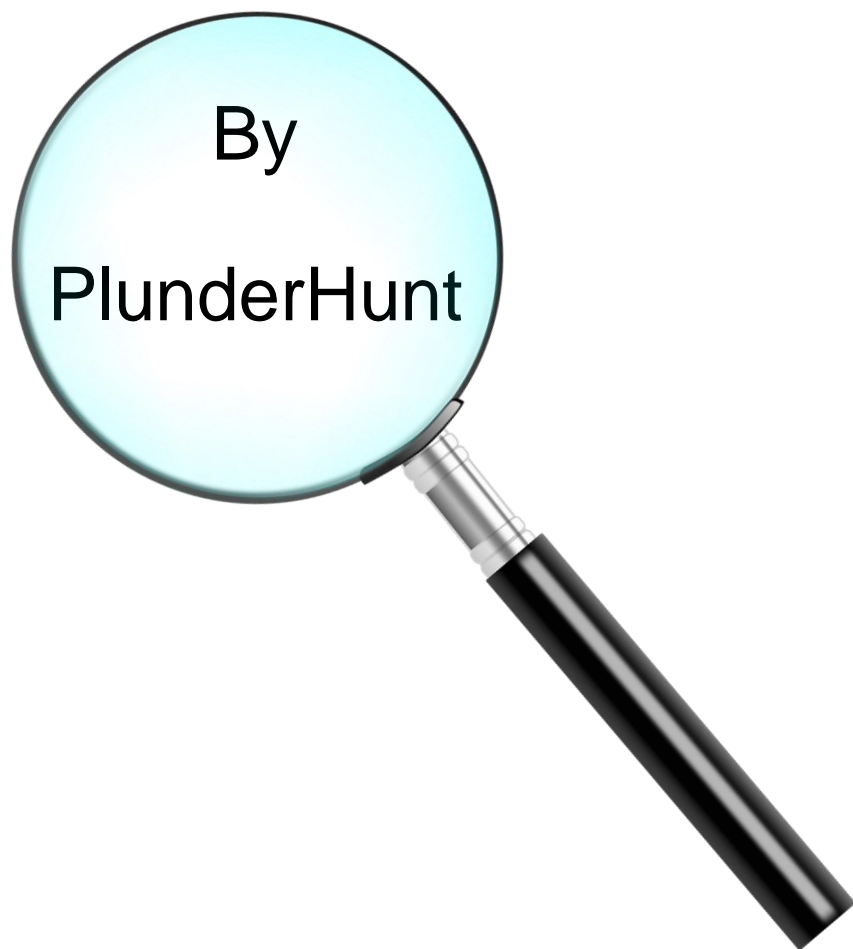


# LEXI WELLS

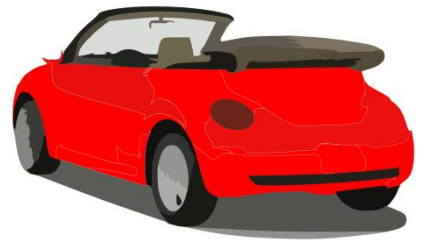


# Werewolves on The Track Team

## Chapter 1

### MONDAY

Southern California's San Fernando Valley is hot this morning, especially for October. It's only seven thirty in the morning and it's already ninety-five degrees outside. Lexi shifts the gears of her VW Cabriolet convertible quickly and races down Ventura Boulevard. The wind rushes through her hair as she turns the wheel sharply into the residential neighborhood of Sherman Oaks. Lexi always drives with the top down whenever the weather permits, even though it always means a flurry of blond hair whipping her face.



One more turn and she's pulling up to the home of her best friend, Catalina Flores; Cat to her friends. Cat and Lexi have known each other since they were kids growing up in the San Fernando Valley, California. Cat is beautiful, smart and fiercely protective of her friends. She's a proud Latina

who is the perfect complement to Lexi's more reserved disposition.

Cat scampers out to greet her ride to school with a big smile. "So, did you hear about the dead cats and dogs?" Cat asks as gets into the passenger seat and buckles her seat belt.

"No, speak." Lexi pries.

"Well, it's completely gross." Cat continues, pulling down the visor mirror to put on her lipstick. "There have been like five or six pets in the neighborhood around the high school that have been killed by some wild animal."

"Oh yeah, I did hear that Harriet's cat went missing and they found it like a few days later all mangled and half eaten." Lexi says, as she navigates out of the neighborhood and onto the 101 freeway.

"If you ask me, it's absolutely barftastic. I'm glad I don't have a pet." Cat says, as she examines her dark red lipstick.

