little weird, but Derek was right.
His dad was fine.

“Only a little; only if I concentrate.” Derek nodded.


“Stiles.” Scott whimpered.

Stiles turned to him and walked over cautiously, afraid that Scott might bolt like a scared animal.

“What is going on?” Lydia snapped from the doorway.

“What is going on?” Lydia snapped from the doorway.

“Lydia--”

“No!” She cut Derek off. “You two morons burst in here like the Hounds of Hell were after you and
Deaton hasn’t taken the soundproofing down! The Pack is freaking out!”

“Overstatement.” Peter drawled from over her shoulder as he ducked his head in.

“Can we have a moment?” Stiles asked.

Deaton shooed everyone out of the clinic but Derek, Scott, and Stiles. He gave them each a look as if
to say “Behave” before he closed the door behind him.

“You bound me to Derek’s Pack? How... Isn’t that supposed to be my choice?” Scott demanded.

“It is your choice.” Derek growled.

“Clearly it isn’t!”

Stiles put his hands on Scott’s shoulders to try to calm him down. “Scott, buddy, look at me. Is it
really so horrible?”

Scott rolled his eyes and tried to get out of Stiles’ grip. “Not you too...”

“Come on, Scott! You can’t keep this up.” Stiles held firmly to his shoulders. “You’re stronger in a
Pack, you know that, and we all need to be at our best to deal with these Alphas. You have to think
about this logically!”

“If I join the Pack, I can’t be with Allison--”

“You’re never going to be with Allison again.” Stiles shouted. “Scott, you’re my brother, I love you,
but you have to listen to what I am telling you. Allison is not trustworthy. She tried to kill you last
year--”

“Kate--”
“Yes. Kate manipulated her. And then last semester Gerard manipulated her. Are you seeing a pattern? She tried to kill Derek, she tried to kill Isaac, she tried to kill Erica and Boyd. Are you getting that?” Stiles begged.

“She helped us when the witches—”

“Scott!” Stiles resisted the urge to shake him. “She gave me what I needed to fight the shades, but she refused to join me in the actual fight. Do you know why?” When Scott shook his head a little, Stiles continued. “Because she said she didn’t trust herself not to attack the Pack, attack you. She is not stable! And she’s making you less stable because she’s your anchor.”

Scott frowned, “Stiles, what are you talking about?”

“What- What am I talking about?” Stiles gaped at him. “Really? Do you recall these last few full moons? Because I had to chain you up to stop you from trying to kill me!”

“Exaggeration—”

Frustrated, Stiles yanked the sleeve of his shirt up and brandished the scars the Scott had left him. “Am I exaggerating, Scott? Am I? Two inches to the left and you would have caught the artery!”

Scott was silent.

Derek was not. “What.”

Stiles placed a hand on Derek’s chest. “Time and place.”

“Stiles...” Scott whined, conflicted.

“Scott. You’re my brother,” Stiles repeated, looking to him again, “I am only trying to help you. Allison is dangerous, and your best chance at survival is with Derek and the Pack.”

Scott hung his head, “Just... let me think about it.”

Nodding, Stiles gave Scott a hug that was weakly returned before ushering Derek out the door. “Talk to you later.”

Scott waved and Stiles closed the door on his way out. He heaved a sigh and felt emotionally drained. He hadn’t gone off on Scott like that in... years. If ever. He hated it, but it was overdue.

“M’tired.” He mumbled.

Derek guided him over to his Jeep where the rest of the Pack were waiting. Leeloo and Deaton were there too, conversing quietly. Stiles slumped against the side of the Jeep and ignored the looks the Pack was throwing him.

“You smell different.” Jackson sniffed the air. “Like... what is that?”

“Magic probably.” Stiles sighed. “Final stage of the ritual required slightly more juice.”

“You should go home and sleep.” Leeloo told him.

Stiles nodded slowly. “Sounds like a plan.”

“Meet us back at Stiles’.” Derek told the others and they left.
Stiles gave Leeloo a hug. “You have to visit. Don’t let slavery be an excuse not to visit.”

She chuckled. “I'll try. I'll be by tomorrow at the very least.”

He nodded and let her go. She helped him into the Jeep and waved to Derek as she closed the door for him.

Derek drove and Stiles fell asleep to the sound of his baby and asphalt.
Ugh, road tripping is exhausting. I did not write nearly as much as I should have. But since I'm stuck in LAX until almost 7, maybe that will change. In the meantime, here is the standard Sunday chapter! Enjoy, because these next few chapters are exciting, and... more graphic than the previous ones...

Stiles jerked awake when a sudden vertigo-like sensation made him feel like someone had just tripped him. It was similar to the normal, mundane sensation of falling before jerking into full wakefulness, but it was different. Something about it felt... off. It was also associated with a sense of dread that had Stiles struggling to breathe normally.

“Stiles? What is it? What’s wrong?” Lydia asked.

“I don’t... I think...” Stiles shook his head to clear it. He was on his couch, Lydia had his feet in her lap while she read and there didn’t seem to be anyone else around. He heard a howl outside though and knew that the Pack was out there.

Lydia whipped her head around to look at the back door as if she could see what was happening to cause one of the Pack--Derek, his mind supplied--to howl. Stiles rolled gracelessly to his feet.

“Stiles, what’s going on?”

“Erica and Boyd.” Stiles gasped, still fighting to breathe like a normal person. He raced upstairs to his room and grabbed his magic kit. He flung it open onto the bed and pulled out the blood he’d collected.

Derek was up and through his window moments later. “Where are they?”

“Working on it!” Stiles snapped. He pulled a compass out of the kit and cut the glyphs for finding lost objects into the wooden back. He smeared the mixed blood of Erica and Boyd into the grooves and worked the magic for the glyphs and the blood-component tracking spell he’d found. He felt the tug and opened his eyes. He turned the compass over and watched as the arrow spun around until it landed due west.

“Got you.” Stiles hissed. He stood up and showed the compass to Derek.

“It worked?” Derek asked, desperate.

“Glyphs, blood, and component magic all wrapped into one.” Stiles told him. “Hard to beat.”

“Let’s go.” Derek growled.

“I’m with you, just give me a minute.” Stiles sat down hard on the edge of the bed and breathed heavily.

Derek knelt in front of him. “You okay?”
“I need to catch my breath.” Stiles said. He knew Derek was impatient. He was too. Something was happening to Erica and Boyd and it was not the standard torture. He could feel it which was just all sorts of weird. He was not a werewolf, he should not be feeling Pack bonds. He chalked it up to a side effect of inking himself with Alpha blood. When he had his breath back, Stiles stood and made his way over to his dresser.

“What are you doing?”

“Unless you want me to fight the Alphas in my PJs, I’m changing. Denim will hold up better than thin cotton and I will take all the protection I can get.” Stiles said as he found a pair of heavy jeans. “Rally the troops; I’ll be done in a moment.”

Derek nodded and left.

Stiles changed quickly, tearing off the bandages of his tattoo and blessing Leeloo for her super healing ointment, because it wasn’t too bad. He could wear clothes over it and not feel like he was stabbing himself. Heavy denim jeans, batman t-shirt—it honestly was just the first one he grabbed—and black overshirt (because layers were good when combating claws), and boots. He put his Sharpie in his pocket after glyphing his hands with no trespassers and scent scrubbers on his neck.

He grabbed his magic kit and pulled out the other vial of blood. He performed the spell he’d found in the book what felt like a lifetime ago. Once that was done, he put everything back in his kit, grabbed it and paused, looking at his blanket. He quickly yanked a few threads and wrapped them comfortably, but securely around a few of his fingers.

So armed, he eyed the window.

Waiting downstairs was a Pack of werewolves that were not ready. Derek had said as much, and Stiles already knew it to be true. They’d been training, they were getting better, but they were not ready to take on a Pack of Alphas. Not unless Stiles softened them up first.

This was always the plan.

Lydia had been right when she told him it was suicidal to try it without magic. Walking alone in the woods, acting the part of bait for the Alphas was a spectacularly stupid idea. He was rather proud of it. Now, though, with his magic and training, he ran a much higher chance of surviving the encounter. Well, surviving it long enough for the others to catch up anyway.

He’d slip out the window and run for the forest, headed west until he ran into an Alpha. They’d take him to their lair, where he’d whammy them long enough to get to Erica and Boyd, he’d free them, send them on their way, and stay behind to hold the Alphas off long enough for them to escape. It was a straightforward plan that had faerie backup in case Erica and Boyd weren’t in a run-for-their-lives kind of mood.

He steeled himself and headed for the window.

But he felt the emotions roiling around in the Pack. He felt their fear, their apprehension, and their need for the hunt. He felt Derek. The trust that they had been building this past month would come crashing down around his ears if he left without Derek and the others. Any chance he would have had at maybe having something with Derek would be gone.

And rightly so.

What he’d planned was boat loads of crazy and he’d beat their furry asses to Timbuktu and back if any one of them had tried to pull the same thing.
Stiles sighed. He may not be in their Pack, but they were in his. He needed them.

He closed the window, slung the bag over his shoulder, and ran downstairs.

The look of absolute relief that flooded Lydia’s face and the way that Derek looked at him... he’d made the right call. He nodded to everyone and they all stood, ready to leave.

“Time for some thrillin’ heroics.” Stiles didn’t smile. This was going to be dangerous and there was a chance none of them would make it out alive.

He and Derek led the way outside and into the sunset. Stiles held the compass firmly and watched it as they moved through the trees. They were off the beaten path though, so the terrain was rough. There was bramble and exposed roots and eventually the line of sight became limited as the trees grew thicker. The wolves had no trouble, but he and Lydia struggled for footing occasionally.

Still, they traveled quickly, moving at a brisk pace that was easier for the humans to maintain than running would be. As they moved deeper into the forest, the needle of the compass guided them, a steady constant arrow that told them they were headed the right direction.

They came to a section of forest that would take both hands for Stiles to climb up and back down, which was still easier than going around, because the bramble to the left looked downright terrifying and the steep drop to the right wasn’t an option. Stiles tossed Derek the compass and hauled his ass up onto the fallen tree so that he could climb over it onto the other side.

His foot slipped on a slick patch of moss and he went for a little tumble, hitting the ground on the other side and going through what appeared to be solid ground, but was, in fact, not. The hole may have been a trap, or it could have just been his bad luck. Either way, he had fallen right into it. He heard the others above him shouting his name.

“I’m okay!” He shouted. And he was. Some bruises probably, but nothing was broken.

“Stay there, we’re going to get you out.” Derek told him.

It was a tight fit, he was packed in pretty snugly, and the narrowness of the passage had slowed his fall, probably why he wasn’t more injured. Derek would never be able to fit down the hole and there would be absolutely no maneuvering if anyone did make it down.

“Don’t!” Stiles told them. “You’d just get trapped too. Let me see if I can... do something.”

“Stiles!”

He glared up at Derek. “Seriously. Do not join me in this tiny ass hole. No vacancy!”

“Stiles, it looks like a fissure.” Lydia poked her head over the edge. “See if you can follow it.”

Stiles glanced at the dirt around him. To his left, he could actually see a little bit of what Lydia was talking about, but the space between the walls was even smaller that way, so that was probably a no. He looked to his right. Other than a larger boulder that was eye level, Stiles saw that it looked like it might be less cramped that way. It also sloped down.

“I think I can move to the right.” He said. “Let me try...”

He moved his feet first, edging them along until he had a secure footing. He repositioned his bag so that it was off his hip, giving him just that much more room to work, then he slid along the walls and ducked under the boulder. It was tight and uncomfortable, but he managed.
“Ok. I’m going right and down.” He told them. “Probably come out somewhere close to the bottom of the drop off.”

“Meet you there.” Derek called after him.

He got closer and it got easier, the fissure widened and he could see the end. When a silhouette stepped in front of his light at the entrance, Stiles hurried. He was a few feet away when he realized it wasn’t one of the others.

He stopped, but the Alpha reached in and dragged him out. He was about to give him a high five to the face, when another hand reached out and grabbed his free arm. Finally free of the fissure, he could see clearly who had him.

Twins. Young too, they could be Stiles’ age, but they were definitely Alphas. Their eyes glowed bright red and they pulled Stiles along and away from the others at a breakneck pace.

Stiles didn’t know how far they’d traveled by time they stopped, but they had headed in the general direction of west, the same as the compass, so Stiles didn’t freak out too much. It was possible they were headed to exactly where Erica and Boyd were. They stopped in a cave, like Stiles and Lydia had suspected they might be holed up.

They threw him onto the ground, and he hit his head solidly when he landed. “Ow.”

He got to his knees and watched the two Alphas as they circled him. “No scent.”

“Using a glyph?”

“Makes our job easier.”

Stiles was tired of them already. “Best tell me your names before I start calling you Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum.”

“Aiden.” One of the said.

“Ethan.”

“Great. I’m--”

“Stiles.” Ethan said.

“We know.” Aiden smirked.

Stiles placed a hand to his head. No blood. That was good. He already felt the pain ebbing away, along with the pain from the sudden drop. Bruises were apparently no match for healing glyphs.

“This your super secret clubhouse?” Stiles gestured to the dank cave. “Kind of slumming it, don’t you think?”

“We like it here.” Ethan said. “It’s... secluded.”

“No stray humans to bother us; plenty of room for... testing.”

“Testing?” Stiles hoped that meant Erica and Boyd were close.

“Of Pack bonds.”
“Of worthiness.”

Stiles looked between the two of them. They were answering his questions and by the looks on their faces, they didn’t like it. He smiled. His blood spell was working, and bonus, it had affected both twins. They would tell him anything he asked.

“Worthiness?”

"Every wolf wants to be an Alpha." Ethan hissed. "Everyone thinks that when they receive the power, they’ll know exactly what to do."

"But, not everyone does. And you’ll never know until you’re tested." Aiden added. "Because when your Pack's in trouble,"

"You don't think."

"You trust the instinct." They finished together and if it didn’t sound ridiculously--like supernaturally--natural for them to do it, Stiles would have called them out for rehearsing it. As it was, he was too busy being herded further into the cave to care.

“Instinct.” Stiles repeated. “Pack bonds? You judge worthiness by testing an Alpha’s bond to his Pack?”

