"The last thing he can remember is turning his back to Jennifer-Julia. It was stupid, of course, because she was the Darach and knew perfectly well how to handle werewolves. [...] He has to be dead."

Jennifer knocks Derek out in the elevator, but he doesn't wake up there.
Death is just the Beginning

The last thing he can remember is turning his back to Jennifer-Julia. It was stupid, of course, because she was the Darach and knew perfectly well how to handle werewolves.

He’s assuming that she killed him (smart thing to do – he’s crawled away from the edge of death roughly every Friday since coming back to Beacon Hills), because the first thing he notices upon waking is a hand buried in his hair. Someone is gently massaging his head, but his acquaintances nowadays are the kind of people who got him arrested for murder or tried to kill him.

He has to be dead.

Enough crazy shit has happened in his life for him to be cautious, however, so he sniffs discreetly and shifts slightly so that he can get the best view possible with one eye cracked open. The results are enough to have him jolting up into a chin and a coughing fit. When he manages to get himself under control, Paige is standing in front of him (in her old house), a glass of water in one hand, the other absentmindedly rubbing her bruising chin.

Paige.

“Are you ok?” She shuffles a bit under his stare.

Paige.

All he can do is nod and take the proffered water. He tries to steady his grip on the glass, but the shock is too much even for a born werewolf to handle; it shatters in his hand.

“Shit! I’ll- I’ll go get the first aid kit. Rinse it in the sink?”

He doesn’t remember Paige ever cursing. The walk from the sofa to the kitchen sink is hazy, and the only part about it Derek truly recalls is seeing the calendar on the fridge.

It’s 2001 – about three days before he asks one of the visiting alphas to give Paige the bite; five before his eyes turn blue.

She power-walks up to him with an overfilling white tin that smells like neosporin and latex. Thankfully, he’s been subconsciously holding back his healing. He pulls his hand – his definitely-smaller-than-it-was-in-the-elevator hand - out of her reach.

“Paige,” he sounds pathetic to his own ears, “I have to tell you something.”

“It can’t wait until you aren’t bleeding?” Her left eyebrow is raised and twitching, but it’s too frantic.

“Werewolves,” he blurts out.

“We can watch Big Wolf on Campus later if want.” She grabs his uninjured arm and tries to use it as leverage to reach the bleeding hand.

“I’m a werewolf.” He allows her to grab his hand now, also allowing his healing to kick in. Small shards of glass squirm out of his skin and ping into the sink. Paige looks up at him. He’s shifting.

“Makes sense,” she breathes.
It’s the first thing in this fucked up scene that doesn’t surprise him – she had been suspicious before.

“You fell asleep when I was reading to you” is the first thing she says after he guides her back to the couch. “To Kill a Mockingbird. For English.”

“I can go if you need time to think.” Quite frankly, he needs time to think. She quirks an eyebrow.

“No, no; you just dropped a giant bomb on my lap, Derek. You’re going to tell me about werewolves. Tonight.”

He smiles slightly, because this is the Paige he remembers. Sweet, but unyielding.

“Your parents are down the road.”

“You can hear that?! Shit, Derek, you were supposed to be gone by now.”

“Meet me in your room. Fifteen minutes.”

He makes it out the back door and swings himself up into the tree conveniently placed close to her bedroom window before her parents even pull into the driveway. (The first two times he tries, he overcompensates and falls. The third time, he’s able to adapt.) She goes through the motions with them (“School was fine. I finished all of my homework with Derek earlier. I’m going to go read in my room. Yes, I’ll go to sleep before 10:30. Night, Mom; night, Dad”) for ten minutes before slowly heading upstairs. Derek leans over to open her window and jumps in. Paige stares.

“So you can control the…”

“Shift.” He nods absently as he talks. “It’s my beta form. I’m a beta; that’s what most werewolves are. Betas are led by an alpha, and alpha-less wolves are called –”

“Could you,” she blurts out, “could you shift again?”

He stares.

“Please?”

He shifts. Paige moves a hand over every inch of his face, feeling the ridges, the teeth, the hair. Derek huffs as she flicks his nose. Laughing softly, she grabs his face with both hands and kisses the side of his mouth.

“Why did you tell me?”

“I love you.” It comes out strangled, and he thinks of blue eyes. “You have to know what you’re getting into.”

She kisses him again, just a peck.

“Thanks.” She grins and lets go of his face. “Jerk.”

By 10:30 (“I promised my parents, you know.”), Paige knows all of the basics, and Derek has smothered her in his scent with hugs. It’s sweet and oh so painful for him. But the worst has yet to come – he has a fifteen minute run back to the Hale house and the Hale family.
The scent hits him first.

The land is saturated with the scent of his family, his pack. His mother’s is slightly stronger than the others’, and it gives off an undercurrent of power, safe, love that has him falling to his knees. Losing a pack member is like losing a limb; losing all but Laura and Peter (and Cora, too, but he didn’t know that at the time) had felt like losing himself, and every following death took chunks of his soul with it. Derek forgot how whole it used to feel. Shakily pushing himself off of the ground, he takes the long way to the house.

The house. It’s full of his family, and he can hear most of them breathing evenly, having gone to bed long before. Peter’s sulking on the porch next to his mother. Talia isn’t happy either.

He echoes Paige’s earlier sentiment: shit.
Painfully Ordinary

Chapter Summary

Derek deals with seeing his family and going to school for the first time in years. Also, Peter tries to meddle.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Your late.”

“Mom –”

“What are the rules?” Talia Hale is even fiercer than Derek remembers. She isn’t backing down, and, when he opens his mouth to plead his case again, her eyes flash. It doesn’t matter that he’s mentally in his twenties. Or that he’s scarred and broken. Talia is his mother, and she knows him.

He hesitates – the rules are coming back to him, but it’s been far too long.

“Be home before eleven.” He used to be able to parrot them back, but for now he’s improvising. At least she only wants the one he broke. “Preferably before ten.”

“And?” Oh shit.

That awful disappointed motherly stare is directed at him. Her being an alpha only makes it worse. Derek’s not only disappointed his mother – he’s disappointed his alpha, and, in a way, his pack.

“You forgot check-ins after nine, nephew,” Peter drawls and steps forward.

Rage, resentment, and regret lick at Derek’s heart like flames. His uncle isn’t (that) bad now, and he promises himself that Peter will never bear those scars again.

“Oh.”

“Oh,” his mother parrots evenly. He has the feeling he’s dug himself a hole so deep that he’s reached the earth’s mantle.

“I was with Paige.” It’s weak, and he knows it.

His mother’s eyes flash.

“Derek Matthew Hale, how long ago were you and your uncle forced to spend the night in a cellar on the preserve?”

“Oh, about a week ago,” Peter says jovially.

“Peter.” Talia doesn’t even look at him, but her brother takes a step back. “I expect better of you, Derek.”

He keeps his head down in both guilt and submission. After a minute or two, she gently pulls him
into her arms. Stern, but with love was how she led the pack, and it was incredibly effective (partially due to the pre-existing ties, but she was admired by other alphas for a reason). “Go up to bed; it’s a school night,” she says softly, letting him go.

He stays where he is.

“I need to talk to you,” he states.

Her eyes soften in concern, and he falters.

“But it can wait.”

Left on the porch, Peter snorts and mutters something about fickle teenagers that Derek doesn’t bother listening to. He heads to his old bedroom then (to the left of Laura’s, across from Nick’s and Alex’s, diagonal from Cora’s – he spent a lot of time in each room when he came back to Beacon Hills). It’s only just after eleven, so Peter probably headed to the library, his mother to her study. He’s too damn tired to check.

The morning is worse.

In an effort to strengthen pack bonds, his mother always insisted on eating breakfast and dinner together. Derek’s the last to the table by choice. He could have come down fifteen minutes earlier, but Laura was drying her hair and humming in the bathroom down the hall, Cora was trying to fit a stuffed wolf plush (a gift for Laura from a gleeful Peter the day she was born that had been passed down to all of his nieces and nephews) into her neon green backpack, and Nick was chucking balled up socks at Alex, who was snoring on the top bunk. That was just the kids’ hall. His head throbbed, and he just lay there until the hall was empty.

When he finally gets to the table, Laura’s there to tease him and flick his nose. Like clockwork, Cora giggles and his brothers both snort. They all fight over waffles and enough bacon to give a normal family heart attacks. The adults eat grapefruit and cereal. It’s everything he tried to forget.

Eventually, he and Laura take her car to BHHS. Derek’s not sure how to feel about it. The car ride is painfully reminiscent of their post-fire roadtrip, and virtually no one likes going to school. Especially if you’ve already learned everything they teach. He’s just lucky that he picked up the habit of meticulously writing everything down (including his schedule, thankfully) from his mom. The only thing not in the school-provided planner he carries is his locker combination, but he remembers it anyway. They all had the same lockers every year at BHHS, and three years was enough to brand it into his memory. It’s all so ordinary.

First period is English (he wants to stand up and shout out the end of the book), second is gym (jumping hurdles is hard when you’re not used to your body), and third is geometry (with Paige). Paige always sat in the second row, he in the last. They compromise, and Derek sits in the fourth row, behind her. No one at school ever knew they had dated. Sometimes he wished he had announced it over the loudspeaker, but, as Peter helpfully pointed out, it meant that no one suspected him when she went missing. Her parents knew, but his breakdown in the days that followed convinced them. They also thought he was just too nice. He slumps down in his seat, because, boy, were they wrong.

Before he can start stewing in his angst, Paige passes papers back, her hand brushing against his. It helps.

It’s a few more periods before lunch. He sits at his new usual table, where he can sneak glances at
her. Two tables over, she does the same. At least until Peter shows up. It’s happened every single day since Derek came home dazed, smelling of a girl and some arousal.

“How sweet.”

Peter steals a cookie off of his tray. Derek lets him.

“How creepy,” he says, gesturing stiffly at his uncle.

“I just wanted to see how my favorite nephew was doing,” he drawls and grabs at his chest. “Is that so bad?”

“I saw you a few hours ago. And you’re too old to be hanging around here.”

The older man gracefully shoves the entire cookie into his mouth and gives his nephew a wounded look. Both are silent as he chews.

“She’s not going to be around forever, nephew.”

“Oh?” A growl is building up in his chest, but he speaks calmly.

“Once she finds out what we are, she’ll leave. It’s a shame; you two are cute together. Of course, it’s all up to you.”

Derek remembers these conversations. Now that he knows his uncle better, he wonders why Peter was so set on Paige getting the bite. What does he have to gain? Peter only does what is good for Peter.

“I have made the right decision,” he says pointedly.

Peter looks pleasantly surprised. Derek looks forward to seeing his reaction when he finally understands.

Chapter End Notes

I’m going back to college at the end of the week, so the next few chapters might not be up as fast!
Derek finally gets a chance to talk to his mother.

Derek doesn’t have to wait all that long. A few more periods later, he’s stuffed in Laura’s car trying not to be aloof. Although he had always been close to his siblings, he remembers going through a too-cool-for-my-siblings phase at this age. Being suspicious is the last thing he needs right now.

