Stiles starts drawing in earnest after finding some impactful doodles in his school notes. It starts as some sort of self-therapy and ends as...well, it never really ends, but it certainly leads to more beginnings than he can count, especially in the case of a certain sour-wolf.
Mermaid, Sun Rays, and Butterflies

Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

Welcome to the feels party!! :D
This fic is written in sections of time so depending on how long certain sections are, I'll be grouping some in the same 'chapter'. There are three sections for this first chapter because the first two are a little short. Also, my timeline is shit. Possibly. I'm more into continuing the story than I am figuring out what month they're in, honestly.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy reading! This has become a baby of mine and I'm impatient to share it so...onward!

I'm replacing the chapters with beta'd versions, so major shout-out to @watyonameisgurl for reading over what I got and helping the flow <3 !

The Mermaid

It started, really, with Geometry.

He had never thought too much about drawing. He did love to doodle, on Scott in class or during rare moments of boredom, stupid stick figures and suns wearing sunglasses littering his friend's arm or random things he saw around him. Sure, sometimes he'd get a surge of inspiration and work for hours on a drawing, but once he was done, he'd always put it away somewhere and forget about it. Life went on. He may have been technically drawing since before he could remember, but he also never thought about it.

Stiles’ mother wasn't an artist. Neither was his father. It wasn't something he had a deep intrinsic past with, or something that brought up any kind of particular emotion, or important memory. He never even noticed he doodled so much until senior year.

He’s studying in his room one night, the world outside cooling down as the sun drops and winter approaches, relishing the lack of supernatural shenanigans, minus an actual Supernatural episode playing quietly on his computer. He’s reading over his notes for Geometry on his bed with his back against a pile of pillows, his growing hair tickling his forehead. Thirty minutes into his lone study session he comes across a mermaid curled around an acute angle.

He’s taken so off guard that his brain pauses. He squints at it and wonders who the hell drew in his geometry notes without him noticing, wonders why it looks so familiar, and then breathes out an “Oh -” when he vaguely remembers sketching it during a boring day of class. Half of his mind was on the lecture and the other half was apparently sketching out the tiny details of fin scales and hair strands.
It's actually incredibly detailed. The hair curled over the mermaid's entire face and her long thin fingers gripped into the triangle as if she were holding on for dear life. Her waist and tail curved across the shape, a very thin space between her body and sharp edges. The tail fin is a bit smudged but it fans out to about an inch and the very ends of the fin twist around each other until they’re circled back to her bowed head.

Stiles is a little gobsmacked because he remembers that day, remembers feeling a little desperate to get home and have a long awaited normal night with Scott. A night without the trials of werewolves or pixies or whatever their town keeps throwing at them. He wanted to play video games and eat oreos until they either threw up or passed out, needed that moment with Scott just to breathe again.

He can see it in this mermaid, in the curve of her body and her gripping hands. Something she needs and doesn't want to let go of, and – and that's super weird. He abruptly closes the spiral and looks at his wall for a moment. He knows art is a form of expression, but this was a little far, yeah?

He shakes off his sudden moroseness and opens the spiral again to see if there are any more doodles on other pages. There are only three others that hold the same kind of attention that he put into the mermaid, although there are a lot of other random stick figures and shaded block letters throughout as well. The next more detailed one is a wolf at a bottom corner two pages past the mermaid, howling up at a zero that was part of an equation. He guesses his past self had imagined the zero as the moon, and he smirks at the cheesiness. The next is the back of a head which he thinks is the guy who sits in front of him in that class. Then, weirdly, a light sketch of Erica, from his vantage point behind her and to the right, as she stares out the window with her legs outstretched past her desk. Her face isn't shown but he does remember drawing it. He had liked the lighting and appreciated her bored aesthetic. He obviously put the most effort into the careful lines showing the curls of her hair draped over the back of her chair. He runs his finger around the edge of the sketch, fondness making him smile briefly.

He doesn't find any more after Erica, but he visits them all again and doesn't find himself as impacted as he was with the mermaid. Erica is a close second, where he remembers being a little sentimental after the omega scare the night before. He was just glad she existed in order to take an arrow to the arm in order to protect him. He can practically see the care in his lines, the softness of the sketch making his mouth twist to himself, a little embarrassed at seeing his emotions on paper.

He rips out the page without really thinking about it then decides, yeah, and rips out the other pages with doodles. He'll rewrite his notes, without feelings distracting him. When he gets to the mermaid he stares for a moment. Then he rips it out roughly and thinks to himself, okay, fine, he was at the end of his rope at that moment, and it's okay because he’d totally needed that night with Scott and had felt a lot better afterwards. He doesn't have to feel weird about it. If anything, it was a venting process. He was healthily expressing his feelings, and that's actually great, because – huh. Wait.

He looks at his sketches placed haphazardly across his blanket. This is actually...good. He thinks of how Jackson spits venom (figuratively, now, thank god), how Scott gets eerily silent, or how Derek murders his punching bag. He looks at his quiet, safe, unobtrusive drawings, and thinks...yeah. This could be a thing.

Stiles puts them in a folder after rewriting his notes. He hides it in the bottom drawer of his desk, underneath all the junk that's already in there. It's not labeled.

And, so, his newfound therapy, self-care, whatever you want to call it -- it starts, really, with Geometry, as the boredom and stress influenced his jittery hands.

And it, well...never really ends.
Senior year is actually turning out to be better than any other year (where’s wood, oh god, knock on it). Of course his friend group of supernatural vigilantes has still had a bunch of utter bullshit to deal with, but thankfully it wasn’t anything like kanimas or sacrifices or constant fear of a painful peril. Mostly it was just unwelcome visitors now and again. Fortunately every creature that’s come to their door since the start of school four months ago has been relatively easy for them to handle without too much bloodshed.

Stiles draws after each visitor. Sometimes he draws the creatures, like an omega lurking down the upper corner of his Chem notes, snarling at him from the page. Or a ladybug-like insect with incredibly detailed wings. It had almost poisoned their water pipes and was a real brief fear for a moment, before they, you know, squished it. As you do. His version has only uneven dots for eyes and a tiny U-shaped smile, which makes him giggle to himself. The image keeps him from smelling his water three times before drinking it. Then a pixie staring blankly at him, its wings taking up the entirety of the page so there’s no room for notes. He doesn't draw an expression, keeps it bland, because their faces were so expressive and he'd rather have this in his memory than their murderous rage or troubling glee.

Stiles never keeps them in his spirals for long. He tries to rip them out the same day and put them in his steadily thickening folder. He doesn't know what he'd do if anyone ever asked about them. Some, once he was finished, he didn't even like to look at, and even though he does feel better after some rough sketches into his spiral pages, it doesn't mean he wants to open the floodgates of his worries and fears.

Sometimes he draws his friends. Mostly Erica, Scott, and Lydia because they’re in more than one of his classes. He waits until they’re focused or day-dreaming and lightly draws the backs of their heads or profiles. He drew Lydia as a queen once, then immediately afterwards drew her sitting on the world. It looked more realistic.

Stiles drew Jackson, but only once. They have one class together. The guy is still an asshole, but there's only so many times you can save each other's lives and still be able to hold a grudge. Jackson actually hugged Stiles one time. It was an odd experience and whenever Stiles tries to bring it up Jackson prickles and douches all over the place. He's the first Stiles tries to draw with shadowing, and he completely ignores the teacher in favor of furtive glances towards Jackson, drawing careful lines to bring shape to his hair and shading under his jaw line, sketching the outline of his head and profile a little darker to contrast the light streaming in from the window. Stiles even draws light lines with the side of his pencil coming at Jackson, to make it look like the sun is shining on him.

Stiles jerks his head up when the bell rings and students around him immediately jump up from their seats. He realizes he spent the entire hour drawing Jackson. He slams his spiral closed and gathers his stuff as Jackson waits impatiently for him by the door so they can get to the lunch table. Stiles smiles as widely as he possibly can, widening his eyes to look crazed.

“Oh look, your resting face,” Jackson says as he cuffs the upside of Stiles head. “Today's not the day to scare the student body, Stilinski.”

“Then why are you doing so well?” Stiles says sweetly, looking at Jackson with innocent confusion, rubbing the back of his head. Jackson gives a dramatic “HA!”, smiling sarcastically as he slaps his knee. He then immediately settles into the most unimpressed expression he can manage, which is actually pretty good, Stiles can admit, and turns down the hallway without waiting. Stiles easily keeps up and they quietly walk to the lunch hall together. He glances at Jackson sometimes, still not
really believing that where he is in life involves walking to lunch with Jackson of all people, but feeling pretty content about it anyway.

When Stiles gets home he looks for his doodles of the day to put them in the folder. There's another one of Erica, mostly so he could draw the braid she had her hair in today, wherein he finished it up with a mermaid tail instead of her desk and legs. He has an unfinished one of Scott, the boys damn jawline and eyes extremely irritating to get down on paper. Then Jackson, and some wolves here and there.

Stiles looks at the one of Jackson for a moment. He spent a lot of time on this one. All of the sketches of his friends are always done softly, light lines creating the image. It almost looks like Jackson is glowing against the rays of light, his face serene as he looks at his notebook on a quickly sketched desk and his hand lightly holding his pen. Stiles spent a lot of time on his face, and it's disconcerting to see how much he cared about getting the details just right. At least with Scott, Erica, and Lydia it didn't feel as odd to know he cared for them. He sometimes can't believe how much his life has changed.

He gags jokingly over the picture before stuffing it in the folder. He needs to get over himself. None of them are the same people they were at the start. He may not like Jackson all the time, but he sure as hell cares whether or not the guy lives now, and Stiles will continue to fight along with him. Stiles thinks that's a good thing to know.

But he still doesn't draw Jackson again. Imagine if he found a bunch of pictures Stiles drew of his face? That boy would preen like a motherfucker, in the most obnoxious way possible.

No way in hell is Stiles gonna contribute to that.

The Butterflies

He may be freaking out. A little bit. He's fucking had it with insects, wants to gas them all out of the world.

He had a panic attack because of a swarm of butterflies that surrounded him and tried to fly into his mouth. He couldn't breathe without them flying up his nose, and goddamn fuck the magic in this town that makes a migration of butterflies life threatening.

He gets home after the madness is over and rips computer paper from his printer so that pages scatter onto his bedroom floor. He throws markers from his desk onto the ground then throws himself down, grabs a random color, and draws.

He draws their wings, and is still not exactly calm, his heart already pumping faster as he next draws a detailed butterfly face, the ugly fucker coming to life on an otherwise empty page, but in an artistic way, a way he can control.

He draws every kind he can imagine, ever color that he has a marker for, small ones, big ones, litters them all over as many papers as he can, some flying, some on a quickly sketched flower, some grouped together so closely you can't even tell where one truly begins and another ends. He draws furiously until his wrist hurts, and even then he continues, at a slower pace, taking time with the curves and details of their wings, even adding the little fuzz on their black bodies with ones he draws big enough to add that detail to.

When he lets a red marker roll from his cramping hand to the floor, he looks at all of his butterflies. A
shiver rolls across his skin. He slows his breathing until he can calmly look at each of the pages, until he can count nine collages in front of him. He flexes his fingers and rolls his wrist, stretches the muscles in his arms and waits until he can comfortably move his hand again.

He grabs the closest page of butterflies and rips it in half.

Each colorful strip that falls to the floor is a weight off his shoulders, and by his third page he's laughing, tearing the pages again and again, putting an unneeded amount of strength into tearing the pieces apart. He rips them until they're confetti on his bedroom floor, and he might be crying a little, but he feels great.

When the last piece falls to the floor, he can breathe again. He sets his hands on his knees and lets himself breathe loud, open-mouthed and obnoxious, no fear of an insect flying in to choke him.

He sits until it's dark outside. He's completely silent, staring at his wall, and feeling the most settled he’s felt in a while, even before the stupid migration. When his knees twinge in discomfort, he stands and stretches his arms above his head with a deep sigh.

Stiles silently cleans up his mess and throws the remnants in the garbage can outside. When he gets back to his room he turns on his xBox and plays until his dad gets home.

A week later, a butterfly lands on a bush close to the clearing that the pack is training in. Stiles watches from his spot next to Scott as Erica groans in disgust and shoos it away. “I hate them now.”

On the other side of Scott, Allison looks up from her book and hums in agreement. “I definitely see them differently than I had before.”

“Yea.” Erica sighs. “It's so sad. They used to be so pretty.”

“Things can be deadly and pretty,” Lydia says from her sitting spot, perched on a chair she made Jackson carry here. She doesn't look up from her phone. “They're still pretty. They've just also tried to kill you.”

“Did they really try to kill us though?” Scott asks. “Sometimes I think that they just had yet to learn how to give proper hugs.” He stares back at everyone who stares blankly back at him. “It...it helps me sleep at night.”

There's a throat cleared and everyone turns to look at Derek, his unimpressed expression, and Jackson pinned beneath him trying to kick out of his grasp. “None of you are paying attention.”

“Now we are,” Stiles says, excitement in his voice. “Hey Jackson, are you used to that position by now?”

Jackson's growl is pretty loud despite his face being pushed into the dirt. Stiles can feel Scott's shaking shoulders beside him. He’s still smiling as well, but Stiles’ eyes travel from Jackson’s sad position and up Derek’s arm, where it’s flexed and connected to naked shoulders. Why does Derek have to do this shirtless. Why. Stiles is snapped away from his musings on skin skin skin when Derek finally lets Jackson up from the ground.

Suddenly, the same butterfly Erica had shooed away comes fluttering back into their clearing, past Jackson who actually flinches away before scowling at it and moving towards Lydia. It flies towards Allison and lands on the top of her brightly colored book.

“Uh,” she says, a brow raised at the butterfly, intoning 'Excuse me?'.
“Squish it,” Jackson says from beside Lydia and Derek rolls his eyes. He bends down for his shirt and slips it on. Thank god.

“It's just a butterfly,” Derek starts. “If you can't handle this—”

“Even you can admit it was weirdly traumatizing,” Isaac pipes up from beside Boyd. “I didn't feel like I could breathe right for awhile.”

Boyd nods in agreement and Derek doesn't respond. Erica shares that she still has dreams about them. “Out of all the things that could give me nightmares,” she says, annoyed, “it had to be the otherwise harmless bugs.”

Meanwhile the butterfly is slowly lifting and lowering its wings and Allison hasn't moved to dislodge it, only staring stonily at it. Scott keeps scooching closer to pick it up, then backs off when it moves its wings again. Derek actually looks like he'll come over and squish it, and for some reason Stiles puts down his Chem homework and crawls towards Allison.

They watch as he brings a finger underneath its legs and lifts it from the book. It only pauses its slow movement of wings, otherwise staying a completely normal butterfly. He slowly walks it past the clearing to a bush and puts his finger against a leaf until it walks off. When he takes a step away, it flutters its wings then takes off away from their clearing.

He walks back to his spot and picks up his homework, raising a brow at Jackson. “There. No squishing needed.”

“Did that actually happen?” Isaac asks.

Lydia smirks. “Stiles just saved our lives.”

Stiles rolls his eyes but flushes and tries to shift all his attention back to his homework. He notices Derek glance at him curiously, but Stiles does his best to ignore it and mentally explains to himself that his beating heart is because of the butterfly. After a moment Derek calls Boyd up for his round of sparring and Stiles lets his shoulders relax.

Scott claps him on the back. “Dude.” He’s smiling when Stiles looks up. “That was pretty cool. I couldn't get myself to do it.”

Stiles shrugs and thinks, yeah, okay, going from having a panic attack when almost suffocating on butterflies to picking one up a week later might be a jump, but really - they are just harmless bugs.

He thinks back to his own butterflies. He smiles.
Jawline and Eyes

Chapter Notes

Two more sections! Happy Friday everyone!

Beta'd by @watyonameisgurl <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Jawline

The first time Stiles practices his therapeutic tendencies outside of a classroom setting is in a fit of frustration.

He’s drawing in a class that he shares with Scott. His book is open on his desk, the left side perched up by a different book so that it hides the sketching he’s doing of his best friend. He’s not too worried about Scott catching his glances. He already has a couple times and they just smile at each other briefly before moving on. Scott’s already used to him being more than a little weird, so catching Stiles staring at him will always be considered the least of their problems.

Although, Stiles is having some issues as he sketches out the fourth head. It’s in profile because Scott is sitting directly to his left, and there’s this thing with his jaw that Stiles of course noticed before because how can you not notice your best friend’s cut-glass jawline when you’ve been friends since third grade.

It’s on a different level now, though - Stiles is noticing the grooves, the shadows, and he thinks he sees the correct perspective in his mind to put it on paper, but it’s just - it’s - it’s really not working.

It looks wrong. Scott looks wrong, all four heads, and he’s trying different line thickness (maybe Scott just doesn’t look good in short wispy lines), or shading (maybe it’s too much under his eyes and jaw, and it’s making the picture look unnatural), or maybe, Stiles isn’t familiar with his best friend enough to draw him correctly.

The thought rankles Stiles, cause fuck you brain, they’ve been buddies, pals, compadres for about a million years, and if he can draw the detailed waves of Erica’s hair from memory after only knowing her for a couple of years, he can draw his best friend’s face.

He’s gotten a lot better at this too, at recognizing aspects of someone and bringing them to paper to make them look real, alive. At least, he thought he had. He stares at the unfinished fourth sketch of Scott and chews his cheeks, his grip on his pencil flexing as he wonders what the fuck he’s doing wrong.

The bell suddenly rings and he slams his book closed and lifts his irritated eyes to Scott.

“You okay, man?” Scott asks as they gather their things. His lips are turned down, brows pulling in just the slightest, and he’s worried, but all Stiles can stare at is his lopsided fucking jaw and how it messes with the equilibrium of a sketch. In real life, it’s charming. On paper, it looks like Stiles turned his paper to the side while drawing and didn’t notice. How the hell does he make that look natural? He’s not gonna straighten the jaw, that’s not Scott, he can’t change his friend on pa-
His cheek is poked and Stiles startles back to the world. “Stiles,” Scott says, pulling his hand back. “You okay? You’re staring.”

“Yep, yea, I’m fine.” Stiles grabs his bag and lugs it over his shoulder. “Just. You know, appreciating your devastatingly good looks.”

Scott looks both flattered and confused, and claps Stiles on the shoulder as they walk out of the classroom. “Thanks. You’re not so bad yourself.”

Stiles pushes him and they laugh their way into the hallway.

That night, Stiles jumps in his desk chair and opens facebook, browsing through Scott’s pictures. Most are blurry, and most aren’t even recent. The most recent includes Scott’s face turned mostly away, and Stiles can tell he’s smiling at a figure that’s shadowed in the distance, and he thinks it’s either himself or Isaac. The problem is that there’s the biggest sun glare coming from behind him and lighting out the edges of Scott’s face. The rest of the photos are along the same lines of not-worth-it-as-reference and Stiles clicks out of facebook with an irritated huff.

His homework is forgotten. It’s three hours before he realizes he hasn’t even had dinner yet. But during those three hours, he sketches and outlines Scott’s face from memory, draws him in weird cartoon styles just to make himself feel better about not getting the realistic version right. No one has to look completely right in cartoon style.

But that’s not what he wants, goddammit. He feels like he can draw most of the pack with his eyes closed, but he hasn’t had the friendship he’s had with Scott with any of them. Does this make him a bad friend? Is he just being particularly picky with Scott’s face? It’s not like he’s perfect with the others’ faces, but it’s never bothered him. Maybe it’s the natural unevenness of it. Scott’s jaw may be fine as heck, but Stiles has realized that what he draws on paper doesn’t always translate well to what looks beautiful to him in real life.

He has two pages filled with Scott’s stupid face and when his stomach growls like an old engine turning on, it startles his hand to a stopping point. He flips through the sketches then opens the bottom drawer of his desk, where the rest of his drawings still are. He takes out one from a couple days ago where he started drawing two people to a picture instead of just a one person sketch, and happens to take out one of Erica and Boyd sitting together. Erica plays with a haphazardly sketched phone, and Boyd just stares sideways and allows Erica’s entire body to lean dramatically into his space.

As they were waiting for school to start, he quickly sketched the very basic outline of the two of them, basically sketching in his bag under the ruse of looking for something, and then the bell rang and he took the rest of the day to fill in the details with what he saw of them throughout the day. He did Erica’s jacket in Geometry, memorized Boyd’s outfit during lunch, and filled in their faces just from the memory of having seeing them every day since...since a while.

He puts this sketch beside Scott’s sketches. He realizes that Boyd and Erica aren’t perfect, but also, that wasn’t his goal for the picture. He just wanted to hold that moment, to have it down on paper, and as he stares, he’s glad he did, because even though it’s not perfect, he remembers how he felt in that moment when he looks at the picture. Remembers their boredom of waiting for class to start, so simplistic compared to how their relationship started, how all of theirs did, and Stiles imagines a moment in the future when things get batshit crazy again, except now he’ll have this reminder that it’s not always like that, that it’s not always fear and running and pain.

His feels himself starting to tear up and he looks to the sketches of Scott. When he looks at these, all he feels is the pressure he put on himself, the stress of getting it perfect, and he feels a bit ashamed,
because whatever deity is out there knows that perfect was never a standard in his and Scott’s friendship. They’re a right mess, to be honest, and Stiles would never trade it for anything.

He thinks for a moment that he’s thinking about this way too much, but he also thinks, well, he’s already distinguished this habit as a form of therapy for himself, so, in for a penny.

He crumples the sketches of Scott he’s worked on for the past couple of hours and throws them in the trash. It lifts a weight from his shoulders he didn’t even know he had been carrying. Scott is his best friend, no matter how fucking crazy things get, and despite the lack of one on one with each other compared to before these supernatural instances started happening. He doesn’t have to work so hard to prove himself or be the perfect friend. They’ve proved that to each other too many times to count, and it’s silly for Stiles to do this to himself now.

He puts Erica and Boyd back in his drawer that’s slowly becoming solely used for all of his drawings. His stomach reminds him again that he’s starving, but he first pulls his spirals from the day out of his bag. He rips Scott’s faces from them and lets himself stare. There’s so many things he’d like to fix, but after the frame of mind he finds himself in after his suddenly introspective moment on his friendship, he just smiles at the sketch and practically feels a thrill go through him about the imperfections of it. He places the sketches in the drawer with the rest, packs his stuff up again, and finally goes downstairs to make dinner, feeling significantly lighter about more than just his art.

The Eyes

The thing is, of course it occurred to Stiles to draw Derek. He never thought about it seriously though because Derek has better senses than the rest of the pack, and Stiles has had awful luck when it comes to finding times to just stare at Derek’s face. Believe him, he’s tried, even before this sudden spark of artistry became a thing. Derek just has a knack for feeling eyes on him, he guesses, because every time Stiles stares at the guy for longer than thirty seconds, Derek’s eyes are suddenly staring right back at him, and Stiles can only smile awkwardly or make a silly face before leaving the situation as fast as he can.