“An Alpha’s strength comes from his Pack, his bond to each member.” Ethan snapped.

“If he is unable,”

“Or unwilling,”

“To nurture and care for those bonds, then he is not worthy to have them.”

“So why take Erica and Boyd?” Stiles demanded. “They had left the Pack--”

“So we noticed.” Ethan sneered. “We left them alone, little omegas soon to die.”

“Until you came along.”

“I don’t understand. What do I--”

“You.” Ethan pushed him against the wall. “Taken by hunters and brought into their lair where they’d strung up the omegas, thinking them betas, and you, pathetic human, tried to save them.”

“Ingratiate yourself into their favor.” Aiden said calmly, completely counter to Ethan’s apparent rage. “They aligned themselves with you, became your Pack, and since you belonged to another...”

“They followed.” Ethan growled.

The only reason Stiles didn’t glyph their asses into the floor was because he hadn’t found Erica and Boyd yet. They were close, he could feel it, but he couldn’t follow it to them. He was either not practiced enough, or not wolf enough. So, he had to keep the twin talking.

“Can a human usually do that? Be a link to the Alpha? Because you seem rather perturbed.” Stiles pointed out. Plus he was curious.

“It happens occasionally,” Aiden smirked, “when the human holds a place of importance in the Pack structure. But Ethan’s just put out that you’ve got some spell on us. Don’t mind him.”
Stiles filed that nugget of information away for later examination. “Fine. So you found them after they left the Argent’s. And what? Sensed the bond? Smelled it?”

“Sensed it.” Ethan gritted out.

“Faint, but growing stronger.”

Stiles resisted the urge to smash his head into Ethan’s nose. “And then you tortured them.”

“Some. Deucalion and Kali did most of the actual torture.” Aiden dismissed with a wave. “Had a session with them this afternoon once she got back from your place actually.”

“What makes you think they’re still alive?” Ethan smirked. “She was rather pissed when she got back, something about a wolfsbane bullet finding its way into her shoulder.”

“Don’t worry though.” Aiden assured. “Cora fixed her right up.”

“I’m so pleased to hear it.” Stiles groaned. “Now cut the bullshit. I know they’re alive. Take me to them.”

“Fascinating.” Aiden smiled. “You feel the bond, don’t you?”

“He’s not a wolf.” Ethan denied.

Aiden shook his head. “And yet…”

“Pathetic that you can feel it and your Alpha can’t.” Ethan scoffed.

“He feels the bond—”

“Then he should have been able to follow it to them.” Ethan jerked him around and away from the wall. “Instead he relied on scent, something easily masked or altered; he proved he is weak and unworthy.”

“Come on; while they’re still breathing.” Aiden grabbed Stiles by the shoulder and the two started walking.

Ethan and Aiden guided him down a few corridors and pushed him into a room that was dimly lit by a string of low watt bulbs that illuminated the bloody and mutilated forms of Erica and Boyd. He rushed over to Boyd, he was closest splayed out on a table and strapped down, and looked him over. Amazingly, he had all his fingers, though the pinky on his left hand had a slightly different skin tone, paler. Newer, Stiles realized. He’d regrown it.

That thought only stayed in his mind for a few seconds, however, because Stiles saw with no small horror that all of his fingernails had been ripped out. A quick check confirmed that the toenails were gone too. The appendages had thin, black veins snaking their way up from the nail beds.

Stiles realized that he’d seen that before. Wolfsbane.

He checked his pulse and was relieved to find one. He started a full assessment. It was difficult to tell on a werewolf how much damage had been sustained over an extended period of time, but all the recent marks were still there. His canines were gone, his nose was broken, his chest was more open wound than skin at that point, and his calves were in ribbons. Stiles thanked whoever was listening that Boyd was unconscious.
Erica, apparently, wasn’t so lucky. She began whimpering as Stiles moved closer to her as she hung from ropes anchored in the rock. He looked to her hand and saw the new, pinkish skin on her finger that meant she’d regrown it, but like Boyd, all of her nails were gone. And they all bore the telltale marks of wolfsbane poisoning.

“S-Stiles.” She whispered, tears streaming down her face.

He put a hand on her forehead. “Shh...” he comforted her. “I’m going to get you out of here.”

He ignored the two scoffs he heard from the doorway.

She looked him over, possibly looking for injuries, but she smiled weakly when she saw his shirt. “Batm-man to the r-rescue. M-my hero.”

“Of course.” Stiles flashed her a cheeky grin. “Got a reputation to uphold.” Her canines were gone too, but she didn’t look too bad otherwise, until he saw her back. It was as tattered and filleted as Boyd’s chest and he winced in sympathy. He pulled his focus back to her eyes and smiled. “Learned a few tricks while you were gone.”

“I miss all t-the fun.”


“I’m a c-captive audience.” She joked.


Stiles leaned his head back and repeated the silent call to summon the gixies three times in his head and followed it up with his command: *Take Erica and Boyd to Deaton’s.* He hoped they would take both wolves. Faeries were finicky and contrary and might deny him both, and there would be no way to convince them to get all three of them out. Mere seconds later, though, he felt the gixies answer, and breathed a sigh of relief.

He looked back at Erica and winked as the cave started to glow with dozens of bright little lights, and then, just like that, they were gone, along with Erica and Boyd.

The snarling from behind him only gave him the best sense of satisfaction.

As it was, he glared and sneered. “Your Pack of sycophants is pathetic and just plain power hungry. What gives you the right to decide who is or isn’t worthy anyway?”

“Nothing.” Another voice from behind the twins answered. “Nothing and no one gave us the right, but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t need to be done.”

Stiles turned to see four more werewolves behind them. He recognized Ennis and Kali, the woman that his dad shot, but there was another man and another woman he didn’t recognize. The man was the one that had spoken.

“Deucalion, I presume.” Stiles remembered the name from the bitch’s taunting.

He bowed a little and stepped forward. “Nice to finally meet you.”

“Can’t say the same.” He muttered.

“No need to be unpleasant, Stiles.” Deucalion smiled.
Stiles gestured to the table and rope. “You’ve sailed straight past pleasant and are well on your way to the special hell.”

“Now, now. No need to be rude.” Deucalion shook his head.

Stiles stifled a growl. “Conversation is pleasant. The twins have already told me how, so how about you tell me why you torture and kill Packs all over the state?”

“Packs across the continent, across the world really, rely on instinct. They fight the beast within and act like civilized creatures, but they are not. Given the chance, a wolf will reach for power, will take it if he can. It is brutal and absolute. But not everyone can handle that power--perhaps those who thirst for it, least of all. Not everyone can handle that much responsibility. We teach a valuable lesson. An Alpha unworthy of the name is a danger to the Pack.” Deucalion told him frankly.

“You all did it. You’re all Alphas. You telling me that none of you thirsted for it? All of you came into your power honestly?” Stiles drawled.

Deucalion just smirked before continuing. “Be honest, Stiles. Who from your band of misfits would you trust with the power of an Alpha? Isaac? The pup who spent most of his early months posturing and overcompensating for his life spent playing the victim?”

“He’s toned back the weredouche tendencies, unlike someone I could mention.” Stiles glared.

Deucalion continued to smirk. “Erica? She got the Bite and used it to ah, what might be an appropriate analogy... bring all the boys to the yard?”

“Her’s is better than yours.” Stiles sneered.

“Then there’s Jackson. Jackson who wanted it for the basest, most selfish reasons and became a Kanima instead. Is that who you would trust?”

“He’s cooled off a bit since being dead.”

Deucalion chuckled. “Or Scott? The boy who has refused time and again to be Pack; could you trust him to lead one?”

“He led a Pack of humans just fine.” Stiles snapped.

“Of course, there’s always Peter, but I think we already know how that one turns out.”

“That one I will give you.” Stiles allowed.

“Being quite frank, Boyd is the only one of the bunch that shows any real leadership potential, but he is still far too young and inexperienced for the mantle of Alpha.”

“I trust Derek.” Stiles said calmly, tired of speeches.

Deucalion sighed. “Yes. You would, wouldn’t you. But it wasn’t always that way.”

Stiles glared. “If you’re implying that your sick game should take credit--”

“No, no. Of course not.” Deucalion shook his head. “You have far more to do with his ability to be an Alpha than anything we have done.”

“I’m annoyingly persistent that way.”
“You don’t see it, do you?” Deucalion stepped a bit closer and looked at Stiles in the eye. “Or maybe you do, and you’re just ignoring it. Either way, it’ll soon be too late.”

“Too late for what?” Stiles asked, but Deucalion didn’t respond. “Don’t make me ask Thing 1 and Thing 2.”

The Alpha smirked. “You’ll learn.” He stepped back a bit, towards his Pack. “Kali, make him ready.”

The werewolf from earlier that morning stepped forward and Stiles noticed that she wasn’t wearing any shoes. She had claws instead of toenails and Stiles made a mental note to stay away from her feet. He reached for his bag, unconsciously.

"Little Spark, is it? Little Red Riding Hood with a basket full of tricks. So show us," she smiled, canines extended. "Show us you aren't afraid of the big bad wolf."

"Abra Kadabra!" Stiles gestured madly, paused for dramatic effect, then dropped his hands with a dejected sigh. "Nope. You're still a bitch."

Kali roared at him and jumped to attack while the others fanned out. He tried to push her away, use the glyphs on his hands, but she was fast as fuck and he didn't get the chance. She'd sliced jagged cuts down his chest and back, barely avoiding the wards.

A simple snap of fingers from Deucalion and she retreated, however. Stiles took quick stock of his injuries. He was bleeding, but not nearly as bad as it could have been. Should have been. She hadn't held back in her attack, his skin should have been ribbons—rather than just his shirts—but it wasn't. His protection glyphs were working. Yay!

"A dry remark for every occasion, Stiles. It is always amusing to watch you." Deucalion smiled. "Brave too, coming here, standing up to those far more powerful. Smart, loyal, resourceful… The list goes on, but I shan't stroke your ego too much. Don't want it going to your head, now do we?"

Stiles glared as he tore the tattered remains of his shirt off. The bloody strips against his skin were distracting. "Your point. Make it."

"You're wasted potential, Stiles. Join us..." Stiles felt one of the other wolves behind him get closer as Deucalion spoke. Ennis probably since he couldn't see the hulking wolf at the moment. "Take the Bite, and--"

"You're not the first to offer me this. You're not even the only species to offer me this. When Peter offered, when the only wolves around were Derek and Scott, he said I was lying, and maybe I was unsure then, but I'm not now." Stiles snapped. "We have plenty of wolves. What use is one more wolf? Just like they can do things that I can't do, I can do things that they can't do. Me being a wolf? That's just redundant."

Deucalion smirked. "An interesting assessment, but you're forgetting something."

Stiles tried not to flinch away from the ghosting of fangs across his skin. "What's that?"

"A Spark is never redundant; human or wolf."

Now Stiles smirked. "I'm not a Spark," he watched the small frown that floated across Deucalion's features when he didn't sense a lie, "I'm a Bruxa." His glyphs exploded with light as Stiles channeled his magic and added extra umph to the glyphs he'd Sharpie'd on his hands to send Ennis flying.
The other female, Cora, began chanting, he could hear it off to his left, and he felt a spell--slick and unpleasant as oil--wash over him, but it had no effect. The protection from magic glyphs he and Leeloo had finished earlier were holding.

Stiles just grinned, and pulled a thread from off his finger. He channeled his magic and imagined the thread to be Cora’s tongue before tying a knot in it. Her chants cut off abruptly and Stiles winked.

“This will not end well for you.” Deucalion warned, no longer smiling.

The twins came at him and Stiles sidestepped at the last minute to dodge Ethan, then pushed him with both hands, sending him flying into his brother to land hard against the wall. Instinctively, Stiles tucked and rolled to the right and saw Kali standing where he’d been moments before when he glanced back. He scrambled to get the table between himself and her as he started pulling another one of his threads loose. When it was finally in his hands, he heard her claws scrape against the table and he looked up to see her there above him, feral grin on her face.

He smiled back and channeled his magic into the thread before breaking it and her spine. The crack of bone and her shriek of pain echoed loudly in the cave. Stiles wasted no time getting to his feet and putting distance between them.

“Your talents are impressive, Stiles,” Deucalion applauded, “but you’re weakening. How much longer do you think you can hold out?”

Stiles’ breathing was labored and he knew Deucalion was right, but that didn’t matter. He didn’t need to take them out, he just had to survive. With three wolves closing in on him, the likelihood of surviving didn’t look particularly high, though. He tried again to push Ennis with his glyphs, but the wolves were smart and had caught on that letting Stiles touch them meant flying lessons, so they stayed clear of his hands, and they definitely weren’t giving him enough time to pull out another thread.

It didn’t take long when they worked together like this. The twins soon had him in a full body grip and Ennis walked up and smirked cruelly before knocking him out.
When Stiles returned to consciousness, he was strapped down. His arms were spread out and secured with leather straps, there was another strap around his neck that prevented his head from moving too much, and since he couldn’t move his legs, it wasn’t a leap to realize his legs were bound too. His magic kit was gone, obviously, and a quick check of his fingers proved that his threads were gone too. He was willing to be that they’d removed the glyphs on his hands as well.

“Let me know when you’re finished.” Deucalion said from somewhere to his right.

Stiles sighed. “This the part where you tell me ‘No, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die’ before aiming a slow moving laser to slice me in half?”

He heard Deucalion chuckle. “You’re hardly James Bond, Stiles.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I always imagined myself as more of a Q anyway.” Stiles frowned as he tried to get free.

“I’m afraid you aren’t going anywhere.” Deucalion told him. “Stop wasting your strength. You’re going to need it.”

“Why? We gonna arm wrestle?” Stiles grunted, still trying to free an arm.

“You made Cora rather upset, and made Kali quite the broken toy. She’s feeling much better, by the way, but I’m afraid they want to teach you a lesson.” Deucalion tsked. “There is very little I can do when they get in a mood you see.”

“I’ll bet.”

He heard footsteps to his left. “Can we have him yet?”

“I’m a one wolf kind of guy, sorry ladies.” Stiles felt his heart rate tick up a notch. He really hoped Derek and the others made it soon.