Their mother is home like always, because she works at home; an alpha needs to be available to their pack at all times. Her study door is closed, though, which means that she’s working hard on something. Derek bides his time. Homework is an easy distraction, and he does it mindlessly. (Geometry is child’s play compared to a kanima, and he’s already read the darn book for English.) By the time he’s done, his mother is sitting on the porch taking a break.

Perfect.

“Can we talk, Mom?” He’s fidgeting in the doorway. It’s hard to do this, because she’s alive and real and he’s broken.

“Of course,” she says, patting the space next to her.

He shakes his head.

“As beta and alpha.”

Without pause, she’s nodding solemnly and gesturing towards the door. The best place for important private talks is the study. It’s soundproofed for this reason. As soon as the door’s closed and locked, he starts.

“I told Paige.” His mother stares at him blankly; she wants him to say all he has to say before she makes any decisions. “It’s serious. I love her, and I knew that the sooner I told her the less of a blow it would be. Uncle Peter’s been suggesting I ask one of the visiting alphas to give her the bite. He doesn’t believe she’d stay with me if she knew, but I figured there was only one way to find out. She took it very well, even after seeing me shift. That was why I was late last night. I was explaining us.”

Talia nods.

“Invite her to dinner tomorrow night.”

This is a test. A werewolf’s home is more than just its territory; it’s a place where they don’t have to act normal and human. And tomorrow night? It’s one night away from the full moon, and the entire family will be closer to wolves than to humans. Paige will see them as they really are. Of course, she’ll be safe, because the Hales are an old pack and have very good control, but he’s still worried.

“I’ll tell the rest of the pack tonight, so that they can be on their best behavior tomorrow. Go invite
It’s not a suggestion. He’s out the door in minutes. When he hits the edge of the preserve, he slows down to a brisk walk. Paige lives a few streets down from where he stopped, and even at this slower pace, he’ll be there any minute. Both of her parents must be at work yet (it is only four o’clock), because there are no cars there. It takes her less than two minutes to open the door.

“Derek?” He smiles at her and rubs the back of his neck. “Uh, come in.”

“I know I wasn’t planning on coming over today, but, um, my mom wants me to invite you to dinner tomorrow night.”

Paige frowns.

“Is it because of –” She gestures vaguely.

“Yeah. Paige, a wolf’s home is the one place that they can –” It’s his turn to gesture. All of this is information he grew up with. He never learned it; it just is, and he’s not sure that she’d truly understand until she came over.

“Be a wolf?” She’s smiling, but it’s hesitant.

The only thing he can do is nod and change the subject. If dinner is a test (and he knows it is), then he can’t help her cheat. She has to meet his family and be judged. It’s likely that Talia will erase her memories of it all if she fails, but honestly? He has no idea what will happen if she passes. Laura’s had boyfriends, but none were serious. Peter’s always been too involved in his own world to really date. And all of his relationships have been, well, not good as soon as they got serious. (That’s not going to happen this time, he swears.)

They talk about school and life and everything until her parents get home. Sure, they like Derek, but he’s dating their daughter. It doesn’t bother him. He just hugs Paige once more before he heads back to the preserve.

Dinner is served shortly after he walks through the door. The only way he expects to get through it is by focusing on his food. If he’s thinking about carrots, he can’t freak out or break down, right? Of course, nothing goes right in his life.

“We’re having a guest for dinner tomorrow,” his mother says once everyone is sitting down.

And everyone is there. Talia sits at the head of the table, Peter and Aunts Miranda and Tabitha (with their respective husbands) to her right, and Laura, Derek, and the twins to her left. Cora and his two cousins are at a kids’ table slightly off to the side, but they perk up at the news all the same.

It is very startling news for everyone. The only dinner guests they usually have are members of visiting packs (it’s a custom Talia refuses to ignore). They never, however, have guests so close to the full moon. On the days closest to the full moon, it’s hard for wolves to be respectful to outsiders, especially in their home. Treaties and friendships between packs are too valuable to risk over manners.

“Derek’s girlfriend, Paige, will be here.” With that, she gestures for everyone to start eating.

No one does. They’re all too busy staring at him. Especially Peter, who’s blinking madly, unable to process it all. Derek was hoping his mother would wait until after dinner for just this reason. His
throat feels swollen. He can’t talk to his not-dead family right now. He needs more time.

Looking his uncle in the eyes, he spears a carrot on his fork, pulls it off with his teeth, and chews. It grounds him, reminds him of what he has to do. It also reminds his family that they are, in fact, at dinner, and, after a tense pause, they start to eat. He has no doubt that he's still firmly on the hook, but if he can have a reprieve, then he can plan just how he’s going to explain giving away their biggest and deepest family secret to a teenage girl he only really met two weeks ago.

Peter confronts him on the porch a few hours later.

“What were you thinking?”

“That I might just get an A on my geometry test next week.”

Peter grabs his shoulder harshly.

“You risked our entire existence over a crush.”

“Brother, if anyone should be disciplining the kids, don’t you think it should be me?”

Derek doesn’t remember his mother having so much sway over his uncle, but the man lets go and backs up so fast that he’s practically tripping over himself.

“Of course, Sis. I'm just surprised that my dear nephew neglected to tell me of his…plans.”

“Of course. Well, I think it’s time Derek went to bed, don’t you?”

She’s smiling, but her eyes flash.

All three head back into the house.
Dinner and a Show

Chapter Summary

Paige comes over for dinner.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Peter doesn’t show up at the school during lunch the next day.

Derek’s not really all that surprised, but it’s worrying. If his uncle isn’t bothering him, then where is he? He mentally puts it aside. What he should actually be worrying about is dinner. After school, he’s supposed to go to Paige’s house. They’ll do homework, cuddle – the usual. Maybe they’ll even makeout. (He’s trying to go slow, because he’s afraid he’ll have a breakdown otherwise.) Then, about an hour before dinner, they’ll go to the Hale house. He’ll introduce her to everyone. Everyone will be nice and leave them alone. The two of them will be couple-y outside as he shows her surroundings. Eventually, he, Paige, and his family will sit down to a not-quite-civilized dinner. And she’ll be judged.

Yeah, no problem.

This time, his plans actually run fairly smoothly. When it’s time to head to his house, he and Paige say goodbye to her parents and walk towards the preserve.

“This usually takes about ten minutes, but,” he trails off and looks at the tree line, “I run.”

“How fast?” She asks soft and curious, and he smiles slightly.

It’s both easier and harder to smile here.

“Fast.”

When he looks at her, she’s looking him over.

“What?”

“Crouch down.”

“What?”

She gives him a look. He crouches down, and begins to understand when she slowly climbs onto his back.

“If we’re doing this, you need to hold on tight.”

Arms wrap around his shoulders, and he readjusts his grip on her legs.

“Are you going to shift?” It’s a whisper against his neck. He almost drops her.

“Uh, yeah. But not until we’re far enough in. Can’t risk someone seeing me.”
He shifts a minute later, rocketing off into the preserve, jumping up ridges and dodging trees. Behind him, she gasps.

It takes minutes to reach the house.

“So,” she laughs out when he lets her down, “fast.”

“Fast,” he agrees.

Her hair looks ridiculous (there are definitely leaves in it), and she’s so happy that he can’t help himself. He tilts her chin up with one hand and kisses her chastely on the lips, his other hand trying to discreetly remove the leaves.

Laura catcalls from her bedroom window. His mother is smiling benignly at them from the porch. Peter’s there, too, of course.

“Piggyback rides, nephew?”

Talia rests an arm on his uncle’s shoulders.

“Hello, Paige. I’m Derek’s mother. Call me Talia.”

“– and this is Aunt Miranda, Uncle Jimmy, and my cousins, Charlie and Sarah.” He forces the words out even though it feels like he’s being strangled. It’s expected of him to introduce everyone to Paige; having the others introduce themselves would be serious mark against him as a wolf, and his mother would ban him from ‘courting his intended’ (as the old traditions go) any further until he could prove himself worthy again. And it’s just plain bad manners.

Paige smiles sweetly as she shakes hands, even bending down to be at the same eye level as the younger kids. Charlie, the youngest, shifts when she holds her hand out.

“It’s ok, I’m nervous, too,” she stage-whispers and extends her hand out, palm up.

It must hurt a little when they shake hands, because Charlie’s claws are still out, but she doesn’t wince. Only Talia knows, but he thinks she’s passing this part of the evening. His mother and uncle are standing off to the side. As the alpha, Talia must observe Paige, and she has a good grip on Peter, so that he doesn’t interfere.

She allows him to step forward to be introduced.

“This is my uncle,” Derek steels himself so that the name comes out evenly, “Peter.”

Paige’s perceptiveness is not new to him, but he never knew just how much she had noticed. Obviously, she’s caught on to his uncle’s underlying anger. Her smile widens.

“I’ve seen you at school before. Derek told me you two are close.” That’s a lie. A very good, very simple lie. Her heart is steady. “It’s nice to meet you. Officially, at least.”

And then, she grasps Peter’s stiffly outstretched hand and pulls him into a gentle hug.

Derek shuffles. One, two, three, four…

His uncle wraps his other arm around her and squeezes just enough for it to hurt. Without hesitation she squeezes back. They separate.
“And my nephew has told me all about you,” he drawls with a smirk.

“All good things, I hope.” She’s the very picture of innocence.

“Oh, of course.”

“Finally met your match in a great big pissing contest, haven’t you, Peter?” Aunt Tabitha whispers off to the side.

Peter smiles blandly. Talia clears her throat.

“Why don’t you show her the garden, Derek? Dinner will be in twenty minutes or so.”

“So, did I pass?”

Derek startles.

“I mean, meeting the parents is supposed to be a big hurdle in relationships.”

“Y-yeah, I think so.”

They walk around the house to the garden, and he takes the time to watch her. Her interaction with Peter was a bit shocking for him. He knew she was strong. The way they met was proof enough that she didn’t take shit from anyone. Still.

“Dinner’s ready,” he says.

She blinks.

“How…?”

He taps his nose.

The seating is different. Laura usually sits on his mother’s left as the oldest of the children, but tonight she’s sitting in Derek’s seat when he and Paige come in. The seat to his mother’s right (Peter’s seat) is also open, and everyone on that side is shifted down one. He had been hoping his mother would let them sit together.

Dinner starts off awkward. Peter has his arms on the table taking up some of Paige’s space, but, honestly, everyone has their arms on the table. Manners aren’t enforced so close to the moon. It’s clear to Derek, however, that he’s doing it on purpose.

“Could you pass the mashed potatoes, Peter?” Her eyes are wide and her smile sweet as she looks at him and slowly and deliberately slides her arms onto the table, pushing her right arm firmly against the man’s left.

They stare at each other for a moment before he inclines his head and moves his arm a fraction to the right.

“Of course.”

Talia hums, and, as soon as everyone has food on their plates, she has a bite, signaling everyone to begin. There is silverware on the table, but no one in his family uses it. In fact, they’re all going
out of their way not to. The youngest kids have even shifted. Derek hesitates, but digs in. This is a test, he reminds himself. He can’t help her.

Without a glance in his direction (he thinks it’s on purpose), she delicately picks up a chicken leg, pauses, and rips into it. All of the silverware is ignored, even when it comes to the potatoes. At the end, she’s the first to start licking her fingers clean. His mother hums again.