Another thing though is that Derek is so lovely to stare at. Before Stiles started looking at people with the eyes of how would I shade this scene, or how thick would my pencil line need to be for your nose? Derek was still in his top three contenders of people he liked to creep on, in a purely I-really-appreciate-your-aesthetic type of way. And okay, with Derek that’s a little bit of a lie because what also creeps in is a I-really-like-basically-everything-I-see-oh-lord-god-how-do-you-exist way.

But now Stiles has a different way of staring at people, and he’s also noticed little things about Derek, like the lines around his eyes and how specifically they change depending on the conversation. He knows when Derek is in a lighter mood, he knows when Derek is angry, and although before this his eyebrows helped substantially in helping Stiles predict Derek’s moods, now he’s getting a full face spectrum.

And god, Derek’s eyebrows. The left is a bit thinner at the curve than the right, the hair spattering a bit less than the other, and Stiles wonders why that is but also knows the just right pencil flicks he would use to get that texture on paper. He notices that Derek’s lips are practically always a little bit dry, and then from that, notices how many times a day Derek worries his lips together, rubbing them back and forth as he thinks deeply about something or is just listening intently. He knows that Derek’s hands have obvious knuckles, and there are curves to his fingers because of it, how his hands are waves that connect to his wrist, where a bone is slyly hidden by the muscle that thickens
into his forearm. When Derek raises his arms, either during practice fights or just reaching to get a
glass from the kitchen cupboard, the wrist bone protrudes a bit and Stiles gets a thrill from the ways
he can draw Derek in order to make it plausible to show this fact.

So basically, the ability to control his staring is worse now. He still hasn’t drawn Derek but, god, he
practically dreams of it. He wants Derek to be his french girl, except in a safe living room instead of
a historically tragic boat.

But. Well. Here’s another thing.

Stiles knows that he doesn’t have completely pure intentions when it comes to Derek. That if he drew
him, it wouldn’t completely be for the sake of art or friendship or even an odd therapy trip. The fact
that he can feel his gut swoop as he sits in his room and puts pencil to paper, imagining how many
ways he can draw Derek, just proves that his intentions are totally more of the sexy variety, and...and
he just can’t find it in himself to continue. He ends up drawing a creature, or just doodling lines as a
fun way to distract himself from the sensation he’d been feeling. He doesn’t want his drawing to
become some sort of pseudo porn for himself, and ultimately, he doesn’t want to do that to Derek.

He doesn’t want to appreciate Derek just for his body, and as they all spend more time together with
the year passing by them, they’re all slowly understanding that Derek doesn’t like to be seen that
way either. Women make passes at him constantly, and he either smiles politely then pivots his
attention to a beta, or he refuses acknowledgement in any way. The pack gets the message loud and
clear, although some of the women take longer to get it.

So he hasn’t drawn Derek, because Derek notices when Stiles stares, and even though Stiles knows
backwards and forwards now how he could possibly draw Derek, he can’t help feeling some sort of
guilt every time he tries, even if he’s just planning on drawing Derek simply watching television.
He’s too damn attracted to the guy to keep it mostly about the picture, and frankly, since he’s still on
the trip of being honest with himself in his art, he’s...not ready, really, at all, to look too deep into his
feelings about Derek. He has an idea that what he’ll find won’t just be about Derek’s rippling abs,
but also about the lines of not just his eyes, but his smile, and the way that depending on the lighting,
when him and Derek lock eyes, there’s a softness that affects the set of Derek’s face that makes
something swoop in Stiles heart, that he yearns to get on paper, that he --

But right, he’s not drawing Derek anytime soon so it’s not something he has to focus on or worry
about or think about or - anyway, nothing too in depth about Derek’s stupid face comes to Stiles’
mind at all. Really.

Really.

It’s now been about three months since he started collecting his drawings, and even by the second
month he’d had to start taking other things out of the drawer to make space for more papers. It’s a
calm Sunday, his window and curtains open so that the sun shines through. He’s sitting cross legged
on the floor, staring into the open drawer at his desk, wondering if he should move the collection
somewhere else, when his phone rings.

“Yo,” he says distractedly after only glancing briefly to see that it was Derek.

Derek starts right in. “Pack meeting, tonight.”

“Is it about something lethal?” Stiles asks as he takes away a bundle of CD’s from the drawer.
Maybe these can fit in the drawer above? No, that drawer holds research.

“Not necessarily.” If he puts it in his research drawer it’ll bother him. He doesn’t like to mix what’s
in what drawer, he’ll end up forgetting where he put something. So the CD’s stay. Should he just move the pictures somewhere else?

“Stiles?”

“Yeah,” he says, rocking forward to try and grip the hulking folder with one hand. Old chargers and computer parts spill around and he curses. He doesn’t have the energy to organize that mess anytime soon.

“Did you hear me?” Derek huffs, and he sounds like he’s losing patience, so Stiles stops himself for a moment, leaning against the drawer.

“Uh, yeah. Pack meeting.”

“What time.”

Stiles thinks hard and chuckles nervously. “Ha. Uh.”

“Be here by three. Bring your brain,” Derek says, and hangs up.

Stiles takes his phone from his ear and looks at it incredulously. “Rude.” He also kind of thought it was hilarious, but the laughter is deep, deep inside, because he won’t indulge the brood-master even when he’s not around.

Stiles checks the time and sees he has an hour, so he throws his phone to the side and continues his goal.

He’ll put the folder in his closet, he decides. Under some dirty clothes. He doesn’t even want to think about how he could explain all of these if someone found them, and in this new placement, that should keep everyone, and their noses, away.

Stiles gets to the meeting a little early and lets himself into the rebuilt Hale house. He drops his bag on his desired armchair in the living room and heads to the kitchen.

Derek is leaning against his counter, staring at his phone with a disgruntled expression. Stiles stops and stares for a moment, and without meaning to, immediately starts examining Derek.

Stiles would say it must be a werewolf thing to have fierce jaws, but the betas all look the way they did before the bite. They just have confidence now, albeit misplaced at times.

It must be an attractive thing. You have to be attractive.

Then he thinks of Peter’s lips at his wrist and feels all at once disgusted and flattered.

Derek looks up from his phone and levels Stiles with a death glare, which could also translate to a simple ‘What’.

“I’m grateful,” Stiles says, very seriously, “that you have a simple jawline.”

Derek’s face does something weird, as Stiles was hoping it would, and continues on his quest for something to drink without explaining. Derek says nothing for a moment but looks as though he’s preparing to. As Stiles opens a Sprite and stares back at him, feeling more courageous than usual and taking a sip, Derek must decide that it’s just Stiles being weird on purpose and leaves it be, staring
back down at his phone with a light shake of his head.

That assumption would be correct, of course. Stiles tries not to smile to himself as he makes himself leave the kitchen, because at least he knows he’s being funny.

Having this little secret to himself, he decides as he settles in his chair, is actually pretty nice. Everyone knows so much about each other in this group. It’s a little exhausting having yourself on display constantly, especially because of scenting and senses.

But drawing? You can’t smell that. You can’t sense it or see it unless it’s right in front of you. It’s his.

As he takes another sip, he realizes that he shouldn’t make random statements like the one he made in the kitchen. Not if he really wants to keep it to himself. These kids get way too curious for their own good, and all of them have randomly insightful moments at times.

Boyd, Erica and Isaac enter suddenly at the same time, their voices carrying from the front door easily.

“Hey, loser,” Erica says as she lightly cuffs the back of Stiles’ head.

“Work on your pep talks,” Stiles says as he shakes his hair out of his eyes. He keeps thinking to himself he’ll buzz it again, but time keeps slipping by and the shagginess of his hair doesn’t look as bad as he thought it would. “You shouldn’t talk to yourself like that.”

Isaac yells, “Oh damn!” before throwing himself on the couch and stretching his legs out. Boyd immediately lifts Isaac’s legs and throws them off, sitting in the space. Erica sits on the floor between Isaac and Boyd as she laughs sarcastically at Stiles’ quip.

The front door opens again and Scott and Allison come in holding hands, going right to the other end of the table to sit together on the loveseat. Scott and him fistbump on their way there, saying hi to the group at large as the front door opens again and Jackson and Lydia amble through.

“So what’s trying to kill us now?” Jackson asks instead of a greeting, and suddenly Derek is right behind him and says, “Nothing.”

Lydia rolls her eyes as they make their way to a seat. “Okay, so, that’s utterly hard to believe,” she says.

“You said it might be lethal.” Stiles stretches his head back to look at Derek who’s standing a little behind his chair.

Lydia points out, “And on the scale of what does and what doesn’t try to kill us when things suddenly appear in our town, I’m sure it’s safe to assume our lives are in danger. Again.”

“Nothing has suddenly appeared in our town,” Derek continues. “And I didn’t say it might be lethal,” Derek directs at Stiles. Stiles smiles wide and shrugs. “I said that it’s not necessarily lethal.”

“This is so mysterious,” Erica pipes up. “And I’m losing interest.”

Derek rolls his eyes and Stiles appreciates the angle he has to stare at Derek’s face. “Come outside.” Then he turns and leaves the living room.

Under the direct order, there’s a bunch of sighs that Stiles joins in on, because he just got comfortable. He leaves his sprite in the room cause who knows what sort of surprise this is. When it
comes to surprises, having free hands has mostly worked out in his favor in terms of weapon grabbing or bitch-slapping.

It just doesn’t work as well when soda splashes across your face and almost blinds you.

Stiles knows.

Unfortunately.

So they all follow Derek to the backyard and spread out across the porch since Derek faces them on the grass not too far from the edge of the porch. It’s a sunny day with a light breeze and Stiles hopes this doesn’t turn into something terrifying.

“I’ve been working on this for a while,” Derek starts, then stops and shifts his eyes across their feet. Stiles observes his face safely because, well, all of them are staring at him, and Stiles might be going crazy but it looks like Derek is nervous.

It kind of seems like he wants to say something else, but instead he removes his shirt and starts to remove his pants.

“Uh,” Isaac says for him, and Stiles agrees.

“We knows you have a bomb body, Derek,” Erica drawls. “You’ve been working on it for more than a while.”

Derek’s only response is to fold his clothes and place them beside him on the grass. Thankfully, he’s wearing boxers, but Stiles still feels like fanning himself like an overheated Jane Austen character. This is really odd, because usually de-clothing oneself is pretty normal, but it’s not normal to do it like this where he’s obviously trying to show them all something.

Is Stiles dreaming? Is this some sort of day dream that got out of hand and for some reason includes the presence of the pack? He looks over the rest of them and they all look confused and, especially in Allison’s case, uncomfortable.

And then Derek says “Don’t be nervous,” and he closes his eyes and fuck.

This is bad.

This is awful.

Stiles’s breath leaves him in a rush and his arm practically convulses for the sudden need to find a paper and pencil, as one second Derek is standing as a human, and the next he’s standing as the most beautiful and biggest wolf Stiles has ever seen.

His coat is long, the inkiest black he’s ever seen on an animal, with strands of brown highlighted throughout his body. The darkness of his fur lightens down his four legs, where the fur steadily turns to grey on his paws. His ears stand straight up, at attention, and he’s looking at each of them and - oh -

*His eyes*. In contrast to the darkness of the fur on his face, his eyes are an incredibly bright green, literally sparkling in the afternoon sun.

Several “Oh my god’s” erupt from the group, and then the wolves of the pack all fly to Derek just to waver uncertainly around him, getting close but obviously too nervous to touch him. Then Derek’s big ass wolf head butts against Erica’s hand and she gushes, “AAAAAAAAAAAAWWWmygod ,” before
falling to her knees and running both her hands across his face and ears and neck.

The rest of the wolves converge on him, minus Scott, who stands a step behind, taking time to stare. Otherwise, Boyd, Isaac, Jackson and Erica all have their hands somewhere on Derek, and Derek totally just stands there and takes it, snuffles whoever gets the closest to his face and lifts his head towards anyone who’s too nervous to touch it.

Everyone starts talking over each other as Allison, Lydia and Stiles all decide together that they can slowly walk towards the scene, since Derek is obviously a willing participant and doesn’t mind that his pack is petting him cause he’s an actual wolf ohmygod.

“I didn’t know this was possible,” Erica says wonderingly, and Isaac is whispering “Holy shit, wow, holy, oh my god, wow,” and Boyd is muttering something along those same lines, and Jackson is saying “He’s so soft,” as if it’s insulting him.

The others get closer, Allison holding out her hand to Derek’s nose nervously, which makes Derek, the wolf, roll his eyes and stick his nose in her palm. She actually squeaks then falls to her knees beside Erica and softly starts to pet his shoulder with one hand, keeping her other hand tightly fisted in her lap.

Lydia goes right to where Jackson stands petting across Derek’s back and she joins alongside him, agrees with a whistle that he’s soft as hell, her thin hand almost covered entirely by how thick and deep Derek’s coat is.

Scott got closer at some point and is awkwardly tapping his hand on Derek’s head between brief pets that go back to tapping. He looks like he’s utterly baffled by the whole thing, and can’t stop his eyes shifting all over Derek’s new frame.

And Stiles, he’s, well. Still standing a couple steps away, gobsmacked, mouth open, eyes raking across the whole scene. He didn’t know this was possible. Was the alpha pack able to change? Why didn’t they? How is Derek able to do it? How long can he stay like this? When did he learn this? Does Stiles have the courage to pet him? My god he wants to pet him.

Stiles takes a step before he’s really thinking about it, and he haltingly approaches Derek’s face, then just kind of stands there long enough for Derek to look up at him questioningly.

Questioningly. Derek actually tilts his head to the side and stares back at Stiles, and when Stiles does nothing, Derek just looks away and focuses back on the rest of the pack.

Did he just miss his chance? No fucking way.

“Move, move,” he says to Erica and drops to his knees between her and Allison before grabbing Derek’s face between his palms and turning Derek’s head to face him.

“Wow,” Stiles breathes, taking in everything, the strands, the waves of fur, his nose. “Wow. You’re actually a wolf right now.” He frames his hands along Derek’s jaw line and traces the bone structure with his fingers, down his snout. “I know you know that, but this is the most surprising thing I’ve ever seen in my life. More surprising than the leprechaun debacle. Remember that? I remember that. Finding out that a character on my favorite cereal box exists doesn’t even amount to how fricken cool this is.” His hands trace down Derek’s neck and chest, the soft fur separating between his fingertips and he continues to babble. “I mean it also kind of sucked to find out that they’re all the littlest shits of little shits in the entire world, but what are you gonna do. I feel like on our spectrum of supernatural creatures, it’s a pretty even break in meeting awful ones and really cool ones.” His hands come back to Derek’s face, that still hasn’t moved away from Stiles’s curious hands, and Stiles
takes that as permission for him to check out Derek’s ears and rub them between his fingers, cause soft.

“Like that trout a couple months ago,” Allison puts in and, yeah, like the trout!

There’s a wave of agreement from everyone as Stiles says, “Yeah! I loved that guy! Fish. Fish-guy.” Stiles pets down to the base of Derek’s ears and drags his thumbs along the top of Derek’s skull. “He was so cool. Such a positive attitude, despite half his family getting eaten. We should have kept him in Lydia’s pool so we could say hi more often.”

“He would have died,” Lydia said, but Stiles really doesn’t care because he just found the ridge of the brow bone that’s totally hidden by the fur on Derek’s face, and that discovery leads to framing his fingers around Derek’s eyes and down his snout, and also to Stiles locking eyes with Derek, who has apparently been staring very intently at Stiles for who knows how long .

Stiles chokes a bit then swallows his nerves down and just stares back. The conversation continues around him but he and Derek are undergoing some sort of staring contest that Stiles has already lost quite a few times, because he keeps blinking and expecting Derek to look away.

But he doesn’t. He stares steadily and Stiles looks back, because damn him if he doesn’t take this opportunity to look.

Derek’s eyes are green. He knew that. But he didn’t know the ridges inside were a very pale green, which is what makes his eyes look so light. The rest of the green in them are pretty dark, and it makes the texture of his eyes so easy to see, and Stiles doesn’t know if this is what happens to wolf’s eyes or not, and he knows sadly that he most likely won’t get the opportunity to find out whether Derek’s human eyes have the same gradient as Derek’s wolf eyes.

Stiles’ thumbs have been petting back and forth across Derek’s snout and Stiles stops when he notices. He understands the bone structure now, of what he sees, of what kind of wolf Derek is, and Stiles thinks, suddenly, his eyes widening, I can draw this.

He can totally draw wolf Derek! It’s not weird looking at him this intently, because everyone else is too! And as crazy as his sex drive can be, he’s one hundred percent sure that he doesn’t get it up to animal porn, so he’s safe on that front. This won’t be weird , it’ll be purely Derek , and Stiles is so suddenly thrilled that he realizes it was making him sad not being able to draw him.

Derek’s head tilts to the side again and Stiles thinks, shit, get a grip on yourself, before chuckling and saying, “On the scale of really cool supernatural stuff I’ve seen, this is the coolest .”

And somehow Stiles can tell that, even though in his other body Derek would just look at him oddly if he ever dared to say that, in this form Derek preens , and Stiles thinks to himself, This.

I need to draw this.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!! <3
Happy Friday! Here are two more sections ~
And, Thank you to those who have reviewed, it's so nice to see responses! Little butterflies attack my tummy whenever I read them.
Chapter beta'd by @watyonameisgurl ~

The Wolf

Derek doesn’t turn into a wolf too often, but it is often enough that it’s not startling to have him amble through a doorway on four legs after a pack meeting or just when Stiles drops by to say hello.

It’s awesome. Stiles can stare as much as he wants and touch as much as he wants. Stiles finds out, hilariously, that Derek is more growly as a human than a wolf. As a human, none of them can waltz up to Derek and hug him around the neck. None of them can pet his ears or hair back. And definitely as a human, Stiles can’t openly observe the way Derek’s body moves, how graceful Derek is when he jumps on the couch, how terrifying his strength is, and how his muscles shift when he’s a wolf during training with the betas.

It’s nice because Stiles can tell Derek is more calm in this form. It’s also obvious that he’s adoring the attention the pack gives him, going as far as sometimes waltzing up to a pack member for contact if there’s too much time between the last pet-fest, to everyone’s pleasant surprise.

The contrast between human-Derek and wolf-Derek is startling, but everyone is taking it in stride, and slowly, human-Derek seems to be relaxing, too. But of course Stiles wouldn’t dare mention this aloud for fear of ruining the peace with awkward comments.

Instead, he draws wolf Derek. A lot. Curled up in slumber under the rays of the sun, staring up at the sky, howling at the moon, standing on his back paws to reach the counter with his front paws. With wolf body reference he gets from the internet and getting to see Derek as a wolf often enough, he has pages filled with Derek doing everyday and silly things as a wolf.

And, really, if anyone were to find these, they’d just think, ‘Wow, you like wolves.’ But if anyone in the pack was to see them, one look at the eyes and they’d know, ‘Wow, you like Derek.’

Derek’s eyes are Stiles’ favorite part to sketch. Stiles is consistently detailed with that facial area, loves to be specific about even the placement of the eyelashes. For some sketches, he even colors the eyes, leaving the rest of the photo in the monochrome pencil or pen lines. Those are the pictures where Derek’s eyes are as startling as they seem to Stiles on a daily basis.

After about four weeks of this Stiles starts to feel weird about it again. And he’s pretty sure Derek is starting to notice how much Stiles stares, because the wolf thing has kind of worn off for just about everyone now, except himself. That makes the situation especially harder to handle since most of the time Stiles is the one that Derek goes to for contact now, since Stiles would never say no to running his fingers through Derek’s fur. It helps that once Stiles gets into some research, he doesn’t move for anything bar a bathroom break, so Stiles is a pretty good pillow. It’s become something normal in their day to day. He’s just got to get a handle on how much he looks at Derek when Derek isn’t
around him for contact. That’s just...much more difficult than expected.

Stiles is afraid he’ll miss something. Something important. He doesn’t know exactly what that something would be - a pose, an expression, another cute moment between Derek and a beta that he’d love to immortalize. He just wants to see it all, and he’s afraid of missing any of those small memories that make up the pack, moments that show how close everyone is finally getting to each other.

The pack as a whole is getting stronger together in less of a my-life-depends-on-you way and more of an I-actually-appreciate-being-a-part-of-this way, and Stiles thinks it started with Derek’s first shift. Out of anything that can bring people together, wolf snuggles is definitely one of them.

He startles from his musings when someone curses and, oh right, he’s in the Hale house living room spacing out. What has he been spacing out at? The corner lamp? Alright. Better than someone’s shoes or face again. He looks down at the research book in his lap and sighs when he notices the pages had been slipping from his fingers and now he doesn’t know where he left off.

A deep sigh comes from the table and Stiles looks up to Isaac, who’s wiping away some soda he spilled. When Stiles looks around the room, everyone else but Derek is gone.

Derek is human, laying across the couch, eyes closed. He didn’t even startle at the fumble, but Stiles knows better than to think he’s asleep. Isaac leaves the room to get another towel, cursing quietly all the way, and Stiles is left alone with Derek.

And yeah, he’s staring. Stiles thinks to himself that he would add sun rays cascading across Derek’s prone body, just because he really enjoys drawing them, and it gives all the pictures a kind of ethereal feel, which is the mood he likes best for most of his sketches right now.

He takes a moment to study Derek’s feet, and realizes he hasn’t drawn feet much at all. He should practice that.

Stiles’ eyes trail up Derek’s legs, his back completely relaxed into his comfy chair, and his teeth chewing on the end of the pen that’s in his mouth that he doesn’t even need to use but he keeps on hand to settle his oral fixation. He notices that Derek’s knees are actually pretty knobby. Usually Derek is wearing jeans, but these sweats are so light and thin that they frame Derek’s legs as if they’re skin-tight. Along with the sweater he’s wearing, Derek looks the complete image of comfort. The sight makes Stiles jealous, and now he kind of wishes he took a nap before he came.

His eyes travel up to Derek’s head, sees that Derek’s hair is super mussed from having one of his arms up and under his head as a pillow. His other arm dangles off the side of the couch. Stiles finds himself smiling a little at how nice this moment is. The movie they were watching earlier has long since finished so the house is quiet, besides the little noise that Isaac is making in the kitchen. The curtains are closed, but the afternoon light is softly shining in, and Stiles imagines that if he tries to listen hard enough, he can hear both him and Derek breathing in tandem.

Stiles realizes he’s spaced out again and blinks hard to bring himself back to the present. Upon blinking his eyes open, his eyes lock with Derek’s.

His heart skips as Derek slowly blinks at him. Stiles is briefly worried about how long Derek was watching Stiles watch him, but after a moment of this peaceful staredown, Stiles relaxes from being caught. Derek still doesn’t look away, and Stiles feels like this is...different.

Derek sighs softly. Stiles tries to ignore that Derek can totally hear his heartbeat. Derek sits up from his position, running his hands through his hair. Stiles’ eyes follow the motion, cataloguing how
Derek’s fingers flex across the curve of his cranium, how his hair strands bend between his fingertips, and when he looks back to Derek’s eyes, Derek has a look on his face that Stiles doesn’t understand.

Confusion? Or - he doesn’t know. But Derek stands and ambles towards Stiles, so Stiles’ brain kind of stutters to a stop in both excitement and anxiety.