“You’re not marked, not claimed.” Cora taunted, running her hands over his chest. “Seems like your wolf doesn’t want you.”

“Oi, paws off the goods.” Stiles glared.

“This doesn’t have to be bloody.” Deucalion told him seriously, drawing his attention away from the
women circling him. “Answer my questions honestly, and they won’t have to hurt you.”

“I’m so excited.” Stiles deadpanned.

“First question, how did you get your friends out?”

Stiles laughed a little. “Faith, trust, and pixie dust.”

Stiles held back his scream when Kali dug her claw across the bottom of his foot. He’d apparently lost his boots at some point.

“Aw, come on! That was mostly true!”

“Which is why you still have all your toes.” Deucalion told him. “Now, again. This time, the whole truth, if you please.”

“Fine. Faith, trust, and gixie dust.” Stiles grit out.

Deucalion sighed and Stiles got a second slice to join the first.

“How did you command the faeries?”

“I asked nicely.” He bit his lip when a third line joined the others. “No, seriously. They owed me a favor; I was collecting.”

“See how easy that was?” Deucalion patted his cheek. “Now, next question. What is a Bruxa; it is not a term I am familiar with.”

“Don’t feel bad. I didn’t know what it was a month ago, either.” Stiles heard the sound of denim ripping and his left leg was suddenly colder than it was a moment ago. “Bruxa is a Spark; Jesus, I was just trying to have a conversation.” He said quickly.

“There’s more to it than that.” Cora accused, flashing angry beta-yellow eyes. She wasn’t an Alpha, like Stiles had assumed.

This close to the werewolf, Stiles could feel the magic around her. She was a Spark, or had been when she was human. He wasn’t sure what a werewolf Spark would be capable of.

“Cookie for you, yes. A Bruxa is a Spark with a specific bloodline.” Stiles answered.

“How very vague.” Deucalion hummed.

“Ask a vague question, you’ll get a vague answer.” Stiles snapped.

Deucalion sighed. “I am not in the mood for games. I’ll be back when he’s more compliant.”

“Leaving so soon? I thought we were having a moment.”

Cora smacked him playfully on the cheek. “Deucalion doesn’t like games, but we do.”

“Awesome, let’s play hide and seek. I’ll be it.” Stiles suggested.

They gave him amused and pitying expressions.

“I was thinking... operation.” Kali ran her claws in a large Y down his chest reminiscent of autopsies he’d seen on TV, catching and tugging on the cuts she’d left from earlier. They weren’t bleeding
anymore, though, and it made Stiles wonder how long he’d been out.

“As much fun as that sounds, I’m using my veto.” Stiles countered. “How about charades?”

“But I’m ever so interested in learning what makes you tick.” Cora hummed, dragging her claws along the inside of his arm. He didn’t bleed though. “Why is your skin thicker than in should be?”

“Comes from years of being teased and bullied.”

Cora added more pressure and cut a trail along the inside of his arm from shoulder to palm. It bled a little, but there wasn’t any arterial spray and he didn’t seem to be risking bleed out at the moment. He counted himself lucky, but it still hurt like a bitch.

“Interesting.” She purred. “You are quite the puzzle, Little Red.”

“Do you think he bruises?” Kali asked with a smirk.

Cora shrugged casually. “Let’s find out, shall we? After you.”

“Oh, no. I insist.” Kali gestured for Cora deal the first blow.

It was too much for Stiles’ patience. Not that he particularly wanted to get the crap beat out of him, but these two were enjoying it way too much.

“Oh, get a room! For the love of--” He was cut off by a punch to his diaphragm. Stiles wheezed for a few moments as he tried to convince his internal organs to go back to their proper places. When he was breathing again, he groaned.

“Look, no bruising.” Kali ran her fingers over where he’d been hit.

“Yay.” Stiles muttered.

Cora smacked him again. “You were glowing earlier. Why aren’t you glowing now?”

“Guess.” Stiles spat.

A claw cut through his abdomen with a white hot pain. He felt the blood start to gather and flow across his skin, and he cursed internally to keep from screaming. He did not want to scream. He wasn’t sure how deep the cut was, but he didn’t feel like his organs were falling out, so he tried not to panic. Before he regulated his breathing again, another searing hot drag of a claw made its way across his stomach.

“Twinkle, twinkle little star,” Cora teased sweetly. “How I wonder what you are.”

“What is it with you guys and nursery rhymes? You all had deprived childhoods, didn’t you.” Stiles whimpered, still catching his breath.

“Glow for us.” Kali demanded, grabbing his jaw in one sharply clawed hand.

Stiles thought furiously about his options. He wished he and Derek had tested the ‘you have jack shit and are bound’ scenario, because that would have been helpful. As it was, Stiles wasn’t sure there was anything he could do but wait it out and hope they didn’t kill him or Turn him before Derek and the others showed up.

Reminded again of Derek and the others, Stiles tried to focus on the new link he’d accidentally forged. He could, if he focused through the pain, feel Derek—and through him, the others. He was
getting a lot of rage and worry off the link, which was not overly helpful in learning how close rescue was.

“Don’t make me break and shake you like a glow stick, Little Red. Glow!” Kali roared.

Stiles glared at her and did nothing. She growled and shoved his head roughly to the side, scrapping the leather against his neck unpleasantly, before digging the points of her claws into the cartilage of his ear.

“Glow or lose the ear.” She hissed.

Stiles wasn’t going to lie. He liked his ear, liked it right where it was. On his head. He was in short supply of options. He could use the emergency reserve to bust himself out, but if Derek and the others weren’t close, it would be a short escape. If he didn’t do something soon though, he was going to start feeling like he’d gone a few rounds with a Cuisinart. He focused quickly on the link again and gave it an especially hard mental yank, hoping that would get Derek going in the right direction.

Stiles began to channel his magic--and glow--and began to draw upon the reserves. As he did so, he realized that his own supply was... not low. Not really close to low. Whatever rest he’d gotten from being unconscious, it had added to his personal well of go-juice. “There. Happy?”

“My, my, my.” Cora hummed, examining the glyphs on his chest. “You get more and more interesting.”

Stiles began to shape the power. The way Leeloo had described it, he could use it for just about anything he could come up with provided that he didn’t try to go overboard with power requirements. Still, Stiles had a pretty good imagination... and very large supply of extra magic.

The first thing he did was speed up the healing on his wounds. Not to fully healed, he didn’t need to waste that much energy, but enough to stop the bleeding. Luckily, Kali and Cora seemed too focused on his tattoos to notice.

“Look, they’re down here too.” Kali observed. She traced the glyphs that appeared above his pantline and hooked her fingers into his waistband when she touched denim.

Cora leaned over and seethed, “So that’s how you did it. Clever boy.”

“If we cut them, is the spell broken?” Kali asked.

Cora cocked her head to the side, clearly unsure. “I would assume.”

Stiles quickly shaped the magic to carry a very strong shock to whomever cut the skin the glyphs were inked into. He grinned widely when Kali howled and drew back a blackened finger. That was perhaps a bit stronger than he had originally planned, but he was not complaining. Much. Cooked wolf was an unpleasant smell after all.

“Would it be poor taste to start humming MC Hammer?” Stiles giggled.

“Listen to me you little shit; I will tear your tongue out and feed it to you if you don’t tell me everything I want to know right now!” Cora slapped him hard enough that Stiles tasted blood. “And if you even think about pulling something like that again, I’ll flay you alive.”

“Cora!” Kali called out, glancing nervously to Stiles while she hugged her hand to her chest.
Cora growled but looked up and asked, “What?”

“It’s not healing.” She whispered.

Cora leapt over the table to get a closer look and Stiles tried to listen in. Cora was better than Kali at keeping her volume below human registers, so he didn’t catch much. What he did hear was interesting though. Kali’s finger wasn’t healing like it should be; even jump starting the healing process didn’t seem to do anything.

Stiles used the break in tortuous activities to check on the link again. He focused as intently as he could and found the connection. Maybe it was wishful thinking, but he thought that Derek and the others might be getting close. He tugged on the link experimentally and seemed to get a relieved response followed by an increase in determination. It was weird and new being able to sense the emotions of the Pack, and Stiles wondered how the connection would work, what kind of things he could get off of it. It was definitely something to explore.

Later though.

He heard Cora start chanting and sensed an increase in magic. She was attempting to heal Kali’s finger it seemed. Stiles figured now would be an excellent time to make a sneaky getaway, but he hadn’t figured out a way to get out of his bonds yet. He wished that the Pack bond was a telepathic one because he could really use some advice right about now, but sadly, things didn’t work that way. He was on his own until the others arrived. He kept a steady focus on the link in order to keep tabs on Derek and the others. He might be able to get a sense of when they reached the cave that way.

Kali and Cora finally turned back to him, murder in their eyes. “You nearly cost me my finger. I think I’ll take yours in recompense.”

Kali gripped his palm and forced his hand open to reach his fingers.

“Kali. Stop.” Ennis interrupted, coming into the room.

She snarled at him and didn’t release Stiles’ hand. “Why should I?”

“He won’t regenerate like the betas.”

“Good!” She snapped. “Deucalion wants him broken, I am doing it!”

“You can’t. His hands are valuable.” Ennis argued. “Pick a different appendage.”

Stiles was so beyond ready to get out of this cave. He gave the link to Derek a few desperate tugs and heard a familiar roar in reply. They were here!

Cora, Kali, and Ennis whipped their heads to the sound and growled. Ennis and Kali ran off, leaving Cora and Stiles in the room. She turned to him and sneered. “Your friends will be dead soon.”

“Why? He followed his Pack bond to find me, doesn’t that mean he passed your test?” Stiles spat.

Cora shook her head. “Deucalion wants you for your magic. This isn’t part of the test.”

“Sucks to be you, then, because I’m never going to yield.” Stiles told her.

“Let me tell you a secret,” she leaned down close to whisper in his ear, “I was like you once. A Spark with a Pack. Until Deucalion came to test the new Alpha. He saw me, saw how much I helped the Pack, so he offered me a choice. If I came with him he’d spare my family, my human family. If
not... I refused; I loved my Pack. And I trusted my Pack to help me when they came for my family.” She scoffed. “Foolish of me. I was just a human, just a tool. When Deucalion showed up, my Pack wasn’t there. He offered again and I accepted. To save my family, I accepted. The same will happen to you. One way or another, he’ll find something that’ll make you obedient.”

“My Pack won’t abandon me like yours did.” Stiles denied. The noise of a fight echoed through the cave to punctuate his point.

“You’re a tool, Stiles. They’ll fight for you, but they won’t fight for you.” She whispered.

“You’re wrong.” Stiles declared.

She laughed pityingly, and patted his cheek. “You’ll learn.”

The sounds of fighting got louder and Cora pulled away presumably to guard the door since Stiles lost track of her. Moments later, Stiles heard Derek’s roar when he entered the room. He decided it was time to stop lying around and gathered up more of the magical energy in his wards to manipulate it into something that could get him out of his bindings. He figured a knife-type item was worth a shot and imagined it slicing through the leather. When he felt the leather fall away he sat up and winced as the movement pulled at still-healing flesh.

He glanced over to see Derek in his hybrid Alpha form trying to get to Cora as she chanted.

“Can’t have that.” Stiles muttered. He pulled a strip of denim off his tattered jeans and channeled his magic. Like he had with the thread earlier, Stiles tongue-tied the Spark to make her shut up.

She shot him a surprised look and he waved right before Derek dove in for the kill. Whatever spell she had cast, however, still seemed to be preventing him from getting to her. He bounced off the invisible barrier and snarled at her. She focused her attention back to the more immediate threat, and began carving glyphs into the floor around her with her claws.

While Cora was focused on Derek and maintaining her spells, Stiles dropped off the table and limped his way over. He gathered a bit of the copious blood that covered his torso and began drawing his own glyphs. It was a set that he’d seen in his blood spell book and he’d been... very hesitant to try it, but since the glyph she was carving would kill Derek if he moved for her again, he decided to make an exception.

He finished the glyphs and began the gestures that accompanied the spell, face set in determination. When he felt the tug that meant the spell had worked, Cora jerked with a gasp of surprise and remained ramrod still as her skin slowly began to turn red. As the blood seeped out of her pores, draining her slowly, painfully of life, Stiles forced himself to watch what he had done as her blood gathered around his feet, drawn to the glyphs and magic he’d worked.

When she fell, blood now gone, Derek turned to Stiles and ran over. He ran his nose along Stiles’ injuries and growled, low and angry. He then bumped his nose under Stiles’ chin, forcing him to look up, away from the blood that surrounded him.

“I’m fine, sourwolf.” Stiles objected, ridiculously happy to see that the Alpha was unharmed. “I got Erica and Boyd out; they’re at Deaton’s. I vote we join them.”

Derek wuffed and started to pull him forward. When Stiles tried to walk, the pain of his injuries, the weakness that Leeloo mentioned would accompany the use of his reserves, along with the massive energy the blood spell had required had sapped him of a lot of strength and he stumbled, dropping to his knees. Stiles winced as the still warm blood drenched his jeans and legs.
“Not sure I can walk,” Stiles told him. “Do we have a clear path out of here?” Derek shook his head. “How many?” He held up two claws. “Just the two? Okay. I can handle them, let’s go.”

Derek gathered him in his arms and started carrying him towards the door. Stiles patted his pockets hoping to find- Yes! They hadn’t taken his Sharpie. He glyphed scent scrubbers on himself and Derek while Derek walked. When they rounded a corner, Stiles saw the others fighting Kali and Ennis.

It was a daunting sight. Kali especially was fast, dancing about with hands and feet to claw the ever living shit out of the Pack. There was blood on all of them. As he watched, Kali tore a long gash down Jackson’s back and flipped Danny over her shoulder when he jumped in to help. Ennis had Peter by the throat and if it weren’t for Isaac, Lydia, and Peter’s struggling, he’d have torn his throat open.

“Set me down.” Stiles pleaded. “Go help, I’m good right here.”