“Thank you for having me over, Talia.”

“It was my pleasure.”

Everyone says their goodbyes then, and Derek crouches down so that Paige can get on his back again. The run through the woods is silent.

“Why did you…” He gestures as they walk down the street to her house.

“When in Rome,” she says shyly.

“It’s not always like that,” he blurts out.

She shrugs. All of this is so foreign to him. He never actually dated Kate, or Jennifer (unless, of course, you count bleeding all over the side of her car as a date – he doesn’t), and his relationship with Paige the first time around was mostly sneaking out to the distillery and doing homework together. The unknown is scary, and, in his experience, often results in death. It’s not going to this time, he thinks as he hugs her goodnight.

When he gets back to the house, his mother is waiting for him on the porch. He follows her into the study, where he expects she’ll tell him whether or not Paige has passed her test.

He’s wrong.

“Who are you?”

Chapter End Notes

My college classes start on Tuesday, so instead of every three days, I'll hopefully be posting once a week (every Sunday).
Derek and Talia talk privately. Derek experiences his first full moon in the past.

Derek feels his heart stop.

“I guess the better question is: when are you? I know my son, and you are him, just not...him. Our emissary says that this kind of time travel is possible, though rare, of course.”

He stares at her.

“How…”

“Your eyes flashed blue the last time we talked here, and you actually love that girl; I could tell. You were only infatuated with her last week. Should I go on?”

He shakes his head.

“I’m twenty-five, and all of you are dead.”

It’s too much at that point. He falls to his knees, but his mother is there to help him up and into a chair. Her hands card through his hair. Once his breathing is back to normal, she shifts from mother to alpha, a seamless change that she always made look so natural.

“Explain.”

And he does.

Talia stops him before he can get to Kate.

“It’s best that I don’t know everything. I can’t let the possible future actions of a person cloud my judgment of them, nor can I afford to be looking over my shoulder everyday.” She pauses. “You can bring Paige over more often. We won’t offer the bite, but your uncle Jimmy does fine without it, so she’ll fit in well. It’s often useful to have humans in the pack, anyway.”

Over the course of a few days, he’s managed to change the future greatly. Paige won’t get the bite, won’t die. Without her death, the nemeton won’t have enough power to bring the Darach back from the brink of death so that she could begin her sacrifices. He’s saving lives already.

It scares him.

“Is it obvious? That I’m…different?”

“The others are beginning to suspect,” she states carefully, “especially Laura. Being next in line to
be the alpha means that she has to take care of her pack, physically and emotionally. She pays attention. Peter is also curious. Just a few days ago, you would have listened to him and taken his advice, no matter what it was. I should consult the emissary. Telling the pack is not an option, but apparently the future needs to be changed too drastically for subtlety.”

He winces.

“Do you really think Deaton can help?”

“That is his role,” she drawls, not showing a hint of surprise at his mention of the name. “Now go to bed. Tomorrow’s the full moon, and who knows how it will affect you now.”

For all of his mother’s doubts, Derek wakes up the next morning feeling confident that he’d be in control that evening. He’s switched anchors so many times in the past (family, anger, Laura, anger, pack) without losing control, so it shouldn’t be a problem. All around him, his family is waking up and getting ready for the day, and he focuses on it all, committing it to memory.

Cora huffs across the hall. Although it takes him a moment or so, Derek remembers that this had not been uncommon. His sister was young and didn’t have the same level of control as her older siblings. She’s ripped her sheets again, he thought.

The problem is that everyone’s busy. His mother is probably in her study (he can’t hear her), Laura’s snoring in her room, and the rest of his family is either in the kitchen or wrestling out front. When Cora whines softly, he’s up and off.

“Oh, it’s fine,” he murmurs, softly closing the door behind him.

She looks up at him, opens her mouth in a silent sob, and begins to cry. Shit. Get over yourself, Derek, he tells himself. Hesitantly picking the crying girl up to rest on his hip – thank God for werewolf strength – he mentally catalogues the damage. It isn’t too bad, and young born werewolves always go through sheets like tissues anyway. Cora winds her hands around his torso, shoving her face into his shirt. He pats her head.

“I’ll fix it, don’t worry.”

After some creative shifting, he stiffly pulls the sheets off of the bed and grabs a new set from her closet. He’s going to have to set her down to put them on, though – there’s no doubt about that. Once she’s on her own two feet again, he kneels down in front of her.

“Do you want to help?”

She nods, and he smiles a little sadly. With Derek shakily doing most of the work – when was the last time he had to put a sheet on a bed for anyone, let alone family? – and Cora smoothing out the top, they finish within a few minutes, and his sister is smiling again. He gets a big hug for his efforts, which he stiffly returns. Images of her sick, dying, poisoned run through his head, and he squeezes tighter, burying his head in her neck and scenting her. Not going to happen this time.

“It’s time for breakfast,” Talia says from the doorway.

Her eyes are focused on him, assessing him.

The rest of the day is mostly a blur to him, but it’s often like that on the full moon. He can feel the
itch to shift, to run. The moon isn’t up, but it’s calling. Like any born wolf, Derek relaxes into the call and embraces the feelings that come with it. He can’t fight what he is. He won’t fight.

And then it’s time. The sun is setting, and the itch is stronger than ever. All of his family members are standing on the porch silently, looking up at the dying light in the sky. The youngest wolves are already shifted. He’s standing ahead of everyone else, Laura obstinately by his side, because he doesn’t think he could handle seeing all of them in this moment of heightened everything. Behind him, his mother hums.

Slowly, they begin to shift. It’s an unwritten rule that they do so by a mix of hierarchy and age. Since Cora and his cousins are already shifted, the twins are up first. They sigh as they shift. Derek closes his eyes and listens. Next to him, Laura huffs a little and places a heavy hand on his shoulder to remind him that it’s his turn.

Oh.

He’s not an alpha anymore.

With a deep breath, he rolls his neck and shifts, eyes still closed. It feels so different. He’s not as powerful as he was even before he took the alpha power from Peter, and his body isn’t as strong, as conditioned. The hand on his shoulder grows claws. He doesn’t notice. In fact, he’s too busy cataloging the differences that he misses all of his uncles and aunts shifting. When his mother shifts, however, there’s a hum in the air that calls for attention. She slides her robe off of her shoulders, revealing what they all already knew – she was naked. The humming increases. It stops when she’s full wolf, and silence reigns until she gives a soft growl.

They all know that growl to be the all-clear. Cora and his cousins yip excitedly, tackling each other and wrestling on the lawn. Content in the knowledge that the others will watch the children, his two aunts and their husbands – even his uncle Jimmy, who chose not to take the bite – head off into the preserve. They’ll stay close, of course, but they’ll have their space. His mother lounges up on the porch.

Alone. Peter?

A rock comes hurdling at his head from the left, and he snaps his head to the side and catches it with a growl. Laura breathes in sharply. Peter’s just standing off to the left, looking at him. Behind him, his mother stands up on all fours. Even the youngest wolves stop wrestling.

'Your eyes flashed blue the last time we talked here…'

Shit.

He can feel his anchor wavering – if it even still existed in the first place. Everything inside of him is screaming, and instinct takes over.

Derek runs.

Chapter End Notes

Although this chapter does have a cliffhanger of sorts for an ending, the next chapter is more of an interlude than a chapter. It will deal with the other main characters in the past - Scott, Stiles, etc. Chapter 7 will pick up where this chapter ended.
When I Was Young

Chapter Summary

Derek runs away from his family. A glimpse at the other main players at this point in time.

Derek bounds through the preserve, barefoot. Stray sticks and rocks slice his feet and tear at his pants, but he doesn’t notice. *They saw his eyes.* He doesn’t know how he and his mother are going to explain this. Less than a mile behind him is his mother in her full wolf form, swiftly tracking him in the hopes of calming him down and anchoring him. In other parts of Beacon Hills, several of Derek’s acquaintances are a few months into an important year of their life.

Kindergarten.

A young Scott McCall, shy and hesitant with an inhaler gripped tightly in his hand, is dropped off by his father on the first day. His mother would have done so if she wasn’t at the hospital for a shift. His father doesn’t walk him in.

Right outside the classroom door, G. Stilinski is being fussed over by his mother, Claudia, while his father stands slightly off to the side, a proud grin on his face. Claudia Stilinski is excited for her son. There aren’t any other kids on their block, and this is a chance for him to make friends. On the other hand, her husband is proud, but worried. The night before he had rambled on and on about abduction statistics until she had laughed and kissed him, assuring him that their son would be just fine.

Mr. and Mrs. Reyes are talking to the teacher as their daughter nervously stands next to the teacher’s desk. *She has epilepsy,* they explain, *and there are certain procedures that have to be followed if she has a seizure.* Although it is necessary, the special attention already makes Erica Reyes feel like an outcast.

Outside of the school, Mrs. Lahey is smothering her little Isaac in kisses – and lipstick – as he squirms and giggles. Mr. Lahey ruffles his son’s hair and gives a hearty laugh. Rolling his eyes, Camden Lahey shifts impatiently next to his father, waiting to be excused so that he could go to his own classroom.

The Boyds are less than ten feet away, saying goodbye to a very quiet Vernon Boyd IV. Secretly, he thinks that all of the other kids are just too loud. He observes.

Just inside the school doors are the Martins. Young Lydia Martin is the best dressed kid in the entire elementary school, and her mother fusses over the creases in her dress and her posture. Her father doesn’t say a word. When they aren’t paying attention, she shoots a soft smile over at the boy she met at the park the week before, Danny.

Danny himself barely has time to smile back. His mother and father are smothering him with hugs. Privately, Danny thinks that they’ll miss him being at home more than he will. It’s not the same for his best friend.
Said best friend, Jackson Whittemore, is clinging to his father, his face buried in the older man’s neck. Mrs. Whittemore is laughing too hard to effectively pull her son off of her husband. Eventually, Danny skips over and manages to coax Jackson into coming into the classroom with him. The Whittemores and the Mahealanis smile over their heads.

Scott McCall wants to color – really wants to color – but some of the other kids are hogging all of the paper. So he sits in the corner, clutching a handful of crayons, unsure of what to do. It’s inevitable in his mind that he eat a few. He’s done it before, too. Though, every time he had, his father had yelled at him. He grins. His father isn’t here.

Just as he’s unwrapping a blue crayon, someone plops down next to them.

“Hi,” G. Stilinski chirps. “My name’s…well, you wouldn’t be able to say it. Only mama can. Daddy calls me son or kiddo. He’s a deputy. Deputy Stilinski.”

The other kid trails off and looks so crestfallen all of a sudden, and Scott can’t help but think it’s his fault that the boy’s mood flipped.

“Stil-in-ski?”

The boy looks at him with wide eyes and nods. Scott shrugs.

“I can call you…Stiles?” He says it hesitantly.

G. Stilinski – Stiles – grins so widely that Scott is afraid his face will split.

“You know, red crayons taste the best,” Stiles blurs out.

Looking down at his crayons, Scott grabs a red one and bends it with all of his strength until it snaps in two.

“Wanna share?”