When Derek stops in front of Stiles - which Stiles felt unkindly took two years to happen, why is time such a weird fucking construct - right, anyway, Deek just stands over him for a moment, and Stiles stares up at him helplessly, pen in his mouth and eyes wide. He feels silly when he gets distracted by Derek’s eyes again, green and a shade of gold, but then lurches back to the present when Derek’s hand reaches for his pen and takes it from his mouth.

“You’ll ruin your teeth,” Derek whispers, keeping to the serenity of the room.

Stiles makes some sort of ugly incoherent noise as a response, something that was supposed to be, Okay? What? Huh? Or some other english word that he can’t get past his lips now. Derek just looks at him for another second before tilting his head to the side like he does as a wolf. Then the edge of his lips twitch and Stiles is drawn to it like a moth to a flame, and he’s introduced to a new smile line that he had yet to see from Derek.

His eyes track it until it’s gone, then meet back up with Derek’s eyes, and that look is back on Derek’s face. Derek’s brows are turned just the slightest bit down, like he doesn’t understand what he’s seeing, but before anything else happens, Isaac’s voice yells from the kitchen.

“Derek! Where the hell are all the towels?” Isaac sounds exhausted and defeated, and Derek moves away before Stiles can get a grasp on things.

“It’s Thursday,” Derek says as he walks, which is explanation enough because Thursday is designated Hale Laundry Day. Isaac groans loudly in irritation. Derek is gone from the room. And Stiles is utterly baffled by the moment they just shared.


When Stiles gets home, he goes through his spirals to take out the sketches of the day. While reorganizing his bag, he realizes - oh.

He doesn’t have his pen.

That’s...fine. He has more in his desk.

It really doesn’t mean anything, he knows, and he stays up until midnight drawing trees and their leaves because the detailing keeps him distracted from thoughts. He draws until he’s tired enough to fall asleep.

The Dates

It’s a Saturday morning when he finds himself staring at his ceiling upon waking for an undetermined amount of time, the only thought circling his head being, I want to look through the pictures.

And so he does, because it’s a day off with no pack obligations and he hasn’t looked through any of the pictures since he started collecting them. It’s almost been half a year. The one folder from the start
of this has been full for months, and now there’s actually three folders, because he can’t ever keep his hands still and anything is possible as long as he has a pencil or pen and a corner of a page.

He eats breakfast and brings snacks up to this room (he knows it’ll be a long process, he needs fuel). On his way up his dad comes out of the bathroom and looks him up and down.

“Doritos at ten am?” His dad comments, face disapproving besides a tiny smirk obviously trying not to make an appearance.

Stiles thinks of the sketches he’s made of his dad waiting in the folders in his room. “Duh. When else?” He smiles wide when his dad rolls his eyes and smacks his hand on Stiles’ shoulder.

“You had breakfast though, right?” he asks, already walking past Stiles to head downstairs.

“Yea, I did.”

His dad gruffs out a “Good,” and he’s already down the first step when Stiles says, “Hey, uh -”

His dad stops and turns back, but Stiles hesitates.

Can I show you something? He wants to say, but he doesn’t because he suddenly gets so nervous that he totally wusses out. “Uh - never mind.”

His dad raises a brow. “Alright then. Let me know if you change your mind.” And then he continues downstairs and Stiles curses his brain to mouth filter as he heads back to his room.

Stiles said he wanted to keep this to himself, right? Then why did he start anything? Now his dad knows there’s something on his mind, and with all the crazy things that happen to them on the daily, that’s not the best thing to have happen.

Stiles drops all of his snacks by the closet door and slides it open. He pulls out the folders, dirty clothes falling to the side, and lays them out side-by-side on the floor. He sits in front of them and opens the folder he first started collecting the pictures in. The drawings are all more or less in the order of being drawn, since he just sort of placed them on top of one another whenever he put them away. He should be able to look at them in order -

Oh god. Wait.

He pulls out the first stack of drawings and turns the top one, a little gremlin guy that wasn’t a supernatural encounter but just something Stiles wanted to draw, and turns it over and around, inspecting the entirety of it.

It’s not dated.

He checks the next five of them and sighs heavily.

Does he care? Is this really that important?

Even as he asks himself, he knows, yes, it is, because even though it never occurred to him to date it all this time, he’s been thinking of these not only as therapeutic, but also as a way to look back on certain moments in his life. How the hell is he supposed to do that a couple years from now if he won’t remember when anything was drawn?

He whines loudly at what he knows he’ll have to do and falls backwards on his back. Alright. This won’t just be a trip down memory lane - this will be a specifically-what-memory trip, which is more
like a dirt path in a questionable forest rather than a lane.

He sits back up again and crawls over to his desk to grab a pencil. Once he situates himself back in front of the folders, he rips open the closest bag of chips and cracks his knuckles.

He’s weirdly excited to go back through his drawings and the specificities of everything, and determination wells in his gut as he smiles to himself. This doesn’t have to completely suck.

Lets fucking go.

It’s about three pm when he finally falls on his back and rolls over a couple times to get away from where he’s been sitting for hours. He did take a lunch break, but his butt hurts like a mofo.

He’d done, though. He did it! He feels accomplished and also like his brain turned to jelly.

Mostly the reason it took so long was because some memory trips of pictures he’s drawn would take him further into remembering what happened those days, which ultimately led him to spacing out while the minutes ticked by without him noticing. It happened a lot.

Otherwise though, because most of his art is so recent, it was easier than he thought to remember the date of each picture. Especially since when he remembered one specifically, the pictures kept next to that one drawing would automatically fall into place.

Like when he drew Isaac chilling against a fence. That was the same day he drew the picture of Erica and Boyd together before school, except he drew Isaac after school.

Then when he got to the pixie drawing after that huge pixie debacle, he knew immediately that one of the next drawings would be of Allison and Scott huddled on a chair together at the Hale house, because it was the pack meeting after the debacle was solved, and Scott had kissed Allison’s’ new scar on her forearm that she had acquired from the whole ordeal.

And it all evolved like that, the moments falling into one another and forming the memories of almost five months now. As Stiles stretches, he can’t help thinking that it’s really cool to have it all played out for him like that, almost like a movie.

It’s a little embarrassing to see the sheer amount of wolf Derek in his arsenal, but a cool thing about it is that he can see an obvious progression of skill since he’s been drawing wolves so damn much. His people sketches are slower, but...he’s still progressing. It’s a really nice feeling.

He’s happy about this.

He thinks about choosing a picture and running it down to his dad, where he’s watching football, also having a relaxing day off. A cheesy image of him being five and yelling, “Dad! Dad! Look!” makes Stiles smile to himself.

If Stiles did that when he was younger, would his dad have put it on the fridge?

...Would his dad do that now?

He thinks of any of his drawings on the fridge. Imagining any of his pictures displayed like that only makes him nervous. No, he’s not ready for that. He’d keep looking at it, maybe wanting to fix things because people could see it.
He doesn’t want his art to be - well, judged. He doesn’t want to show anyone because what if -

But this is such a major part of his life now, and it’s been a while, and no one knows, and no one can see how far he’s come and how much he’s learned, and no one will see what he’s dedicated most of his free time to, what he now loves doing. No one will ever see. Not unless he shows them.

Stiles is biting his lip and his stomach is turning over in nerves. God, if there was anyone - anyone he’d show -

The one it would be is sitting downstairs in his living room. But damn - Stiles can’t get himself to sit up.

It’s okay. It doesn’t have to be today, he tells himself. That eases the anxiety and helps him move. He’s able to put all of the folders back in his closet. He piles the clothes on top again and slides the closet door closed.

After cleaning up, Stiles heads downstairs and watches the game with his dad, who’s confused about his presence when Stiles obviously doesn’t care about the game at all, but is happy to see him nonetheless.

Stiles surprises himself by thinking where his mom would have sat in this moment. It’s a dull ache, but it’s such a sweet thought, her being here and not caring much about the game either, but still all sitting together. Stiles can’t help but smile.

Before he goes to bed he draws a messy sketch of him and his dad on the couch, relaxing against the cushions. Their faces aren’t detailed but the outlines are hard and you can tell where each limb lays, that Stiles is leaning into the corner of the couch with his elbow on the couch arm and his legs outstretched, that his dad’s arm is over the back of the couch as his other hand holds a mug of cold coffee. The door to the kitchen is behind them, the frames of the pictures in the living room are roughly put in, and each object is shadowed or patterned to how Stiles will always remember it being.

The loveseat to the left of the picture is empty, until Stiles erases a circle into the shaded seat and bottom back of the chair. With finer and careful lines, he draws a lilly laying in the empty space. Tiny circles of different sizes surround it and they give the impression that the lily is glowing.

She’s there. He knows she is.

Stiles dates it but can’t bring himself to put it in the closet. So he stares at it until he tears up, until he’s crying quietly, and until he has to close his eyes against it.

Stiles puts the drawing under his pillow before turning out the light. He falls asleep thinking, without a doubt, he would have told her first.
Chapter Notes

Friday again!! I hope everyone's week has been good. It's a short chapter today because the next is pretty long and I don't want to put them together. I hope you enjoy it either way, and I'll see you next week ~
BTW, Thank you so much to the sweet comments and responses I've been getting on this story. It really makes my week. <3
Thank you to watynameisgurl for the edits!!

The Looking

Derek keeps looking back.

It's blunt and simple in his mind, and if he saw the sentence on paper he'd think, ‘Yeah, people do that.’ But this isn't anything simple. This involves Derek, and anything involving Derek is decidedly not simple.

Derek isn't even trying to be subtle. When Stiles catches him, he still looks back, and Stiles is still the first to look away. When Derek gets close to him, he mentions random things about the book Stiles is reading or the homework he's doing, simple things like, ‘You've read that far already?’ or ‘I remember doing something like this, too.’

And jesus christ, when Derek's the wolf. Derek bounds right up to him, gets into his space, plops himself beside Stiles on the couch and expects to be pet, or to get his fur smoothed down.

And of course Stiles does it. How could he not? It's still just about the coolest thing he's ever gotten to do.

And really, ultimately, all of these happenings are very simple things.

But again - Derek.

And so he's a tad worried and confused, but...also enjoying every second of it.

He's not going to say anything. Stiles will enjoy it while it lasts and maybe at some point there'll be answers, but right now…

Well.

The pile of clothes in his closet is higher, but it's the same amount of clothes it's always been. It's only risen due to the fact that the folders underneath are bulging from the amount of sketches inside them, and most of the ones stuffed into the top are filled with green, green, green eyes that stare back at Stiles as wolf Derek is sketched sitting, leaping, staring, anything.

This may be worse than what would have happened if he had just drawn human Derek, but it's like falling headfirst into a vat of melted marshmallow.

It probably won’t end well, but at this moment, it’s so sweet.
On a random school night Stiles is at the Hale house again surrounded by the pack. He’s leaning back against the living room couch and pretending to be focusing on homework.

Derek is human at the moment, cooking something in the kitchen that smells fricken amazing.

After a couple more minutes of pretending to focus, he drops his pen in his book, closes it, and flings it to the couch in unnecessary fervor. Him and Scott lock eyes and Scott smiles at the antic, which makes Stiles have to aim finger guns at him as he stands with a plan to head to the kitchen and figure out what that smell is. The rest of the pack ignore him except for Erica when he accidentally steps on her spiral. She jabs him in the back of the knee with her pencil in revenge, and somehow, he makes it out alive.

“D-D-D- Dereek ,” Stiles says too loudly as he enters the kitchen. He has yu-gi-oh flashbacks but continues on. “What’s happening in here and why have you been keeping it from us?”

Derek looks over his shoulder at Stiles, his brows drawn in confusion, and elbow deep in a huge bowl of batter.

“Are you making cookies!?” Stiles yells and Derek practically pouts.

“You can’t tell?” he says as Stiles gets closer.

“I could tell it smells amazing.”

“I’m not keeping it from you. It’s just in a different room.” Derek puts his attention back on the batter and continues to mix it with his bare hands.

“Did you wash those?” Stiles says as seriously as he can, and Derek stops and slowly looks at him with the best bitch face Stiles has ever seen from him. The impact startles Stiles into laughter and he choking on it, coughing into his elbow as Derek continues his mixing in silence.

“Kidding, kidding,” Stiles mutters and leans against the counter with his arms crossed to watch Derek.

Derek’s hands are completely submerged, and it’s frankly an obscene amount of batter that will still probably not make enough cookies for the whole pack. There’s some kind of chocolate, and sugar, and honey smell going on, and Stiles can’t figure out which one is more prominent, but it just has the overall smell of sweet and pleasant that was what drew Stiles here in the first place. The tendons in Derek’s arms shift with the motions of his mixing as the batter becomes harder to mix.

He looks peaceful. Stiles feels the serene energy reach him, and they stand quietly together, Derek working, Stiles staring, and it’s one of the most calming moments Stiles has ever experienced in his life.

He’s not even trying to pretend he’s not staring, and Derek isn’t doing anything about it. He’s glanced up a couple times but still says nothing.

Once the batter is mixed Derek wipes the bulk from his hands into the bowl and washes the rest of it off in the sink. He then gets two spoons from the drawer and hands one silently to Stiles, and they both spoon the batter into little balls and place them on already prepared cooking sheets.

They fill up six trays of decent sized batter balls, and Derek can fit three of them into the oven to cook at once. He does so, and he and Stiles work together to clean up the rest of the space.

“Did you know that…” Stiles starts, finally jittery enough again that he wants to break the silence.
But he doesn’t actually have a fact in mind. “Actually. What kind of apron would you wear?”

Derek glances at him but otherwise doesn’t react much. “Apron?”

“Yeah, like, if you had your own cookie shop or something, or were a professional cook, but like a fun one? What kind of apron would you have? And it can’t be solid black, because that’s boring and obvious, and would not fit in the fun cook category.”

“Black aprons are understated,” Derek says as he hands a wet spoon to Stiles. Stiles grabs a rag and dries it off to put in the dish rack.

“A lot of things can be considered understated, but it doesn’t mean they’re fun. Come on. What about - ‘I’m Grumpy because you’re Dopey’.” Stiles own lips twitch just imagining it on Derek. “Or maybe, ‘It’s not that I’m not a people person, I’m just not a stupid people person’.” Stiles laughs outright at that one, and when he glances at Derek he see’s that he’s smirking.

“Your opinion was not in my recipe,” Derek says kind of quietly, and Stiles looks at him to make sure he’s joking, and. Ohmygod. Derek’s smiling. He’s taking part. And that actually sounds like something that could be on an apron.

“Chop it like it’s hot,” Stiles puts in.

“Romaine calm and lettuce carrot on.” Derek retorts immediately, and he’s scrubbing the bowl he used for the batter, but his shoulders are shaking and it sounded like it was hard for him to say, which Stiles understands, because that was awful, and Stiles laughs louder.

Through chuckling breathes Stiles adds, “It’s all or muffin,” and Derek releases a faint laughing breathe that continues on, and then they’re crazily chuckling to themselves about food based puns after preparing six batches of cookies.

Stiles lets that sink in, how ridiculous and wonderful that is, and looks at Derek just to know what his face looks like in this moment. There are the lines at his eyes and mouth, his eyes bright. He’s imagined all kinds of ways he could draw Derek if he ever got the chance, but he knows that what he sees now, he’d never be able to get on paper.

Stiles has stopped laughing as hard as he was and Derek looks up at him and stops laughing as well. They stare at each other and Stiles knows that if he were watching them both from the outside, this would look a bit odd, but as one of the people part of it, it just feels right.

“You ...” Derek starts, but doesn’t say anything else. Stiles lifts his eyebrows in what hopefully looks like encouragement. Derek rubs his lips together in thought and Stiles’ eyes are immediately attracted to the sight, pencil lines running through his vision. He looks back at Derek’s eyes after just a second and flushes when he realizes that Derek just saw him looking at his lips.

It’s very tense for the moment they stare at each other and neither one moves. The water is still running from the sink but Derek has stopped trying to wash the bowl.

Stiles doesn’t know what comes next, but the silence is stretching. He can’t leave it. “The water’s running,” he says, his voice rough even though he’s talking quietly. He swallows so that hopefully his throat won’t be so dry.

Derek blinks then looks at the sink as if it just appeared there. He turns it off and dries off his hands.

“The cookies are probably ready,” Derek says, and Stiles’ eyes widen and all is forgotten in favor of his incredulity, because -
“You didn’t set a timer!?” Stiles yells and he speeds the two steps to the oven and opens the door. They look fine, but Stiles still blows a raspberry. “What a risk to take, man. And with cookies.”

“I could smell if they were burning,” Derek says as he looks over Stiles shoulder at the cookies. “They’re fine.”

“We want them a bit gooey though, cause they’re still hot when you take them out, and if they’re hot, they’re cooking.” He grabs the mittens to take out the trays. “Cookies 101. Keep ‘em gooey.”

Derek helps take the trays out and put the next batch in. Derek closes the oven door again and they share a silence.

“I’m gonna get back to homework,” Stiles says, and Derek just nods. As Stiles leaves, he thinks he’s pretty sure that was another moment, and Stiles doesn’t think he can take anymore tonight.

He thinks of finally drawing Derek as he scribbles messy notes into his spiral. A human Derek to finally be added to his arsenal of artwork, wearing a dumb apron surrounded by cookies.

When he gets home he instead draws a wolf, wearing an apron and, yes, surrounded by cookies. He doodles little stars surrounding the image as if the whole scene is glowing.

It makes him chuckle, and he adds it to his green eyed collection.
Memory

Chapter Notes

Have a great week everyone! Thank you so much for the comments and support I've been getting. It's pretty dang dope <3
Thank you watyurnameisgurl for the edits :)

The Memory

Stiles has a thing for detailing, wherein he loves to spend time drawing the little individual lines of things like hair, wings, or leaves. He’s played around with a few other methods and areas of focus here and there, but for the most part he’s stuck to this ever since the mermaid and her complicated tail and hair.

So the fur of a wolf? Very fun.

Especially since, sometimes, it can be messy. It can go every-which-way, it can look like wind is blowing through it, or it can look fluffy, or wet. He can go schwik schwik schwik with his pencil, little fast swipes, and the picture can be created, usually in ways he didn’t expect.

And with Derek, he gets to card it between his fingers. He gets to see the movement of it with each pet, observe the up or downstroke of his hand to see how the fur either shifts back into place or stays upright. It’s a free, living model and Stiles is incredibly lucky because of it. Because of Derek.

Derek is just so fucking beautiful, in wolf and human form. He’s also easier to talk to because of how close the pack has gotten since his change. It’s like a physical thing, the feeling of the pack being wound tighter together. Stiles may not be able to feel it as well as the wolves in the pack but he thinks he can see how the ties connect between each member, and it’s a pleasant sight.

It’s a Sunday in November, which is one step closer to winter break, finally, and Stiles is at the Hale house in the backyard sitting on the porch steps. He came alone and without much purpose, but Derek didn’t kick him out, so Stiles just waved and continued on his way to the porch so he could stare at the forest beyond.

It’s a really nice place to sit. In the summer there are butterflies and birds that gather in and around the trees, a sign that Derek and the pack have been here long enough for the wildlife to be used to their presence. Now though, it’s colder, and the birds are quieter and the butterflies have moved on.

Whenever he thinks of butterflies still, he remembers the pieces of colored paper thrown out months ago, and he can’t help but smile.

Derek joins him after a moment as the wolf and sits heavily beside Stiles, almost knocking Stiles over with the weight of his lean. Stiles scoffs but wraps an arm around Derek’s head that’s now laying on his lap. Stiles pets him slowly and continues to stare at their surroundings.

This would be a good place for a group photo, Stiles realizes. There’s enough space in the lawn for the pack to bulk together, and this is where they all mostly spend their time. The pack doesn’t take many photos, either, and Stiles thinks, sadly, that his sketches are probably the only form of physical
memories that they have documenting them together.

“We should take pictures more often,” Stiles whispers, not wanting to break the quiet calm. “Like, as a pack. I know usually it’s too crazy around here to think of that, but it’s been calm recently, so…” He doesn’t finish the sentence but Derek noses his thigh and usually nosing anything means a ‘yes’ in wolf Derek language.

“Cool,” Stiles says. “I’m sure Lydia has some sort of camera. We can ask her to leave it here, or something.” Stiles twirls some fur around his finger then smooths it out. He continues petting.

“That’d be nice, I think. To have pictures of us in the house. Just to remember, and stuff.”

Derek sits up suddenly and noses at Stiles cheek, then licks a large stripe up his face.

“Ew,” Stiles says emphatically, but is laughing as he pushes Derek’s face away.

Lydia does have a camera, and she barely uses it. She agrees to leave it at the Hale house as open reign for anyone to grab and play with. It leads to a week of some ridiculous pictures, some blurry moments of running and sudden play-fighting, some simple shots of the pack working in the living room, either on homework or supernatural research (mostly Stiles), and some pleasant shots of pack members doing simple things, like Isaac washing the dishes, Erica and Lydia chatting on the couch, and other sneak shots of random daily things. It’s all so unbelievably normal looking that if anyone saw the group of photos, they’d just think they were all incredibly close friends.

Which is true, now. But it’s an odd, albeit nice, image to see compared to how they all got here.

Everyone sees the photos together after the first week, since the memory on the card ran out a day ago, which led to an unfortunate deleting session that led to a fight, and, well - Scott got them developed before anything else could happen.

“Where’s the one of Erica doing push-ups?” Jackson says to the group at large, mixing up the photos on the living room table in search of that one.

“Deleted,” Erica says smugly, and Jackson grunts in irritation.

“The one with Boyd and you was also deleted,” Allison says sadly. Erica stops looking through the pictures and looks at Allison in disappointment. “It was a misclick,” Allison says sadly. “I’m sorry.”

“New rule,” Scott says loudly to the table. “No more deleting pictures, for anyone, at any time. Everyone has an equal chance at humiliation.”

“Here, here!” Stiles yells, pounding his fist twice on the table. “Anyone for this notion, say ‘Ay’!”

Mostly ‘Ay’’s go around, but Stiles continues for the fun of it.

“Those opposed to the notion, say ‘Nay’!”

Jackson is the loudest ‘nay’ in the group, so Stiles smiles all the more smugly and says, “The pack votes in favor of no deletion. Subject dismissed!” And he and Scott both pound the table twice, then smile goofily each other over a high five.

“You’re such fucking nerds,” Jackson grumbles.

“Jokes on you because that wasn’t a reference. That was purely us.” Stiles points finger guns at Scott
again and Scott pretends to get shot and dies on the table in fake bloody glory.

Of course, this is greatly ignored by everyone, which Stiles thinks is a shame because it was hilarious. Scott and him high five again as the conversation goes on around them.

Derek comes in around this time and sits between Isaac and Boyd at the other end of the table. He joins the riffling of the photos, and for just a moment has a small smile on his face.

“So who gets what?” Isaac asks. “Cause this,” and he holds up a picture of Erica stuffing half a pizza in her mouth and trying to block the camera with her hand, “I want.”

Erica shrieks and tries to grab it from him but he cackles and leans away into Derek, holding the picture high into the air.