Derek set him down gently and looked him in the eye for a moment before running to join the fray. Derek tackled Kali to the ground and threw her into the wall, pinning her there while Jackson and Danny went to help the others fight Ennis. Kali clawed at Derek’s legs with her feet and Stiles raged when he saw the blood splattering the wall and floor of the cave. The others finally managed to pull Ennis off of Peter, but he was not going down. He lashed out fast and brutal, knocking betas to the ground with one hit.

This was not going to go in their favor if Stiles didn’t do something. Fast.

He pulled more denim free and channeled his magic. It was harder to focus, so weak, but he forced himself to concentrate. He broke Kali’s back again, since it worked so well the last time. She screamed and lost the use of her legs. Derek, pressing his advantage, ripped her heart clear out of her chest with a vicious snarl.

Stiles didn’t think he had enough juice in him to do it again, so he settled for something easier. He pulled another bit of denim off and channeled his magic and then tied it in a knot. He slumped against the wall, exhausted and watched as Ennis stumbled a bit and Derek stepped in from behind to rip his throat out while his betas panted and caught their breath.

“That it? We win?” Jackson wheezed.

“No.” Stiles said. “There are three others, including the leader.”

“I vote we amscray before they get back.” Lydia suggested, dusting her pants off. She was bruised and had a cut along her arm, but otherwise seemed okay. She was actually the least hurt out of all of them.

“We have to get Erica and Boyd first.” Isaac said.

Stiles shook his head. “Did that already. They’re at Deaton’s.”

The Pack looked at him, shocked. Stiles shrugged weakly and winced.

Derek shuffled over and nosed at him, whining in concern. Stiles forced himself to lift his arm and rest it on his hulking shoulder even though the act took monumental effort. “I’m just tired.”

“He doesn’t look like he can walk.” Lydia assessed, putting her pepper spray back in her pocket. “You good to carry him?”
Derek replied by lifting Stiles off the ground and making for the cave entrance. The others followed, leaning on each other for support. It was slow going, and Stiles fell asleep to the warmth of Derek’s chest and the steady thrum of his heart.
Chapter Notes

The latter bit of this chapter is in a point of view other than Stiles', it'll be pretty obvious when the shift happens.

Also, over 10k hits!! You guys rock my socks!!!! And I wish I could give kudos to all the comments, because they always make me smile and squee! You all are amazing.

When he woke up he was at the hospital.

“I’m torn whether I should ground you or give you a medal.” His dad said when he opened his eyes.

“Medals are shiny.” Stiles muttered.

He felt a warm hand on his forehead and looked up into his dad’s worried face. “You are absolutely insane. You know that right?”

“Wasn’t my fault I got abducted by werewolves.” Stiles frowned. “I abandoned that plan.”

“That it was ever a plan scares me.”

Stiles shrugged. “It had its merits. Where is everyone?”

“The clinic.” His dad told him. “Deaton insisted that the alpha be present to help with the healing, otherwise I think Derek would still be here.”

“How are they? How long have I been out?”

His dad sighed. “Not sure how they’re doing. I haven’t been over to check. You have been here for a day and a half.”

“I want to see them.” Stiles tried to get up, but his dad pushed him back down.

“You’re still healing, Stiles.”

“I’ll keep healing whether or not I’m in a hospital,” Stiles pointed out. “I’m going to heal faster than they’re going to like, actually, so can we go before that becomes an issue?”

His dad frowned, worried. “Were you Bitten?”

Stiles shook his head. “Part of the wards I mentioned. I heal about three times faster than I should.”

“Fine. I’ll get Melissa to bring us the paperwork.” His dad rolled his eyes and got up. “Sit tight, kiddo.”

Stiles gave him two full minutes before he was out of the bed and looking for his pants. He didn’t find any anywhere and this was not a thing that would stand. He needed pants. He needed to not be in a damned hospital gown and he needed pants.
“Stiles.” His dad was leaning against the door frame.

“Where are my pants?”

“You mean your shredded and bloody pants?”

“Yes, those. Where are they?” Stiles asked again.

“They were incinerated.”

Stiles blinked. “But I need pants.”

His dad sighed and pulled the bag off his shoulder, tossing it to Stiles. “Your priorities sometimes...” He muttered.

Stiles grinned and tore open the bag to find a clean set of clothes. He ripped the gown off and jumped into his jeans quickly, wanting to cover any trace of the visible tattoo from his father. When that was done, he grabbed for the shirt and pulled it over his head. When that, too, was done he gestured to the door.

“Shoes?” His dad asked.

Stiles shrugged. “Overrated.”

He followed his dad as he led the way toward the nurses station. Mrs. McCall was there with the paperwork. His dad signed, she gave Stiles a Look, and they were free to go. Stiles hopped into the passenger side of the cruiser, happy to not be riding in the back again, and practically bounced in his seat while he waited for his dad to get in and get going.

“To the clinic?”

“As fast as possible.” Stiles nodded. “Can we use the sirens?”

“Is it an emergency?”

Stiles waged a fierce but brief war with himself, but finally settled on, “No.”

“Then no.” His dad drove the speed limit and obeyed all traffic laws and Stiles was ready to bash his head against the dashboard.

Finally, finally, the cruiser came to stop in front of the clinic. Stiles flung the door open and walked quickly away, ignoring the nice automated lady telling him that the door was ajar. Stiles ran around to the back and was ready to pound on the door for admittance, but thankfully, someone heard him coming and had it open for him.

The room was crowded. The room was very crowded, but everyone made way for Stiles to enter and get right next to the exam table. Boyd was currently on the table, breathing regularly, and he did already look better, but that could have just been the fact that he was clean. His chest and legs were bandaged, as were the tips of his fingers. The black trails of wolfsbane were still present, however, and further up the length of his arm, and Stiles glared at them. Boyd was sleeping, so Stiles placed a gentle hand on his shoulder, to comfort himself more than the sleeping werewolf.

Erica was on a gurney next to him. Stiles made his way over to her and smiled brightly when she reached for him. He grabbed her hand, careful of her bandaged, wolfsbane tainted fingers, and squeezed. She, too, was cleaner. Her back was covered in sterile dressings, but she was awake.
“You made it out.”

“Of course I did.” Stiles grinned. “Didn’t these mooks tell you--”

She grinned shyly, “They did, but...”

“She wanted to see for herself.” Derek said. Stiles felt him looming over his shoulder. “Boyd too.”

“I’m here.” Stiles comforted.

She tightened her grip and let her eyes slip closed. She was asleep in seconds.

Stiles finally looked up from the wolves on the tables. He found Deaton not too far from his patients. “Sorry about the abrupt delivery.”

“Not to worry. Scott and I had them settled in no time.” Deaton assured him.

“The wolfsbane?” Stiles demanded.

Deaton shook his head. “Without knowing what kind was used, I’d only make it worse.”

There was a small whine. “What do we do?” Isaac asked.

Peter offered. “We could amput--”

“Finish that sentence and I will amputate your head.” Stiles snapped, glaring at Peter.

A warm hand on his shoulder helped to calm his rage. “Stiles, if we don’t know the type of wolfsbane--”

“No,” Stiles refused. “They’ve just gone through months of torture and now you want to add to that? No!”

Jackson shifted nervously. “They’ll heal--”

“Don’t make me punch you in the face. Again.” Stiles glared.

“Stiles--”

Fed up with insistence to cut off their arms, Stiles channeled his magic with a frustrated shout, and reached in with his magic to siphon the wolfsbane taint out of Erica’s hand in a fit stubbornness and rage. He didn’t even realize it was working until suddenly there was a pan under their connected hands to gather the dripping black liquid that was seeping out of her fingers. Stiles kept going, still too angry at everyone to stop, and watched as the blackness receded until the last of it was gone. When that hand was finished, he grabbed her other hand and reached in again to get the foulness out of her. The steady stream became a trickle, and then when the trickle became the last few drops, Stiles moved on to Boyd. He repeated the process, getting every last drop of poison out, and then stepped aside--hands drenched in black ichor--and glared at everyone.

There was absolute silence.

“Stiles?” Boyd whispered, finally coming awake and breaking the silence. “Man, what’s up with your hands?”

Stiles blinked, coming out of his anger-haze, took several deep breaths, and looked at the black sludge on his hands in confusion. When he glanced back up, everyone was staring at him.
“Um...”

Deaton cleared his throat. “Did you use the magic in your wards to do that?”

Stiles frowned and then did a quick check. The emergency reserves in his tattoos were at full. He shook his head, slowly, even more confused. “No. No I did not.”

“You shouldn’t have been able to do that.” Peter frowned.

Stiles looked to Peter and gave him a lost little shrug of his shoulder. He had no idea he was capable of that, and Peter was right. He should not have been able to do it. He’d manipulated his magic without any sort of tool; no glyphs, no words, no components, no magical ink. Nothing. He’d just... used the magic. His magic.

“Discuss the ways Stiles broke the universe later.” Derek said as he and Scott shoved their way to the front with damp towels. He wrapped it around one of Stiles’ hands and began to clean it off while Scott took the other. “Thank you.”

“Welcome.” Stiles whispered. When his hands were clean, Scott and Derek threw the soiled towels into the trash. “Thanks.”

“No problem, dude. You look like you could use the help.” Scott shrugged.

Stiles nodded and bumped him gently with his elbow and a small smile of thanks. He moved back over to Erica and Boyd to look them over, make sure that he’d gotten all of the poison. He was pleased to see that they were already starting to heal.

“Anything we can do to speed this along?” Stiles asked.

Deaton shook his head. “All that can be done is being done. It’ll just take time now.”

“So what next?” Jackson inquired.

“Half of their Pack is dead. They might just... move on.” Isaac suggested.

Derek shook his head. “Not likely.”

“Why not?” Scott asked. “Erica and Boyd are back, doesn’t that mean Derek passed whatever test?”

“Because this isn’t about their test any more.” Stiles sighed.

Isaac pinched his face in confusion. “What is it about?”

“Power.” Derek growled. “It’s always been about power.”

“You mean Stiles.” Erica was awake again, it seemed. “They want him.”

Hackles went up all around.

“That would not end well for them.” The sheriff commented from the doorway. Stiles realized he’d been there pretty much the entire time, just waiting quietly on the sidelines.

“It would be risky for many reasons.” Deaton agreed. “Not the least of which is Stiles himself.”

“I think you’re overestimating my skills there Doc.” Stiles disagreed.
“Regardless of your abilities, Turning a Spark is a bigger gamble than Turning someone without magical aptitude.” Peter informed the room. “For one, it won’t work unless the subject is willing.”

Stiles looked at him, searching. Had Peter known what Stiles was when he’d offered the Bite? Was that why he’d offered instead of just attacking like he had Scott? The knowing smirk Peter was throwing him seemed answer enough.

“One of them was a Spark.” Stiles supplied. “Cora. It’s how they were masking the scents. She told me that Deucalion threatened to kill her family unless she joined them.”

“See. Consent. In a roundabout and crude fashion, but still.” Peter shrugged.

“More like coercion.” Stiles mumbled.

“Call it what you like; it worked.” Peter stated.

Isaac interrupted the mini-argument with a question, “We outnumber them now. Would they really risk dying for someone who will fight them every step of the way?”

The answer was obvious by the silence. No one knew. Logically, Isaac was right. The Pack outnumbered the remaining Alphas nearly three to one. It would be dangerous and costly to go up against them to get to Stiles, who would fight tooth and nail. But, they’d lost their Spark, lost half their Pack, and there was a chance they’d want revenge just as much as they wanted Stiles.

“The wards around your house will keep the Alphas out, but when you’re not in the house you will be with the Pack. Understood?” Derek ordered.

Stiles nodded. “Like I’d trust you losers on your own?”

“Sheriff,” Deaton began, speaking over the grumbling werewolves, “if I may suggest? If you don’t already, you should carry wolfsbane bullets at all times, and allow either Stiles or myself to ward the station.”

“You can’t ward the entire town, Alan. Where do you draw the line?” The sheriff asked. “Don’t give me special treatment, when it’s the rest of this town that’s actually in danger.”

“Dad’s right.” Stiles sighed. “We outnumber them now, but what happens when they start Turning people. They’ve already tried a few times.”

“Tried and failed.” Jackson pointed out.

“Not entirely.” The sheriff shook his head. “There was an attack the morning you all ran off into the woods. She survived.”

“She Turned? Who was it?” Stiles asked.

“Jane Doe.” The sheriff shook his head. “She was only Bitten, refused treatment, didn’t give a name.”

“No one recognized her?” Danny asked.

“It’s a small town, but it isn’t that small.” Deaton told him.

Stiles groaned. “Fine. Can we get a description so I’m not suspicious of every woman I see?”

“Young; I’d put her in her early twenties. Short blond hair, blue eyes, about 5’9’, athletic.” The
“It’s a start.” Derek nodded. “Stay alert; you all should be able to recognize another wolf by now.”

The sheriff’s phone buzzed and he sighed. “I have to go back into work. Don’t go anywhere alone; I mean it Stiles.”

“I know. I’ll be safe.” Stiles told him seriously. “Be careful.”

The sheriff nodded and gave Stiles a gentle hug, “And get some rest. You’re not 100% yet.” He instructed before going back out to his car.

Deaton gave Stiles a pointed stare when he turned back around. “Your father is right; you should go home and rest.”

“I’ll take him.” Jackson stood up and began pushing Stiles towards the door. Lydia followed.

Stiles sputtered. He didn’t have to go right this second! But Lydia and Jackson had him almost out the door already. “Dude, at least let me say goodbye.”

They relented and let him push his way back in.

Stiles found Scott first, pulling him into a hug, mindful of his injuries. “We good?”

Scott inhaled deeply and nodded. “Yeah, we’re good.”

Scott pushed him playfully away and Stiles smirked before moving to Isaac. He got a fist bump and a grateful smile from the curly-haired werewolf before moving on to Boyd.

“You’re going to be okay now.” Stiles told him, clasping forearms.

Boyd rolled his eyes. “No shit, dumbass. Now get outta here before your sappiness gets all over me.”

Stiles chuckled and turned around to Erica. She pulled him down into a hug around his neck and he very gingerly patted her shoulder. “I’ll see you later.”

“You’d better. You’re on my shit list and I’m going to take it out of your hide once its healed.” She warned him with a wet smile.