Isaac bonds with a kid named Matt Daehler over comic books during lunch. Over to the side, Vernon Boyd has deftly climbed a tree, lunchbox tied to his pant loops, to eat in peace. Sitting cross-legged on the grass are Jackson and Danny. A table away, Erica shyly asks to sit with Scott and the newly christened Stiles. She’s too afraid to ask to join Lydia and some of the other girls two tables back, and the two boys are sitting alone together. They say yes. Well, Stiles babbles incoherently, mouth full of food (which he’s spitting out as he talks), and Scott bounces up and down in his seat with a grin and nods.

“I’m Stiles, and this is Scott,” the messy kid chirps once he swallows.

He holds his hand out. It’s smeared with what she thinks is ketchup. After a moment’s hesitation, she grips the hand anyway and shakes it.

Erica thinks she’s in love.

All of them are innocent, happy. On the night of Derek’s first full moon in the past, they’re in bed. Scott and Stiles are having the third of many sleepovers at Stiles’ house. Claudia babies them,
stuffing them so full of brownies and milk that they drift off sprawled out next to each other on the couch. Sneaking a brownie for himself, Deputy Stilinski carefully carries them up to Stiles’ room one at a time. Across town, Lydia covers her ears with pillows in an attempt to drown out the sound of her parents fighting. She doesn't know what they’re fighting about, but they’ve been fighting for days. Jackson’s fallen asleep in his mother’s study down the street. Danny, Isaac, and Erica have all been tucked in by their loving parents. Boyd is out camping in his back yard.

Images of all of them – scared, sad teenagers with way too much on their shoulders – flash through Derek’s head as he runs to the only place he can without being judged.

*Paige.*
Paige is awake in her room when the sun sets. Derek, she knows, is out there in the preserve with his family, watching the moon and letting himself go. It makes her feel restless that they’re out there, and that she’s cooped up in her room, wondering what exactly is happening. She laughs. *I’m pacing in my bedroom, thinking about my werewolf boyfriend.* The thought calms her enough that she’s able to curl up on her bed with *To Kill a Mockingbird* and begin reading the last three chapters for Monday’s English class.

Two chapters in, her window is ripped open.

His hands and feet bleed and heal as Derek runs on all fours through the preserve, instinctually heading towards Paige’s house. All he can think about is the future. He can’t go back now even if they found a way – he’s already changed an event. At the same time, the future is an unknown. Sure, he’s saved Paige from dying the way she had before.

But what about everything else? What if she dies anyway? *What if he loses everyone again?*

Before he has the chance to think about whether or not he’ll have to bury Laura all over again, he’s in Paige’s backyard. He looks up at her window and shuts himself down. It’s just too much, and without an anchor, he can’t take it.

The feral beta scales the tree and yanks the window open, not caring about how the frame cracks from the force of his actions.

Paige drops her book.

“*D-Derek? Warn a girl, would you?*”

He scurries over to the corner of her room, his glowing eyes watching both the door and the window. *Something’s wrong.*

“Derek? It’s me – Paige. Are you okay? Where’s your family?”

A wounded noise comes from the beta in the corner. She walks over to him slowly, holding her hands out in the universal ‘I mean you no harm’ gesture. When there’s less than five feet between them, he darts forward and sniffs her hand.

*Stay calm, stay calm, stay calm.*

He must be satisfied with what he smells, because he begins herding her over to her bed, his eyes still flitting between the door and the window. The bed dips as she sits on the edge. With a quick glance her way, the beta settles himself on the floor in front of the bed.
He’s trying to protect me? she thinks, scrunching her eyebrows.

A soft hand rests on his shoulder, drawing his attention back to her. Paige gestures for him to come up on the bed, and he does so without hesitation, tilting his head when she lays down on the side of the bed against the wall.

“It’s fine,” she whispers as she pats the bed next to her. “We’re in no danger, Derek.”

It’s really what she believes. The beta in front of her may be a little bloody but only on his feet and hands. If he and his family were attacked, it would be worse, wouldn’t it?

He lays down next to her – though facing away from her, so that he has a clear view of both entrances. It’s the most she can ask for in the moment. With a soft sigh, she curls up against his back.

It takes her less than twenty minutes to fall asleep.

A black wolf trots into the backyard and sniffs at the trunk of the tree.

Derek.

Talia inclines her head to look at the open window on the second floor. Her son is in there, and through her bonds to her children and pack, she can tell he’s still shifted. Still panicked. His girlfriend is there, however, her scent mingled with his in a such a way that the alpha can tell they must be touching.

She’s brave, Talia muses. Or stupid.

The black wolf takes off in the direction of the preserve.

The good thing about Saturdays is that her parents aren’t around to bother her. They both go to various club meetings and musical practices on the weekends, because it’s the only time they have to do so during the week. It’s best they don’t see her now.

Her head is buried in Derek’s neck when she wakes up, her hands wrapped around his chest. She can feel it expand and deflate with each slow breath he takes. His own hands are resting against hers. No claws, she realizes with a grin.

A kiss to his shoulder wakes him up, and it doesn’t take him long to recognize his surroundings. Shifting around in her arms, Derek stares at her. How did I get here? he wants to ask, but she speaks before he can.

“Hey.”

“Hey?”

“Yeah,” she replies and kisses his nose.

“You’re not going to ask about…,” he trails off.

“Do you want me to?”
“Yes?”

She gives him a small smile.

“What happened last night?”

He tells her the basics – that he was startled and realized that his anchor had changed, that it had shocked him into being feral, and that he had come to her on instinct.

“You must be my new anchor,” he finishes.

“But you didn’t shift back.”

He’s not completely sure why he didn’t to be honest. Being near his anchor should have calmed him and forced him out of his feral state.

“The only reason I can think of is that I must have felt that you were in danger,” he admits, looking away from her.

What he doesn’t say is that he must have thought she was in danger from his own family.

The room is silent for a few minutes.

“Get up,” Paige says abruptly.

All of a sudden he’s unsure. Does she want him to leave? She raises an eyebrow.

“There’s a box of waffle mix and a waffle iron waiting for us in the kitchen. Unless you’re not hungry?”

Oh.

They manage to finish their waffles – after a very long and very messy waffle mix fight that had Derek laughing like he hadn’t since before Paige’s death in the original timeline – and read the last chapter of To Kill A Mockingbird together before his mother shows up. He can feel her coming from the moment she leaves the preserve. Concern echoes through the pack bonds, multiplied by everyone in his family. Even Peter is deeply concerned. It throws him off.

“Derek, Paige,” Talia says after Paige lets her in.

“Mom.”

His mother – the alpha – stares at him, judging him. Evidently, he passes her examination, because she gently grips his shoulders and pulls him into a hug.

“We have to talk,” she says into his shoulder. “A pack meeting.”

He knew it would happen. If only his eyes hadn’t stayed blue.

“Okay,” he mutters.

Exchanging a quick goodbye hug with Paige, Derek steels himself for the approaching pack meeting.

How am I going to explain this?
Telling the Pack

Chapter Summary

Talia and Derek talk to the rest of the Hale Pack.

Derek and Talia walk back through the preserve. At the house, the entire pack is assembled and waiting for them – for his explanation. It’s something he’s never had to deal with. Laura hadn’t asked for an explanation after the fire, and by the time he’d had a new pack, he was an Alpha. Alphas don’t have to answer to anyone. Not to mention the fact that he hadn’t even begun to think of how to explain his eyes. At the pace that they were walking, he had a little less than ten minutes to come up with something.

Derek had never really been creative. Shit.

When they reach the invisible line around the property that designates where the hearing range of the wolves in the Hale house ended, his mother rests a hand on his shoulder.

“As Alpha, I will begin the meeting. You’ll talk when it is your turn – and no sooner.”

All he can do is nod. She returns the nod, and they quickly arrive at the house. Although he can hear them all inside, waiting impatiently but quietly, none of them move as he and the Alpha enter. The two of them go into the living room and stand at the entrance. His family looks at them expectantly, and his mother inclines her head to show that the meeting starts now.

“As you know,” Talia begins, “last night was no ordinary full moon. Derek’s eyes flashed blue last night instead of the gold they were a few short weeks ago. There is an explanation for this. It is not a simple one, and none of you will get to hear all of it. I myself have not – and will not – press him to tell the full story. As Alpha of the Hale Pack, I ban all of its members from asking questions that are not be answered in this explanation. Derek may tell you, if – and only if – he chooses to do so.”

This is it, he thinks. They’ll all hate me. I killed them. I put Peter in a coma. He’ll rip me apart. They won’t stop him.

He trembles and shrinks in on himself, trying his hardest to breathe. When he tries to start speaking, however, Talia holds a hand up. What?

“Some time ago, Derek came to me and told me that he was struggling with a decision and needed some guidance. He was hesitant to explain the situation, so I contacted our emissary.”

Everyone perks up at that. The emissary existed – that they knew – but he or she was almost a myth within the pack, because only the Alpha was ever in contact with them. Derek can see that Peter, especially, is paying close attention. Peter never liked mysteries.

The thing that Derek can’t help but focus on is that his mother isn’t lying. He did come to her. He did tell her about a difficult decision he had been struggling with – though he had already decided when they talked. She had even contacted Deaton.

“With the emissary’s help, he was able to…explore the possibilities of his choices. It was real
enough to him that certain events – which will not be discussed here – that would have turned his eyes blue had they actually happened managed to turn them regardless. I have not forced him to discuss these events, but they have affected him strongly. That is why he ran last night.”

Still, no lies. Deaton had helped him in the future, and she hadn’t forced him to say everything he had when they talked. This is why his mother is the Alpha.

“Did I miss anything, Derek?” she asks as she rests her hand on his shoulder again.

Her tone implies that she knows she hasn’t. He shakes his head, still trembling slightly. Unsurprisingly, Laura is the first to move. She really is the perfect wolf to take over from their mother – observant, powerful, and able to think quickly.

“Derek,” she says softly and yanks him into a hug.

The rest of the pack follows suit until they’re all surrounding Derek – the adults are hugging him fiercely, the youngest wolves are wrapped around his legs and even Peter has an arm around him (as well as an interested eye, but that’s not shocking at all). It takes a few dizzying minutes for them to disperse. He knows from experience that they’ll all regroup for lunch around eleven and stick close for the rest of the day. The animal instincts are still right at the surface.

The one who sticks closest to him is Laura, and, just for a moment, he imagines that the fire has happened, that they’re clinging to each other because there is no one else. It’s a morbid image, but it calms him down somewhat. When it was just the two of them, they learned to take comfort in being around each other. They learned how to help fill those gaping wounds on their souls. Facing just Laura is easier than being thrown into his entire family again. Cora is curled up between them on the couch to watch movies, and he finds that it’s not that hard to imagine a world where they knew about Cora and took her with them. His grip on the two tightens. Laura nuzzles his hair. Cora nudges his arm.

Behind him is his mother, and she stands there watching the three for a minute before announcing that lunch is ready. Lunch after the full moon is always the same. A few loaves of bread are on the table along with several pounds of lunch meat and cheeses. No one uses a plate, and the kids don’t even bother with bread. It’s simple but perfect. Secretly, he thinks that Paige would fit in perfectly, sitting on the floor with them (maybe between Cora and Charlie, because the kids really did like her) and eating meat and cheese without bread and laughing when the youngest wolves yip in excitement.