Derek grabs it from Isaac’s hands and looks at it, coughing in his shoulder a moment later in an attempt to hide a sudden laugh.

“Rude,” Erica says bluntly, and Derek clears his throat.

“I have a sketchbook,” Derek says suddenly, and Stiles’ head whips up from a photo of him and Scott talking in the living room. “We can glue the photos onto the pages. Make our own scrapbook.”

“Or we can get a scrapbook from the store,” Lydia says. “A nice one.”

“The longer we leave these here, the more likely everyone will take away their favorites or…” Derek smirks and pointedly looks at the photo in his hand. Erica’s eyes narrow. “Their least favorites. Let’s do the sketchbook for now and then we can have a scrapbook for our next set.”

Lydia rolls her eyes but doesn’t object.

“But I really want this one,” Isaac whines, and takes it back from Derek. “It’s amazing.”

“I want it,” Erica says and tries to grab it from him again. He leans away and they glare at each other. Boyd, on the other side of Derek, is trying not to be obvious about how hard he’s trying not to laugh.

“We can each take one,” Allison suggests, still scouring the pictures laid out on the table. “From each week, we can each take one that’s our favorite, and the rest go in the book.”

There’s no immediate objection and everyone looks around at each other. Finally, everyone looks to Derek and Derek nods in agreement. “Any disputes over pictures come to me,” he says, grabbing the pizza picture back from Isaac’s hand. “Which means, I say that this picture goes in the book. No one keeps it.”

As Isaac and Erica both voice their objections, Stiles finally commits to finding a picture. He thinks there are about a hundred and thirty that were able to fit on the memory card, which are now scattered across the table.

Around him, people are suddenly laughing and giggling, remembering moments and teasing each other.

Allison finds a picture of Scott asleep on the couch, completely stretched out, mouth hanging wide open, and even though Scott blushes when he sees it, he agrees she can keep it. She looks at the photo lovingly and puts it in her purse.
Lydia finds the one of her and Erica chatting on the couch, and silently puts it in her own purse.

After Isaac and Erica both finally give up on getting the pizza picture back from Derek, they look through the pictures as well.

Stiles feels the same feeling in his chest that he did when he was looking through his sketches. Except this time, he’s actually in these photos. He still hasn’t drawn himself in any photo besides the…well, besides the one he drew with his dad and…

So he doesn’t draw himself ever really, and it’s nice to look at this...proof that - ...well, he’s a part of it.

There will always be that whisper in his mind that tells him he doesn’t truly belong here, together with all of them. It keeps him awake sometimes, that one day they’ll make a decision and he’ll be out.

But these pictures show a glimpse of what he sometimes doesn’t feel. That belonging here can be ultimately as simple as helping do the dishes after a pack meeting, as being the research guru, as just walking in the house and sitting on the back porch.

A lot of the photos he finds with him in it are photos with wolf Derek lounging next to him, or in a few, lounging on him in supreme nap mode. These make Stiles smile, and think - well, if the Alpha can nap on him, then he can...he can be a part of the pack.

He glances up at Derek at the other end of the table and sees Boyd hand Derek a picture. Derek observes it for a long second, says something quietly to Boyd, then slips it under the table, probably in his pocket. He glances up and catches Stiles looking, but Stiles doesn’t get as tense as he used to about it. He just smiles and goes back to his own searching.

After the group decides to start a movie and plans are in motion to order chinese, Stiles finds the photo.

It’s of Wolf Derek, standing on his pack paws, front paws on top of the kitchen counter, and head held high, probably to see out the kitchen window.

It’s practically a replica of one of the first pictures Stiles ever drew of Derek.

He doesn’t even immediately think to himself, this is it. He reacts on instinct. Before anyone can see over his shoulder or grab it from him to see, he quickly puts it in his front pocket and taps it for safety.

This is it. Months later, one of his sketches in reality. The excitement is bubbling in his chest, and he doesn’t know exactly why this makes him excited, but it does. He’ll bring it home and put it in his desk. He’ll get to see a memory he drew, and a memory photographed.

To him, that’s really cool. He won’t compare the two, no. Especially since it was one of the first wolf pictures he drew full body. It won’t live up to the reality.

But sometimes he thinks that if years down the line, if he were to die, and someone were to find the drawings, they’d have no idea what they were. But with this picture they’ll know he wasn’t crazy. He was drawing his life - and his life is pretty fucking cool.

That thought waves over him and he laughs into his arm, trying to pass it off as a cough. What a time to get sentimental, surrounded by emotion sniffing teenagers. This is why he should keep these moments at home.
“I’m kind of sad we didn’t start this picture thing earlier,” Allison says after the movie. “This is our senior year. We’ll only get the second half of it.”

And then, Stiles thinks, plans for college...

The pack stays mostly quiet. “At least we’ll remember what came before,” Erica says. “It’s too crazy not to.”

There’s a pang in Stiles heart as he thinks back to his sketches, to the drawing under his pillow, and thinks, you won’t remember as much as you think.

But he doesn’t say anything.

Stiles draws about forgetting.

He draws a lily first. Then he covers the page with lines that are straight, winding, short and long.

After so many lines over one another, he can’t tell which line is connected to which, and which lines make up the flower.

He uses a thin eraser to make lines though the pencil ones, and then he can’t tell what the picture is supposed to be, but he knows at the start, he did draw a lily, even though he can’t see it.

Stiles realizes, after an hour in, that he’s scared of it. He’s scared of forgetting. This, at the start, was just a form of therapy, but now, it’s also - it’s the people he loves. It’s everything that changed him. It’s the things in the world that scare him.

Anyone else who sees this will just see a bunch of lines. Stiles sees a lily. And when he looks around his house, he only sees seven pictures of his dad, three of Scott, none of the pack, thirteen of himself and five of his mom.

But including his sketches?

Twenty of his dad, plus two collages.

An utterly ridiculous amount of Scott, especially since the jaw line debacle.

Then seventy percent of the three packed-to-the-brim folders in his closet are of the pack, individuals and groups, them existing, living, happy.

Fourteen of him.

Six - now seven - of his mom.

Stiles grabs a twelve pack of colored pencils from his desk. He hasn’t used them in a while, got them for a school project maybe a year ago, before he really started drawing so he has to rifle through the drawer for a few minutes to find them, but eventually he does.

Once he’s comfortably back on the bed he picks the purple, yellow, and green out and starts filling in the spaces where he remembers drawing the lines for the lily. He pretends the complete outline of the flower is still there, no random breaks from the eraser and ignoring the lines that cross through. He colors only where he knows the petals, stem, and leaves are.
He hasn’t had any practice with coloring, but Stiles does his best, even though when he’s done it looks a little rough and unblended, no rhyme or reason to when the colors are softly colored or hard pressed.

But there the lily is - obvious, even under all of the other crazy lines and eraser breaks.

Stiles dates it then stares at it for a little longer.

He’s never titled any of his pictures. He’s never felt like he had to.

He titles this one ‘Memory’ and puts it in one of his folders.
A week later, there’s another set of pictures to choose from. Most of the pack is gone already and Stiles is laying back on the couch and staring at the picture he chose.

It’s one of him and Scott this time. They’d been in the kitchen getting drinks and Stiles was already drinking from his can of soda, leaning against the counter and waiting for Scott to decide on his own drink. The picture was taken just as Scott closed the refrigerator and was facing Stiles, when their eyes are locked and both of them are smiling, mouth open from conversation. It’s a little backlit from the window behind them which makes it somewhat blurry. He likes that though.

He hasn’t drawn a scene like this, so it’s a nice one to keep. He’ll put it in his binder for school.

The couch cushion he’s on dips a bit as wolf Derek jumps up with him. He looks at the picture Stiles is holding then lays down beside him.

“I like what we’re doing now,” Stiles says. “It feels like the start of a tradition.” He slides the picture in his pocket and starts petting Derek’s neck. “It’ll be nice to have pictures in my room.”

Derek, of course, doesn’t answer, but Stiles doesn’t mind. He just smiles and brings over his other hand so he can frame them around Derek’s head. He feels for Derek’s brows, outlines around them with his fingertips then does the same around Derek’s skull and jaw.

When Stiles looks at his face he sees that Derek is staring at him. Stiles just smiles and continues his petting. Or, he would have, if Derek didn’t suddenly sit up.

“What?” he asks, and Derek’s eyes narrow. Stiles supposes that he just wanted to sit instead of lay down, so he brings his hands up again and rubs his thumbs along the side of Derek’s snout.

Suddenly there’s a shift beneath his fingertips and Stiles yelps and crawls back in shock as human Derek sits before him, in all of his naked glory.


“Why do you look at me like that?” Derek says, and his voice is rough like it always is after transforming back.

“Like what? What?” Stiles still doesn’t take his hands from his face, but his heart is finally slowing. Derek grips his wrists and pulls them away so that they lock eyes, and, welp, there goes the calm he was getting back.

“The way you look at me. Why do you look at me like that?” Derek’s face is close and very serious, with a bit of confusion pulling down his brows. Stiles almost chokes on his breath before releasing a
nervous giggle.

“Like - Like what? I don’t look at you in any specific way, I mean, yeah, I look at you. You’re a wolf, dude, it’s amazing, I’m still not over it,” and he’s starting to babble so he convulsively swallows to stop his flow. “It’s just, wow, you transform and stuff. Super cool.”

“It’s different,” Derek says, eyes narrowing. “You look at me differently.”

“Nope, not really.”

Derek leans in even closer and whispers, “Lie.”

Stiles lets loose a strangled noise then chuckles nervously in a high tone.

“I know you stare at me all the time,” Derek continues.

“I’ve gotten better about it,” Stiles retorts.

“You were getting better about it, but then it really started up again since I transformed. And now-...now, it’s...” Derek can’t seem to finish and Stiles tries really, really hard not to look down.

“It’s more intense ,” Derek says.

Stiles doesn’t think he can handle this.

“You look at me when I’m human, and you look at me when I’m a wolf, but especially when I’m a wolf, you’re so open about it. You just - you look at me.”

“W-well, yeah -”

“You look at me .”

And Stiles gets it.

He takes a moment to read Derek’s face and notices that - well, Derek looks incredibly uncomfortable. A vulnerability that Stiles has never seen before is creeping into Derek’s face the longer the silence goes on. Stiles thinks, shit, is this real, what’s happening , and then he thinks, fuck it, because life is incredibly insane and there’s a naked Derek in front of him whom he may, not may , he does , have an incredibly huge crush on.

“You’re really fucking beautiful,” Stiles starts, voice high and nervous, and before Derek can interject with that shocked expression of his, Stiles continues with, “And I love all of the details of your face and your eyes do this thing, and so does your mouth, and hands, and they do this thing that I don’t really know how to explain but they do it , and I really love looking at you but it does feel weird when you’re a human because you catch me and it feels weird, cause I don’t want you to feel like I don’t respect you and your body, because I do, I mean, if I could look at a corporeal representation of your personality, I fucking would , hot damn, I’d look that shit up and down all day and - and this is getting away from me, okay, yes, I look at you, but I don’t want you to feel uncomfortable, and then you’re a wolf and - and -” Derek has let go of his wrists and has sat back on his heels a little, still staring, shocked, at Stiles, but Stiles is on a roll now so he continues, “And you like it when we look at you, you love the attention, and I am really on board with that because I love giving you attention, and I get to stare at you and pet you all I want and you’re down for it and it’s all around all kinds of great, and, and stuff, and it’s just great. You’re great. You’re really great, and like, graceful, and strong, and beautiful, and nice - you’re really sweet, and you make us cookies, and it’s just - and you’re -” Stiles sighs heavily and swallows against his really dry throat. “Uhm.” Is
all he’s got left. What the fuck is he even saying.

Derek doesn’t respond. Stiles looks at his hands for a moment and then looks back up at Derek, who still doesn’t utter a word.

After a moment, Derek’s throat kind of shifts as if he’s trying to say something, but then all that comes out is, “Uh.”

“You, uh - you look like you don’t believe me.” Stiles licks his lips and scratches his cheek. “But that’s okay. I can - uhm.” But then as he’s saying it, he gets irritated. “Actually, no, it’s really not okay.” Stiles ignores for a second that Derek is naked and grabs his hands from his lap. “There’s something I want to show you because you should believe what I’m telling you, and I really want you to know that you’re really fricken great, and you’ve been doing really well lately, and -” Stiles stops that train, because no . “Okay, so, meet me at my house tonight. If you want to. I’m not forcing you. Just.” He squeezes Derek’s hands. “If you want to.”

Then he unfolds himself from the couch and gathers his stuff as fast as he can, the last look he sees on Derek’s face being gobsmacked. He leaves without glancing back because there’s only so much a healthy highschooler can take.

And then he waits.

Like an idiot.

He can’t believe he did that. Said that. Saw...that. Shit. Shit.

Is he even ready? To show someone his drawings? He really thought the first to see would be his dad and Stiles is actually feeling a little guilty that it’s not the case at the moment.

But Derek looked so lost from what Stiles was saying, and that just can’t be allowed to continue, because - because - well.

Derek has a ragtag group of highschoolers as his go-to peeps for supernatural deeds. At least, that’s as vague as it started, how simple Stiles thought of it.

But Derek needed a pack. He made one of kids who needed stability.

And god knows it didn’t go exactly as stable as Derek had probably hoped but...but...against all weird and unnatural odds, here they are. Here all of them are.

And they - they kind of did it. Right now, at this moment, the pack is succeeding. And it sure as hell isn’t all Derek’s fault, cause at times he made it worse than better, and everyone collectively has pretty much made a shit ton of mistakes and they’re all basically idiots -

Uh. So he sees where he’s getting the idiocy from. They’re all kind of rubbing off on each other, now, in a very nice non sexualized way. Very non sexualized way. Stiles shivers at the thought of any kind of rubbing between most pack members, but then he derails from that thought right into Derek, and the rubbing, and closeness, aaaaaaaaaanndd god fucking damnit, derails it again into emotions because he’s already struggling pretty hard in the pants department after that sudden transformation on the couch, and Derek is coming tonight - ha, coming - stop Stiles are you fucking serious - and he needs to get his head in the game and prove that he’s totally jamming with Derek’s everything and wasn’t just saying stuff because of the seriously hot bod very close to him.
Derek isn’t the best Alpha. And well, Stiles’ experiences with other Alphas has been frankly deplorable, but still he knows that Derek isn’t the best out there. But he’s one that’s really trying for the best of all pack members. He’s trying to help them survive, and after all the shit they started with, that might be the best he was capable of doing, handling the life peril first and not being able to handle much of anything else, yet.

And now, there’s more training and pack meetings, and it’s less like pulling teeth for everyone to come. Sometimes people just come over to Derek’s and hang out, unbidden. Stiles thinks, compared to before, that’s an amazing step forward for everyone. And he also really thinks that started with Derek, when he transformed, when he finally readily let all of them in. It’s less scary to be around him after seeing him headbutt Allison’s hand for a pet. Which is cute as hell.

Stiles lets himself think about that for a moment, staring off into space with a goofy smile, before he shakes himself and claps his hands for no reason but to get some energy out. “Okay!” he says loudly, alone in his room. “Okay,” he says more quietly. Stiles was hoping that would actually get him moving but he’s still standing, hands together, staring at the wall above his desk.

He should just. Move. Or something.

He should eat something. Oh my god, yes, he should eat something. His body jerks into motion and suddenly he’s passed his door, down the stairs, and in the kitchen.

If there’s anything he’s good at, it’s pretending there’s not an utterly terrifying moment that could possibly happen at any second. Life goes on, and you still need to eat even, for example, let's say, while pixies are running amok in the southern forest area.

Stiles grimaces from that memory and opens the fridge. Actually, facing a werewolf is rather something to look forward to in comparison to that.

He ignores the resounding nerves throughout him and makes a sandwich.

It's kind of startling how, in just a second, a course of life can change drastically.

One hundred and twenty seconds ago, Stiles was eating a sandwich on his bed. One hundred and twenty seconds ago, his window was closed, there was one folder on his bed that he stared at pensively, and he was trying really hard not to think about what he was obviously thinking very hard about.

Then, at the one hundred and twenty first second, his window slid open and he accidentally breathed in bread crumbs.

He was choking on his bed, frantically finding his water bottle, as Derek slipped through his window silently at nine pm, practically on the dot. He closed the window after himself, which rarely happens, and after Stiles is done choking and they’re just staring at each other, Stiles realizes the closed window means he plans to stay.

It's awkward. Stiles still has half a sandwich left, but he can't bring himself to take a bite. He puts it to the side and fists the edge of his blanket in his hands.

“So you came.” Great, Stiles. Good start. “Uhm.” Wow. He really should have planned something. Damn his excellence at avoidance.
Derek doesn't say anything or move anywhere. He stays standing near the window, glancing from Stiles to the rest of the room in nervousness.

That doesn't give Stiles the courage to explain, but it does make it easier for him to toe the edge of the folder on his bed. “In here,” he says, and then that’s all he says because his throat closes up and my god. Derek is going to see his pictures.

Not all of them. Just the pictures he drew of Derek, and some pack drawings. He's absolutely not ready to drop so much of his work and life on someone at once.

Derek walks to the folder as if it's a snake. He picks it up slowly and turns it over, but it's a plain blue folder, so nothing is immediately obvious besides the fact that it's filled with papers.

He sits on the edge of the bed and begins to open the folder, and Stiles thinks he might throw up. He's clenching his blankets and staring wide eyed at Derek's hands as the folder opens, and it’s so sudden - there's his art, in Derek’s hands, available for his perusal.

When Stiles’ eyes fly to Derek's face to see his reaction, Derek only looks incredibly confused. The two top pictures in the folder pockets aren’t Stiles’ favorites, but he had wanted to ease Derek into the fact that A. Stiles draws, and B. Stiles draws him and...everyone.

….mostly Derek, though.

Derek pulls the entire stack of papers from the left pocket and sets down the rest. The top of this one is a rough sketch of wolf Derek sleeping with no details of the area, just him and random flowers all around the page when Stiles kind of wanted to draw scenery, then lost interest a few flowers in. He then just scattered a couple around the wolf in an odd frame and was done.

“Is this,” Derek starts, but doesn’t’ finish. Instead he slides the top picture away and looks at the next one, which is a collage of wolf Derek that Stiles used to practice facial expressions. He slides that one away, too, and the next picture is a collage of wolf Derek walking, sitting, standing on his hind legs, that Stiles used to practice positions and placement of limbs.

Stiles’ eyes feel dry because he hasn’t blinked in maybe two minutes. He’s rapidly glancing from Derek’s face to the pictures that Derek is glancing between, and it’s utterly silent, and Stiles can’t take it.

“I draw,” Stiles bluntly states. Derek jerks and his eyes swing to Stiles, startled at his sudden voice. “I draw a lot. It started a while ago. I, uhm,” Stiles breaks from his blankets and crawls towards the edge of the bed until he can grab the face collage from next to Derek. “I know it’s really creepy that so far it’s mostly you, but I promise I draw other things. Look, here,” and Stiles takes the second pack of papers from the folder and he takes the second paper from the stack because the top one is of Derek as well. “This one.” The one he pulls out is the sketch of Erica and Boyd hanging out before the bell rings for school. “I draw the pack, too. And my dad. But he’s not in here. And the creatures we fight, and, uhm, random stuff, I guess, too.”

Derek slowly accepts the sketch of Erica and Boyd, staring intently at it and gingerly holding the picture between his fingertips. Stiles doesn’t know if Derek is listening still but he keeps talking anyway.

“Honestly, though, I do draw you the most, since you transformed. You’re incredible. I drew wolves before, but now I only draw you. You’re expressive and most of the time, right in front of me. I can’t help it. I just want to stare at you all the time and see your bone structure, the way your fur moves in the wind,” as Stiles is talking he’s taking more pictures out from the stack and slowly handing Derek
more to look at. He interchanges pictures of Derek with random pictures of the pack so that he doesn’t overload him. “You’re kind of really gorgeous, and that’s already true for your human form, but it feels less weird drawing your wolf form, so I kind of latched onto that.”

Derek looks up at this statement as Stiles tries to hand him a fifth sketch. “Less weird?”

Stiles blushes and avoids eye contact by riffling through his pictures for another one to hand Derek, since he seems to be intent on just looking at the ones he’s handed. “Well, yeah. I mean, you know you’re good looking, everyone knows you’re good looking, but we also know that you’re kind of uncomfortable about it.” Stiles glances at Derek once he says this, but Derek stays stone-faced. Stiles looks back to his drawings. “So every time I tried to draw you, I would feel uncomfortable about it, cause if you’re uncomfortable with how hot you are, how could I possibly be comfortable portraying it through sketch?” And now Stiles’ face is utterly red, goddamn, he’s in waist deep now. “I didn’t want to do that to you. Make it look like I was just drawing you for...but I also couldn’t figure out how to make that apparent, you know?” He pulls a picture of Isaac and Scott sitting side by side. “Drawing the pack is easy. But drawing you is…” Stiles flounders and hands the sketch to Derek to look at. “Is…” Fuck.

“Hard?” Derek suggests, taking the sketch from Stiles but putting it down immediately. He’s just staring at Stiles now, and Stiles can see it in his peripheral.

“I mean, I’m sure you know,” Stiles says quietly, his throat tightening.

“I don’t.”

“You do ,” Stiles insists, finally looking at Derek and trying not to let the embarrassment eat at him. “I stare at you all the time. I try to be in the same room as you, all the time . I worry about you all the time, I think about you all the time, and now you see I draw you all the damn time ,” Stiles is starting to yell a bit, frustrated about his mess of a heart, and he rises to his knees so he can look down at Derek. “I want you to know how beautiful you are because I think you’re really fucking beautiful, as, like, a person, and a wolf, and your everything ,” Stiles gestures to all of Derek and Derek blinks slowly back at him, “and god damnit Derek, I can’t draw you as a human because it’s complicated for me, and I keep thinking that it’s because I don’t want to hurt you, but it might also be because-” Oh shit, fuck, shit - “Because I -” Stiles’ eyes widen and he falls back on his butt. “Oh wow.”

They share a silence in the quiet room and Stiles and Derek stare at each other through it. Stiles can’t get himself to speak, because damn.

He loves Derek.

It’s not a crush. It’s all around what he knows about love - caring for someone, wanting them safe, trusting them, getting frustrated and elated by them all at once - and Stiles was so uncomfortable sketching Derek because of how attractive he was, but really Stiles was so uncomfortable with sketching Derek because of how attractive he is, and Stiles doesn’t trust himself enough not to fall utterly headfirst into into the full rounded spectrum of love - emotional and sexual.

“I can’t draw you as a human because I really like your body,” Stiles finally says. “And I also really like you , and putting the two together is dangerous .”

They blink at each other for a moment.

“So what you’re saying is,” Derek says, “You’re attracted to me, and you didn’t want to draw me because you felt bad for drawing me when you’re attracted to me.”
Stiles relays that in his head about a thousand times before nodding. Basically right.

Derek holds up the collage of his wolf face.

“I’m not into bestiality,” Stiles says quickly. “Drawing you in wolf form is just really easy and awesome because you love it. You’re obviously really happy as a wolf, and I just...I really like that.”