“I’m feeling the love.” Stiles snarked.

She let him go and Stiles was yanked back by Peter of all people, given a quick hair ruffle—despite not really having a lot of hair—and then shoved forward. Derek caught him as he stumbled and they both glared at Peter, who just shrugged and then proceeded to ignore them.

Stiles rolled his eyes and turned to face Derek. “You’re staying with them while they heal?”

Derek nodded. “Helps to have their Alpha around.”

“Good.” Stiles agreed, though he admitted to himself that he’d miss Derek’s presence in his room. “I’ll see you around.”

Derek seemed... reluctant to let him go, but that could have just been Stiles’ wishful thinking. Finally, though, Derek released him with a nod and Stiles waved to Deaton on his way out of the clinic.

Stiles joined Lydia and Jackson outside the clinic and they began to drag him towards the parking
“Lydia, where’s your car?” Stiles asked, not seeing it.

“Still at your place.” She told him. “Didn’t have time to retrieve it what with staying watch over Erica and Boyd as they slowly deteriorated.”

“Cheery.” Stiles glared half-hearted.

“Accurate. Until you showed up, Deaton said they had zero chance at recovery unless something drastic happened.” Jackson grumbled as he shoved Stiles toward the Camaro. “We were all just watching them die until someone grew balls enough to chop off their arms.”

“It’s not easy to psych yourself up for cutting off someone’s limb. Trust me.” Stiles opened the passenger door for Lydia to climb in back after she tossed the keys to Jackson.

Stiles settled into shotgun as Jackson slid into the driver’s seat and put the key in the ignition before Stiles thought to ask, “Uh, does Derek know we’re taking his car?”

Jackson revved the engine as he started up the car and smirked, “He does now.”

Jackson burned rubber as he peeled out of the parking lot and Stiles grabbed a hold of the oh-shit handle as Jackson fishtailed onto the main road. “You’re insane.”

“This fat-ass car is a lot heavier than the Porsche.” Jackson complained.

“Hey, no disrespecting the Camaro.” Stiles scolded.

“Relax Stilinski,” Lydia sighed. “Enjoy the ride.”

Jackson was decidedly not headed in the direction of the house, Stiles realized. He eyed the two of them suspiciously. “Where are we going?”

“Still taking you home.” Lydia said. “This is just the scenic route.”

“Got a few things to get straight.” Jackson told him.

“So you stole Derek’s car and kidnapped me?” Stiles asked incredulous. “A simple conversation at the house was insufficient?”

“Can’t run away, and we won’t stop until we reach an understanding.” Jackson explained.

Stiles racked his brain trying to fathom what Jackson could possibly be talking about. He hadn’t had a real issue with Jackson in months, and Jackson seemed to get that Stiles was no longer interested in his girlfriend, so Stiles was a little lost as to what they had to discuss.

“So talk.” He instructed.

“I want to know where you get off thinking that you can just leave.” Jackson stated.

Now Stiles was more confused. “I’m not...? I have no intention of going with Deucalion.”

“No, moron. Think earlier than that.” Jackson snapped.

Stiles blinked a few times drawing an absolute blank. What on Earth had gotten into Jackson and why was he being interrogated for shit he hadn’t done?
“Are you trying to blame me getting kidnapped on... me?”

“No, but for the record, I want to tell you how very happy I am you didn’t purposefully run off and get yourself taken.” Lydia commented from the back seat. “Smart move on your part.”

“You’re endorsement is duly noted.” Stiles sighed. “Fine, if it’s not that, what are you talking about?”


Stiles gaped at him for a few seconds, honestly shocked and a little confused, and more than a little annoyed. “Excuse you, I was kicked out!”

Jackson growled. “You didn’t put up a fight!”

“What?! What was I supposed to do? Derek told me I didn’t belong, he threw me out, I was supposed to argue with the Alpha on whether or not I was Pack?” Stiles demanded.

“You argue with Derek all the time.” Lydia pointed out calmly.

“Yeah, when he’s obviously wrong!” Stiles objected. The others looked at him unimpressed. “Come on guys. I wasn’t even sure I was still Pack since Scott left, and then the first verbal confirmation I get is in the negative, what did you expect me to do?”

Jackson rolled his eyes. “You’re a dumbass, Stilinski. Of course you were Pack. We helped you, you helped us, what was confusing about that?”

“Why are we even arguing about this? It’s not like I can go back and change what happened.” Stiles insisted.

“No, but you can stop being a confusing fuck and get with the program.” Jackson pulled a particularly sharp turn that had Stiles slamming up against the window.

He grunted and rubbed his shoulder. “What?”

“You’re confusing the Pack, Stiles.” Lydia said in her best you’re-an-idiot voice. “You act like Pack, but you haven’t proclaimed yourself such, and whatever you did with your wards has only made it worse.”

“I’m not just going to assume that I’m Pack, that’s not how it works.” Stiles told them sternly. “If Derek doesn’t want me in the Pack--and he’s had plenty of opportunities to say otherwise--then I’m not going to subject him to my presence.”

“Seriously?” Jackson groaned. “You’re even stupider than I thought.”

“Hey!”

“Stilinski, he’s stayed with you, at your house, for the past month. You seriously think you’re subjecting him to your presence?” Jackson asked.

“Obligation--”

“He’s the Alpha! He isn’t obligated to do anything but take care of the Pack.” Lydia snapped.

“He could delegate that shit if he really didn’t want to be with you.” Jackson added snidely.
Stiles shook his head. “It made tactical and logical sense to divide protection detail like he did. What he wanted didn’t come into play.”

“He made a nest by your bed!” He could sense Lydia’s desire to smack him upside the head. He could feel it in the way she glared at him.

“Between my bed and the window.” Stiles corrected. “Part of the protection—”

“He could have slept outside.” Jackson said.

Stiles glared at him. “Dude. I was not going to make him sleep outside. That’s just plain rude.”

“So you’re just going to ignore that fact that whatever you did to bind Scott to the Pack, essentially did the same thing for you?” Lydia asked.

Stiles rolled his eyes. “Scott still had a choice. The magic made them closer, and yes, gave them a stronger bond, but Scott still had to decide whether or not he was Pack.”

“So why can’t you just... decide to be Pack?” Jackson asked.

“Scott had an open invitation to the Pack. I don’t.” Stiles shook his head

They both heaved deep sighs of the heavily put upon and Stiles sunk a little lower into the seat. It’s not like this was his choice or anything. If Derek wanted him to be Pack, Stiles would join right up, where’s the dotted line, who cares about the fine print, give him a fucking pen! It wasn’t his choice, though.

“Okay. Let me see if I understand this correctly.” Lydia began. “You want to be Pack.”

“Put simply? Yes.”

“But you don’t think you can be until Derek asks you, or tells you that you’re Pack?” Jackson clarified.

“Bingo.”

“So nothing we say will convince you that you’re Pack?”

Stiles bit his lip. It was nice to hear that they thought of him as such, but no. Derek was the one that ultimately decided, so he had to hear it from him. He nodded slowly, “That about sums it up, yeah.”

“Take him home.” Lydia ordered stonily.

Jackson swerved again and pulled onto a street that would take them to Stiles’ street in a few minutes. The car ride was silent and eventually Jackson pulled up in front of Stiles’ house and he got out. Jackson escorted him to the front door and gave him a nod in goodbye once Stiles was within the protection of the wards while Lydia got into her own car. He then turned around and stalked back to the Camaro, threw her into drive, and peeled out of the driveway at an illegal speed.

Stiles started on dinner since he was hungry and then plopped himself down in front of the TV in hopes for replacing the thoughts and emotions of that conversation with mindless entertainment until he was tired enough for sleep.

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Jackson sped all the way back to the clinic, obeying traffic laws only when other cars were around.
“Stubborn. They’re both ridiculously stubborn.” Lydia complained, voice small through the speakerphone.

Jackson nodded. “At least we know how to fix it.”

“True enough.”

“Do you think he’ll listen?”

“For Stiles? Most definitely.”

They pulled into the parking lot in back and get out of their cars, eager to talk to their Alpha. Derek was waiting for them.

“Keys.” He demanded, palm outstretched, eyebrows glaring.

Jackson tossed him the keys with a small eye roll. “You said to take him home.”

“What part of that sounded like you should leave him there alone?!” Derek growled.

“He’ll be fine. He’s got layers of wards on the place, remember?” Lydia sighed.

“We need to talk to you.” Jackson told him.

“Why haven’t you told him he’s Pack yet?” Lydia demanded, straight to the point.

Derek stilled and glared at them. “It’s his choice--”

“He doesn’t think so.” Jackson shook his head.

“Not since you told him to leave, which, let me remind you, I told you then was a bad idea.” Lydia snapped.

Derek growled. “I was--”

“Trying to protect him. We know.” Lydia steamrolled. “But now he doesn’t think he’s Pack, and no amount of us telling him he is will change his mind.”

“He isn’t going to believe anyone but you, so stop dicking around and fix this.” Jackson insisted.

“I can’t tell him he’s Pack. He has to choose for himself.” Derek told them.

“He won’t. He doesn’t want to subject you to his presence.” Jackson gritted his teeth at the memory. Stiles could be just as stubborn as Scott and Derek when he put his mind to it.

Derek looked mildly confused. “What?”

“He feels like just declaring himself Pack would be inserting himself where he isn’t wanted. He’s still convinced that you don’t want him around, Derek.”

“I’ve spent the last month--”

“He thinks you’re doing it out of some sort of obligation. That if you could delegate the task you would, but that it makes the most strategic sense to stick you with him.” Lydia explained. “He wants to be Pack, but he won’t force himself on you or any of us.”
“He’s not forcing himself--” Derek growled in frustration. “I’m giving him the choice--”

“But you’re not.” Jackson said. When Derek glared, Jackson continued. “You say it's his choice, but have you told him that?”

“All the times he made a comment about not being Pack, every time he got upset about not being Pack, did you say anything? Did you offer him the choice? No. You just assumed he knew he was welcome back.” Lydia glared at Derek, truly upset that it had taken this long to resolve this issue. “But Stiles would never do that. He won’t assume he’s welcome after being thrown out. Not unless you tell him.”

“Do it soon.” Jackson requested. “Whatever magic he did to bind himself to the Pack is confusing as fuck.”

Derek sighed heavily and turned away, running a frustrated hand through his hair. It was supposed to be Stiles’ choice, it was up to him whether or not he wanted to come back to the Pack, Derek knew that was how it would have to be after telling him he wasn’t Pack. Derek had hoped that Stiles would willingly come back, that him helping out was a sign that he wanted to be Pack, but every time the topic of Pack came up, Stiles would be swept up in a wave of regret and sadness and anger. He’d flat out said he wasn’t Pack. Derek had thought it meant he didn’t want to be Pack, that he’d alienated him and wouldn’t be forgiven, but... What if he’d had it wrong?

Clearly he had had it wrong. Lydia and Jackson were telling him as much—and he could always count on Lydia to tell him when he was wrong. But he still wanted it to be Stiles’ choice. If he just told him that he was Pack, Stiles might react badly. It had be something he came to on his own.

“You’re overthinking this.” Lydia scolded. “And you’re both too stubborn for sense. One of you has to make the first move, and it isn’t going to be Stiles.”

There was a phrase that Derek had been trying not to think about. Lydia seemed to know it too by the look she gave him. He wondered occasionally just how perceptive the girl was because sometimes she was... scary.

Finally he sighed and decided he needed to go for a run. Running with Stiles had been a good way to sort out his thoughts, just like it was for Stiles, and he needed to check the perimeter anyway. In the meantime, he shooed Jackson and Lydia away, telling them to go home and get some sleep. He watched as Lydia’s car pulled away and then started running the perimeter.

Oddly, he found it wasn’t as peaceful running by himself. He’d gotten used to Stiles there next to him, either talking about magic or reading or just nothing. Sometimes it was silent, but more often than not there would be conversation. The silence was a little weird now. It gave him time to really think through things.

It took a little time, but Derek came to a decision. He’d talk to Stiles about being Pack when he came back to visit Erica and Boyd in the morning, and... other things when he thought Stiles was ready. Pack first though.

He walked back into the clinic.

The empty clinic.

Erica and Boyd were gone.

He got his anger under control before he inadvertently set the whole Pack on edge and howling to his doorstep. There was a chance they’d gotten tired of the sterile clinic smell—he was kind of tired of
it too--and gone for a walk. He expanded his senses trying to find them, and followed along the Pack bond lines.

He nearly laughed out loud when he figured out where they’d gone, because of course. He shook his head as he ran out to the Camaro and drove to Stiles’.

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Erica and Boyd listened as Derek talked with Jackson and Lydia just long enough to hear that Stiles was at home alone. That didn’t sit right with them. They both looked at each other and came to a silent agreement. They got up as quiet as they could, left out the front, and ran to Stiles’.

When they got there, Stiles was in his room so Erica jumped up first and went in through the unlocked window. Stiles was there, clearly getting ready for bed, because he was in the process of changing when Erica entered.

“Holy brick shit house, Batman.” She grinned getting a good look at the way he’d filled out. There were abs for crying out loud. Not, like, Derek level impressive, but a hell of a lot more than she’d thought he’d had.

Stiles turned to stare at her in surprise and blushed a little. She found it amusing.

Less amusing were the still healing marks on his torso that were obviously from werewolf claws. She made her way closer to him as Boyd hopped up and came in through the window behind her. She sat on the bed, getting a closer look at the marks as Stiles shifted a bit nervously.

“Uh, shouldn’t you guys be at the clinic? Healing? With Derek?” Stiles asked.

Boyd came closer, too, moving to his other side to look at the marks on Stiles’ back. He and Erica glanced at Stiles, before looking back to the wounds he’d sustained while trying to rescue them.

“We heard you were alone.” She muttered. “Thought we’d make sure you were safe.”

“I warded the house--”

“We know.” Boyd interrupted. “We just... didn’t want you to be alone.”

Erica frowned as she traced the edge of a wound. “These look almost healed...”

“Yeah. Magic healing is nice.” Stiles commented. “Not as fast as you guys, but better than a normal human’s.”