He doesn’t feel so bad anymore.
Derek talks to a few people.

The problem now is that they all treat Derek like glass. He’s a werewolf, thank you very much – he’s been dealing with all of his grief for years now, and even if they don’t know that, he doesn’t need them to be so careful around him. Maybe it would be easier if Mom made me tell them about Paige at least, he muses. Then they would know what to tiptoe around instead of being cautious about everything.

Even Cora is being careful around him. In fact, the only ones not treating him like something breakable (newsflash: he’s already broken) are Talia and Peter. Talia knows the truth, and her job as the Alpha is not to coddle her pack, so it’s not surprising that she is still the same. Peter, however, isn’t treating him carefully as much as he is treating him with more respect. At least, that’s what it seems like. Derek is even more convinced now than he ever was that something happened in his Uncle’s past. Maybe he made the decision Peter couldn’t? Or maybe Peter was scarred from something, too. All Derek knew for certain was that he would never understand the older man. Speak of the Devil and he shall appear, he thinks as his Uncle climbs into the tree he’s perched in.

“You skipped lunch, dear nephew,” he drawls as he tosses a saran-wrapped sandwich in Derek’s direction.

He catches it deftly with one hand and unwraps it. Ham. Not bad. Ripping a large chunk off with his teeth, he nods. Talia had come to the base of the tree twenty minutes before to tell him that it was ready. He stayed in the tree and figured that she must have told the rest of the pack to leave him alone. Not that Peter ever listens. He swallows the first bite and looks at the other man.

“Just ask.”

Peter grins.

“So, blue eyes, you mind explaining?”

Derek sighs. Of course he knew what Peter wanted, but that doesn’t mean it ever gets easier to relive Paige’s death. All of the black blood dripping on the roots of the – no, nope, don’t think about it.

“I would have asked one of the visiting Alphas,” he mutters. “She wouldn’t survive.”

“That wouldn’t change your eyes,” Peter says after a moment of silence. “You wouldn’t have killed her. The Alpha would have.”

Derek turns to look his Uncle right in the eyes, his own eyes glowing weakly.

“Yeah, I would have.”

Peter inclines his head. He understands.
“Ah, young love,” he drawls.

“Young love can last,” he retorts.

Because, really, he’d had a grand total of three relationships when Jennifer had knocked him out in that elevator. Kate happened a year after Paige, when he was still in so much pain. He had needed someone who was nothing like Paige, and she was older, blonde, and sexual. After the fire, he didn’t have another relationship until Jennifer, because she was damaged just like he was (and looked like Paige, a small voice in his head whispered). All of the love and pain he had from this first relationship had controlled his life. He doubts he could let go of her now that she was alive. He won’t mess this up, too.

Peter stares at him and nods. It only supports Derek’s theory – Peter had been in love before and it hadn’t ended well. Maybe he can work with that, become closer to his Uncle so that he can try to keep him off of the violent sociopath track. It would be painful but worth it. He doesn’t want to have to rip his throat out again. He wants his family to stay whole.

Derek’s stomach rumbles, and he sighs. Obviously, Peter had only brought the one sandwich. Without pause, he slides off the tree branch and lands feet first on the ground next to where Peter lands a moment later. They walk back to the house together in silence.

He calls Paige that night. They hadn’t seen each other since the morning after the full moon, and he’s sure she’s anxious for an update.

“Yes?”

“Paige.”

“Derek,” she teases.

He rolls his eyes, but he can tell that she’s curious by the tone of her voice.

“I’m fine. It went well.” She doesn’t say anything. “I’ll be in school tomorrow. Are you going to be practicing before school?”

“When aren’t I?” she says with a laugh. “You know that if you ever need to talk –”

“I have you,” he interrupts.

It feels so good to say that.

“Yeah.”

When he hangs up, he climbs into bed and sits there, head against the wall. Everything is so new to him. He just doesn’t know how to be a teenager or in a relationship. It throws him off, even as he can feel the deadlines pushing in on him. He can’t fuck up this time.

“You’re really serious about her, aren’t you,” Laura says softly from the doorway.

It isn’t a question.

“Yeah.”
She climbs into his bed and sits next to him in silence for a few minutes.

“How do you do it?” he asks.

“Do what?”

“Be in a relationship.”

She purses her lips.

“I’ve never been in a serious relationship like yours, little bro. None of my dates have ever known about our monthly problems.”

“So?”

Glancing at him, she lets out a quiet ‘aha’.

“She is your first girlfriend, isn’t she. Well, just be yourself. It’s crappy advice, but you can actually follow it. I mean, if you two spent a furry night alone together, then you don’t have to hold yourself back,” she says with a wiggle of her eyebrows.

“Laura! Nothing happened and you know it.”

Apparently she finds it hilarious, because instead of responding, Laura just laughs loudly.

“I hate you,” he hisses and then looks away, feeling guilty.

“Love you, too, bro.”
A Big Step

Chapter Summary

Derek goes to school on Monday

The next day is a Monday. Mondays suck.

Well, Derek figures they could be worse – he could be doing pull-ups in the charred remains of his house while waiting for a bunch of teenagers to get out of school like he had after coming back to Beacon Hills. Yeah, it could be worse.

The car ride to school is a little awkward, because he still feels guilty for telling Laura he hated her, and Laura is dead-set on teasing him about his ‘adorable girlfriend’. If he were actually his teenage self, he’d huff and think of some way to prank or just plain irritate her. But he can’t bring himself to do that. His sister is real and alive and driving him to school. So he deals with it by rolling his eyes and hiding his small smile.

Derek even gets to see Paige, who’s in the music room with her cello and an empty music stand (which is flat horizontally so that she can put a water bottle there). She doesn’t notice him. Leaning against the wall, he watches her play. The bow glides across the strings, and it’s obvious that she knows this song by heart, because her eyes are closed, too, a soft smile curling at the sides of her mouth. Why had he never done this before? It had always been about stolen kisses and the way her hair fell on her shoulders and the look on her face when he teased her. It makes him feel shallow. There she is, playing her cello like the two of them are the only things left in the world – like she wants to do nothing more than create music with it. Music has always been her passion, and it brings out her beauty – a thing he had always thought only shone when they were teasing each other with secret glances and brushes of the hands.

God did he want to kiss her.

As soon as the song was over, Paige gently sets the bow down and props the cello up in its stand so that she can take a swig of her water. It still takes her a minute or so to notice him, and when she does, she blushes and scrunches her nose up.

“You couldn’t make a little bit of noise next time, could you?”

He drops his backpack and walks up to her, bending over slightly and pulling her into a kiss. The kiss is soft and loving and so startling to her, but she barely shows it.

“I’ll take that as a no,” she whispers, their faces still close together.

With a grin, he pulls another chair over and sits on it backwards.

“I have a favor to ask you,” he says

“What kind of favor?” she replies with a raised eyebrow.

Taking a deep breath, Derek steels himself for what he is about to say. It’s something he probably never would have asked of her in the original timeline, because it would have ruined what he
thought was the best part of their relationship. Now that he is older and wiser (it sounds like such a cliché, but it’s true), he doesn’t give a shit. He has her back. His family knows and approves. He isn’t going to mess this up.

“Would you sit with me at lunch?” he says hesitantly.

Paige blinks and jerks her head back in surprise.

“What about –”

“I can hang out with them at practice. Or class.”

Okay, that’s a lie. He doesn’t really feel any sort of connection with his ‘friends’ anymore. Not after the funeral. They attended, said their apologies, and avoided interacting with him again until he and Laura packed up what little they still had and left town. None of them knew how to deal with an orphan. Yeah, he doesn’t really care anymore.

“Then I suppose I could eat with you,” she says with a dramatic sigh.

Derek leans in and kisses the side of her mouth.

“Thanks.”

He’s a little antsy from then until lunch. This is a big step for the two of them, because everything they had done was secret before. Secrecy might have been part of the appeal originally, but all of his relationships so far had been secrets (he and Jennifer hadn’t exactly been shouting their relationship from the rooftops), and all of them had ended horribly. He wanted this to be a serious relationship, too. Silly or not, Derek wanted a domestic life – a life where he didn’t have to worry about his pack being killed off, where they could all gather on the full moon and run around like a real, full family. He wanted what he had given up the moment he had fallen for Kate’s charms.

And the first step to that life was to stop treating Paige like his dirty little secret.

Pulling his lunch out of his locker (because school food smelled wrong), he finds her already sitting at a table off to the side. Peter joins him along the way. Derek isn’t surprised.

“Hey,” Derek whispers as he slides into the seat across from her.

“Hey,” she whispers back and then glances up at Peter. “Peter.”

“Paige.”

His uncle pulls some candy out of his pocket and ignores the two of them.

“My mom made cookies for you. As a thank you for inviting me over. I think they’re starting to like you more,” she says with a laugh, pulling a small bag of ginger snaps out of her lunch box.

Derek blinks. Cookies? No one’s mother had ever baked him cookies before. It’s so normal. He takes the bag from her and sets it aside, and Peter grabs it and sneaks one.

“My compliments to the baker,” he drawls as he wipes cookie crumbs away from the side of his mouth.

“Mom’s going to have your head if this is all you’re eating for lunch,” Derek says and gestures at the candy wrappers and bag of cookies in front of his uncle.
Peter rolls his eyes. Shortly thereafter, he produces a sandwich from somewhere and takes a large bite of it, ignoring his nephew’s chuckles.

It’s a weird lunch, but Derek doesn’t mind.
Breaking Tradition

Chapter Summary

Derek asks something of his mother - his Alpha - that tradition says he shouldn't.

It’s Tuesday, and Derek is having a fantastic week.

That’s the first indication that something’s about to go really, really wrong. After school, Laura pulls him into the kitchen and strongly suggests he let her help him with his homework. She’s known about his eyes for less than a week now, and she’s just as protective as she was after the pack meeting when she found out, which is both irritating him and making him happy. It’s all very confusing.

Two math worksheets and a set of chemistry notes later, Talia calls a short, informal pack meeting. The pack crowds into her study.

“One of the visiting alphas and I are going to speak to the emissary tonight,” she says as soon as Peter comes in, closing the door behind him. “Unfortunately, I expect the meeting will last quite a long time, so dinner will be served without me today.”

The older members of the pack, including Derek and Laura, nod, while the younger ones huff and whine, though Nick and Alex try to hide it. If the meeting is interrupting one of the meals the pack shares, then it must be important. Talia usually meets with Deaton later in the night.

And then it hits him. ‘One of the visiting alphas…’

The Alpha Pack.

“Alpha,” Derek blurts out, instinct keeping him from addressing Talia as ‘Mom’ in such a crucial moment.

Talia hones in on him, her glowing red eyes waiting and assessing. And it’s not just her – the entire pack is staring at him. He grimaces. Maybe he should have waited until the meeting was over.

“May I accompany you to the emissary?”