“You really like that I’m happy,” Derek states, and Stiles is starting to get irked by his stone face. Not even his eyebrows are emoting.

“I really like that you’re happy,” Stiles states back, raising a brow. “And I really want you to know that you’re awesome.”

“That I’m -” Derek starts and Stiles waves his arms up frantically with a groan.

“Stop it! Stop repeating me!”

“I just -”

“I like you! A lot! I’m pretty sure I love you,” Derek’s eyebrows finally shoot up, thank god, a reaction, and Stiles grabs another sketch of Derek and shoves it in his face, “and I asked you here so that I could show you how beautiful I think you are, and that you are worth being stared at for hours every day.” Derek takes the picture from Stiles, and now just looks baffled. Stiles takes Derek’s face between his hands and stares down into his eyes.

“This is a fact for me,” Stiles states. “And your brain should catch up with your senses telling you it’s the truth.”

He touches his nose to Derek’s, who’s staring wide eyed back into Stiles’ eyes, then Stiles backs off because his heart might be deafening.

“I’m going to get us drinks. Don’t leave.” Stiles stands from the bed then turns around and glares at Derek, in case he was feeling jumpy. “Don’t leave.”

Stiles runs out of his bedroom. He grabs water bottles and two Sprites as fast as he can, quickly grabs some chips just in case, then bounds back up the stairs to his room. He’s breathing hard by the time he crosses the threshold, but Derek is still there.

Derek is still there.

Stiles drops half his load on the bed then goes to his desk. “I’m going to work on some homework. You keep...you know. Looking. And stuff.”

Derek doesn’t respond but grabs a water bottle, so Stiles takes that as a good sign.

As Stiles turns to his computer he tries to ignore his nerves that are bundling up again. Derek hasn’t even said anything about the sketches, and Stiles hopes to all hope that his work is even good enough for what he’s trying to accomplish.

He just wants Derek to look as carefree as he does as a wolf. That simplicity is still somewhere in there even in his human form, right? The tail wags, the excited yips and comfortable nap times?

Stiles really hopes so. He doesn’t think Derek’s shoulders are naturally as tense as they tend to be as a human.

And he...he doesn’t need a reaction to his confession. Not right now, at least. He didn’t even mean
for it to come out like this. He’ll just pretend it never happened and move on with whatever this leads to. He’s pretty sure Derek doesn’t feel the same way anyway.

But it’s...really nice to have it out there. And that Derek didn’t run, like he sometimes does. Stiles is being honest and he already feels more relaxed because of it, because there are less things hovering around in his mind.

Well, that’s a good thing at least. He opens the programs he needs for homework and delves into the history of the 1920’s.

About an hour later he stretches and rolls away from his desk. He already finished his homework thirty minutes in, but Derek’s taking a long time to look at each picture.

He stands from his chair and joins Derek on the bed. Derek’s made a decent sized dent in the amount of pictures he’s gotten through. Stiles thumbs through the small stack that’s left over and hums at one of them. Derek looks up and Stiles smiles and pulls out the picture.

“This is my favorite,” Stiles says quietly, and hands it over. It’s a portrait of Derek’s wolf face, each line of fur purposefully placed, but the main focus point being Derek’s eyes. It’s one of the ones where the rest of the picture is in grey and black tones, but his eyes are the bright green that Stiles sees when they catch the sun.

Derek stares at the picture and the picture stares steadily back. Stiles smiles at the memory of drawing it, about finally feeling impacted by the picture the same way he is when he catches Derek’s eyes.

Derek is looking at it wonderingly and Stiles feels his chest swell in pride and nerves. “How long have you been drawing?” Derek asks.

“Not sure exactly. I noticed that I’ve been doodling in my notes for a while, but I wasn’t really thinking about it. It really started I think...seven months ago?” His nose scrunches up in thought then he shrugs.

“These are...” Derek hesitates then he clears his throat. “These are really good.”

Stiles beams. “Thank you.”

Derek glances up then, doesn’t look away from Stiles face. “It’s uh...it’s a little hard to give a compliment about my own face,” Derek mumbles. It’s the most at ease Derek has looked this whole evening and it relieves Stiles.

“It’s okay,” he says. “I uh...I haven’t shown anyone any of these, so I appreciate hearing whatever.”

Derek sets down the paper. “You haven’t shown anyone?” His eyebrows are downset, and he sounds shocked.

Stiles shrugs as he says, “It just started suddenly, and it was therapeutic for me. I didn’t want other people’s thoughts to get in the way, you know? And...most of the drawings started out really personal for me. Most of the drawings pretty much still are.” He wrings his hands together as he remembers the creatures he drew after some of their particularly harrowing encounters. Then he remembers the picture that’s still under his pillows and his lips purse uncomfortably.

“Okay,” Derek mumbles. “So I’m...”
“You’re the first,” Stiles finishes, and gives his hands something to do by straightening out the papers.

Derek glances across all of the sketches, then, in a gruff voice, says, “You’re really good at facial expressions.”

Stiles is about to simply say ‘Thank you’, but then Derek barrels on. “I like the sketchiness. When you only color one thing, it’s - impacting.” He pulls out the picture of Erica and Boyd. “You’re really good at getting their faces right. I can easily tell who everyone is.” He continues to stare at the picture, and Stiles can’t believe it, but his gaze is fond. “You must look at them all a lot, too.”

Stiles’ stomach is doing odd flips, but he still has the breath to say, “I see them every day at school.” He doesn’t continue and Derek looks up at him. They stare at each other.

“You can draw me as a human,” Derek says. “If you’d like to. I’m giving you permission.”

Stiles is speechless for a whole two minutes, and Derek waits the silence out without breaking eye contact.

“...Really?” Stiles finally says, kind of breathless as the possibilities ramble through his head, all of the things he’s wanted to draw this whole time but never had the gall to.

“Yes,” Derek says. A full blown smile erupts on Stiles face.

“You’re basically giving me permission to stare at you more now, you realize,” Stiles jokes, his hand gripping the blanket beneath him because he can’t quite believe this is reality.

“I know,” Derek replies. Their eye contact suddenly fizzles down to Stiles’ bones and his smile falters because he - he doesn’t know exactly how much weight he should put into that, and those two words bounce in his mind.

“Oh,” is all Stiles can come up with, and then he feels stupid about that so he smiles wide again and says, “Okay.”

They stare at each other for a moment longer and Stiles is startled by the lack of an anxious edge across Derek’s features. Stiles has gotten so used to seeing it and - and he doesn’t quite know when it went away, but he’s really glad it did, and that the absence of it makes Derek...sweeter.

Stiles’ hands start feeling twitchy so he breaks his eyes away to continue straightening the pictures. Derek helps him after a second and they both put the pictures back into the folder. In just a minute, the folder is closed between them.

“I should go now,” Derek says, and him and Stiles stand together and take the three steps to his window. Derek pushes it open then looks at Stiles.

“Thank you for showing me,” Derek whispers, his eyes to the floor, and then he’s vaulting out of the window and already blending with the night.

“You’re welcome,” Stiles says to the darkness outside. He closes his window, then his curtain.

He walks in a dazed, dream-like state to his desk and pulls out a sheet of computer paper and grabs a pencil.

He doesn’t draw anything. But he knows, now, that he can draw anything, and after twenty minutes, he prepares for bed and falls asleep smiling.
Quiet

Chapter Summary

Short chapter today - I hope everyone is doing well. Thank you so much for the responses on the last chapter - I love seeing people returning and the comments are wonderful <3
Thank you to watyonameisgurl for the edits!

The Quiet

It’s Friday, soon after the night with Derek. It’s Stiles’ first time at the house since then and though nothing has progressed involving him and Derek, he’s deciding not to worry about it. He thinks they both need time to digest.

Stiles is holding the new picture of the week in his hands when Scott quietly says, “You seem more calm lately.”

Stiles startles because the only other sound in the room was music coming from the backyard. He glances around the living room and realizes they’re the only ones here. Everyone else is hanging around outside, probably enjoying the odd nice day since it’s been getting colder.

He looks to Scott who’s sitting at the head of the low table, legs crossed. Stiles can’t help but smile a little and shrug.

Just as quietly as Scott, Stiles replies, “I have literally never heard that before.”

Scott laughs a bit, shaking his head. “It feels kind of weird to say.”

Stiles doesn’t look away from him but it takes a moment for Scott to look back up.

“Is everything okay?” Scott asks.

Stiles knows now that this is a serious conversation. He appreciates the foresite from Scott to keep his voice low and scoots closer to where Scott is sitting. He takes a moment to think and stares down at his picture as he does so.

It’s of him and Erica from two days ago, on the couch. Stiles was caterwauling through their gameplay and Erica finally got fed up enough to slam her controller down and smother Stiles down with a couch pillow. The picture is the moment of Erica bearing down on Stiles, pillow pushed into his face as he’s falling off the couch. You can’t even see him much, since the pillow covers his head and the table covers most of his body.

What he loves about it is that while it was happening, Erica had just sounded frustrated. Unbeknownst to him, though, she was smiling widely, and he would have never known without this picture.

‘I’m happy’, Stiles wants to say, but the thought of it out loud in such a serious moment makes his stomach twist with doubts, with ‘Are you really?’ And, ‘What if you say it, and it ends?’
So he stays quiet and Scott stays quiet with him.

“This is mine,” Scott whispers a moment later. He hands Stiles his picture of the week and Stiles chokes down his laugh and drops his own picture briefly to cover his smile.

It’s Isaac, completely passed out on the window sill of an upstairs bedroom where the sun is shining through. It would be a sweet scene if his mouth weren’t wide open in a snore and if he wasn’t very obviously slipping off the sill, about to fall onto the hardwood floor.

Stiles imagines the aftermath and can’t help but giggle. He hands Scott the picture back, then picks up his own to angle it towards Scott. Scott huffs a laugh and Stiles smiles with him.

Scott softly clears his throat. “You’re very zen,” he whispers. “Like, you’re not different, you’re just...calm. Calmer.” He wrinkles his nose. “Uhm.”

“I get you,” Stiles murmurs back. “I’ve been...trying some things.”

Scott’s brow raises and Stiles rolls his eyes.

“Completely legal, safe, and personal things.”

“Oh,” Scott says, eyes widening and a blush forming on his cheeks. “Oh. Uh. I mean, good for you man, experimenting -”

Stiles doesn’t even truly say a word to stop Scott’s sentence, just erupts in garbled syllables and rises on his knees to wave his hands in Scott’s face, then continues with, “No, no, no, no, no, no, no.” He sits back when Scott is sufficiently quiet, a bemused smirk on his lips. “My god. No. Get whatever was in your head out of your head. It’s legal, safe, and emotionally personal things. Not whatever you were going with.”

“You have to admit that it’s not far fetched for me to go there.” Scott looks more amused than anything.

“I admit that usually that would be a fair point. And maybe, one day, that will be the case.” He side eyes Scott who now looks uncomfortable with the admission. Stiles points at him. “HA! It’s weird for you, too. So let’s not go there.”

Scott salutes and Stiles high fives his falling hand in agreement.

“So you’re safe. And it’s doing well for you.” Stiles nods and Scott nods back. “Okay.”

“What do you-” Stiles starts and then hesitates, but Scott gets it.

“I don’t think it’s anything totally obvious to the others. But I know what you look like when you’re comfortable.” Scott looks to the table. “And you haven’t really ever been comfortable around here before. You usually get antsy faster, or try to leave faster, or just...” Scott trails off and Stiles waits.

“Now, you’re just a part of it, you know? You’re not in a rush to leave or put in your opinion. You’re just here with us.” Scott smiles. “It’s like when we hang out at our houses. You still talk a lot.” Scott says wryly and Stiles smiles back. “But it’s less forced. And I know that in your case, that’s pretty big.”

Stiles sits with that response for a moment, thinks back to the past couple of weeks, or even the past month, and he already knows that Scott is right. He feels it. Even when Stiles is by himself, he feels what Scott is talking about.
He used to be incredibly nervous about being in the pack. He’s always felt that he somehow has to be of some sort of use. He has to be doing something, constantly, so that he could prove himself. So that they could see he should be here.

So that they wouldn’t kick him out.

But things have been so calm recently. What the hell is he supposed to do? All of them do house chores, and he does as well, since they’re all here all the time. And that’s about the extent of pack work at the moment.

If life were this uneventful a handful of months ago, Stiles would probably be ridden with more anxiety than was necessary right now, just trying to figure out, how, how, how can I prove this, how can I prove me.

But.

His life isn’t the same as a handful of months ago. He isn’t the same. His closet isn’t the same.

Stiles is more calm. He’s more involved. The time he takes to get everything on paper has been letting him be more active in his life.

He lets that wash over him as he stares at the table.

Scott’s starting to fiddle around where he’s sitting, tapping the table quietly and jiggling his knees. Stiles lets him sit in the silence a moment longer just to fuck with him. He tries not to smile too obviously.

Finally, he says, “Thank you, Scott.”

Scott’s head jumps up and they lock eyes with a smile.

“Will I get to know what you’re doing?”

Stiles shrugs. “Part of what’s really great about it is that I’m one of the only one who knows. I don’t have to explain anything, or talk about it. It’s just me at my own pace.” He resolutely ignores the butterflies in his tummy when he thinks about the one person who does know now. This isn’t the time.

Scott is nodding along but looks pretty disappointed. “Well, if you ever want to talk about it...you know. I’m curious. And supportive!” He quickly brings up two thumbs and smiles widely.

Stiles laughs loudly and fistbumps both of Scott’s hands. “I don’t expect to keep it from you forever. It’s still technically a recent thing, anyway.” Stiles reassures Scott with some pretty intense eye contact. “I’ll let you know.”

Scott beams and they stand together. He hugs Stiles quickly and when he tries to turn away Stiles shifts his body forward again so they can properly dole it out. Scott squeezes him tightly before letting go, and they smile at each other again. They hit each others back in a jokingly bro fashion as they leave the living room to join the others outside, and Stiles feels a lightness inside of him that makes smiling easy.

Their pictures are still on the table, but they won’t forget to bring them home.
The day after his talk with Scott, Boyd saves him from being trampled by Erica and Isaac. Erica and Isaac are constantly finding an excuse to wrestle each other and get one up over the other. Except this time, they started *inside*, which is a big no-no in the house because they tend to break things.

*Things* almost turned into *Stiles*. Isaac, Erica, and a sleeping Boyd are on the couch while Stiles is on the floor in front of the couch reading. In one moment everything is calm, but then there’s a large *BANG!* from the couch slamming into the wall from the impact of Isaac barreling into Erica. It startles Stiles so badly that he bends the first half of the pages of his book with his grip, and when he whips around, Isaac has his hand pushing down on Erica’s shoulder and she’s rearing up with her hand to push his face away.

Boyd is beside them, eyes open, sleepy and unimpressed.

“You piece of shit!” Erica is yelling, a laugh in her voice. “I knew you would-”

“Ha!” Isaac laughs as Erica struggles upright. He’s trying still to push her down, even though his legs are hanging off the couch side and he has nothing to leverage against. “Lies! You know nothing!”

“OUTSIDE!” is suddenly bellowed by Derek from upstairs, and both Erica and Isaac flinch, then jump quickly into action to sprint out the backdoor.

Unfortunately, Stiles is in their path, and they’re still pushing each other, and his whole awkward life flashes before his eyes as Erica and Isaac stumble up, aggressively grabbing each other by their clothing and already beginning to kick each other -

His shirt sleeve is grabbed, and suddenly Stiles is being lifted sideways, hands moving from his shirt to under his arms to be flung up and out of the way. Boyd pulls him close enough for Stiles’ back to land against Boyd’s chest. It happens fast enough so that when Erica suddenly trips Isaac, Isaac’s leg hits the edge of the table instead of Stiles’ face.

Stiles stares, slack jawed, as they run to the yard. He almost got brained. Shit like this is the reason they have *house rules*, dudes.

Boyd mumbles groggily in his ear, “You good?”
Then Stiles flails cause *fuck*, he now realizes he’s in Boyd’s lap. Stiles twists around sideways to slide his body off Boyd’s leg onto the couch, now only his legs stretched across Boyd’s lap.

“My god,” Stiles says, still a bit startled. “Yeah, I’m good. I’m not bludgeoned to the face.” He laughs a bit, cause damn, it’s not like it would’ve been completely painful, but it definitely would’ve hurt. “Thanks, Boyd.”

Boyd shrugs and then - and then smiles, just a little, and stretches upwards until his head is leaning back on the couch again. So, he’s just going back to sleep.

Stiles’ legs are still across Boyd’s lap but neither of them are doing much about it. Usually, Stiles knows, he would have felt weird in this position with a pack member that he’s not incredibly close with. But right now it just feels simple, like they’re friends chilling in the living room.

Stiles decides that if Boyd isn’t going to push his legs off, then Stiles isn’t going to move. He reaches over to the table and nabs his book, then wiggles until his head is supported by the arm of the couch. When Stiles shifts, he realizes that Boyd’s hand is placed on top of one of his ankles, and Stiles smiles a bit, excited about this moment and how weird it *isn’t*, and opens his book.

Some time later Stiles looks up to the sound of Derek coming down the stairs. Derek briefly looks outside where Stiles can still hear Erica and Isaac running around, and Derek shakes his head with a fond smile before coming into the living room. He stops at the sight of Stiles and Boyd. Stiles gives him a wide smile over the top of his book.

Derek doesn’t say anything but something in his face softens. Stiles’ heart clenches at the sight before Derek turns away and walks towards the radio.

He turns the station to classic rock, keeping the volume low. He leaves the room again and Stiles turns back to his book.

Stiles and Derek haven’t had much one on one since the night Stiles showed him the pictures. He’s not very worried about it, because overall it ended on a good note. It was the best version of Derek disappearing into the night that Stiles has ever experienced. The next morning Stiles realized that Derek had never finished looking through the pictures, but after everything that was said, he can understand pacing oneself.

And really, Stiles doesn’t expect a response to his confession too soon. He didn’t really mean to say it in the first place, and Stiles doesn’t know if he’s ready to actually act on it anyway. The thought sends shivers down his spine and makes his stomach hurt. He thinks that’s a sign to hold off for now.

And luckily, Derek has surprised him by not avoiding him so far, or making it awkward. He’s kind of proud of Derek when he thinks about it more, since their past is riddled with running away and avoiding topics. When Stiles came to the house to read today, Derek had opened the door for him. Stiles’ resolution to act like nothing had changed proved to be much easier when Derek greeted him inside as if he’d made the same resolution to himself.

Through all of this so far, Derek has been proving his own personal progression. It gives Stiles hope.

Really, the only odd thing Stiles can take from their exchanges is the amount of eye contact, but now that only excites Stiles instead of making him nervous.

“I know,” Derek had replied when Stiles told him he’d be staring more. And that’s - damn. Stiles still can’t think about it for too long, what with how much that can possibly mean.
Derek knows, and wants him to stare?

Derek knows, and it’s simply for Stiles’ artwork?

Derek knows, and wants to stare back?

Now only staring at the page of his book instead of reading, one of the things that keeps circling around in his head is that Derek didn’t give a response to his confession, but he encouraged Stiles to draw him after Stiles explained that the only reason he didn’t draw him was to not encourage his growing feelings for Derek. So - so what does that mean?

*He wants to encourage your feelings,* Stiles’ brain supplies. His flingers flex around his book in reaction.

*But wouldn’t he have said something more?* Stiles thinks back. *Wouldn’t he have had a clearer response to my confession?*

*Maybe,* his thoughts echo, *he’s not ready to act on it either.*

And isn’t *that* a thought. Derek was pretty quiet during the whole exchange and he certainly didn’t try to dissuade it at any point. So maybe, just maybe, that can mean...

Stiles’ scalp starts to sweat as his mind suddenly derails and jumps on all of the different variables and options, and he realizes he’s gripping his book tight enough to turn his fingers white. He forces the thought process to trail off into gibberish.

This is why he can’t think about it too long. It stresses him out once he spaces out without realizing.

After shaking his hands out, he goes back to the page in his book that he left off from and continues reading.

Stiles gets in three pages more before Derek returns to the room. Stiles notices, but doesn’t look up until a small memo notepad and a pencil are held out beside his head.

Stiles looks from the notepad to Derek, and Derek glances from Stiles to Boyd and back. Stiles stares at him a second longer, confused. He glances from a sleeping Boyd to the little memo book twice, mind whirring at the pencil and the possibilities, and - no way.

Stiles’ heart whooshes and he forces his lips together to keep from smiling too wide, afraid that if he opens his mouth, he’ll laugh and wake Boyd. He excitedly trades his book with Derek and takes the notepad and pencil. Derek smiles softly as he sets the book on the table then gently moves the closest chair in the room next to Stiles. It’s not necessarily hovering, but definitely a position where Derek can see what Stiles would be drawing.

It makes Stiles a little nervous to have someone so close, but he doesn’t let it stop him. This is *A Moment,* and he doesn’t want to let it get away.

He feels giddy that Derek would even think about this for Stiles, but tries to push it aside so he can accomplish something before Boyd wakes up. He can hear Erica and Isaac outside but they could return at any moment.

He opens the notepad and the first couple pages are filled with Derek’s tiny condensed writing, and he doesn’t read any of it but it fills six whole pages until Stiles gets to an empty one. His pencil hovers over the little page for a moment, aware of eyes beside him, and he decides to start on something simple.
He draws the curve of Boyd’s closed eyes and starts with his eyelashes.

Boyd’s lashes are short, but thick, so Stiles starts with many tiny strands at the base of his eyelids, then slowly extends the length so that a few are longer than the rest. He blends the base of the lashes with his pinky finger so that it seems more condensed and illusions a nice blend of thick to thin strands.

The *schwik schwik schwik* of the pencil is quiet enough that the soft sound of the radio covers the sound of his sketching. The more lashes he draws, the more Derek’s presence is just something he’s aware of in the back of his head, something comforting instead of nerve wracking.

He’s on Boyd’s eyebrows before he knows it. By the time he gets to drawing a rough outline of Boyd’s head, he’s practically vibrating with this opportunity.

He’s never had a chance to really stare at any of the pack before. The closest he’s come before this is Scott, because Scott doesn’t think it’s odd if Stiles stares at him for so long.

He’s never gotten *this* close to Scott, though. Stiles can see so much of the details of Boyd’s face, and it’s so wonderful because he’s asleep, so Boyd isn’t changing the angle of his face by turning or talking or even blinking.

The only sound is small snore coming every other breath from Boyd. Stiles knows he’s smiling and he can’t tamp it down.

The more he sketches the quicker he goes, aware of the seconds ticking by. He runs out of space fairly fast on the small page, and once he’s done with Boyd’s head he quickly flips the page and starts Boyd’s body smaller than he did in the previous one. He wants to get the whole scene of the window behind Boyd, the sun shining in, and all of Boyd being comfy on the couch.

In the size he made Boyd in order to fit the rest of the details in comfortably, he doesn’t have the space to fill in most of the details of his face. Stiles draws the curve of his nose, then a simple line for his mouth. The curves of his closed eyes are thin and the tiny flicks of pencil lines for his brows are the most detailed he gets for the face.