“You smell different.” Boyd noted, giving him a whiff.

Stiles turned his head to half glare at him. “I probably smell like magic. I do a lot of that these days.”

“Yeah, but...” Erica frowned. “That’s not all.”

“Okay...” Stiles seemed to be growing more confused. “Do I want to know...”

“You smell a little like Derek.” Erica said bluntly.

Stiles visibly relaxed. “He’s been bunking here while we worked on how to save you guys.”

“That’s why the room smells like Derek, not why you smell like Derek.” Boyd told him.
“Then it’s the ink.” Stiles shrugged.

Erica looked at him curiously. “Ink? Why would ink make you smell like Derek?”

“Because it has his blood in it.” Stiles explained. “I used it to strengthen my wards.”

The betas accepted this.

Erica pulled him down onto the bed with her and then shyly looked at the bed. They were tired, the run had taken a bit out of them, and they were still healing, but it felt right to be here. She and Boyd felt a lot more comfortable in Stiles’ room than at the clinic, for all they’d never been to Stiles’ house before.

Stiles seemed to catch on fairly quick. “You guys want to sleep here?”

“It’s... better here.” Boyd frowned.

Stiles nodded. “Okay. I have sweats if you want something to sleep in...”

Erica accepted a pair of basketball shorts rather than sweats and slipped out of her jeans as Boyd and Stiles dug through Stiles’ dresser to find something that would fit Boyd. She tugged on the shorts, and then crawled up the bed to wait for the others. When Boyd was changed, Stiles nodded in satisfaction and made for the door, but Boyd caught him and pushed him to the bed.

“Stay.” Erica pleaded.

Stiles looked between the two of them and then sighed with a shrug. “Alright. It’ll be a tight fit though.”

Erica pulled him onto the bed and arranged him how she wanted, so that she could wrap herself around him, tucked under his arm. Boyd slipped in after turning the light off and arranged Stiles a bit further so that Stiles was using his shoulder as a pillow, which allowed Boyd to reach Erica as well. It was very comfy and warm and they calmed instantly, falling asleep soon after.

This was how Derek found them a little over an hour later. When he climbed through the window, he was hit with the smell of calm, sleeping werewolf and the sense of Pack. He glanced at the bed and forced himself to not jump to anger that there were other wolves wrapped around Stiles. A shirtless Stiles. There was no arousal in the air, nothing to even hint that anything other than Pack bonding had occurred. It was irrational to jump to jealousy, but, then, jealousy was hardly a rational emotion.

His momentary fight with his emotions had awoken his betas though. They looked at him a bit nervously, but they didn’t move.

“This is a lot better than the clinic.” Erica whispered, not loud enough for humans to hear.

Derek sighed and nodded. He couldn’t blame them. This is exactly where he would go if he needed a place to heal.

“He smells like our alpha.” Boyd added. “Like you.”

“Because he is.” Derek told them. “He bound you both to the Pack, bound Scott, helped keep us all together, kept us safe. He’s taken up a lot of roles of an alpha.”

“Or an alpha’s mate.” Erica teased quietly.
Derek glared at her.

“Just sayin’.” She smiled.

“Think you can get out of there without waking him?” Derek asked.

The betas looked at each other and began to shift a little at a time, getting out from under and on Stiles so that they were free to stand. When they were up, Derek tossed Erica the keys to the Camaro.

“If you’re well enough to get here on your own, you don’t need to stay at the clinic. Go to McCall’s; Isaac is there. He missed you.” Derek instructed.

Erica pouted. “Why do you get to stay?”

“Alpha bonding.” Derek rolled his eyes.

“Come on, Erica.” Boyd guided her to the window. “Mom and dad want alone time.”

They snickered as they left, ignoring Derek’s glare. He closed the window behind them and tracked their progress to McCall’s, relieved when they made it. He felt contentment spread over the bond as they joined Isaac and he allowed himself to finally relax.

He shrugged out of his jacket, and got into his regular sleep attire before debating with himself whether or not to sleep in his nest or in the bed. He glanced between the two trying to decide.

On the one hand, he had a pile of blankets that no longer smelled like Stiles and, while better than nothing, was still technically the floor. On the other, there was Stiles and a mattress and Stiles. Stiles, whom he’d almost lost, had found battered and covered in his own blood, but who had still managed to rescue his lost wolves. Stiles whom had saved them again by sheer force of will, and allowed them comfort when they needed it. Stiles whom he trusted above all others.

For once, he decided to allow himself to give in, got in the vastly more comfortable bed, wrapped a protective arm around Stiles, and went to sleep.
When Stiles woke up, he was warm and toasty and he kinda felt like just going back to sleep, basking in the warmth of werewolf heating. He knew he shouldn’t though. Derek would be looking for his betas and he should have called him last night to tell him they were in his room, but they’d been really insistent on sleep. He resolved himself to call now.

Stiles yawned and stretched as best he could with someone’s arm wrapped around his chest. He looked down to move the offending limb when he realized it definitely didn’t belong to either Boyd or Erica. Confused, he followed the arm up to the attached shoulder and from there to the head. He nearly flailed when he saw Derek.

“Dude!”

“Go back to sleep, Stiles.” Derek mumbled, not even opening his eyes.

Stiles opened and closed his mouth a few times to try and form words, but none were all that forthcoming. His heart was doing that really dumb, rapid beating thing and he was suddenly aware of other things, like how warm Derek’s arm was against his skin, how relaxed Derek looked, and how many years that seemed to take off of his face. Stiles suddenly had to fight the urge to run his thumb over the spot between Derek’s eyebrows because it was smooth for once and not frowning or glaring.

“Uh...” Stiles tried again to say something, because going back to sleep at this point was right out, he was way too wired now.

Derek opened his eyes and looked at him expectantly.

“You are not the werewolf I went to sleep with.”

Derek snorted quietly and shook his head. “They’re at Scott’s with Isaac.”

“Oh. Cool.” Stiles had no idea what to do. Part of his brain was screaming at him that he should escape Derek’s arm before his body reacted in its hormonally driven way, but another part was just content to stay as long as Derek was, which... why was Derek cuddling with him? He was so very confused.

“Relax.” Derek placed his hand over Stiles’ rapid heart.
Stiles was more than halfway tempted to do just that, but he needed answers. “Are we... gonna talk about this?”

Derek sighed and rolled over. Stiles immediately missed the warmth of his arm and just barely kept himself from whimpering at the loss. “I’m sorry.”

Stiles’ mind started firing warning signals. This was not the desired effect! He wanted more of the cuddling, the cuddling was really nice and awesome and should totally continue, just after he figured out what was happening. He did not mean for Derek to take his question as a refusal.

“Nah, don’t be. I was comfy, just... curious.” Stiles tried.

Derek side-glanced him with a smirk. “Not that.” He shifted again so that he was closer, though not quite as close as before. He looked down, face furrowed in concentration as he continued. “I’m sorry for... not being clear. I should have said... something earlier.”

Stiles held his breath. This could go spectacularly well or horribly, wretchedly wrong. “About?”

Derek was clearly choosing his words carefully, deliberately. Stiles realized that talking about what he thought and felt was not something that came easily for Derek, so he gave him the time to sort it out. He didn’t rush him.

Finally, when Derek sighed and looked back up to Stiles’ face, he asked. “Do you want to be Pack?”

Stiles tried really quickly to judge the appropriate response to this. Derek was still frowning slightly, and it was possible that was a concentration frown, but it could also have been an unhappy frown. It had that quality to it. If Stiles answered yes, and Derek didn’t want him to say yes then there would be this horrible awkward conversation about how he wasn’t Pack and Stiles didn’t really think he was up for that. On the other hand, it could be that Derek wanted him to say yes, and that would be nice, but Stiles didn’t really see why Derek wouldn’t just come out and say that Stiles was welcome to be Pack.

“Do you want me to want to be Pack?” Stiles asked before he could stop himself. He winced as soon as the words left him.

“I want... you to choose.” Derek settled on after a few seconds.

Stiles sighed and bit the bullet. “Yeah. I do.”

Derek looked at him and looked relieved. He moved a bit closer, “Good.”

“That’s it?” Stiles asked. “Just like that, I’m Pack again?”

“Stiles,” Derek nuded even closer, “you’ve been acting like Pack, the betas already consider you Pack, but I... wanted you to choose.”

Stiles frowned a little. “I... I didn’t think it was up to me. You’re the Alpha, you... kicked me out, I thought you didn’t...” It struck Stiles then how very intimate their current positions were. They were close enough that neither had to raise their voices above a whisper, he and Derek’s legs were still intertwined, and if he really wanted to, it wouldn’t take more than a few inches to close the gap between them. His heart rate kicked up a notch as the thought crossed his mind.

Derek shifted again so that they were almost in the same position they had been when Stiles woke up. The difference was that Derek was now running his nose along Stiles’ shoulder and neck, sniffing him.
“Is, uh... is this a Pack thing?” Stiles needed to know, because he didn’t recall this from previous Pack encounters and if it was just a Pack thing, he’d have to get that message across to certain excitable regions, because they were beginning to take notice.

Derek followed the line up his neck to the spot right behind his ear, and then followed it back down to the joint of his neck and shoulder where he buried his nose a little deeper, scenting him again. He also hugged him closer.

“Oh my god,” Stiles mumbled quietly as he started counting backwards from 100 in order to keep blood flow going in the right direction.

“You haven’t just been acting like Pack.” Derek told him, conviction finding its way into his tone.

Stiles’ curiosity was piqued. He wasn’t sure what else Derek meant. He hadn’t done anything odd in his opinion. Not anything that the Pack wouldn’t do. They saved each other all the time. It was a thing.

“How have I been acting?”

He could feel Derek smile against his skin, they were that close now, and Stiles was about ready to throw all his chips in the middle, bet the double zero, and spin the roulette wheel, because this conversation was testing his restraint like none other.

“Like an alpha.” Derek told him.

That was... not what Stiles had expected. He worried that Derek was possibly upset with him. He hadn’t intended to step on his toes, hadn’t even realized he was doing anything that would be considered alpha behavior...

Well... On deeper contemplation, he supposed that maybe some of his action could be considered alpha-like, but he was just trying to keep the Pack together and happy and healthy. He didn’t think he had done anything wrong... and Derek didn’t appear to be... upset...

“Is that why Erica and Boyd came over last night?” Stiles asked.

Derek nodded, which caused him to rub his nose and stubble along Stiles’ neck. “They wanted the comfort of their alpha.”

“You’re their alpha.” Stiles insisted, not wanting Derek to think he was trying to steal his Pack.

“So are you.” Derek corrected. “It’s not uncommon for the alpha to have a... partner.”

Stiles nearly choked. He reminded himself to breathe and then squeaked. “You mean a mate.”

Derek stilled for a moment, but he didn’t pull away. “Packs run better with a pair at the head. A trusted lieutenant, an advisor to the alpha, or a mate. Someone to challenge the alpha when he needs it, someone the pack can go to with concerns they feel they can’t share with their alpha, someone the alpha can trust above all others. Only you fill all those roles.”

Stiles let that sink in, and Derek seemed content enough to let him as he continued to breathe in Stiles’ scent. The twins had said that a human couldn’t usually bind wolves to a Pack unless they held an important place in the Pack structure. Stiles hadn’t really thought that he’d been that high on the totem pole.

Apparently he was wrong.
“So which is it?” Stiles asked, clearing his throat a little to make sure his voice didn’t crack like an embarrassed teenager.

Derek paused, propped himself up on his elbows so that he was looking Stiles in the eye, and answered, “Your choice.”

Stiles frowned, heart pounding in his chest loud enough he was sure his neighbors could hear it. “It’s not... It can’t be entirely my choice, Derek.”

“I... have a preference, but anything you choose--”

“Tell me.” Stiles challenged. “You gotta throw me a bone here, Derek, you can’t tell me you have preference and then make me try to guess which one it is. The odds aren’t exactly in my favor.”

Derek frowned pensively and began to absently trace the almost-healed marks from the rescue. As he traced, though, he seemed to pull more focus on the wounds and scars that lined Stiles exposed torso. When Derek got to the healed claw marks on his side, he raised a questioning eyebrow to Stiles.

Since Stiles recognized that Derek needed to sort through what he wanted to say, he allowed the topic to veer a little. “From the shade, while we fighting the witches.”

Derek nodded, though he frowned a little deeper. As he moved his gaze back down, his eyes seemed to catch on the vampire bite marks along his collarbone. He had two there, and Derek ran his thumb over both of them.

“Vamps, which you probably guessed. Those two aren’t as bad.”

“As?” Derek asked adding voice to the eyebrow.

With a small sigh, Stiles rolled a bit so that Derek could see the one that the librarian had left on his shoulder blade. It was uglier than the other two, not nearly as faded. When Derek ran his thumb over it, he let out a soft growl.

It only took a small push for Stiles to roll all the way over. When he did, Stiles knew what Derek was looking for: The scars that Scott had given him on his left arm. The growl that he let out that time was more frustrated than murderous.

There weren’t any other scars on Stiles’ back though, other than the new ones that the Alphas had left. Derek began to run gentle fingers over them and his growl—which Stiles didn’t think Derek was actually conscious of, it had that tone to it—resumed its murderous tone.

“You tore her heart out of her chest.” Stiles told him. “I don’t think you can kill her any more than you already did.”

Derek grunted, but he leaned back down and resumed his snuffling and sniffing of Stiles’ neck. When he ran his nose through the fine hairs at the base of Stiles neck, goosebumps flared across Stiles’ skin.

“You keep putting your life on the line for my Pack.” Derek mumbled.

“They’re as much mine as they are yours.” Stiles objected quickly.

He felt Derek rumble with a pleased noise against him, and Stiles realized what he’d just said in context to what they had been discussing.
“Does that answer your question?” Derek asked.

Stiles rolled back over so that he was facing the alpha. “I already knew my answer. I want to know yours.” He said seriously. The cat was out of the bag at this point, so there was no use getting evasive.

Derek was always better at show than tell.

Slowly, Derek looked him in the eye and leaned in, allowing Stiles ample opportunity to move or stop him if he desired. When he was millimeters away from Stiles’ lips, he paused and pinned Stiles with a look that was one part question, one part warning, and all parts burning desire.