God, he hopes that’s formal enough to be taken seriously. He can tell the pack sure isn’t taking him seriously. No one ever sees the emissary other than the Alpha, and they all grew up knowing that. To ask to go is to ask a supremely stupid question. Peter narrows his eyes. Talia must see something in his face, because she hums and seems to be considering it.

“It’s important,” he adds.

“Be ready at five,” she says at last.

Oh. He wasn’t expecting her to agree. After a tense moment, he nods hesitantly. He can do that.

“Any other questions?” she asks, looking at the pack at large. “Serious questions, Peter.”
His uncle smirks, but his eyes don’t leave Derek, who groans in his head. Of course he’s not going to be able to do anything now without getting Peter’s attention.

“Good. The meeting is over.”

With that, everyone disperses. The kids go back to either homework or wrestling around outside, and the adults have their own things to work on. Derek himself goes back to the kitchen with Laura to indulge her by doing more homework together. Out of all of his pack (by birth and by bite), she was the one he had the most time with. He’s still missing her in a way. The Laura he remembers so well is his sister, his Alpha – the one he curled against in their apartment in New York to help fight off nightmares, the one who bought him candy bars and post cards at gas stations all over the country, and the one who was strong enough to be the foundation for the two of them. She’s strong now, sure. It’s just that she’s still a beta, which is so obvious to him when he sees her grinning eyes and the flip of her hair. Alphahood hasn’t been forced on her. It shows.

So Derek spends time with her, and gets to know Laura the beta better than he had bothered as a teen. This Laura knows chemistry like she does the moon, though her literature skills are shaky at best.

“I can write,” she huffs out, “but don’t ask me what the the color of the curtains symbolizes.”

“But the curtains are so interesting,” he says wryly, because that’s just the way his humor is.

She gives him a wet willy.

His mother is waiting for him by the door ten minutes before five. As soon as she sees him, she heads out the door and down to the car. He slides into the passenger side a moment later.

“It’s Deucalion, isn’t it?” he says when they’re about halfway there.

Talia glances over at him.

“Yes. He’s an old friend of mine.”

“What kind of Alpha is he?”

His question is hesitant – how can you ask if someone’s blind without giving away too much of the future? – and she inclines her head. He can tell she’s curious.

“A visionary,” she settles on. “Deuc’ wants peace, and he’s a good enough leader that others are listening – other Alphas, even.”

A shudder runs through his back.

_The Alpha Pack (swirls of vengeance, harsh angles of the mutilated triskele, and the piercing agony of the pipe in his chest)_

“But you already knew that, didn’t you?” she says as casually as she would have asked him about basketball practice.

Although she’s looking at the road rather than him, Derek nods. She doesn’t need to see it to know.

The rest of the car ride is silent.
The veterinary clinic looks just the same as it will over a decade into the future. They walk in and are welcomed to the back by Deaton himself, who holds open the mountain ash gate and merely nods in response to seeing Derek.

“Deucalion is in the back,” he says lightly.

The Alpha knows that Derek is there as soon as he and Talia pull into the parking lot, of course, so he’s staring at the beta, head cocked, straight away.

“Talia,” he says warmly, not looking away, “glad you could be here. Is this one of your sons?”

“My eldest son, Derek.”

“A pleasure, Derek.”

He’s tense, unable to think of Deucalion as a good Alpha, and the others in the room think that it’s the presence of another Alpha that has him riled up. It’s better that way. Baring his neck slightly, he acknowledges the older man and settles into the background to listen.

This should be interesting.
The first thing Derek notices is that he’s missing something.

“You need to be careful,” Deaton warns Deucalion. “He’s not easy to read.”

This is how it’s been going for a while now – Deucalion and the emissary go back and forth about some meeting with someone dangerous, and his mom is just listening, occasionally interjecting with a short comment or two. He can’t help but feel that they’re censoring themselves because of him. Finally, Deaton gives.

“You can’t trust Gerard. Have you ever heard the story of the –”

Derek grips the counter hard enough to dent it heavily with a pitiful groan of the metal under his fingers. Of course Gerard has something to do with it. The real question is, how dangerous is he now? He was ruthless in the future because of his cancer, but it was highly likely that he didn’t even know about it at this point. When Derek pulls himself out of his head and looks back at the other three people in the room, all of them are looking at him.

He should really apologize and say that he was thinking of something else – something stupid but plausible. Unfortunately, it’s Gerard.

“You can’t,” he shouts, looking at Deucalion. “Gerard doesn’t want peace. He’ll never want peace.”

“Oh?” the Alpha replies.

“It has to be a trap. You don’t know him.”

“Young Derek is right,” Deaton says calmly. “Gerard Argent is not an honorable man.”

“What do you suggest we do?” Talia asks for the other Alpha, who is eyeing her son with suspicion.

“Be prepared,” Deaton replies as if it’s the simplest thing in the world. “There are multiple Alphas and packs in Beacon Hills right now – the most wolves to ever be gathered here at a single time. Use your resources.”

“Hunters have their resources as well,” Deucalion retorts.

“They don’t have emissaries.”

Holding a hand up to stop any questions, Deaton disappears into a back room for a few minutes.
“Your son is quite interesting, Talia. Is he in line to be a Hale Alpha?”

Derek stiffens and reacts before his mother can.

“I’d be an awful Alpha. Laura is next in line.”

In all his life, he had never thought about being an Alpha, nor wanted to be one, and when it was forced upon him, he grew to hate it. No, Derek Hale was never supposed to be an Alpha. With any luck, he never will be.

“Interesting.”

Deaton and his weird timing strike again, and he’s back in the room with an old carved wooden box in his arms.

“You’ll need to use all of your resources,” he says evenly, pulling a few clay spheres out of the box. “These are filled with a mixture that will temporarily neutralize most plants and powders that are harmful to wolves. If it’s a liquid, you’re on your own. Just throw it down hard enough to shatter it and move quickly.”

“Emissaries are supposed to stay neutral,” Deucalion says.

“Most plants and powders.”

“Ah.”

Derek frowns, because, in his experience, Deaton stayed on the sidelines 90% of the time. Maybe he did help Scott with Gerard the first time around, but this was more help than Derek could ever remember him offering. Talia’s suspicious, too. Unlike Deucalion, she’s dealt with the vet for years.

“You’ve never pulled these out before,” she says as she examines one of the spheres.

“I didn’t have a reason to.”

She nods, and all Derek can think is, this is serious. Deaton wasn’t any help at all when the fire happened (he winces as he remembers it), but, then again, he hadn’t even had an idea that most of the Hale pack would be murdered. Maybe he wasn’t as bad as Derek thought he was.

Maybe.

“We’ll hold a meeting tonight,” Talia says firmly.

“I’ll tell the others,” Deucalion murmurs back and, with a nod to the other adults and one last curious look at the beta, strides out of the door.

“Derek. Your mother tells me your eyes have changed.”

He nods.

“Be careful with what else you change,” Deaton says casually.

And that’s that. Talia says goodbye and pulls Derek with her out to the car.

“We need to pick up Laura.”

It throws him off, because of course Laura would be there as the future Alpha of the Hale pack –
but Derek? How would she justify bringing him along?

“‘We?’”

“The emissary suggested we use our resources.”

When he looks over at her, she’s frowning slightly, and he knows that she, as a mother, hates having to use him as a tool. But there are lives at stake. He knows that better than she does – saving Deucalion’s pack could mean saving everyone killed by and for the Alpha Pack (*Erica in the closet, Boyd on his claws*) in the future. This is something he has to prevent.

Laura gives him a questioning look as she slides into the backseat of the still-running car. He shrugs back at her. If she knew the truth, he wouldn’t even have to tell her for her to understand why he hasn’t gotten out of the car, but she doesn’t, and the unspoken lie eats away at him.

*This is my life now,* he thinks, *and I have to get used to it.*

Thankfully, she doesn’t press for answers. The car is parked quietly behind some bushes a few minutes later, and the three wolves get out of the car. They shift on his mother’s cue (Talia into the full wolf form with Laura carrying her clothes) and head up to the distillery, which makes Derek tense. He had no idea the packs had ever met here. Sure, he remembers running his fingers along the spiral clawed into the metal wall, but he never made the connection.

It’s there when they enter, and he stares at it until he realizes just who else is in the room. Deucalion and his pack are standing slightly in front of the others as an unofficial sign of their rank among the packs. Kali, feet bare and claws out, is off to the left with her pack. The tense, hulking figure he remembers as Ennis is to the right with his own wolves. He tries to relax his body as he looks at the three of them, who are watching Talia’s dramatic appearance and shift.

“Talia,” Deucalion says.

The other two Alphas nod. His mother acknowledges all of them with a nod of her own.

The meeting begins.

Chapter End Notes

I’ve been so busy that I haven’t been answering comments!! (One of them has been sitting in my inbox for almost a month whoops) So I’ll be answering those as soon as this chapter goes up and trying to answer future comments as I get them.

Also, I’m leaning towards writing another interlude for the next chapter, so the actual meeting with the packs might not be until chapter 14
BFFs

Chapter Summary

While Derek is struggling to change the past for the better, Scott and co. go to kindergarten.

Derek’s trying to juggle everyone’s future, not knowing whether he’s actually making anything better by changing things, but only three people – including himself – are aware of his struggles. Most of those whose lives he aims to change are learning the difference between right and left.

Scott McCall is the first to get it right. Well, Lydia Martin is, but she raises the wrong hand when she sees the confused faces of her peers. She doesn’t want to be singled out. Grinning goofily, he takes hold of Stiles’ hands and shows him what to do, the other children refusing his help. Beside his friend is shy Erica, who can’t seem to remember which is which no matter how hard she tries. Stiles waves his arms in front of her face just as she’s about to start crying.

“It makes a L,” he shouts, his left hand still flailing in front of her.

“What?”

“L for left,” Scott chirps as he leans around his friend to look at her.

She holds up her hands again and looks for the L, cheering when she figures it out. At the same time, others are doing the same. Boyd sits in the corner nodding and looking at his hands resting on his knees. Isaac and Matt both scribbled Ls and Rs on their hands in green marker, while Jackson and Danny give each other high fives.

Halfway across the country, little Allison Argent is picking at her packed lunch at the end of a picnic table. Her mother insisted on packing a ‘healthy’ lunch instead of letting her eat the ‘slop’ they ‘no doubt served’ at her new school. Gnawing on a carrot, the young girl sighs. She’d been there for less than a week and hated it already. It was a small town. All of the children already knew each other, and none of them wanted to be friends with her. Two girls sit down at the other end of the table, ignoring her. Narrowing her eyes, she thinks of what her mother and aunt would do.

It’s simple. They’d sit right down next to someone, introduce themselves, and practically demand they talk to them. It’s an Argent family thing, Kate had told her when they were moving out of their last house. Us Argent women don’t back down for any reason.

Allison repacks her lunch and slides down the bench until she’s knee to knee with the blonde girl, who turns around and frowns.

“I’m Allison. You want a cookie? My mom made tons.”

“When are we going to tell her, Chris?” Victoria Argent asks softly.
This wasn’t the first time they had discussed this. In fact, the first time was when Chris had come home to find dinner and a positive pregnancy test on the table. He hadn’t been expecting either. He himself had been let in on the werewolves secret when he was seven. *Old enough to learn, young enough to be scared,* Gerard had drawled upon hearing about his would-be grandchild. *That’s when you have to start. Too early and they’ll spill the secret. Too late and they’ll be too cocky and ignorant.* Even Victoria had been told at a young age, though she was twelve when her parents sat her down.