Now he puts his attention to Boyd’s body, the fabric lines, the angles of his hands. Stiles doesn’t draw his own feet on Boyd’s lap but he fills in the details that his feet are covering, and makes it so Boyd’s hand is relaxed on his own leg rather than Stiles’ ankle.

After he finishes Boyd, he fills in the rest of the scene that he can fit in the page. The couch, the window, a bit of the doorway and a picture frame that’s past Boyd on the far side of the room. He uses the side of the pencil to draw the sun rays filtering from the window, which is still one of his favorite things to do. Once he’s filled in most of everything, the frantic sketching he was doing calms down.

He still hasn’t been interrupted, so - more details.

Stiles shades the room. He makes it shadowed at the top, draws a fine line for the crack on one of the walls. He adds dimension to the window and shadows the curtains.

The page itself has that tinge of gray from the pencil getting on the side of his hand, since he moves back and forth across the page so much. He uses that as an opportunity to add highlights, just erases where he wants them so the original color of the page becomes the shine of the room.

Stiles mind is in one of the places he loves to be when he’s drawing - totally zen, patient, eyes roaming easily to find more details to fill in. There’s nothing impending, no pressure, just him and his
pencil and whatever he wants to put on paper.

He begins to shade Boyd. He shadows the folds of his clothing, darkens the shading of his short hair. He doesn’t add too much more to the face, because it’s such a small area he knows it’ll end up just looking smudged if he does.

Derek suddenly shifts in his peripheral, which is jarring enough from the previous peace that Stiles blinks away from his sketch to look up at Derek as he stands. Stiles hears voices coming closer from outside, and Stiles lets Derek take the notepad and pencil from him to switch it with his book.

By the time Isaac and Erica stroll into the living room, Stiles is back with his book, blinking sleepily, and Derek is writing in the notepad.

Erica eyes them curiously then glances over to Boyd and smiles. Isaac pays them no attention, heading straight to the radio to change the station.

“Keep it pleasant,” Derek says tiredly, knowing Isaac’s penchant for screamo.

“Yeah, yeah,” Isaac mutters, then ends up switching back to the original station and leaving the room.

“He’s so cuuuuuute,” Erica whispers, keeping a few feet away from Boyd but looking like she’s ready to pounce.

The fact that Boyd is still sleeping through this, even though Erica’s staring, which Stiles knows they all could feel even from ten feet away, says a lot for the amount of trust he holds in this space.

Derek growls softly, just for a second, and Erica pouts and pivots out of the room.

It’s silent again for them, this time accompanied by sounds from the kitchen, probably Erica since Isaac’s gone upstairs. Stiles doesn’t shift or ask for the notepad back, but doesn’t start reading his book either. He stares out the window and lets the peace continue as it is.

Behind him Stiles hears the telltale sound of a shift and a wet nose bumps against his elbow soon after. Immediately Stiles is smiling again and he moves his arm up to allow wolf Derek’s head between the space of his arm and side. Derek rests his jaw on Stiles’ stomach and looks up at him until Stiles starts petting his head.

“Thank you,” Stiles whispers. Wolf Derek wuffs softly and Stiles sees Derek’s tail wagging slowly. He smiles and closes his book so that it falls between him and the couch and uses both hands to pet Derek.

Derek can’t jump on the couch without severely jostling both him and Boyd, so he stays on the side with his head on Stiles and sits until his whole body can lean against the couch. His head winds up more on Stiles’ ribs and chest, and for the rest of the peaceful hour, Stiles slowly pets down Derek’s head until both of their eyes close.

The peace ends when Erica’s patience runs out. Stiles and Derek are napping at that point and are unable to stop her from taking a running start to jump on the other end of the couch. It jostles everyone wide awake, and when Erica crawls over to try to hug Boyd, he grabs her by the waist and stands, throwing her over his shoulder.

“I’ll take her out,” he grumbles, and Erica laughs delightedly, slapping at his back with one hand while gripping onto his shirt with the other. He walks her out of the room and up the stairs as Stiles rolls his eyes, not annoyed but heart beating fast from the sudden interruption.
He’s certainly not going to nap now, so he gathers his book and decides to head out. His dad will be home for dinner anyway and he’d like to be home for that.

As he’s putting his book in his backpack he hears the sound of shifting again and doesn’t turn around, knowing Derek will be getting redressed.

Derek trails behind Stiles as he heads to the front door. Before Stiles can cross the threshold, he’s poked in the side. He turns and Derek is holding out the notepad. Stiles glances to it, then Derek, and shakes his head.

“Keep it,” Stiles says quietly. “There’s not a lot of pictures of the pack like that, right? You can have it.” Stiles smiles as Derek looks steadily more uncomfortable, still holding out the notepad.

“But you-”

“Yeah,” Stiles smiles. “I drew it for you. Good catch.” He pats Derek on the shoulder then leaves the house before Derek can find a response.

Stiles was lying, and he knows Derek knows that. Stiles is happy he got to draw at that moment, and he feels happy to leave it at the house.

For some reason, he feels like the sketch should stay with Derek. It should stay home.

He’s getting sentimental again. It doesn’t weird him out anymore, though.

The streets are empty as he drives and Stiles lets the home, the peace, the sentimentality wash over him. He’s smiling, and he feels like he could cry, but nothing spills over.

‘Is everything okay?’ Scott asks again in his mind.

“I’m happy,” Stiles tries to say quietly. He stops at a red light and stares at the empty road.

“I think I’m happy,” Stiles tries again, keeping his voice low. His chest squeezes and his stomach turns like he’s about to give a speech. “I’m-”

The light turns green and he starts driving again.

“I’m, I’m, I’m,” Stiles whispers to himself. “I am, I am, I am.”

The world is dark around him, but that’s just because it’s nighttime. The stars peak out, and Stiles puts an importance on this that he wouldn’t have any other night. It’s dark, and it’s okay that it’s dark, because it’s how the world turns, and at least we see the stars, and - and he feels silly now thinking like this. Sometimes it’s easier to think in analogies rather than reality, but he feels like he’s been doing it for too long now.

Stiles forces himself to drive to the side of the road and park. The mood for him has shifted and his throat is feeling tight. He grips his steering wheel and stares into the distance.

He suddenly imagines his mother teaching him how to drive, and the thought explodes into light in front of him. She’s sitting beside him in the passenger seat waiting calmly for him to continue on the road when he can. He keeps his eyes forward, doesn’t dare to look to the right.

She never taught him to drive. But he imagines.

He imagines running to Scott and hugging him, just hugging him, happy that he can.
He imagines giving Derek every picture he’s ever drawn. He imagines Derek’s face for every picture, surprised, thoughtful, thankful.

He imagines giving his dad only one, and it’s with a lily, and despite everything, his dad is smiling.

He imagines himself smiling, and then he tries to imagine why he would be, and then - and then.

A couple tears track down his cheeks as Stiles convulsively swallows against the tightness in his throat. His thoughts circle and he realizes maybe, maybe, maybe that -

He could be happy, or he could be if -

Maybe he -

He is, he -

“I am, I am, I am,” he whispers, voice rough, and his stomach turns, and he closes his eyes against it, and then what he’s realizing, it makes him so sad, so fucking sad, but he -

He tries to say it. His mom waits patiently beside him, and he tries, because he knows, he knows she wants him to be happy, he knows everyone in his life wants him to be, if only he’d - if he’d...

“If I let myself be,” he whispers, eyes closed, world silent, hands gripping the wheel. “If I let myself be - be happy.”

He takes a deep breathe and it shudders out of him. His head leans down until his forehead touches the steering wheel. “If I let myself be.”

Stiles tries to say it again. He tries to continue. He swallows against his throat again and as the image of his mom beside him fades, he realizes he can’t.

He aggressively shifts his car into drive and heads back onto the road. He makes it home on autopilot, then lets himself into an empty house. He goes straight to the kitchen and starts making dinner.

Throughout the night, he’s bothered by the moment, but his dad’s presence distracts him in a pleasant way. He’s grateful throughout dinner, so grateful, that they can do this. His dad squeezes his shoulder on the way to his room, and Stiles can breathe easier.

He doesn’t think too much about the car ride until he’s back in his room. Then, it circles in his mind. He knows that of everything he’s made himself draw, or think about, or work through, that this will take the longest.

Letting himself be…

Knowing it’s okay to be…

Knowing he can be - ah, fuck.

Stiles drops into his desk chair and sighs at the ceiling.

He tries to look at this simply instead of letting the experience wash over him in convoluted ways. What is he feeling - how can he express it.

He feels...well, he feels pretty raw at the moment. Alongside it, though, is a glimmer of something, and he pokes at that instead. It’s curled beside his sadness and makes his stomach whoosh, and when
he tries to make sense of it, it should be more confusing but instead feels right.

It’s excitement.

The excitement shifts around his sadness and makes his hands itch to draw. It points at his sadness, regret, and doubts. The excitement pushes them forward and screams, Look! Look! Now you can fix it!

And Stiles realizes he can.

He can work through it. Just like with - with everything, with his pixies and butterflies and...and mom. He can work through it. He doesn’t have to keep it in himself.

The excitement grows because it hurts, it really does, but now that it hurts and that he’s acknowledging its presence, he can fix it, and work towards a day where maybe, maybe, he’s worked through it enough for it not to hurt anymore.

This feeling, this fight - it won’t be forever.

He thinks about who’s around him and he sees that even Derek has made leaps for himself, with his wolf and not taking advantage of an open window to escape through. Then he knows from Scott that even Stiles himself has made obvious changes for the better. Even today was proof, as his legs laid across Boyd’s lap was comfortable instead of awkward.

He sees proof. He’s living it.

So it’s okay. It is. He knows, really, it is. He can work through this.

In his heart, he feels the resolution, the adamant certainty that this is something he wants and can make happen.

Stiles pokes at the sadness again and regrets that he’s built up a delusion for himself that he’d have to live with it forever. It courses through his body and he breathes in deep. His throat tightens, and he shakes it out by drumming a beat on his chair arms.

It’ll take time, he knows.

Perhaps, also, a lot of paper.

Chapter End Notes

Happiness is relative. For me, knowing that it's okay to be happy is hard, but possible. At some point. One day. #struggling
Happy Wednesday! There will be a bigger chapter later in the week, but I haven't posted in a while and wanted to get this out there :) Thanks for sticking with it, I really appreciate all the wonderful comments!
Thank you beta, watyonymeisgurl!

The Schwik’s

Derek comes through Stiles’ window two days later. It startles the hell out of him and he’s frantically covering a sketch he’s working on before he realizes that the only person who breaks into his room already knows.

Stiles turns in his desk chair and Derek is leaning calmly against his window sill, the light shining behind him. It’s early afternoon and the air is cool as it breezes past Derek into the room.

They haven’t been alone together since Stiles last showed him all of his drawings. Stiles can’t think of anything to say right away, and Derek is just looking at him.

He kind of gets how Derek might have felt all this time now. It’s a bit like wading into water without knowing you were going to be anywhere near a body of water.

Don’t think about bodies, Stiles desperately thinks, and then Stiles’ eyes are raking down Derek’s body and there’s so many things he wants, and -

Thankfully Derek speaks before it gets past awkward into weird.

“I want to see more of your drawings,” Derek says.

“Really?” Stiles stands and jerks his body towards the closet then halts himself. “I mean. Yeah, of course you can, you didn’t finish the folder last time -”

“I’ll look through that then,” Derek says and Stiles nods and goes to his closet to fetch the folders. He kept them all together from the last time, so there wouldn’t be too much digging.

Derek wants to keep looking at his pictures.

Derek wants to. He came back to look through them.

Stiles is feeling... pleased, and he’s actually pretty excited.

“What are you working on now?” Derek asks behind him as Stiles kicks off all of the clothing.

“Oh, uhm.” he bends down and thinks he hears Derek push his desk chair to the side, and - yep, he’s moving the random stuff Stiles piled on top of the sketch to he can see the picture. “Nothing, really. It’s just practice. I googled sunflowers and I’m drawing a bunch of them.”

Derek doesn’t respond, so Stiles gets the folder, piles the clothes back on the others, then stands to
take the folder to the bed. He doesn’t look at Derek since Derek’s obviously looking very closely at what Stiles was sketching.

Stiles places the folder on the bed, and as he turns, Derek turns from the desk and they’re staring at each other again.

“You like drawing tiny details,” and isn’t this an odd day where Derek is the one to break the silence twice now?

Stiles shrugs and then decides that’s not the proper response. He tries to explain. “I kind of love detailing. The first picture I drew - ah.” He backtracks. “Well, I drew a lot of the creatures we faced. A lot of detailed wings and nature scenery. Stuff like that.” He gives an example by making quick, short lines with his right hand, keeping his thumb and first finger together as if it’s the pencil. “The schwik’s are pretty satisfying.”

Derek’s brow raises. “Schwik’s?”

“Yes, like, really short lines that I draw really fast, like -” he makes the motion again and says, “Schwik, schwik,” each time his wrist turns.

His cheeks start burning as he realizes what he’s doing, but when he glances up at Derek he sees Derek’s right hand is up, thumb and first finger together, and he looks like he’s trying to make sense of it.

Oh. Stiles heart clenches and he smiles as he says, “I give the sounds words in my head. It made it faster to think through when I was thinking what to do next on a picture. Like, ‘Here I can schwik the small shadows in the corner’ , or, ‘I can scheut to color in the grey tones’.”

The corner of Derek’s lips quirks up into a tiny one-sided smile as he asks, “Scheut?”

“Yea!” and now Stiles is full blown smiling, and Derek, looking sort of helpless about it, starts smiling along with him. “It’s when I hold the pencil beneath my hand instead of between my fingers so that I can shade something with the side of the pencil instead of drawing with the tip. The more the pencil is to the side, the more soft it can be. I mean, pressure counts too, you can’t dig it into the page if you want it soft,” Stiles shrugs and Derek shrugs back and nods, and it makes Stiles cheeks hurt and continue his explanation because, damn it, Derek is actively listening to it, “and scheut is more for, like, when I’m shading fast with the side of the pencil. So it’s usually repeated a lot in my head like,” he brings his thumb and first finger together again and makes sideways motions back and forth relatively quickly. “‘Schuet, scheut, scheut, scheut, scheut’.” He chuckles a bit and Derek full blown smiles.

Stiles drops his hand and they stare at each other again.

A bit more quietly Stiles says, “I say them as I’m drawing, too. In my head. I don’t even mean to anymore, just if it’s making the sound, I’m making the sound along with it.” He laughs quietly at the end.

Derek says, “Like your own language.”

“Yeah.” Stiles appreciates that Derek isn’t looking at him like he’s crazy. In fact, Derek looks like he’s enjoying the conversation, and, well. Stiles cheeks are hurting a little more. “Uhm, here’s the folder.” He motions to the folder that’s been there long enough for Derek to have known already, but Derek nods.

“Thanks.” They switch places and Stiles sits on his desk chair and Derek sits on the edge of his bed.
Derek takes off his jacket and throws it to the pillows before opening the folder and taking out one of the stacks.

Stiles moves all of the random stuff back to where it had been, and to the sound of paper shifting behind him, wakes his computer from its sleep and continues his collage of sunflowers.

It stays quiet, mostly, and Stiles doesn’t find the need to talk through it or put on music.

It’s pleasant, and Stiles schwiks through the moment.
Moment

Chapter Notes

Happy Thursday! Going over what I have of the story, I realized I could have posted this with the chapter yesterday, so I'm just going to post it today!
Thank you for the comments on yesterdays chapter, I love that this is a pleasant read for most of you <3 Yay!!
Thank you watyonameisgurl for beta-ing!

The Moment

It’s Friday at the house and Isaac has been staring at a picture for a long time, quiet within the rumbling of the pack. Stiles is glancing at him more often now, waiting for his silence to break, but Isaac looks incredibly taken with whatever picture is in his hands.

This week Stiles chose a picture of Boyd, Jackson and Lydia in the living room, mostly for reference he can keep with him. Unfortunately, Boyd is turned a bit away from the camera, and Jackson is looking down at the coffee table. He can still use it as body reference though, too.

The face and body reference is perfect for Lydia, with her head leaning against her hand as her elbow is on the arm of the couch. Her face is perfectly forward, her eyes staring into the distance, a small smile gracing her face in reaction to whatever is behind the picture taker.

When he tries to tuck it into his pocket, his wrist is grabbed.

“Why in the world,” Erica starts, looking from the picture to him bemusedly.

“Hey,” Stiles says, taking his wrist back. “I don’t have any pictures of them yet.”

“Yeah, okay,” Erica scoffs. “I wouldn’t have thought you’d want a picture of Jackson and Boyd.”

“And Lydia,” he adds. In his peripheral he can see Jackson pretend to flip his hair.

“I knew it, Stiles,” Jackson starts, sighing imperiously. “If you wanted fashion tips, you could have just asked.”

“Why use you as a middle man? You’d just ask Lydia anyway,” Stiles says and smiles when Lydia laughs loudly. Jackson pouts at her and she just smiles sweetly at him.

Stiles notices Isaac stand and leave the room. As Jackson and Lydia start in on each other, he stands as well and quietly follows Isaac into the kitchen. On the way out he meets eyes with Derek and shrugs at his questioning brows.

In the kitchen, Isaac is standing at the sink. He has to know that Stiles is there, but he doesn’t react as Stiles walks up to him and looks over Isaac’s shoulder.

It’s actually a picture Stiles took of Isaac and Derek on the grass in the backyard. Their backs are to the camera but they’re looking at each other, talking. Derek’s hand is on Isaac’s shoulder and Stiles remembers taking it because it looked like a sweet moment - very picturesque.
Stiles hopes Isaac agrees. He can’t really tell how the guy is feeling.

“I took that this week,” Stiles says, just to push past the awkward silence. Or at least, it’s awkward for him, just cause he’s so confused. “Seemed like a good moment to document.”

Isaac starts nodding slowly. “Yeah. It’s nice.” He swallows and Stiles’ stomach dips. Isaac sounds like he’s gonna cry.

Stiles tries to think about it, tries to see it through Isaac’s eyes.

He only understands when Isaac asks, “You ever miss something that never even happened?”

It hits Stiles like a blow to his chest and he can’t help the immediate tensing of his body. He can’t answer immediately but after a moment Stiles says, “All the time.”

Stiles takes one more step forward to be beside Isaac instead of right behind him. They don’t look at each other, but stare at the picture, and Stiles knows what he sees now. It is very picturesque - kind of like a father and his son, chatting in the backyard.

Stiles huffs a quiet laugh then whispers, “A couple days ago I imagined my mom in the passenger seat as I was driving home. I imagined what it would’ve been like if she taught me how to drive.” His fingers starts to tap against the counter of the sink. “It didn’t happen. But I…”

Isaac says, “I don’t miss him. It doesn’t hurt when I think about him, like it does for you.” He glances at Stiles and Stiles nods that, yes. It hurts.

“I just…” Isaac sighs and looks back at the picture. “I miss what could have happened, what we could have had.” Isaac’s thumb rubs slowly back and forth across the bottom of the picture.

“I’m surprised you’re talking about this with me,” Stiles murmurs. He sees Isaac smirk.

“You or Scott,” he murmurs back. “You’re the only ones I feel like would understand.”

Stiles thinks to himself that Derek would probably understand, too.

Then his heart clenches, and he thinks, Derek probably isn’t the best to talk about this with. Derek would understand too much.

“Well,” is all that Stiles says to that. It makes Isaac huff a short laugh. They share a moment of silence until Isaac stiffens then hides the picture quickly in his pant pocket.

Stiles turns around and sees Derek in the doorway, glancing between them. “Everything okay?”

“Yeah,” Isaac replies shortly. Derek glances to Stiles then, and Stiles smiles with two thumbs up.

Derek obviously doesn’t really believe them, but he nods shortly. He hesitates to leave, but instead of asking more he says, “Isaac, I got more of those snacks you like. I hid them behind the pasta so you could get them before Erica found them.”

“Well,” is all that Stiles says to that. It makes Isaac huff a short laugh. They share a moment of silence until Isaac stiffens then hides the picture quickly in his pant pocket.

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Derek obviously doesn’t really believe them, but he nods shortly. He hesitates to leave, but instead of asking more he says, “Isaac, I got more of those snacks you like. I hid them behind the pasta so you could get them before Erica found them.”

“Really?” Isaac enthuses, darting towards the rice and pasta cabinet in excitement as Erica yells “HEY!” from the living room. Boyd starts laughing loudly.

As Isaac rifles through the cabinet, Derek smiles briefly at Isaac’s back and glances at Stiles before finally leaving the threshold of the kitchen.

Isaac woops in excitement and he pulls out a big bag of vanilla animal crackers. He closes the
cabinet and sets them on the counter. Stiles joins him on that side of the kitchen and stares at the bag as Isaac gets the milk from the fridge and stands again at Stiles side.

Stiles picks up the cracker bag and opens it for Isaac before Isaac can get his hands on it. “I think,” Stiles whispers as he sets the bag down, “what could have happened, is happening.”

Isaac sets down the milk harsh enough for Stiles to hear it slosh in the carton. Isaac stares at the crackers, suddenly so vulnerable. It takes him a second to physically shake it off, but when he does, he gets a cup from the cupboard to pour his milk into, continuing as if Stiles hadn’t spoken. He knows Isaac listened though, so Stiles leaves the kitchen, head swimming with the situation and the newly visible sweetness of the photo he took.

Stiles’ hand itches to draw.
Perfection

Chapter Notes

Good evening, and happy almost Saturday! Enjoy your weekend everyone, and thank you for the wonderful comments ~ you're all lovely.
Thank you beta, watynameisgurl!

The Perfection

It’s evening the next day in Stiles’ room. Derek is on his bed, reclining against his pillows and continuing to look through the folder of pictures. Sometimes Stiles just smiles to himself from how much time Derek is taking to look at each one. It’s...flattering.

Stiles is digging through his archives on his computer and trying to organize some of the creature files he stored, just to make sure their resolutions for creatures they’ve faced were added to the files. Instrumental music is softly playing through his computer, a relaxing background to their respective activities.

Stiles finds the file about the scary ladybug incident, but finds himself chuckling when he remembers the picture he drew of it. Then that leads him to remembering the other pictures he’s drawn and made silly. He’s outright laughing now, covering his face with his hand.

“What’s up?” Derek says from the bed and Stiles shakes his head.

“Nothing, nothing.” Stiles focuses back on his computer, smiling, and hears shuffling paper behind him.

“What?” Derek asks again, very curious.

Stiles shrugs. “I drew some of the creatures we faced a while back. I’m just remembering.”

“Which ones?”

Stiles stops scrolling and turns his desk chair to face Derek. The drawings are on Derek’s lap, but his attention is completely on Stiles. “Like the ladybug thing and the pixies.”

“Those are making you laugh?” Derek asks, his eyebrows going judgey. Stiles rolls his eyes.

“I drew them kind of stupidly,” Stiles explains. “To make them less scary.”