Lexi seems deep in thought. “I think I may write about it in this week’s article.”

“Oh yeah, like the school newspaper needs an article about dog and cat happy meals. Can I say ‘eww’!” Cat exclaims.

“This from a girl who made fun of my 818 number until all she could get was a 424.” Lexi says sarcastically.

“424 is a perfectly respectable codex. Beverly Hills, Brentwood, the Boo.”

“Go tell it to your 909 boyfriend.”

## SCHOOL

They approach the high school, weaving through the obstacle course of pedestrians walking across the parking lot. Lexi swings her car into the last free parking spot right in front of the high school, startling Denise, one of Lexi's classmates from the school newspaper, making her leap out of the way and toss a huge stack of papers into the air.



Lex and Cat walk towards the central courtyard, the “Quad”, where most of the students congregate before class. Students linger around their lockers in the open air hallways and gossip, or madly tweet, post, text and update. Lexi checks her text messages on her phone.



Cat’s on-again-off-again boyfriend Logan comes up from behind her holding his skateboard which he has never been seen without. He wraps his arms around her as he leans in for a kiss. Logan is blond, tall, athletic and normally one of the



more attractive guys in school, even though his wardrobe seems to consist solely of black pants and a white t-shirt.

He smiles at Lexi. “What’s up, scoop?” he says, holding his hand up for a high five but left hanging. He whispers in Cat’s ear. “Hey baby. I love that shirt. You’re cuter than socks on a rooster.”

“Get off me.” Cat shouts, pushing him away.

“What did I do now?” Logan asks with a look of slight exasperation.

“You know what you did. You didn’t call me this morning.” Cat says, finishing the verbal scolding with a short rant under her breath in Spanish.

“Buyer’s remorse?” Lexi chimes, as if on cue.

“I totally should have signed for the warranty extension.” Cat says, shaking her head at Logan.

Logan seems embarrassed by her remark and skulks off.

“What’s up with your boy toy?” asks Lexi. “And does he own any other clothes?”

“Ok, come back.” Cat shouts back to Logan.



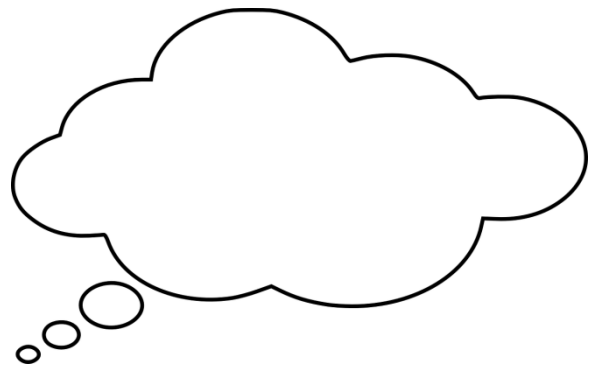
Logan rushes back, gleaming. He normally tries to play it cool with everyone, but anybody can see that Cat has him totally wrapped.

With the first bell, the three get up and head towards their lockers passing Eugene Thompson, the school nerd, who lumbers past with his overstuffed backpack weighing him down.

## SPANISH CLASS

Lexi sits in the back row of Spanish class, staring off into space. The room is quiet, except for the occasional muffled laugh and the loud click of the old clock on the

wall, one of those old-fashioned kinds only used by schools and courthouses. Lexi's already forgotten about the test and is thinking about that new scarf she bought last week. A quick pencil tap on Lexi's test by Mrs. Garcia brings Lexi back to reality.





“Ok, pencils down.” Mrs. Garcia says as half the class scrambles to finish the quiz. “Ahora pasa tus papeles al frente.”

“Mrs. Garcia,” Cat exclaims as with her hand raised. “Why do we always have to have a quiz every Monday?”

“Why do you ask, Ms. Wells?”

“Well, I just think that they should be scheduled for later in the week so we have a chance to settle in after a weekend of rest.” Lexi says.

“I will give that some consideration. Perhaps I’ll make my pop quizzes more spontaneous and keep the date random. Class what do you think about that idea?” Mrs. Garcia says as the entire class groans. “I think you have your answer, Ms. Wells.”

“Maybe we shouldn’t have them at all.” Lexi says. “Pop quizzes are sexist anyway.”

“Class, in respect for Ms. Wells’ sensitivity, we will now be having *Mom and Pop* quizzes each and every Wednesday instead of Monday. How does that sound?”

The entire class cheers and laughs.