Like Gerard had suggested, they’d enrolled Allison in gymnastics classes and tried to peak her interest in the bow and arrow. Chris refused to let her touch a gun until she was at least eighteen, which Victoria had agreed to as long as they introduced her to knives when she became a teenager. *The bow and arrow doesn’t do shit at close range,* she had stated in a no-argument voice.

But they had never decided on an age.

Their daughter is five years old now, a sweet little girl who's in love with stickers and gymnastics and the clothes her mother gets as part of her job. She isn’t a hunter.

“When she’s ready,” he replies.

“Daddy!”

Deputy Stilinski hears the happy cry before his son rounds the corner and sprints for his work desk. Some of the others grin or coo at the sight. Smiling impishly, Claudia Stilinski jogs around the corner after the boy and scoops him up before he can cling to his father’s leg. He giggles.

“How’s my boy?” the Deputy asks as he organizes the files on his desk and puts them aside. “What’d you learn today?”

Stiles squirms in his mother’s hold until she lets him down.

“L for left,” he says proudly, wriggling his left arm out towards his dad, who grins back.

“My son, the genius,” he jokes.

“Stilinski,” Deputy McCall says from a few desks down. “We have to head out. Crime in progress.”

“I’m on it. Be back for dinner, honey,” he says giving Claudia a quick kiss. “See ya, kiddo.”

“Be safe,” his wife says seriously.

Beacon Hills is a fairly safe town, but you never can be sure what's going to happen in life.

“I’ll be back for dinner,” he repeats, nodding.

“Scott will be over, too,” she calls as he rushes out, watching him give her another nod.

The other Deputy gives her a grateful look as well. Melissa McCall is probably Claudia’s best friend just as Scott is her son’s. The other boy is almost always over at the Stilinski house now, because his mother works long and odd hours at the hospital, and his father does the same at the station. She’s not sure Stiles understands why his best friend is over so often. But he doesn’t question it.
Claudia has a feeling Scott McCall and G. ‘Stiles’ Stilinski will be friends forever.
Chapter Summary

Talia, Derek, and Laura meet with the three Alphas and go to dinner.

The saving grace of the meeting so far is that only Deucalion is paying Derek any attention, and even then, it’s only a few glances here and then. It’s just too important of a meeting to worry about him.

“Deucalion says we have a situation,” Kali states, the question implicit.

“Gerard Argent is dangerous,” is Talia’s reply.

Off to the side, Ennis growls ferociously, and Derek winces, remembering that the Alpha lost a pack member to hunters not long ago. Maybe this won’t run so smoothly as he hoped it would. An angry Alpha is a wild card.

“This isn’t about revenge,” his mother barks. “This is about defense. If Argent plans to trick Deucalion, we will be prepared to stop him.”

“What evidence do we have?” Kali interjects, placing a hand on Ennis’ shoulder.

“Only the Hale Emissary’s warning and Talia’s son,” Deucalion drawls from where he had been observing silently.

Heads swing to face Derek, including that of Laura, whose eyebrows are scrunched up in question. Talia smiles.

“There are… extenuating circumstances,” she says blandly. “The Emissary is just as wary.”

Although the Alphas don’t seem to be satisfied, they accept it. For now. The conversation takes a slight turn.

“Then what are we supposed to do?”

It’s Kali that speaks now, because Deucalion has already talked to Deaton, and Ennis is still simmering despite the hand on his shoulder. He figures there are a few things they can do, especially because the vet is too cryptic to give them solid advice. Regardless, Derek stays silent. He has to remind himself that he’s a young beta and can’t bring attention to himself.

“Talia’s Emissary gave us these,” Deucalion says lightly, pulling out the spheres from the vet’s office. “Gerard agreed to meet my pack and myself, which means that we will be armed with the spheres. I suggest that Kali’s and Ennis’s packs hang behind in the surroundings as a backup should the warnings prove true. It would be best for the Hale pack to stay uninvolved.”

Both Kali and Ennis narrow their eyes at the statement. Why shouldn’t the Hales help? It’s their territory, their direct enemy. Furthermore, they’re a strong pack. He’s not quite sure why the Alpha says it himself, but his mother responds right away.

“Should something go wrong, I cannot risk my pack to the fury of the Argents. They know this
land as well. If they come after us with a purpose, we would not have much of an advantage. We support you but cannot do so physically. Not this time.”

It makes sense. Derek remembers how Kate and Gerard had come back to Beacon Hills long after the fire, after Laura’s death. Although it had been years, they easily made their way around not only the town but also the preserve. Hell, Gerard had been able to capture and murder that omega. Kate had even known her way around his house – though that was his fault, of course. All in all, the Argents had lived in the town for a fraction of the time the Hale family had throughout the generations. His pack knew the land inside and out by heart. None of the cliffs, dips, or rivers could make him stumble on a run through the forest and hadn’t been able to the first time he was sixteen. He’d learned from his mother, aunts, and uncles, all of whom had learned from other family members. The knowledge had been passed down and evolved over a very long line of Alphas and their pack members, and if he succeeded in his goals, it would continue to be so long after the current pack was old and gone. The Hale tradition rides on his back.

The meeting wraps up while he’s brooding over all of the things that could and would go wrong if he can’t even stop Deucalion from being blinded. Laura drops her arm on his shoulders and steers him back towards the car, their mother’s clothes once again in hand. Beside them is Talia, who’s trotting along in full wolf form already. He and his sister shift and set off.

On the way back home, they stop for dinner at a diner in town. It’s late and a school night, so their mother sends her eldest child in to get some food to go. Of course she has a good reason for doing so.

“What did we stand to lose?” she asks casually as Laura disappears into the diner.

Derek looks up and contemplates how much to tell her. Both she and Deaton would advise him to keep his answer brief and uninformative, so he decides to leave out Jennifer/Julia and the sacrifices.

“Three and a half packs. And a vision.”

The half pack is, of course, his own two betas, because he can’t leave them out, no matter if he’s talking about immediate or long-term loses. He honestly doesn’t care about the packs of the three Alphas they left behind in the distillery. It’s a horrible thought. Even he knows that, but he didn’t know their packs, and sweet, shy Erica and quiet, smart Boyd will always be more important to him. He doesn’t give a shit if that makes him a horrible person. (It’s one of the reasons, he thinks, why he didn’t make a good Alpha.)

Talia tightens her grip on the steering wheel. Of course Deucalion’s pack would have been in danger, but two and a half others? He figures she thinks the half pack is their own, and, in a way, she’s right. Not that she had been around to meet his betas.

Holding three greasy bags that smell heavenly even with the windows rolled up all the way, Laura strides out of the diner and towards the car once again. They eat in the parking lot, hands shiny with grease and seats covered in crumpled napkins.
Peace Among Men

Chapter Summary

Deucalion and Gerard meet to talk peace.

Chapter Notes

There WAS an author's note here, but I've deleted it and added Chapter 15 (and then 16). More will be up within the week!

WARNING: This chapter has actual action in it, and the action is not extremely graphic, but someone loses an arm, there are descriptions of blood, and mentions of death. It's not much, but I figured I would warn you.

The peace talk wasn’t for another three days, and the wait was killing him. As much as he hated the man, Derek needed Deucalion to keep his sight – to keep his vision.

And then, of course, the Hale pack wasn’t even involved in it.

Talia picked him and Laura up from school that day and took them straight to Deaton’s office, and they all sat in the back room. Now? Now she and her Emissary are playing Scrabble. Scrabble. The only thing holding him back from ripping his hair out is the look she gives him whenever he shifts restlessly. Laura isn’t bothered at all. In fact, she’s perched on a chair behind their mother, looking at her letters and whispering hints.

Is he the only one who’s concerned about the meeting?

He’s not. Deucalion and the others are worried but refuse to show it. They can’t afford to show weakness – especially not in front of Gerard Argent, renowned hunter. Luckily, the meeting place has successfully been changed to the area around the distillery, making it harder for the hunters to poison them. There’s still no guarantee they’ll make it out unscathed.

As it turns out, their worry is warranted.

Gerard and his men arrive earlier than they should, but not earlier than expected. Deucalion and his pack are already there, the ranks spread out to cover a large area – a move that could be considered a power play if they were spread wider. This way, however, the hunters are put on edge but cannot claim the wolves made the first move.

Not that Gerard Argent ever played by the rules.

He’s a wild card, always has been. Even as a child it was apparent that he was manipulative and damn good at it. If his older sister hadn’t separated from the family, it wouldn’t have been as much
of a problem, but she had, and the younger man had basically taken over the family the moment both of his parents died. Hunters were already a corrupted bunch. No, Gerard hadn’t taken them down with him – he’d taken down his own family.

Kate, he thinks as he walks closer to the Alpha in front of him, his frail act in place, will enjoy hearing about the meeting afterwards.

She always did enjoy a good bloodbath.

That’s my girl.

Formalities were dealt with slowly, as befitting a true peace talk. Kali and Ennis, as well as their packs, are hanging back in the trees, tense and fierce. The bulky wolf’s pack thrums with the silent, steady roar of revenge, of heartbreak. Next to the Alpha himself is Kali, and she runs a hand down her lover’s arm in comfort and sympathy, because she, too, misses his – their – fallen wolf. Gerard doesn’t know what he’ll bring down upon himself if he lashes out.

It’s only due to Deaton’s (Derek’s) warning that Deucalion’s second sees the sly hand that slides into a pocket, pulling out what they quickly discover is some sort of smoke bomb. The first one is thrown by itself – the rest, in unison not only with their companions, but with the wolves’ secret weapon as well. Smoke obscures everyone’s vision, though the wolves are better off than the hunters. Back up drops from the trees like spiders making their descent. A roar rips its way through Deucalion’s throat, and Gerard smiles.

A sharp machete is all he carries. He fells bodies right and left as he makes his way towards that roar, not caring if they be wolf or hunter. Blood slicks the blade and runs down his arm, but he doesn’t notice.

His target is in sight.

A hunter of a lower rank reaches out and grabs his boss’ arm amidst the bloodshed.

“What are you –“

He’s cut off by a near-silent scream. It takes him a second or two to realize that it’s coming from his own throat. His body collapses, and he curls up around his arm, gripping tightly and hoping, hoping that it will be enough to staunch the blood flow.

The hunter closes his eyes, unable to stand looking at his arm where it rests several feet away.

Another hunter – no specific friend of the first, but still loyal to his fellow hunters all the same – meets Gerard’s blade with a smaller one of his own. This is not right, he thinks. I’m not right. It’s a sobering thought, and the conviction it gives him is enough power to give Deucalion the time he needs.

A clawed hand, dripping red, grips the old hunter’s throat and slams him down to the ground. Gerard’s grip on the blade loosens. The second hunter steps back.