Derek stares at him for a moment, and for that moment, Stiles feels dumb and remembers vividly why he didn’t want to share his pictures with anyone.

But then Derek nods and says, “That’s clever,” and Stiles hates and loves that he immediately feels validated and that his worries disappear. Derek looks back down at the drawings on his lap. “I dream about them still, sometimes.” He takes a breathe as if he’ll go on, but the silence continues.

Stiles picks up the conversation. “I don’t anymore. I did a couple times, but.” Stiles shrugs and glances from Derek’s downturned face to his hands holding the papers. Stiles bites his lip then asks,
“How do you usually deal with what happens to us?”

Derek looks up. “I work out.”

Stiles forces his eyes to stay on Derek’s face as he thinks, *no shit*, then says, “That’s a good way to vent. Gets it out of your system.”

Stiles wants to sigh when Derek at first only shrugs. Derek flips one of the drawings over onto the pile of viewed ones and quietly says, “Yeah.”

Stiles fingers twitch on the chair arms because that quiet ‘yeah’ makes Stiles want to hug the hell out of him.

“Yeah,” Stiles repeats, and his right pointer finger starts tapping on his chair arm. “You know if at any time you want to be a wolf here, you can.”

Derek looks up from his perusing and stares at Stiles until he continues.

“Just, you know, I want you to know that you can, if you ever want to. If you’re sleepy and want to curl up, or if…” Stiles shrugs. “If you’re stressed or like,” Stiles choke the word out because Derek is practically staring into him, “*overwhelmed*, you can come here.”

Derek still doesn’t say anything so Stiles continues, nervous. “I know you’re more calm as the wolf. So when things get crazy for us again and you have a moment, you can chill here.”

Derek finally breaks the silence by saying, “Thank you,” and looking back down at the pictures.

Stiles sighs as quietly as he can manage and turns back to his computer. Well, that was stressful, but Stiles thinks Derek took it well? He certainly hopes Derek didn’t take it as an insult, because Stiles believes it to be fact that sometimes people need a break, especially with what’s possible for the world to throw at you.

Stiles starts typing the resolution to the ladybug debacle. He gets so focused that it’s jarring when Derek asks, “Do you have pictures of the pack as reference or are all of these by memory?”

Stiles stops his typing mid sentence and turns again to face Derek. “Mostly by memory, but I have some reference photos. Not of all of the pack yet, and most of them are honestly pretty shitty angles, but I’m working on it.”

Derek’s head tilts sideways and Stiles thinks, *so wolf-like*, as Derek asks, “How?”

“The picture day. I’m trying to get everyone’s full face if I can find one.”

“Is that why you had such an odd choice this week?” Derek smirks.

Stiles rolls his eyes. “Yes, okay. It was good position reference.” Stiles starts twisting back and forth in his chair. “It was pretty shitty face reference for Boyd and Jackson, but whatever. It was a great one for Lydia.”

Derek hums and looks back down at the pictures. Stiles sits up a bit and sees that he’s looking at one of the collages of Scott’s face. Stiles smiles at the memory then turns back to his computer, assuming correctly that the conversation is over.

The evening continues quietly until Derek leaves at midnight, when Stiles is yawning more than typing. He’s getting spoiled on the lack of scary supernatural activity - his sleep schedule is almost
normal now compared to what it was.

Stiles thinks about how much Derek has been visiting, and how nice it is to be quiet and chat so easily with him. They’re getting to know each other a lot more now.

His chest squeezes. He’d like to get used to this.

“Smile,” Derek gruffly says from inside the house, and he hears Erica cackle loudly. It’s a few days later from the last time Stiles and Derek sat together in his room. Stiles doesn’t know exactly what’s happening in there, but he’s lazy and comfortable laying on the grass so he makes no move to find out.

After a moment of low talking, the front door opens and closes. Stiles spaces out looking at the sky, rubbing the new calluses on his fingers absently. They’ve gone past the point of hurting and are now a perfect cushion for his pencils and pens.

“Hey.” Scott appears beside him and lays down as well. “What are you looking at?”

Stiles shrugs. “The sky.”

Scott looks up. “Pretty,” he comments, and for a peaceful second they stare at the clouds together. Scott breaks it by saying, “Derek left with the camera a second ago so we might be left with an aggrieved Lydia.”

Stiles scoffs with a smile and shakes his head. Lydia was very kind to let them use her camera for the endeavor and she certainly enjoys it as much as everyone else, but after some weeks of roughhousing over it, she’s become a bit anxious whenever someone takes it out of the house. She may not have used it much, but it’s a really nice camera. Too nice of a camera, frankly, for how long it sat around unused.

“I think I’m slowly remembering some chores I have to do,” Stiles mumbles, and Scott shakes with laughter beside him.

They stay in the yard until Lydia gets to the house. Everyone puts in their two cents of reassurance that, yes, Derek can handle himself with the camera, and yes, he should be back soon (even though no one actually had any idea where he went in the first place), and the camera will be back in one piece. Stiles makes a show about remembering house chores but kisses Lydia’s cheek on the way out to ease her glare and hilariously build up Jackson’s.

Driving back home, Stiles wonders about Derek’s whereabouts only briefly, and focuses instead on clearing his head during the drive. The drive home a couple weeks ago lingers in his head whenever he’s alone in his car, but so far it’s not so troubling as it is just a constant thought on his mind. It now paints a picture as he thinks about it, the sadness of it swirling around in greens and blues, the feeling of a good vent adding a splatter of color in purples and grays. He lets it jumble in his mind until the colors are a mess, his memory of the night becoming a rainbow of emotions instead of cold facts.

When he gets home the house is empty and he gathers snacks from the kitchen to nibble on while he practices more drawings. He’s moved on from sunflowers and started working on roses. The layering of the petals is fun for him, as is practicing the different techniques of shadowing each of them. He’s trying to make it look like natural dimension so that the rose can be realistic instead of artistic.
He jogs up the stairs, hands filled with snacks, and pushes down on his doorknob with his elbow. When the door swings open a loud sneeze startles him so badly that he chokes on a gasp and drops most of his snacks on his feet.

Looking up, Wolf Derek lays innocently on his bed, staring at Stiles, unremorseful.

“Jesus,” Stiles whispers harshly as he bends down for the dropped snacks. “Well, hello.” He continues into his room as normal.

If he _pretends_ this is normal, maybe it’ll become true. He certainly can’t outwardly express how excited he is to see that Derek took him up on his offer, because then Derek might _leave_, and that would _suck_. So Stiles continues on, _normal_, and drops the snacks on the floor beside his chair to have better room on his desk to draw. When he glances to the surface of the desk he sees Lydia’s camera in the corner, on top of a small folder.

“Lydia is kind of freaking out,” Stiles says as he turns on his computer. “I mean, if you ask her, she’s fine, but really she’s kind of freaking out. Make sure to bring the camera back with you or else we’ll both be yelled at,” Stiles smiles.

Stiles hears Wolf Derek lick his chops in response and Stiles huffs a laugh.

“Yeah, okay.” His computer is set up to the google image page of roses. He glances again to the camera and folder. “So, what’s this?” He doesn’t expect an answer as he sets the camera off to the side to pick up the folder. It’s light, and what’s inside is small.

Stiles is ready to make a silly comment, snort, scoff, _anything_, but when he flips open the folder he instead goes speechless, mouth still open to speak but now staying open in shock.

It’s filled with photos. The top photo is of Erica staring directly into the lense, face forward, smiling widely in front of a plain background that Stiles notices is one of the plain walls inside the house, next to the door to the backyard.

Stiles suddenly remembers, “Smile,” Derek gruffly said from inside the house, and he heard Erica cackle loudly.

Stiles breathes out slowly as he stares at the best reference photo he could have ever asked for. There are more photos behind it.

He takes the pile out of the folder and flips through them. Jackson is next, slightly frowning in irritation at the camera, but just as full frontal as Erica’s. He’s posed in front of the refrigerator instead. Then there’s Boyd, on the porch, face passive and patient. Lydia’s is against the side of the house, her face haughty with the barest hint of a smirk apparent. Scott and Isaac are both in the hallway and smiling in theirs, Scott’s an awkwardly unwilling one and Isaac’s a boastful one that makes Stiles huff a laugh. It’s the first sound he makes since starting to look through the photos. Allison’s is the last and she only has a tiny smile, impatience bleeding through her eyes, and Stiles’ light huff turns into solid laughter, both from her expression and from his disbelief at what he’s currently _holding in his hands._

Then he flips that Allison over and the laugh abruptly dies when he sees that the next one isn’t the loop back to Erica’s frontal, but a new one of Erica turned to the _side._

_No fucking way._

Stiles flips through them faster now and one by one a side angle of everyone flips by and Stiles..
just - he can’t.

“You-” his voice cracks and he clears his throat, face flushing with emotion. He’s a bit embarrassed by the wave of thankfulness that washes over him. He’s been trying for so long to compile pictures of them all without leading to hints of his hobby, and now it’s all in his hands, frankly perfect photos of them all set up in a way that he would have taken himself if he had thought he could get away with asking them all for the same pose multiple times.

Jesus, Stiles gulps, and goddamn, his heart hurts.

He hears the telltale sound of a shift and stupidly glances up. He then hurriedly focuses on the photos again, face now red for a different reason. There’s some shuffling of fabric then Derek’s human feet come into Stiles line of vision. Stiles brings his legs under the chair when Derek kneels down in front of him.

Derek looks tired. He stares calmly into Stiles’ eyes.

“I thought you’d want to get pictures you really like from now on,” Derek whispers. “On Fridays. So you don’t have to…” he glances down at the photos and shrugs.

“Yeah,” Stiles says weakly. He feels like he’s lost feeling in his whole body because of the confusion and wonderment that’s taken over him. He glances over Derek’s features, trying to see if he can find anything about why, because oh boy is he getting some ideas from this.

“The only people I didn’t get was you and me,” Derek continues, locking eyes with Stiles again. Stiles nods slowly.

“We should fix that,” Stiles whispers back. He’d feel odd about ruining the quiet with his regular voice.

Derek nods in agreement and reaches for the camera. He turns it on, presses some buttons, then nods toward Stiles’ blank bedroom wall. “We can get them there.” As Derek stands he grabs the photos from Stiles and trades them with the camera. Stiles stares at the camera in his hands a bit dumbly as Derek heads to the wall.

“Stiles,” Derek says, and breaks Stiles’ reverie. Stiles shakes his head and stands from his chair.

The dark grey of Derek’s shirt and the tan of his skin look stark against Stiles’ bedroom wall. When Stiles holds up the camera, his hands are shaking.

He just - why? And, when? And - god.

Through the camera Stiles can see Derek looking steadily at the lens with no smile, his green eyes shiny from sleep and the soft light trickling in from Stiles’ window. Even though it isn’t eye contact, the steady stare sends a shiver down Stiles’ spine and he swallows down his sudden nerves. He tries to ignore his quick heartbeat and the fact that Derek can hear it. He snaps the photo.

He did this. He took Erica’s picture today, and then he left with the camera, which means she was the last, which means he’s been doing it for some time, which means - holy shit, I don’t know, but Derek did this, and it was for me, for me -

Once the camera clicks, Derek turns his face at an angle that Stiles doesn’t need to correct. It accentuates Derek’s jawline, the shadows under his cheekbones, and even his ears. Stiles quickly takes the photo before he becomes too invested in staring at the details of Derek’s features, which he has certainly done before and could certainly fall into easily in this moment.
He's doing this for me.

The shutter clicks and Derek immediately moves away from the wall and takes the camera from Stiles’ still shaking fingers. Derek looks at the photos, nods, then shows them to Stiles. “Good?”

Stiles looks to the photos and hopes his gasp wasn’t audible. Good?

_Fucking - god._

“Yeah,” Stiles replies roughly, a bit stricken by how much his belly is fluttering from this picture, from Derek, from the _folder._ “Yeah, they’re perfect. They’re all perfect.”

He realizes the response may have been a bit much and quickly glances at Derek. Derek’s already looking at Stiles though, eyes soft and contemplative, and Stiles’ eyes quickly dart away again, startled.

“Go,” Derek encourages quietly. Stiles nods and goes to the wall, quick to leave that moment, and Derek’s eyes, and those _pictures._

At first he leans against the wall, then thinks maybe he shouldn’t in case it affects the angle, so he stands straight, then realizes that even if he leaned back he could change the angle with his head, right? His body twitches to lean back again, and then he stops itself. Wouldn’t he look stupid going from leaning, to not leaning, to leaning again?

He stands frozen for a moment, staring at the ground in rising horror and embarrassment, before Derek’s fingertips are suddenly under Stiles’ chin and lifting his head. Derek’s fingers are gone almost as soon as they appeared, but now Stiles is again staring at Derek, back to his green eyes. Stiles decides, officially, that Derek has no qualms in staring at Stiles, or in Stiles staring back.

Derek lifts the camera, takes a tiny step to the left and shifts the camera upwards, then snaps a photo. It startles Stiles since he was so focused on Derek that he didn’t realize he would take the picture so soon. Stiles immediately feels anxious about how he looks in the photo. He doesn’t want to have to stare at his stupid face compared to all the others.

“Turn,” Derek says, and Stiles doesn’t mention his worries for the taken photo, unsure if he’d be able to explain coherently. He turns his head to the right since it worked for Derek’s picture in terms of the light coming from the window. His eyes stare straight ahead. He hopes his nerves don’t show through.

“Lower your head a bit,” Derek directs, and Stiles does, his eyes now looking upward because of the change of angle. The camera clicks.

Stiles immediately relaxes and steps up to Derek to look at the pictures. Derek obliges and they look together. Stiles can tell that the lighting does well for their intent, but it’s too odd for Stiles to be looking at his own face. He can only feel awkward about it. Stiles just shrugs.

Derek says solemnly, “Perfect.”

Stiles’ eyes flash to Derek but Derek still looks at the photo for a moment. Then he shuts the camera off and finally looks at Stiles. “I’ll get them developed tomorrow and bring them by after.”

“Okay,” Stiles says, but what he really wants to say is, _perfect? Me? You said that?_”

Derek turns away to place the camera on the bed and then stretches his arms upward until something cracks and sighs loudly. “I had a good nap. Thanks for letting me come by.”
He’s thanking me, Stiles thinks, and the amount of actions Derek has surprised him with brings Stiles so out of depth that he watches Derek put on his shoes without comment.

Derek grabs his jacket and the camera and takes the first couple of steps to the window while asking, “What are you practicing today?”

“Roses,” Stiles murmurs, then realizes Derek is leaving. He adds, “Derek, wait.”

Derek does. He stands in front of the window and waits patiently while Stiles tries to wrap his mind around what he wants to say.

It takes long enough that Derek’s brows furrow just the tiniest bit and Stiles’ nerves spike. He doesn’t want Derek to leave without him at least trying to say something. “I just,” Stiles starts. Then he pauses. He truly does not know how to continue without sounding like a fool.

“Was this...okay?” Derek asks quietly, entire body tensing.

Stiles rushes to reassure. “Yes, yes, absolutely yes,” and Derek settles down considerably. Stiles continues, “I just want to say that - anytime. Anytime you want to come by again and nap or whatever, you can, you know, still do it. It doesn’t have to be a one time thing.”

Derek’s eyes crinkle in the corners, despite how small his smile is. “Thanks.”

“Yeah,” Stiles responds, throat thick. He swallows it down and - is there a way to ask? Is there a way to describe to Derek what he did for Stiles today?

“What you did is incredibly sweet,” Stiles bursts accidentally. “It’s - it’s so sweet. Derek, you did something so wonderful for me, and I gotta be honest, right now I’m still kind of surprised that something I really wanted is now sitting on my desk, and I’m just, I feel-” like it’s so sweet that the sweetness bled into me, like now my insides are jelly beans and my heart is a starburst, like I’m a pinata and you just burst me open.

Stiles takes a deep breathe to try to calm the almost tirade. “I’m so excited. I’m so - thank you. Thank you so fucking much, Derek, I just.” he sighs. “It’s so great. Thank you.”

Derek looks back at him, a bit dumbfounded, then flushes the most attractive pink that Stiles has ever seen.

“Oh wow,” Stiles blurs. Derek ducks his head and misses Stiles’ own blush from his blurt. They stand together, both red and embarrassed, until Derek shuffles enough towards the window and Stiles bites his cheek against a smile.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” Stiles says to break the silence. He doesn’t want Derek to go back to wordlessly disappearing.

“Yeah,” Derek replies gruffly, then jumps out.

Stiles breathes in slowly and exhales even slower, staring out the window.

Damn.

Among the rampant thoughts that this whole afternoon has barreled at him, and the excitement of what he could possibly create now that he has these photos, he also wonders...could his pink colored
pencil make that same pleasing shade?
Happy Monday evening and I hope you enjoy this chapter. Thank you, again, for all of the wonderful comments. I'm so glad people are enjoying this. Thank you wayonameisgurl for the edits! And fun fact, this chapter was alternatively called the 'Hell Yes' chapter.

Stiles draws a chibi cartoon of Derek early in the morning after sleeping on and off again throughout the night. It’s nine a.m. now and he actually heard his dad get ready for work, prepare breakfast, and leave, but he still can’t seem to get back to sleep. He’s on his bed, not wanting to completely give up and settle at his desk yet in the hopes that maybe he’ll doze off while doodling. It’s just that his whole body feels buzzed in a way that he’s not used to and can’t get a handle on, yet.

Stiles finds the pink colored pencil and adds it as the only color on the doodle so far. He shades in a blush that extends past Derek’s chubby cheeks, smiling while coloring because he’s finding his own creation incredibly endearing.

When he’s finished he leans back against the pillows and smiles stupidly at the picture. It’s just Derek cross-legged with his hands folded in his lap, eyebrows bushy and pointed slightly downwards, making him look a bit petulant. But still endearing all the same.

Stiles wishes he had a nicer pen to outline it in, but the hard pencil does fine enough and the additional pink blush adds such a cute touch to it that Stiles deems it as finished.

But then he thinks, oh, how could I draw the others?

Excited by his idea, Stiles sets what’s on his lap aside and jumps from his bed to get the reference photos from his desk. He kept them in the same folder after looking through them again last night and brings it to the bed with him.

Excitement spurring him on, he works on the cartoons until eleven and is done with everyone except Isaac and Allison. His stomach has been growling for thirty minutes though, and he finally huffs and sets his project aside. Fine. He’ll take a break, get some food, and finish the last two later.

Stiles returns to his room and Derek has one leg over his window sill. Both pause in their movements, eyes locked on each other in surprise, until Stiles’ lips twitch into a smile and Derek shakes his head in humor and continues his climb over into Stiles’ room.

“I brought the photos,” Derek mentions immediately and Stiles notices he looks more awake, more alert, than yesterday as he pulls them from his jacket pocket, encased in the actual photo carton that Stiles knows usually comes with printed photos, and places them on the bed. Noticing the mess at the head of Stiles’ bed, however, he leans over interestedly.

“Oh,” Derek hums as he slips off his jacket and climbs onto the bed.

Stiles swallows harshly and looks away from Derek’s crawl over, his body a confused mix of humor at seeing Derek crawl across a mattress, and arousal at seeing Derek crawl across his mattress. He goes straight to the photos on the end of his bed as Derek climbs up to the head of it and settles himself against the other half of Stiles’ pillows to comfortably look through the pictures.

Stiles doesn’t bother to look at the ones of his own face. He lifts the photos at an angle so that Derek can’t see which ones he’s looking at, and stares only at Derek’s. Jesus, that face. Finds himself glancing back up at the real Derek sitting at the head of his bed, focused on the doodles and slowly looking over everyone Stiles has drawn so far.

Jesus. He just wants to draw - well - all of it. All of him. Everything.

He holds back a needy sigh and takes the photos from the little folder, circles to his desk to throw out the old folder, then heads to the head of his bed to grab the main folder from beside Derek and place the photos of them alongside the others.

When Stiles places a knee on the edge of the bed and leans over for the folder, Derek asks, “Who do you have to finish?”

“Isaac and Allison,” he responds, placing the photos inside and closing the folder. “Just gotta decide what colors to associate them with.”

Derek nods but doesn’t give any suggestions. He’s mostly made his way through the pile, and Stiles heart stutters when he notices that he’s two pictures away from the doodle of himself.

Derek glances up in curiosity when he notices Stiles looking and their eyes lock again.

“What?” Derek asks softly, and Stiles doesn’t know if Derek does it on purpose, but in that tone his voice has a bit of a rumble that makes the back of Stiles’ neck heat up.

“Nothing,” Stiles murmurs, Derek looking up at him for a moment longer before going back to the pictures.

Stiles hesitates on the side of the bed before deciding that it’s his bed, and no matter what of course he’s allowed to sit on it, shuffling back into the space he vacated.

Derek is on Erica by the time Stiles has Isaac’s photo in front of him and his pencil and paper at the ready. He tries not to glance over too often. When he fails that endeavor, he at least makes sure to only look at the picture, as if he’s just looking over what he drew. Erica is still the same as he last saw her, smiling wide with an eyebrow up in absolute sass. Her chibi self is posed in superhero likeness, a bright yellow belt as her color accent.

“These are really good,” Derek says, putting them all down and looking at Stiles. “I’ve never seen this style before.”

Stiles can’t answer for a moment. Because he can’t believe Derek just stopped looking. There’s one more underneath. There’s - him. Himself. Derek. Blushing.

Never mind, he’s okay with this.

“Thanks,” Stiles says quickly. Then what Derek said really catches up and he squeezes his lips
together to keep his smile tamped down. The rest of his face flushes in pleasure though, and he sees Derek’s eyes track the flush from his neck to his face. When they lock eyes again Derek smirks a bit and Stiles lets loose a chuckle.

“Thanks,” Stiles says again, more quietly and Derek nods slowly, smirk morphing into a smile.

They goofily look at each other until Stiles makes himself look back at the empty page in front of him. “Now Isaac,” he says nervously, although not because of the picture.

“How I shift?” Derek asks and Stiles nods, smiling wide now in excitement.

Derek shuffles to the end of the bed and sits on the edge of it. Once he brings his arms up to take off his shirt, the skin and muscle in his lower back slowly being revealed, Stiles focuses his attention to the paper and his pencil grip. He starts on Isaac’s chibi before he can become too flustered.

The next time the bed moves, wolf Derek is bounding up onto the bed. Derek makes his way to where Stiles sits and flops down with a sigh beside him, body stretched out completely and head laid on top of his folded paws.

Stiles glances over at him once he flops, but Derek’s eyes are closed, so Stiles leaves him to it.

Stiles wants very much to reach his hand out and touch, but he reins it in to finish his project. Once Stiles is done, he can pet across wolf Derek as much as wants, and oh, he certainly will. He’s reinvigorated by the prospect of wolf cuddles and dives into his sketching with a renewed energy.

Time ticks by and he doesn’t even notice how much. Stiles has soft breathing to his left and a fun project in front of him. It’s not until he puts the purple colored pencil down after finishing Allison’s drawing that he recognizes how peaceful he feels in this moment. He focuses in on it, closing his eyes. The window is still open from Derek climbing in and the breeze blows by softly, so soft that he only notices it because of the sound of the leaves rustling from the trees. The house is settled and quiet around them, just as the neighborhood is. Stiles can practically hear the buzz of the outlets in his room and beat of his heart in his own eardrums. Beside him, the long ins and outs of breath tell Stiles that his wolf is asleep.