Dustin Johnson, one of the schools best dressed kids who always wears a vest and fancy shoes, leans over to whisper to Lexi. “Thanks for that.” He says. “I was already a little depressed because my dog Ruffles was killed last night.”

“Really?” Lexi exclaims. “I heard about the neighborhood monster killing all the pets. I’m really sorry to hear about Ruffles. That’s a terrible way to start your morning.”

“We found him last night.” Dustin explains. “We heard a commotion in the back yard and ran out to find him bleeding.”

“Did you see what type of animal it was?”

“I caught a glimpse of something. Looked like a really big dog. There was a full moon outside so I got a pretty good look at it as it ran away.”

“Full moon, huh?” Lexi says. “That’s really interesting.”

The bell rings and everybody gets up and leaves.

## THE QUAD

Lexi usually joins Cat and Logan in the Quad between periods. Lexi has Phys-ed next and that class usually starts late to give everyone time to get dressed in their gym attire. Cat has FCS, family and consumer sciences, although a few students still refer to it as Home Ec. She’s the star pupil and can pretty much show up whenever she wants. It also helps that the teacher, Mr. Pinnacle, is terrified of her.

“Did you know that there was a full moon out last night?” Lexi says to Cat as she takes a seat next to her.

“Uh-uh.” Cat says, paying more attention to Logan as he rough houses it with his friends on the other side of the Quad.

“Dustin’s dog was killed last night and he said he saw a huge wolf running away from the grisly murder scene last night.” Lexi says. “Are you paying attention?”

“I’m sorry, miha,” Cat says apologetically. “I’m completely distracted. Logan is in brag mode.”

Across the Quad, Logan is standing around with his basketball team buddies. Logan is very animated as he seems to be telling a story to his friends. Logan and the guys are always caught up on a display of exaggerated bravado and posturing, typical of many high school boys. Logan apparently has the group engrossed in whatever tale he’s weaving, as they hang on his every word. Finally, the story hits a high note which has the entire group cheering and each of them pats him on the shoulder as they direct their gaze directly towards Cat.

Cat immediately gets up and storms towards the group. “What exactly are you telling your little group of misfits,

pendejo” Cat says, grabbing Logan by the arm and pulling him off to the side.

“Settle down.” Logan says, although no sooner do the words escape his mouth does he realize he just started world war 9.

“I’ll settle you down.” Cat shouts. “Don’t act like I didn’t just see what I thought I saw.”

Logan starts to realize he’s in over his head. Lowering his voice to almost a whisper, he grabs her hands and pulls them to his chest. “Babe, it was nothing, honest. Just guy stuff.”

“Well then guy stuff is now off limits. I don’t like having an entire group of juveniles patting you on the back while they look at me as if you just bagged a seven-point buck.”

“Sweetie, you can’t really have a seven-point buck.” Logan says. “I mean theoretically you could but you see the antlers usually come in pairs and --”

“--Are you really going to argue with me about deer horns?”

“Antlers.”

“I just can’t!” Cat says, her palms facing Logan in complete exasperation. With that, she storms off.

Logan stands there in complete bewilderment. Where moments ago he was king of the studs, he now stands in utter humiliation. Not only has he made a fool of himself in front of his crew, he may have just lost the love of his life.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

During the warm weather, gym class is always held outdoors. As Lexi walks onto the track field on the south side of the school she sees a group of students huddled in a circle.

She approaches the group and wiggles her way to the front. There on the ground is a dead racoon. One of the boys is poking it with a stick, turning it over and examining the

carcass in gruesome detail. The animal seems to have been the neighborhood monster's latest victim.

The boy holding the stick, Connor is awestruck. "Look at the black goo coming out of it. Looks like something from the tar pits. You know, my dad told me that three pets were killed last night." Connor says while still poking the racoon's stiff carcass. "The Holloway's Chihuahua, the Blakely's Rottweiler, and my neighbor's dog were all executed in a similar fashion." Connor Mack is one of the kids on the track team. He's tall and athletic with cherubic features and bright red curly hair. Connor's generally nice to everybody. And he seems to have a gruesome fascination with dead racoons.

"I heard Dustin's dog also got killed." Jersey, another member of the group says. Jersey is shaped like a mini-fridge and although one of the star players on the school football team, most of his friends are on the basketball team, including Cat's boyfriend Logan.



“Yeah, I was just talking to him about it.” Lexi says. “He’s super bummed.”

“Whatever’s killing them must be huge.” Says Jersey. “The Blakely’s Rottweiler is a monster. That beast used to chase me when I rode past their house on my bike. I swear, it was like being chased by a bear. I thought any minute I was going to relive that bear love scene in the Revenant, where Leo what’s his nuts was loved up by that grizzly.