All it takes to end the Argent patriarch is a fierce grip and a twist.
The fighting doesn’t stop there. Of course it doesn’t. Called by a roar, the packs begin to pull back just enough to be free of the smoke. The hunters, still confused by the smoke themselves, continue to fight ruthlessly until the second hunter – a man named Leo – screams for them to stop. He pulls the first hunter out by hooking his arms under the man’s armpits. His sleeve is soaked as he clears the dense smoke, and his colleagues get their first look at who Gerard really was.

“That cut,” one of them sputters, running over to the bushes to vomit.

No matter how many wolves he’d butchered over the years, none of them compared to this. This, even to his twisted code, was wrong. Hunters didn’t hurt hunters.

Deucalion strides out of the smoke soon after. Gripped in his clawed fist is Gerard’s shirt – hunter attached. There’s no doubt that he’s dead when he tosses the body forward.

“This,” he roars at them, “this is how your kind defines a peace talk.”

Two hours later, the blood-spattered wolf walks into Deaton’s in time to see Talia put down the game-winning word. The Emissary hums.

“Gerard Argent,” the vet says as he tallies up the scores, “is dead.”

Deucalion nods. Talia stands up and envelopes him in a hug.

Back at the distillery, Kali and Ennis stay to help find and bury their dead. Thankfully, there aren’t many, though several dead hunters litter the ground. Hunter and wolf stay separate.

Not far away, Kate Argent is painting her nails a thick shade of red with short, experienced flicks of the nail polish brush. She’s safely ensconced in the home Gerard bought them months ago, and news has not yet reached her. It will be a day and a half before the police find her father’s body with the help of ‘anonymous’ calls.

It will be another hour after that before she officially takes on the role as the Argent matriarch.
Derek can’t help but be relieved at the news of Gerard’s death, despite knowing that it won’t solve all of his problems. Deaton himself examined the body and upon pronouncing the man dead in front of the present Hales and Deucalion, worked a little of his secretive knowledge to help prevent the man from returning to the living. It’s an odd request on Derek’s part – at least in the eyes of his mother, sister, and Deucalion – but the Emissary takes it in stride.

The second hunter, Leo, is a silent participant in the examination. Everything he knows was proven wrong, and his discomfort at being surrounded by wolves is higher than it had been hours ago. To him, the two Alphas look like a couple with their two children, and his stomach threatens to crawl up his throat. It’s clear that they aren’t married – and the girl and boy have none of the male’s features - but Leo feels as if they almost murdered a father. Even worse, hunters – at least those like Gerard Argent – wouldn’t hesitate to slay the children. The boy looks much too young to have graduated, and judging by the two backpacks set off to the side, the girl hasn’t either. Deaton tells him where the bathroom is.

His stomach makes good on its threat.

The blood and body don’t hinder any of the adults from their discussion, though Laura’s face is pale as she listens dutifully. Derek, on the other hand, is quiet but unchanged. How much of the same has he seen in his life? No, he’d thankfully never seen his family’s remains after the fire, but he had buried (half of) Laura. And that was only the first time, his mind supplies as he looks down at his hands, seeing a flash of them covered in blood (Paige, Peter, Erica, Boyd).

His mother’s hand is strong and steady on his shoulder. She and the others are negotiating peace as they should have hours previous. Nodding grimly, Leo is open to suggestions and willing to compromise. He can’t force the other hunters to comply, he tells them, but there will be severe consequences for those who don’t. With a nod, the wolves agree. They are cautious – always will.
be – but willing to accept that the man will try his best. *That’s not enough*, Derek thinks darkly, remembering Chris Argent and how the man’s values had been easily overshadowed by those of his father.

Derek will never trust a hunter.

They say that cutting off the head is the best way to destroy an organization. Without the head, they’ll run around, confused and rip themselves to shreds. But Derek has thought of the Argent family as a cockroach for months now, at the very least. You can cut off a cockroach’s head, but the vile pest will live, in a limited way perhaps, for days after. Furthermore, they’re said to survive just about anything and breed like nothing. Six years ago, as he collapsed to the ground in the harsh beams of the sheriff’s deputies’ car lights and watched the smoke drift off of their house, he’d thought that Kate Argent was the only pest. Derek had let her in, and she wreaked havoc.

But then he’d come back. Chris Argent threatened him, hunted him, and Kate came back to taunt and brag, bringing misery down upon him even with her death as Gerard swooped in vicious and determined. Even Allison threatened to destroy his life with her love for Scott and all that that led to (he’ll never forget what her mother tried to do to the beta).

No, the whole family is a menace, and he will never trust any of their kind.

Talia insisted with a few silent gestures that he and Laura be allowed to stay through the entire ordeal, which is, to all present but Leo, completely understandable. Next in line to be the Hale Alpha, Laura is learning about negotiation. She can’t afford to be naïve. Their mother wishes it wouldn’t happen, but they all know that the chances of something like this occurring again – of a terrible, bloody event marked by death – are not exactly low. Wolves are hunted by hunters, among other things. No Alpha can afford to go through life believing they are safe, that their pack is safe, and it is for this reason that Laura is allowed to be involved in even a minor way.

It’s different for Derek, of course, but Deaton and Deucalion understand, the vet moreso than the Alpha. The beta is not just the son of the local Alpha; he’s something more, and Deaton wagers none of them will ever know just what that ‘more’ entails. However, Laura is horribly confused. Her brother will naturally be one of her most-trusted and highest ranking wolves, but it is not standard procedure for him to be at such a meeting. He’s even met the Emissary. Any wolf worth their salt knows that only the Alpha is allowed to meet the Emissary of the pack.

No one explains any of these things to Leo, so the hunter takes it all in stride.

It’s a good few hours before Talia drives her two tired children home. The three of them pile into her study with hastily put together sandwiches and a pitcher of iced tea one of Talia’s sisters mixed the day before. Upstairs, most everyone else is asleep – with the exception of Peter who is surely lurking around somewhere in town. The sandwiches are devoured in silence.

Talia thinks of her son and the steady *(and triumphant?)* look on his face when Deucalion and the hunter dragged in the stiffening body of Gerard Argent. It’s not hard to guess that the man has touched her son’s life somehow. A growl is shoved down in her chest as she thinks of the family, of their poisonous ideals, and of the unknown slight they would have done her eldest son. She looks at him. Perhaps it is for the best that she not know what it was.
Laura isn’t thinking about the situation at hand at all, nor is she wasting thoughts on the Argent family. No, her mind is focused solely on her duties. In time, she will become the Alpha and all that that includes. Years of training will lead up to that point. Glancing at her brother as he slowly finishes his second sandwich, she privately thinks that she won’t be able to do it. Not without him by her side.

Although the other two look at him, Derek doesn’t look at them. His own thoughts are a mixture of the two with a few unique things of his own. Gerard is gone, but the rest of his family remains. His future – the entire Hale pack’s future – is still in jeopardy. He’s aware of this. But he’s not prepared. Already, much has changed – Paige is alive (and he’s even more invested in her than he’d ever been as a teen), Gerard Argent is dead, and Deucalion still has the full range of his sight. These three things are big enough on their own, and they will make ripples across his future. What he went through the first time around is nothing he’d want to repeat. But who knows what the future would be like now.
Chapter Summary

A look at the Argents.

Chapter Notes

It's been snowing here, so my internet has been spotty. :[ So this chapter should have been up yesterday (not earlier because New Year's was very busy for me). I have another chapter partially written, so that will hopefully (if the internet works ugh) be up later tonight or tomorrow afternoon.

Derek may not know what to expect, but Kate Argent does. Sitting in the bar less than a week later, she plays the vulnerable card on a pathetic chemistry teacher who is already very intoxicated. It seems to be the natural progression of events in her mind.

Admittedly, she doesn’t think the way most do – hasn’t for years.

The Argents were never a normal family. Before Kate had been born, Gerard and his wife, Sally, would leave young Chris with a babysitter (usually the sweet girl who lived a block over) on nights they went out. Their outings seldom involved fancy restaurants or dancing. They often, however, got a motel room for a few hours – but only because it would not do to have their neighbors see them splattered with blood or covered in dirt. None of this changed when Kate was born. Sally had even continued to hunt until well into her sixth month.

Both children were completely ignorant of their parents’ nighttime activities, Kate because of her youth and Chris mostly because he really did not want to know what his mother and father did in their spare time. For years it went like this. Once he was thirteen, Chris began babysitting his younger sister (by six years), which only served to make Gerard and Sally more comfortable with going out often. By the time he was fifteen, most of his nights were spent doing homework in the living room while nine-year-old Kate practiced her spelling. He was her homework-helper, her chef, her protector, her big brother.

Gerard gave him a set of knives for his sixteenth birthday. He’d been trained in archery for years prior (as his future daughter would be), because Sally’s choice of weapon was the bow, and it had always been clear that the boy took after his mother more. Even though he rightly assumed the knives were for hunting, Chris was confused. Gerard never took him hunting. Gerard never even went hunting.

Three days later, the teen was knocked out with a blow to the head while on his way home. He woke up in an abandoned house, tied up and being watched by his own father. Nothing had prepared him for how his life would change then.
Chris always took issue with his father’s methods. The code was the code, and if it had worked for generations of Argents before them, why couldn’t it work for them? That’s not to say that Gerard actively disregarded it. But sometimes they’d go after a wolf or even a full pack, and, although he wouldn’t voice his opinions (he was just so new to this after all), he’d take note of how flimsy the evidence against their prey was. They were monsters, though, so he remained silent even in his most rebellious years. (That was what his parents taught him; that was what he believed.)

Kate was not like her brother. Perhaps she would have been, had he not moved out at eighteen to go to college several states away. Chris had his own life now, and she was determined not to piggy-back on it. But she was only twelve when he left her. It was only to be expected when she latched onto another – her mother. Overall it was a good choice. Sally disagreed with her husband as well (like mother, like son) and opposed them in the only way she knew how – she stuck to her own morals, determined to pass them onto their children. With Chris, she was successful. Kate would have likely followed the same path, but, by a stroke of fate, Sally was bitten when her daughter was only fifteen.

Her last night on Earth was spent with her husband and daughter as the three of them discussed their calling. Kate was brought into the fold early, but it was necessary. Although Sally was full aware that wolves were just like people – innocent until proven guilty – she could not bear to be one.

The youngest Argent lost her mother at the young age of fifteen. Her brother came back in time for the funeral, eyes rimmed red and leaning on a young redhead whose face was blank. They left as soon as they came. Gerard was there for her, and Kate never doubted a word he said, afraid to lose him, too.

It had been years since then – more than enough years to twist her mind to his liking. With each and every meeting, Chris recognized less and less of his sister, and it pained him when he realized that he wished she’d stop visiting. He’s afraid she’d take Allison on as her apprentice. (More than anything, he wishes Allison will never understand the hidden meaning of hunting.)

Her father was her rock, the one thing that held her together. With him gone, Kate is lost again – just as she had been when her brother left, when her mother was ripped from her.

She doesn’t like feeling lost.

So it seems the natural progression of it all was to get revenge. She wants to go after the local pack. She wants to rip everything away from the beta she’s seen around town. He was so young (around the same age I’d been, she thought cruelly), and it would be a great comfort to see his eyes go blank with grief before she tore him in two.

Gerard had always said she had fire in her.

And Kate was never one to contradict him.

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