Taking a risk, and throwing caution to the wind, Stiles surged up just that last little distance and met Derek in a kiss that took his breath away. As much as Stiles liked breathing, he decided that that was okay, because Derek was **kissing him back**.

Derek put his hand behind Stiles head, cradling it and angling himself better in order to deepen the kiss and send a clear message that he wholeheartedly agreed with what was happening. When Stiles let out a small, unconscious moan of approval, Derek bit Stiles’ bottom lip and drew it between his teeth, releasing it with a self-satisfied smirk.

Stiles panted, coaxing air back in his lungs, and smiled widely. “How did I know biting would be one of your kinks?”

The growl that Derek let out was one Stiles honestly hadn’t heard before, but he really hoped he could hear it again, because it did all sorts of nice things to his libido. Of course, that could also have something to do with Derek being pressed up against him and **feeling** the growl as well as hearing it. Either way? Stiles probably just found a new kink of his own.

Derek nosed along his jawline, until he reached the spot where his neck met his shoulder. There he kissed, nipped, and then bit down hard enough to leave a mark, but not near hard enough to draw blood. Stiles felt his knees go weak, which was simply ridiculous since he was laying down. When Derek kissed the mark he’d left, he moved back up to Stiles’ mouth, peppering kisses along the way.

“You know that won’t last very long.” Stiles told him between kisses, because he apparently lost his brain to mouth filter and was talking when he should just be enjoying the moment.

“I’ll leave another one.” Derek assured him, moved so that he was straddling Stiles, and then began leaving kisses along his collarbone. When he went to leave another mark, Stiles grabbed his hair and stopped him. Derek looked up. “No?”

“Just... I don’t know what that’ll do to the ward.” Stiles cautioned. “The last person to try and damage one nearly lost her finger.”

Derek looked mildly impressed for a moment, but that shifted to mild frustration in a few seconds. “How am I supposed to avoid them if I can’t see them?”

Stiles opened his mouth to retort, but thought better of it. Derek had a valid point after all. Instead, Stiles channeled his magic. The glyphs filled the semi-dark room with light and threw Derek’s face into stark relief as they glowed pale blue.

The werewolf stared at the glyphs intently, drawn immediately to the binding glyph in the center—the insular triskele. He ran his fingers over it and gave Stiles a look.

“The triskele happens to be a very powerful glyph.” Stiles defended.
Derek nodded like he already knew that. “What’s it mean for you?”

“That one stands for the Id, Ego, and Superego.” Stiles told him quietly. “Inner balance.”

“These?” Derek followed the glyphs leading along Stiles’ collarbones.

Stiles ignored the goosebumps that touch sent up his spine and answered, “Physical protection. Makes me harder to injure.”

“They wrap around.” Derek followed the glyphs down passed Stiles’ shoulders.

Not needing another hint, Stiles turned over to show Derek his back once again. It was a little awkward since he was between Derek’s legs, but he managed. Derek continued to follow the glyphs to where they met at his spine. When he ran a finger down, Stiles couldn’t suppress the urge to arch into his touch, just a bit.

“Those ones are for healing.” Stiles supplied.

He felt Derek scoot lower so that he could kiss where the glyphs met between the tops of his shoulder blades without bending in half. By doing so, Derek revealed the beginning of the third section of wards. When he traced them, he used just a bit more pressure, like he was resisting the urge to grab Stiles by the hips.

“This last set is for magical protection.” Stiles’ helpfully turn back around when Derek reached his sides.

He grinned to himself when he saw the look on Derek’s face as he realized the glyphs went below Stiles’ pantline. He glanced up at Stiles when his fingers caught the fabric of his pajamas, and smouldering did not begin to describe it. Stiles felt his blood fly south for the winter at that look and tried not to blush too fiercely as his body reacted.

He gave Derek a small nod of encouragement, bracing himself for the big reveal.

As Derek slowly drew the waistband of his pants down, Stiles knew the second he caught sight of the triskele. The sharp intake of breath, and the stilling of fingers was enough of a hint without knowing instinctively when the glyph would be exposed.

The glyph was inked in blood, and didn’t glow pale blue like the others; it didn’t really glow a color at all so much as it gave off an aura of power and strength that still... glowed. It was weird and Stiles didn’t know how to describe it other than, well... magic.

Stiles released the magic he was channeling, and the other glyphs went back to being invisible. Derek continued to stare at it.

“My anchor.” Stiles explained.

Derek glanced up at him, then back down to the tattoo. He tentatively brushed a finger over the top whorl and seemed surprised about something. “Your father,” he muttered, apparently able to sense who the blood belonged to, and then moved to the next one. “Scott,” Derek gave an ah ha face when he felt Scott’s essence. He moved on to the third and last whorl, inked with his own blood. “Me.”

Stiles nodded and took a deep breath. “Father, brother, lover.”

Derek snapped his eyes back up to Stiles’ own in shock.
Stiles was definitely blushing, he could feel the heat in his cheeks. He recognized that that was a lot for someone to admit to after only just sharing a first kiss, but it was true. He couldn’t exactly lie to the werewolf, not that he’d want to. He wasn’t ashamed to admit it, after all.

The possessive growl coupled with Derek’s fingers digging into his hip cued Stiles in to how much Derek seemed to like the tattoo. He kissed the tattoo and then kissed a line to Stiles’ hip where he nipped gently before going back to the tattoo and inhaling deeply. The growl increased in volume and sent good shivers down Stiles’ spine.

“You did this even when you thought I didn’t want you.” Derek still had the possessive growl to his voice, and Stiles was aware that he seemed to be paying the tattoo a lot of attention.

“The spell was a... reminder.” Stiles told him while he struggled to form cohesive thoughts. “My anchor, to remind me why I use the magic. My... emotions were enough to make it work.”

“You realize it’s more than that now.” Derek practically purred.

Stiles looked down at him and raised a questioning eyebrow.

Derek moved back up so that he could take in Stiles scent at his neck as he elaborated. “You put my sign into your skin with my blood. You marked yourself as mine.” Derek pressed a warm hand firmly to the triskele, slipping his last two fingers under Stiles’ pajamas in the process.

Stiles slid his hands onto Derek’s chest because he could and he wanted to and it was novel to be able to do what he wanted. He swept his hands up to around his shoulders, planting one firmly on Derek’s own tattoo and using the other behind his head to bring Derek’s mouth to his own. He had no adequate words for Derek’s statement, but this was something that he felt could suffice in answer.

The kiss was slow and heated and delicious. When Derek teased his mouth open and their tongues greeted each other for the first time, Stiles thought that as far as first impressions went, he didn’t do too bad. There even seemed to be a kind of... tug.

They broke apart, suddenly, at the same time, and looked at each other with some confusion, because that had not been just a feeling. That had been magic.

Something had happened.

Then Stiles felt it. The Pack bonds that he could feel if he concentrated flared into full high definition in his mind. He didn’t need to concentrate to pick anyone out, he could feel them all, distinctly and without effort. He knew where they all were, he knew that they were all safe, and he could tell that they all felt something happen as well.

He looked to Derek, breathing heavily with the new sensory input. “Whoa. Is it like this for you all the time?”

Derek nodded.

Stiles smiled. “This is awesome!” He noted that Derek relaxed; he could feel it in the Pack bond as well as see it in front of him. “This pleases my need to keep tabs on everyone.”

Derek huffed a quiet laugh and got up off of him.

“Hey, where’d you go? Why the leaving?” Stiles whined.

Derek pulled his duffle out from under the bed and started digging through it. “You should get
dressed Stiles.”

“No. No, in fact we should both be getting undressed. I was pretty sure _undressed_ was in my near future.” Stiles objected.

Derek gave him a rueful smile over his shoulder as he pulled a shirt out and put it on. “I would say get undressed if you want, but you’re not allowed to be naked in front of the Pack.”

“The Pack? Why—” but he could feel it. The Pack was descending upon the house, and by the feel of it, Peter would be the first to arrive. That was incentive enough to get Stiles clothed. “How come you’re allowed to be shirtless all the time and I’m not?” He asked, just to be difficult.

Derek pinned him to the bed again and kissed him filthily, which was just going to make putting pants on uncomfortable. When he broke the kiss and Stiles was catching his breath, Derek answered, “Because you can’t rip their throats out in a fit of jealousy. I can.”

Stiles gave him a look, because while Derek _could_, he _wouldn’t_. Stiles knew how much he cared about his Pack. He appreciated the sentiment for what it was, though. He kissed Derek before slipping out from under him and moving to the dresser.

He gave no fucks as he stripped down to change. If Derek was going to be a cock block, Stiles was going to make him pay for it. He grinned to himself when he heard the growl behind him and a groan of frustration. He dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, throwing on a plaid overshirt for good measure. When he turned, Derek was dressed as well.

“I suppose I should warn my dad we’re about to have company.” Stiles grimaced. There was a conversation he needed to have with his dad. Soonest.

Derek nodded with a wince of his own. “Better make it quick. They’ll be here soon.”

“Why are they coming anyway?” Stiles asked as they made their way to the hallway.

“When an Alpha takes a mate, there’s usually a ceremony so the Pack can formally recognize their new Alpha, especially if they’re human. We seemed to have skipped that step somehow.” Derek explained quickly.

“How?” Stiles wondered. “You think... it has something to do with me being a Bruxa? I mean, that was magic, I recognize magic when it happens.”

“That’s part of it, but it helps that at least part of the Pack already sees you as their Alpha. It could also have something to do with my blood in the tat--”

“Dad!” Stiles smiled brightly as they rounded the corner and ran into him as he made coffee in the kitchen.

“Stiles.” He greeted. “Hale.”

That was his “Explain now” face. Joy.

“Well, Dad, there’s a conversation we need to have.”

He gave him an unamused look. “Stiles. I think we should have had this conversation some time ago.”

“What? Oh! No! Dad, this just— I mean...” Stiles bit his lip and frowned. “Can I start over?”
“Please.”

“We’re about to have lots of company.”

“That’s the wrong conversation Stiles. Let’s try again.” His dad urged politely.

“Jump in anytime here.” Stiles muttered, only half joking.

Derek shook his head. “I’m going to forestall the Pack. You two talk.”

And then he left. Out the front door for a change. Stiles sighed and muttered, “Chicken.”

“Stiles.” His dad snapped, growing impatient.

“Ok. I’m bi, I’m dating Derek, and the Pack is coming to say congratz.” Stiles said in a rush.

His dad blinked a few times and poured himself a large cup of coffee. “Where to start... Okay. If you’re serious about being bisexual--and you seem to be--you know I don’t have a problem with that. You could have come to me sooner.”

Stiles rubbed the back of his neck nervously. “I know. I guess... it just wasn’t that big of a deal to me. I didn’t have like, a crisis or anything. It was just... me. I don’t know why I didn’t tell you.”

His dad nodded. “Well, I’m glad to hear you’re comfortable with yourself, but just keep in mind you can come to me about stuff like this. I’m your father; I want to know what’s going on with you.”

Stiles nodded in agreement.

“Good.” He took a large drink of his coffee and then set the mug down on the counter. “Now, as far as dating Derek...” his dad sighed, “Trying to stop you is pointless, I know that, and he seems like an okay sort, but Stiles... He’s six years older than you.”

“Five and a half.” Stiles corrected quietly. “I know, but... Dad, I...”

He sighed again and nodded. “I figured. Just... I feel like I should have a problem with this, as the father of a teenage boy, and yet... You could do worse.”

“Wow, Dad. That’s a ringing endorsement.”

“About the older man whom I have arrested for murder, on your word--I might add--and has been hunted as a fugitive on the word of your best friend, yeah. Yeah it is.”

Stiles blinked. “Touché.” He then turned to the door and shouted, “Hey Derek, did I ever apologize for getting you arrested for murder? Because, totally sorry. That second one was all Scott though. But to be fair we thought you were dead.”

“Why is this your life?” His dad muttered.

“Just lucky, I guess.” Stiles smirked.

The sheriff just sighed again and finished his coffee. “So, why is the Pack invading my house?”

“To offer us congratulations?” Stiles shrugged. “It’s a wolf thing I think.”

“Uh huh.” His dad did not look particularly convinced of Stiles’ innocence.
It was Stiles’ turn to sigh. “I honestly don’t understand it, Dad. It was not explained to me very well.”

He rolled his eyes, but his dad didn’t ask any further questions. “I want plausible deniability. I’m going upstairs. Don’t destroy the house.” He gave Stiles a hug as he passed. “I’m glad you’re happy, kiddo. Just... be safe.”

“Thanks Dad.” Stiles returned the hug, then let him go upstairs.

“That went well.” Derek stood behind him now, having entered the house once the sheriff was on his way up the stairs.

Stiles nodded. “Thinking about getting him one of those #1 Dad trophies.”

“Ready for the Pack?”

Stiles turned to Derek and glanced cautiously behind him to the waiting werewolves. He tested the bond to try and see how they were each feeling. Confusion, excitement, annoyance--Jackson--, but nothing negative. Stiles looked back to Derek and nodded.

Derek gestured for the Pack to enter and they converged in Stiles’ living room. Erica, Boyd, and Isaac took the love seat, practically on top of each other; Scott sat on the arm of the love seat next to Isaac and Stiles was really glad that he was there, because it meant the Scott had accepted the Pack. He’d talk to him about it, about when he finally decided, after this was done. Jackson and Lydia were sharing the recliner, both looking annoyed and slightly confused, and Stiles could tell that they’d been asleep when the... whatever it was, happened from their state of dishevelment. Danny sat on the floor next to the recliner with his head on Jackson’s knee. Peter stood calmly by the staircase, observing quietly.

When they were all settled, Stiles was at a complete loss as to how to begin.

“Tell me you two have a good reason for dragging us out of bed at 7 o’clock in the morning.” Lydia demanded, apparently impatient.

“Trust me, I’d rather be in bed too, Lydia, but this is important.” Stiles retorted, annoyed at her annoyance.

“Enlighten us then.” Peter said calmly.

Derek took over before Stiles could respond to Peter. “You need to recognize your new Alpha.”