“Love scene?” Lexi says with a smile.

With that, Jersey grabs the racoon by the tail and starts chasing Lexi around as she runs away shrieking.

“Alright, that’s enough!” says Mr. Klein, the Phys-Ed teacher says as he claps his hands and motions to the group.

“Sorry Mr. Klein.” Jersey says as he tosses the dead racoon off to the side of the track.

“Yeah, sorry coach.” Says Connor.

Mr. Klein directs everyone to line up for calisthenics. As the students do jumping jacks, Lexi is still fixated on recent events.

“So, what kind of animal do you think it is?” Lexi asks Connor who is next to her doing jumping jacks at twice the speed of the rest of the class.

“What do you care?” Connor says.

“Why do you care that she cares, barf beetle?” Jersey asks.

Undaunted, Lexi continues. “Why would it leave the racoon here on the track? Do you think it lives nearby?”

“What? No, of course not.” Connor says uncomfortable with the question.

“The school is right in the center of all the killings.” Lexi says. “The Holloways live two blocks away, and the Blakley’s live right up the street, and your neighbors live a few blocks further.” Lexi says motioning to Jersey.

“Dustin lives the completely other way, though” Connor argues.

“Sure, but the school is right in the center of all those houses.” Lexi says, thinking. “I think it deserves an extra look.”

Jersey looks over to Connor with a smirk. “Looks like Wells on wheels has already got next week’s story.”

## BAKERS ACRES

The Bakers Acres retirement home is one of the more exclusive establishments in town. It's a high-end facility usually reserved for retired politicians, and celebrities. Located in Calabasas, it's a mecca of assisted living retirement.

A man in his seventies sits in his wheelchair, looking off into the distance. The facility overlooks a golf course, which sprawls off into the distance.

Coach Klein sits next to the man in the wheelchair and points off into the distance. "You remember that brutal dog-leg on the seventh fairway, pop?" He says.

"Of course." The man answers. The man, coach Klein's father Bruce Klein, has a handsome but rugged. Like that of a retired cop. Bruce's hard features come from thirty years on the Los Angeles police force. Yet even on a cop's retirement, the opulence of the surroundings seems out of

character for a retired police Detective. “But I still think it’s overkill to be living next to it.” Bruce says.

“Pop,” Klein interjects. “None of the other facilities were equipped to deal with your health issues.”

“Alzheimer’s.” Bruce says. “You might as well get used to the word.”

“It’s not Alzheimer’s. They said it was just old age. You’re an old coot who can’t remember nothing and you end up going on long walks to nowhere and then forget where you live.”

“Well, the food’s lousy.”

“Sure, pop.”

“Seriously, how can you afford paying for me to stay here?” Bruce says.

## LUNCH

Lexi and Cat take a seat on one of the lunch tables in the outside covered area. Cat is still visibly upset by her fight with Logan and Lexi is reluctant to bring it up.

“He may have just been being a boy.” Lexi says. “You know how boys are.”

“I know how boys don’t know how to treat their ladies, so they never live to grow up to be men.” Cat says.

Logan walks towards their table but upon making eye contact with Cat, she immediately stands up and storms off. Logan sheepishly takes a seat next to Lexi.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do.” Logan says to Lexi.

“Have you tried apologizing?” Lexi says.

“Of course I have.” He says. “But she didn’t want to hear it. I can’t blame her for being mad. I was acting like a complete jerk.”

“Rule number one is that when you’re talking to your friends about your girlfriend and they’re high-fiving you, you’re showing that you care more about what they think.”

“I know.” Logan says, looking down. “I don’t even know what I was thinking. I wasn’t even saying things that bad. You know me. That’s just not who I am.”

“What were you telling your crew anyway?”

Logan thinks about it for a second. “You’re right, I probably went too far.”



## THE VALLEY HIGH SENTINEL

It's 5:00 PM and Lexi is still working on her new article for the high school newspaper. She sits in the empty classroom that also serves as the newspaper's headquarters. Off to the side are the rows of computers, scanners, and other equipment that help shape the newspaper's contents for its periodic editions.

Lexi is deep in thought. The clock on the wall ticks loudly. On the other side of the door, the custodian, Leroy can be heard rolling his mop bucket along the hallway. Leroy usually keeps to himself, and he's always been tolerant of Lexi when she stays late to work on an article.

Lexi always keeps her notes on her phone, but whenever it's time to write, she will compile all her thoughts onto a yellow legal pad. That way she can add notes in the margins and draw lines for any connections she might see in all the story's players.

After another twenty minutes, Lexi packs up her notes and heads out of the room, being sure to lock the door behind her. This part of the school has an interior hallway closed off from the outside.

The hall lights have been turned off, but there is still enough light to see with the streetlights shining through the windows. It's still creepy, nonetheless. And quiet. As she walks down the hallway towards the main parking lot, she starts to get antsy, working herself up into a slight panic. An owl hoots outside and its shadow cascades over the lockers as it takes flight. She can hear the wind blowing through the trees outside and the faint rustling of the leaves blowing against the asphalt.

For the past two hours, she's been trying to figure out a connection between the school and all the dead pets around the neighborhood. She's immersed herself in animal carcasses and eerie thoughts. What was even worse is that she just had to let that nagging thought about the monster seen by Dustin enter her thoughts.

*‘There was a full moon outside so I got a pretty good look at it as it ran away.’* She recalled Dustin say as he described the huge wolf-like creature as it ran away.

Lexi starts to get herself more worked up. She picks up her pace as she rounds the corner towards the gym locker rooms. Suddenly she hears a deep guttural growl come from behind her. Quickly she runs into the locker rooms. The animal is right behind her. She can hear the beast’s claws click onto the marble floor with each step. Slipping into the showers she crouches behind the corner, holding her hand tightly to her mouth to quiet her breathing. Click, click, click, the animal stops at the shower entrance. Silence. After a few minutes of agonizing nothing the animal finally leaves the locker room and back out into the hallway.

Lexi remains perfectly still, crouching in the empty showers, almost catatonic. As she listens to the sound of the animal get further and further away, her attention is drawn to a huge patch of animal hair right above the shower drain. It’s

not human hair, that's for sure. It's darker, coarser, and she thinks to herself that it's clearly that of some dog, bear or wolf.

Lexi is a complete wreck. Frantic but methodical, she runs on her tiptoes towards the parking lot exit doors. As she turns the corner, she's more focused on what creepy monster might be following her that she doesn't even notice coach Klein rounding the corner. Slam! She bumps right into him, startling him just as much as startling herself and knocking herself down to the ground.

"My, young lady." Coach Klein says, reaching down to help her up. "Let me help you up."

"Sorry, I thought something was chasing me." Lexi says. "Did you see a wolf walking through the halls?"

"A wolf?" Coach Klein asks nervously. "No."

"Oh, must be my imagination." Lexi says. As coach Klein helps her onto her feet, she notices his shirt is ripped. The sleeves are torn to pieces and two buttons are missing. Small dark red blood stains polka-dot his shirt like a poorly

designed Hawaiian shirt. “Sorry I scared you. Bye.” Lexi says as she beats a hasty exist.

## TUESDAY

Lexi and Cat sit in the partial shade of the big tree in the center of the Quad as Lexi tells Cat of her evening ordeal.

“I’m telling you girl, it was huge and scary and was nipping at my heels. I barely escaped with my life.” Lexi explains to a skeptical Cat.

“Right, some animal is roaming the halls of the school, but nobody ever noticed?” Cat says, trying to remember her locker combination.

“Well it probably doesn’t leave footprints. I mean, the hallway floors are made of stone.” Lexi says. “But I did see gross animal hair in the shower drain.”

“Ew.” Cat says, making a third attempt to open her locker.”

“Totally ew.” Lexi says. “It was a complete hurl-fest. By the way, your locker combo is 2-2-5.”

“Thanks.” Cast says. “Maybe a bear got into the school.”

“That’s not the weirdest part.” Lexi says.

“What’s the weirdest part?”

“I bumped into Coach Klein with his shirt all ripped up and bloody.”

“Come on.” Cat says.

“I’m stupid serious. It was the middle of the night and he’s walking through the halls.” Lexi stops to think. “Right were the animal disapeared.” Lexi stops mid sentence. Suddenly Lexi grab her books, gets up and rushes down the hallway, without so much as a good-bye.

## THE VALLEY HIGH SENTINEL

The door to the school newspaper editor's office bursts open as Lexi runs in and shouts for the entire room to hear. "Werewolves! Werewolves on the track team!"

Everybody stares at Lexi for a few seconds and then turns back to whatever they were doing.

Lexi stands there frozen waiting for the enthusiasm she expected, but instead she's greeted by the senior Editor, Mr. Hargrave.

"Ah, good, you're here." Mr. Hargrave says, gesturing for Lexi to take a seat in his office.



End of Chapter 1



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