There was confused silence, and Stiles enjoyed immensely watching each face as they got it—or didn’t. Peter was first, of course, but he only seemed more confused after the moment of realization. Stiles couldn’t blame him. As the person with the most experience in werewolf culture, he was probably just as confused as Derek as to how it happened.

Erica and Boyd were next, shortly followed by Isaac and Lydia. Their excitement amped up and Stiles was tempted to wipe the smug look off of Erica and Lydia’s faces, but he let it slide for now seeing as the happy feelings he was getting from their Pack bonds was nice.

“I don’t get it.” Jackson glared at the people in the know around him.

“He means Stiles.” Lydia told him.

Scott’s face frowned deeper and he sniffed the air. “Were you Bitten?”
“No, Scott. Still just regular old me.” Stiles clarified.

“There’s usually a ceremony for something like this.” Peter eyed Stiles inquisitively. “You keep breaking the rules.”

Stiles felt kinda creeped out by the stare and glared at Peter, silently telling him to back off. To his surprise, Peter did, nodding his head in a manner that also exposed his neck. It was the first time he’d shown submission to Stiles rather than just regard.

The wolves all picked up on it too.

“Why is Stilinski an Alpha?” Jackson asked, less annoyed than before.

“They’re mated.” Peter said bluntly.

Both Derek and Stiles glared at him for that, and he smirked but submitted.

“What?” Scott’s question brought Stiles’ attention back to the other wolves.

Lydia was smiling smugly at him and Stiles maturely ignored her. Jackson looked like he was debating whether to be more disturbed or pleased by the development, but Stiles felt the approval over the Pack bond, so he let Jackson make funny faces as he tried to decide. Danny just laughed quietly to himself and gave Stiles a thumbs up.

Erica and Boyd looked like kids who had just discovered the candy at the bottom of their Christmas stocking, and Stiles felt their happiness increase. He did glare mildly at them though when Isaac pulled a ten out of his pocket and handed it to Erica. Isaac, apparently unperturbed that he just lost a bet, considered the two Alphas and then nodded as if deciding he would allow it.

In contrast, Scott looked like someone just told him that Santa wasn’t real. Stiles looked pleadingly at his best friend and tried to send him reassurance over the bond. He hadn’t talked with Scott about his feelings for Derek—hadn’t talked to anyone about them—and he knew that the surprise of it was throwing Scott off. If he’d prepared him for the news, brought it up with him sooner, he probably wouldn’t have been so upset.

“Come on, Scott.” Stiles whispered, though he knew the wolves could hear him. “This is a really good thing; I’m really happy with this. Please?”

Scott looked between him and Derek and appeared to debate with himself whether or not to be okay with the development. Stiles was a little tense while he waited. He wanted Scott to be cool with this, he didn’t want to fight about it, and he didn’t want it to scare Scott away from the Pack.

Stiles felt Derek slip his hand into his own and give it a firm squeeze in reassurance. Stiles felt himself relax a little and returned the grip, though he didn’t take his eyes off Scott. His friend observed the interaction and Stiles saw him practically deflate. When Scott met Stiles’ eyes, he nodded and gave him a reluctant smile. Stiles smiled widely and felt the tension in the room melt away almost instantly.

“So Stiles is our Alpha now?” Scott asked, apparently contemplating the concept and finding it somewhat agreeable.

“One of them.” Stiles agreed. “Derek is still in charge.”

“Normally, there is a ceremony where the mate is brought before the Pack and they formally accept him or her as Alpha and that’s when the bond is supposed to strengthen. Not before.” Peter was still
apparently frustrated with the break in custom.

"We’re just as surprised as you are.” Derek told him.

"Time out.” Lydia caught their attention. “What’s so important about this ceremony? Why does it matter they did it out of order?”

“It isn’t supposed to be possible.” Peter explained.

“A lot of that happening.” Isaac commented.

Jackson sighed in annoyance. “Still doesn’t explain why it matters. It’s done. Does it really change anything?”

"It doesn't." Derek stated agitated, shooting Peter a glance telling him to shut up. "There are still the technicalities of the ceremony, however."

"We have to recognize him, right?” Isaac asked.

Derek nodded.

"How? Is it just a 'I do hereby swear' thing or…?" Danny inquired.

"Just like submitting to a wolf, I suspect.” Lydia answered. "Like when you submitted to Derek.”

Again, Derek nodded. "Stiles is human, but the ceremony is more for your wolves than for Stiles."

"So that's it?” Stiles asked. "I just… what, sniff their necks and presto change-o? I'm their Alpha?"

"They're recognizing your authority."

Stiles smirked and turned to Scott, "You heard him. Respect mah authori-tah."

Scott fell into a fit of giggles at Stiles’ Cartman impersonation, but he exposed his neck and allowed Stiles to bump his nose along the jugular. When he pulled back, Stiles and Scott exchanged a fist bump and Stiles moved on.

Erica kindly moved her hair out of the way as she exposed her neck and Stiles bumped his nose along her jugular, taking in the sweet smell of her shampoo that lingered. It calmed him, knowing she was safe and whole and home, free to use such a fruity smelling shampoo. He ruffled her hair as he stood, much to her vocalized annoyance.

Boyd's scent too, though much more masculine, made him calm as he bumped his nose along the exposed neck, for the same reason. When he stood, he exchanged another forearm clasp like the one he'd gotten earlier at the clinic.

Isaac already had his throat bared when Stiles moved to him. Stiles did his sign of dominance and then smiled when Isaac offered him the same fist bump that Scott had. Stiles accepted the gesture and then moved on.

Jackson gave him a critical once over before Lydia nudged him in the ribs. He sighed and offered Stiles his throat, which Stiles took just as he had the others’. He allowed Jackson to punch his shoulder because it didn’t hurt and Stiles understood that Jackson wasn’t all that good with submitting. If it made him feel better, Stiles was fine with it.

Danny was next. He got on his knees so that Stiles didn’t have to get on the ground with him, and
Stiles bumped his nose along the vital artery of his neck just as Derek had done not so many weeks ago.

When he straightened again, Lydia was moving her hair like Erica had done, and offering her neck. Stiles blinked at her and was about to comment that, as a human, she didn’t need to do that, but one impatient eyebrow from her shut him up. He smirked and repeated the dominance display, ignoring the very quiet growl from Jackson.

Finally, Peter was the last. Stiles didn’t want to get that close to the undead werewolf, but he needed to assert his rank as Alpha for Peter to submit and accept and all that jazz. Not letting himself look to Derek for encouragement—thus showing weakness in front of the creepy beta—Stiles steeled himself, and strode purposefully forward. When Peter submitted, Stiles didn’t rush the dominance display, even though he really wanted to. The last time Stiles had been this close to Peter, he’d been kidnapped and forced to help him find Derek before being offered the Bite. Stiles refused to show Peter how unnerved he was by him. It was about control and not letting him see how much his proximity bothered Stiles.

When it was done, Stiles moved back over to Derek who nodded his approval.

“Anything else?”

The doorbell rang and Stiles looked up at the universe as if to say “Really?”

He moved to the door and looked through the peep hole. He smiled when he saw Leeloo and opened the door. She wasn’t alone. At her feet were three brownies all bouncing excitedly on the balls of their feet.

She smiled apologetically, “Hey Stiles. Sorry to drop by unannounced, the brownies wanted to talk to you and dragged me along.”

“Who is it now?” His dad hollered from upstairs.

“Brownies!” Stiles shouted back.

There was a small pause. “It’s not cookie season.”

“Wrong kind of brownies!”

“What does that even mean?” There was another pause. “Nevermind. I don’t want to know.”

Leeloo looked around as she walked in and spotted the Pack. “Am I interrupting something?”

“Bruxa!” One of the brownies chirped happily.

Stiles looked back to see that the brownies were still hovering outside the door. “You guys can come in.”

The took tentative steps inside and looked around in appraisal of the human dwelling before promptly ignoring it all and swarming around Stiles’ legs. They paused briefly in their movements as they got close and then their bouncing and moving got even more excited.

“Bruxa is bonded!” They shouted, tiny voices so full of cheer.

Leeloo gave him a smirk and an ‘Oh really?’ eyebrow causing Stiles to blush a little.

“That can’t be why you guys are here--”
“Bruxa,” one of them said much more seriously, “bad wolves are gone. Bruxa chase them away!”

Stiles snapped his head up to Leeloo. “The Alphas are gone?”

“So it would seem.” She seemed just as surprised as he did. “The brownies would know better than most.”

“Bad wolves are gone. Balance returning.”

“What’s that mean?” Stiles asked.

“Other creatures are returning to the forest.” Leeloo answered. “We’ve noticed them too; I didn’t realize that meant the Alpha Pack was gone.”

“This is good, right?” Scott asked.

“Very good.” Leeloo answered with a smile. She seemed then to notice that there were two wolves on the couch she hadn’t met before. “And you must be Erica and Boyd. Glad you guys got out safe.”

“Bruxa save them!” One of the brownies trilled. “Bruxa save the forest!”

“Okay.” Erica had apparently reached her limit. “Who are you, what are they, and what is a Bruxa?”

“My apologies.” Leeloo tucked a strand of hair behind her ear in mild embarrassment. “My name is Daumelladnel, elf of the Beacon Forest. The Pack refers to me as Leeloo. I assisted Stiles with his wards. The little folk are brownies. They’re fey of a sort that reside in the forest as well; though they don’t usually make themselves known.”

“They’re drawn to Stiles’ magic.” Derek clarified.

“Bruxa!” One of them corrected.

“Wielder of belief, shaper of magic, Bruxa!”

Stiles looked down at the brownies in surprise. That... sounded almost like... like what he’d done at the clinic. He wasn’t the only one to notice either. Peter picked up on what they’d said as well and seemed to reach the same conclusion Stiles had.

“Oh dear.” Leeloo winced. “Okay, I have to leave before I get in trouble for hearing this conversation.”

“What?” Stiles looked back to his friend, confused.

Leeloo sighed. “There are rules, Stiles. I can’t break them, even though I wish I could. An elf can’t tell a Bruxa things about himself he doesn’t know. It was deemed too dangerous. Even being in the same room while someone else... I must take my leave, I’m sorry.”

She breezed past him, stopping only to give him a very quick hug before she was out the door.

“What was that about?” Lydia asked.

“It would seem that our Daumelladnel is holding out on us.” Peter intoned.

Sties shot him another glare. “She has her reasons; it’s fine.”

“Oh, I understand completely. If I’m interpreting the brownies correctly, you only require the
strength of your belief to work magic. No components.” Peter continued on over the brownies repeated chirps of ‘Bruxa’, “Knowing that would make you... significantly more powerful than you already are, and Duamelladnel is young, much too young to go against the will of her elders.”

“Like I said: it’s fine.”

Lydia cleared her throat. “So are we supposed to ignore the tidbit about you being able to use magic without components?”

“Yes.”

Derek rolled his eyes behind Stiles back.

“I saw that, sourwolf.” Stiles pointed to Derek behind him without turning around.

Isaac smirked. “So that’s what that refers to. Figures, I suppose.”

Stiles shot him a look that meant in no uncertain terms that he should shut up if he wanted to avoid the wrath of his new Alpha. The fact that Isaac knew the password to his phone’s GPS did not even occur to him until he’d already said the endearment. When Isaac held his hands up in surrender, Stiles stopped glaring at him.

Before anyone else could comment on the weird conversation between Stiles and Isaac, the brownies piped up again. “Bruxa! Bruxa, what should we call you?”

Thankful for the distraction, Stiles turned to the little folk and said, “Stiles. My name is Stiles.”

The brownies quirked their heads, confused.

“Lie.” One of them said.

“But not lie.” Another added.

Stiles sighed and looked to all the suddenly expectant faces, then back to the brownies who were also looking rather expectant. He sighed again. “Cionnfhaoladh. Cionnfhaoladh Stilinski. But, please, just call me Stiles.”

Peter laughed. “Oh, I’d forgotten about that. That’s rather fitting.”

“What is?” Derek looked to his uncle.

“Cionnfhaoladh is Gaelic for Wolf Head.” Peter announced, smirking.

Among the twittering laughter and thoughtful looks, Scott just looked confused. “You’ve shown me your name. How does that... I mean... there’s an f in it.”


“Stiles.” The brownies tried the name out in their tiny voices and then nodded. “Stiles! We leave now. Thank you for scaring bad wolves away.”

“You’re welcome. See you around.” Stiles waved as the brownies poof’d away.

“Things are never dull around you guys.” Danny commented.
Stiles smirked. “Hopefully that will change now. With the Alpha Pack gone, life should get a little less interesting.”

“For now.” Peter allowed. “Until they return.”

The Pack all looked to Peter somewhat annoyed. “Rain on my parade, why don’t you.” Stiles scowled.

“Why do you think they’ll be back?” Isaac asked.

“Yeah, they left. Maybe they’re just cutting their losses.” Scott added.

Boyd was the one who shook his head. “He’s right. They’ll be back for Stiles.”

The Pack looked to him in question. “What makes you so sure?” Jackson asked.

“Deucalion was rather talkative during his torture sessions.” Erica answered grimly. “He wants Stiles for his Pack, and ‘no’ doesn’t seem to be in his vocabulary.”

Stiles shrugged in what he hoped was a nonchalant manner. “He’ll just have to learn.”

“Or die, failing.” Derek added with a vindictive growl. “Anyone who goes after Stiles, after any of you, deals with the Pack.”

Stiles grinned. “Right. And we won’t be prey. We’re one Pack now, all of us, and we won’t let Deucalion or anyone mess with that.”

The wolves all threw back their heads and howled, and after a beat and a shared grin of satisfaction, Stiles and Lydia added their own voices to uproar.

“What are you doing?” The sheriff thundered down the stairs. “I want no noise complaints. The sheriff should not have to answer noise complaints at his own house!”

“Dad!” Stiles smiled happily. “I let you have some bacon if you help me make breakfast.”

His dad eyed his wolf infested living room, Peter especially, and then looked back to his son. “For all of you?”

Yep.” Stiles nodded. “We’re a package deal.”

End Notes

Stiles refers to the events of last chapter of The Lines of Which We Tread as the Cookie Debacle

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