Stiles’ eyes open. He means Derek. Wolf Derek is asleep, not his wolf.

His heart speeds up a bit from his faux pas, but then his gaze catches on the rays of sunlight filtering into his room and it distracts him simply with how pretty it is. Stiles has always loved the way the angles of light from the sun look filtering in through a window. He loves adding it to pictures, loves the slide of the pencil in his hands when he angles it sideways to match the softness of the light.

The light coming in means it’s afternoon by now. He unwittingly matches his breathing to Derek’s and breathes slowly through his thoughts. His heart has calmed without his notice. His pencil is loose in his hands.

He has a finished project under his belt. The feeling of completion, especially from something that took time, feels both relieving and exciting. It’s done - the work is over. It’s done - he has something to show, something he’s proud of.

Something he’s…

He gazes at the sun beams as he thinks. This cartoon is technically the first set, project, thing, whatever, that he’s finished. This is something he can put together and - and show someone. It isn’t an unfinished sketch, or a practice run, or even the unsteady pile of sketches that Stiles would frankly be embarrassed to show to anyone because they’re either too personal or…Derek.
This is something he wants someone to see.

Derek’s seen it - he likes it. But Derek’s seen a lot of his stuff. He wants...he wants…

...to...

Show...someone else?

Is that what he’s feeling?

His body is lax against his pillows as his eyes trail over to the window. His free thumb grazes across the page on his lap and his heart squeezes at the thought of showing someone, but not in fear or nerves, just in excitement.

Yes. Yes. That’s what he’s feeling. He wants to share this. He wants to show someone. A smile slowly builds on his face and he holds his drawing more firmly.

The first person he thinks of, automatically, is his dad. And still the nerves don’t come, and instead a wave of Yeah! Perfect! comes over his brain and he wants to wiggle in place in excitement because finally!

He’s ready.

To show his dad, at least.

Because it’s not the beginning anymore. It’s not just the possibility of a hobby or passion. He has two thick folders in his closet, and only two because those are his only folders to spare - now there’s also loose papers that don’t fit inside of the folders that are piled to the left. He did laundry a couple of days ago and he still hasn’t placed a jacket or shirt and pants to hide them, and every time he opens his closet door he’s briefly confounded by the amount of sketching he’s doing before he smiles at the piles and feels good about it.

This has kind of, accidentally, become a part of him.

Stiles should probably get a plastic drawer to put them in. Something, so that they’re not on his floor forever.

Wolf Derek snuffles loudly beside him and Stiles startles out of his thoughts. He looks over to see Derek mid-yawn. Derek licks his own nose before looking at Stiles. He smiles and sets his art aside to move himself closer to Derek. He needs to in order to pet with both hands. The end result brings Stiles’ body at an awkward side angle, but he ignores it in favor of ruffling Derek’s fur. Derek’s eyes close the second Stiles’ hands make contact, so Stiles lets himself smile stupidly for the duration of the pets.

After a couple of minutes the position starts to hurt, so Stiles shuffles down until he’s laying completely on his left side. Stiles’ left hand pets across Derek’s face that’s angled toward him, while his right arm is thrown over Derek’s neck and twists the fur there around his fingertips. Stiles’ smile has died down a bit once they’re both settled, but the pleasantness curls around his abdomen and trails across his body, keeping him lax as he enjoys Derek’s soft fur.

He wonders if Derek has ever bathed as a wolf. Does the softness correlate to how soft Derek’s hair is when he’s a human? Or is it a separate entity? He wonders, if Derek fell into a mudpit while human, then shifted, if him as a wolf would have mud stuck in his fur?

He falls asleep wondering.
Stiles’ dream is, simply, of warmth - maroon and red hues mix and flow around him, and he ebbs between content when the maroon slides by, and too warm when the red almost touches him. There’s safety in this dream though. Neither color threatens to suffocate or burn him. He flows along with them until he’s opening his eyes like it was only a blink in time. The only reason he knows he fell asleep is because of the sleepiness of his mind, and how he knows he must have been asleep because otherwise there’s no way he would be this close to human Derek.

Stiles’ own arms are against his chest now, one of his hands splayed against Derek’s bare chest. Derek’s arms are wrapped loosely around Stiles, one arm under the curve of Stiles’ waist and the other wrapped over Stiles’ shoulder, fingertips grazing Stiles’ back. Their legs are apart from each other, thank god, and Stiles doesn’t look down, doesn’t look down, because he knows what awaits and he’s not at all ready to start that train of thinking more than he already is when he’s directly in front of the man himself. Their knees are grazing a bit, though, and that little tickle of touch sends Stiles’ awareness of the other man past the roof, the clouds, and into the universe. At this moment, it’s just about Derek. Derek being close, Derek being warm, naked god so naked, Derek opening his eyes since Stiles’ heart rate ramps up in speed.

Stiles knows his face is red. He knows that Derek knows why. Derek only blinks at him though, sleepy-like and slow and basically looking adorable and just as Stiles had felt when he awoke.

For a second, Stiles is blown away by how safe he feels. He knows by now that Derek cares about his life in their crazy life-threatening activities. But here, wrapped in his arms, so close to shiftable nails, teeth and pin-you-in-place eyes, Stiles still feels safe.

The thought calms him. He stares steadily back at Derek and doesn’t feel the need to move, speak, or change position. He’s okay with not talking about this, whatever this is, whatever he’s hoping this is, right now. He’s okay with how honest he was when this all began.

He’s also so okay with the response so far. Derek coming over more often, shifting, talking. Derek giving him a notepad to doodle a rare moment in their living room. Derek giving him the photos. Derek here.

Derek.

Stiles sighs. Derek doesn’t say anything to break the silence or move away from him, but Stiles can tell that he’s holding himself more carefully, a bit stiff in an attempt to keep still, though his eyes keep the sleepy calm that he woke with.

Stiles grazes the thumb that’s on Derek’s chest back and forth across his skin, sees Derek’s eyes dilate, and wants to do a little dance. He keeps himself in check though and saves it for later. He’s so doing the little dance later.

“I have a challenge for you,” Derek rumbles, and Stiles can’t believe that he felt it against his palm. That’s cool.

Wait, what?

“What?” Stiles mumbles, looking up at him. Derek’s lips twitch and Stiles thinks, yes, please, let me see that smile, but his lips stay relaxed as he continues.

“An art challenge. I read about them. I have a challenge for you.”

Stiles feels a thrill go through him, but tries to play it cool. “Oh, really?”

Derek smirks. “Really.”
“What is it?”

“You told me that you like details,” Derek starts. Stiles smiles a bit and nods quickly. “Well, I thought maybe you could draw everyone as mermaids. Scales, crazy hair, gills. Whatever.”

As Derek talks, Stiles’ eyes widen and he sits up with a gasp by Derek’s last word. “Yes!”

Derek’s arm that was over Stiles slides down when Stiles sits up, and his hand lands on Stiles’ hip. It definitely could have fallen to the bed, but a soft grip keeps it at the curve instead, his thumb skimming a bit across Stiles’ skin. Both purposefully ignore this and keep their eyes trained on each other as they talk.

“Yes, yes, yes,” Stiles continues, excited. “I - the first thing I drew, it - well, okay, not really the first, but it was the first thing I noticed that I drew, it was a mermaid and - anyway, yes! I love drawing mermaids, and there’s different kinds of fins and tails and even different fishes that I can base them on and scenery options for whoever it is and -” Stiles breathes out a raspberry. “Oh, yeah. I’m doing this.” He smiles at Derek. “Challenge accepted.”

Derek’s sleepy-eyed expression is gone, replaced with one of amusement, another smile tugging at his lips, his thumb now skimming back and forth across the skin above Stiles’ sleep pants. This too goes ignored. “I can’t wait to see them.”

They both smile and not-smile goofily at each other. Then Stiles notices that his foot is digging into one of his doodles.

“Shit!” He quickly lifts his foot and wavers unbalanced for a moment, wherein the hand at his hip helps him stay steady. Stiles doesn't comment on it and moves the pictures and supplies closer to the edge of the bed, and as he does so, Derek sits up and Stiles remembers that Derek is naked.

He takes more time straightening his art as Derek puts his clothes back on behind him. Once he hears sound from the window, he whips around to see Derek opening it all the way, jacket and shoes already on.

“Gotta go back,” Derek says, but still waits by the window. “Thank you.”

Stiles shrugs. “Any time.”

Derek continues to wait so Stiles stands and heads over. He wraps his arms around Derek’s waist in a hug before he can think too much about it.

“Thanks for the photos,” Stiles says quietly. “I’ll make some kick-ass mermaids, just you wait and see.”

“I will,” Derek responds softly, and finally wraps an arm around Stiles’ shoulder. He rests his cheek briefly against Stiles’ head before letting go and vaulting out the window.


Stiles stares out the window a moment longer just to think, This, this is wonderful, then pivots to his desk to research mermaids, because - yes.

Hell yes.
The Progression

The next Friday, Stiles stares at all the photos of the week thrown across the table in front of him, everyone laughing and talking around him, and gets a bit overwhelmed by the options. He hasn’t been able to choose a photo of any favorite moment in about three weeks.

He shuffles through them quickly, laughing when he sees one of Scott and Jackson shoving each other. He tries to find one of him and someone. He wasn’t around much this week though, so he’s having trouble.

He does find one of himself laying out on the grass in the back yard the same day that Derek gave him the photos. It’s from the vantage point of the back door, so it’s mostly the porch and trees, but the focus is on him far away in the sunlight. He sets it aside with a smile. He doesn’t need a picture of himself, but he still enjoys the memory.

He finds one of him and Erica sitting on the porch at the front of the house, him leaning back against the porch railing while sitting on the middle step, and her on the top step, looking down at him, smiling. He slips it into his pocket and stands from the table, intent to get away from the grabby-hands.

As he’s passing the hallway to get to the kitchen, he sees Isaac sitting on the back porch, back hunched and alone. Stiles hesitates. Then he sighs and opens the back door.

“Hey.”

Isaac barely turns his head as he calls back, “Hey.”

Stiles waits for more, or even for a question of why Stiles is there, but when nothing is forthcoming he slides the back door closed behind him and sits next to Isaac.

Isaac is looking at a picture. It’s from the same viewpoint as the one he found of himself, except where he was lying, Isaac and Derek are standing, facing the trees. They’re standing close, with Derek angled towards Isaac, and Isaac’s head facing upwards to Derek.

“He was giving me advice on my senses,” Isaac suddenly explains and Stiles’ eyes dart up to Isaac’s face, surprised by the peace he sees. From his posture and the picture and the last conversation they had Stiles expected a bit of sadness. Except, looking at him now, it’s almost like he’s very close to smiling.

Isaac says, “I’m more sensitive than the others. It’s, uh...sometimes difficult to know so much.” His face wrinkles and Stiles can’t help letting out a chuckle and tries to hide it in his arm because with a
pack full of teens he can only imagine what Isaac has been smelling. He feels bad for a moment, but then Isaac starts chuckling with him, and they both quietly let out the laughter until Isaac continues again. “He was telling me about what his mom told his sister one time, she was pretty sensitive, too.”

Stiles sobers up and trains his eyes on the picture. “You don’t have to tell me. I think if he pulled you aside like this, it’s something he just wanted to share with you.”

Stiles can see Isaac smiling in his peripheral. “Yeah. He hasn’t told anyone else. It’s, uh...it’s pretty cool.”

Stiles smiles again slowly. “You know,” he says quietly. This might ruin the mood, but he feels like he has to point it out. “That’s some awesome bonding you two are doing.”

Immediately Isaac giggles and Stiles’ smile widens in surprise as they both look at each other, a look of horror on Isaac’s face. He utters, “Uh,” and blushes.

Stiles decides not to comment on it, for the sake of the conversation. “It is awesome,” he repeats.

Isaac’s blush slowly recedes. “Yeah.” He glances at the picture then out to the trees. “I…” he swallows hard, and tries again. “I got the next best thing, didn’t I?” he says roughly.

Stiles’ face softens. His throat tightens, but he doesn’t look away from Isaac. “Yeah. And it’s going to get better.”

Isaac immediately scoffs. When he meets Stiles’ eyes though the derision melts. “It’s happening,” he says, and Stiles remembers the end of their first conversation and nods.

“It’s happening.”

For a while, they both stay on the porch without speaking, Stiles entertaining the idea of telling Isaac about his art escapades as they both stare out into the trees.

Stiles thinks Isaac would understand. He’d still never tell him before Scott, though.

Isaac slips the picture into his pocket and a moment later the back door slides open.

Lydia says, “We’re ordering pizza. Uh,” they both turn around to face her judgmental look. “Were you guys sitting here in silence?”

“You came in between subjects,” Isaac states bluntly, quickly standing and slipping past Lydia as she says, “Uh huh,” with a smirk.

Stiles stands as well and she turns to him and says, “You know, I didn’t think you were capable.”

Stiles shrugs with a smile. “I’m a man of many talents.”

She bursts with a single “Ha!” and pivots back into the household. Stiles doesn’t take offense. Only fondness fills him to the brim as he follows them inside to join the ravenous masses in pizza ordering.

The Birds

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” Scott says quickly during a routine property check. “Something is glowing over there.”
Boyd pivots in place and walks to where Stiles and Scott have stopped, and even Stiles can see the glow very easily from his position just behind Scott. They stare at the base of a tree that’s a foot away from them, uneasy about the unexpected appearance and the innocent look of the golden glow that seems to be coming from one of the raised roots of it.

“It’s not giving me the shivers,” Stiles mutters quietly, in case it’s something that could listen.

“Yeah,” Scott says just as quietly. “Maybe it’s...nice.” Even as he says it, he sounds unbelieving.

Boyd hums beside them, taking a step forward, and when the glow is unchanging, he continues.

Stiles starts to step closer with Scott, but Scott throws his hand back for him to stay in place, standing at the ready to fight or flee as the wolves creep close.

The noises in the forest are louder now that they’re trying not to make noise and it eases Stiles that the wildlife is going about its business like usual. That’s usually a good sign that a magic presence is safe.

The thought flies right out of his mind though as Boyd reaches out a hand and a tendril of light shoots out from the glow and grips tightly around his wrist.

As Boyd screams, the glow explodes outward with a ground shaking boom that sends the birds of the forest screeching in flight, away from the magic. Stiles is thrown on his back and blinded where he lays.

All he hears for that moment is silence, and all he thinks for that moment is that if Scott is dead, Stiles will - he won’t -

- Scott will never get to see himself as a chibi. He won’t get to see himself as a mermaid, either.

The thought wrenches Stiles up with a gasp and it burns so much that tears roll down his cheeks. His sight swims back, fuzzy at first, and he’s so nauseous with the return of it that as he’s trying to stand, he gags. It takes him a couple tries to stay upright on his feet. By then his sight is back, and though his ears are ringing, he can hear someone gasping nearby.

He stumbles forward and finds Scott.

“Scott, Scott,” Stiles rasps, gripping onto his shirt, but Scott only continues gasping, his eyes wildly looking from side to side. But he’s breathing, and alive, so Stiles takes it as a win and expects that Scott will come to just as Stiles had. His relief gives him goosebumps, but he staves it off so that he can focus on standing and finding a worryingly silent Boyd.

Stiles takes slow, tentative steps toward the tree, in case something else explodes around them and blinks his eyes harshly, trying to get his focus back, but the tears and returning sight make it difficult.

When he’s closer, he sees Boyd’s body against the base of the tree. Boyd is on his front, his arm pulled from its socket and angled up along the trunk. There’s a glowing band of gold wrapped around his wrist to his elbow. It’s smoking and looks like it’s burning into Boyd’s skin.

In a moment of stupidity, Stiles reaches out and tries to get the band off of Boyd, but it burns his fingers to the touch and Stiles flinches back.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” he hears, and it’s not until he’s got Boyd rolled over on his back that Stiles realizes it’s his own voice. It’s almost unrecognizable because of the sheer panic and roughness.
Stiles touches Boyd’s face, worried, anxious, thoughts caught up in a repeated loop of *what the hell do I do!?* He’s so distracted that he yells when a hand shoots out for his own and grips his wrist.

But it’s Scott, and he pulls Stiles’ hand to Boyd’s throat. “Pulse,” he rasps, head hanging low. It looks like Scott had crawled his way to them, the arm that holds him up shaking.

“Right, right, right,” Stiles starts repeating, heart beating fast. Fuck. Fuck.

He slides his fingers against Boyd’s skin, searching, pressing, and his breathing picks up when his hand is shaking too much for him to get a good feel.

“Stiles,” Scott whispers, unable to speak louder. “You picked up a butterfly.”

Stiles breath shakes out in a maniacal giggle. “I did.”

“You did.”

“I did.”

“You’re kick-ass, bro.”

“I’m. Yeah.” Stiles’ fingers press into the space below Boyd’s jawline. He feels a beat. “A pulse,” he breathes out, so relieved that his vision swims with it. He hears Scott breathe out and notices his head drop lower. Stiles fingers flit over Boyd’s face again, needing to keep a hand on him. He glances at Boyd’s bent arm, then at the golden band. His stomach lurches from the charred skin, so he looks at Boyd’s face instead, slack as if asleep. “I - I have my phone,” Stiles stutters and starts fumbling for his pocket with his other hand.

“No need,” Scott mutters so quietly that it takes Stiles a second to register his response. A moment later a foot appears in his peripheral. Then Derek is leaning down over Boyd and picking him up in one fluid motion, Jackson and Isaac appearing a second later and grabbing Scott while Erica suddenly looms over him, then overwhelms him by swooping him up into her arms.

“Oh god,” he swallows roughly, trying to keep the bile down.

“Please don’t puke,” she says quietly. Or maybe at regular volume. Stiles can’t tell, thinks maybe his hearing isn’t completely back yet since he didn’t even hear any of them coming until they were all already here.

“How did you know,” Stiles starts, then has to stop, closing his eyes against the passing trees, the bright light of day, and the nausea simmering in his tummy.

“Saw the birds fly off,” is what Erica responds. He registers the response, but isn’t thinking about his question anymore.

“I want Boyd to see his chibi,” Stiles says brokenly, chest aching at the thought that maybe Boyd won’t.

Stiles faints while Erica is asking what he means.
Tick Tock, Messaging

Chapter Summary

I can’t believe how fast time passes. Long time no see! This story is not abandoned. Just got sideswept by holidays. A couple things:
A wonderful person has been helping me edit the story, and all previously posted chapters are now replaced with beta’d ones, as of 4/14/18! Thank you watyonameisgurl for the help <3 If you'd like to go back and refresh yourself with the story, now is definitely a good time :) I'm still writing chapters and may post unbeta'd still but will replace with beta'd versions as time permits. We're both pretty busy but I don't want to interrupt the flow of posting as badly as it just was. I hope some of you are still along for this ride - thank you so much to those who read & commented even during my absence, it was so great to see. And finally, I'm so fricken sorry that I left on such a shitty cliffhanger :'D Thank you for your patience. Without further ado, I hope you enjoy this next chapter. LET'S FRICKEN GO!! :D

The Tick Tock

Silence is a tremulous thing.

There are some tones of voice and barks of commands that make Stiles nervous, there is a certain way to slam a door and a type of breathy laugh that make Stiles flinch.

But those were experiences learned through certain people randomly throughout his life - things one learns no matter what kind of life you live. If someone uses that tone, you know to tread carefully. If someone slams any door, you know to give some space.

But for Stiles, he can’t think of a single moment where he learned that silence is his enemy. He thinks he was simply born with the knowledge. If it’s quiet, fill in the void, with either your voice or your hands - avoid the questionable outcome of an awkward pause or the desperate and fallible attempt at a new conversation topic.

Avoid the eery, gritty silence, like a hospital waiting room. Avoid it.

Of course, though, Stiles has already learned that avoidance is impossible. He’s a star student of procrastination, but also very learned in that the test day will come despite any unpreparedness, and that cancer can have a very, very, very bad ending, no matter how tightly you hold a hand.

He wonders if magical golden bracelets have a bad ending as well.

He stops that train of thought because thinking of Boyd is a black hole of anxious wondering, and he has to focus on anything else until they get the answers they need.

But in Deaton’s waiting room at ten o’clock at night, there is nothing substantial to distract him from these thoughts, or the next ones, or how he can’t get his leg to fucking stop jittering up and down like
a limb on crack. Every time he glances up it’s to make eye contact with another silent, tense, worried, anxious pack member. So he doesn’t look up anymore. Deaton needs to mop his floors, badly.

He can hear the ticking of the clock. God fucking dammit, he can hear the ticking of the clock. It’s slow. Why is it so slow? So - okay, his heel can hit the linoleum a mile a minute but a clock can’t even keep up with his heartbeat? What the fuck is up with that? He woke up two hours ago but the numbness in his ass makes it feel like he’s been sitting for days. What’s up with that? He’s already asked that. What’s up with -

Scott hasn’t looked up from his hands in thirty minutes. Stiles knows, because Stiles has been watching the clock. Counting with it.

Stiles wonders if the coffee shop is still open.

Allison hasn’t taken her hand from Scott’s shoulder blades in forty three minutes.

He’s a fucking idiot. Of course it isn't open. Its ten o’clock at night, jesus.

Where are Isaac and Jackson? They were there earlier, right? He’s been awake for two hours and eight minutes but hasn’t seen them here since the forest. Maybe they’re checking out the area. Yeah, probably.

Erica has been a statue for twenty three minutes. He started counting that one after she stopped crying. He wants to - god, he can’t look at her. He can’t. His heart aches down to his jittery toenails and all he wants to do is wrap her up in seven blankets and give her something warm to drink. But the blankets here smell like dog and the coffee shop is closed and he’d start crying the minute he met her eyes, and he just - it just, god, it won’t help anything, it won’t help a damn thing and he’d only want to help her and it - he - shouldn’t. He shouldn’t do anything. The silence is bearing down on him, and if he does anything to break it, it’ll just break them, and they need to wait for what Deaton has to say before they all crumble together.

Oh, fuck, right. Isaac and Jackson are scoping the forest area. They had that conversation an hour and forty two minutes ago when Stiles had asked where they were. Duh.

Lydia is probably home. And Derek is - he’s standing, now, at ten sixteen p.m., and walking towards Stiles. Stiles stares resolutely at his shoes, but the hairs on his arm raise when Derek sits in the seat on his right and places a hand on his knee to quell his jittering leg. Derek doesn’t remove his hand.

Deaton comes out at eleven-o-two and tells them to go home. There’s a good chance the mysterious accessory can be removed after Isaac and Jackson come back with the energy residue from the forest.

A good chance. Vague and lacking of promise.

But - a better prospect than some answers they’ve received before.

Erica breathes out a long and heavy sigh. It breaks the silence, the stillness, and everyone starts shifting out of their respective waiting positions. Derek stands first and everyone follows slowly after, keeping to the front of their chairs until Derek sits in the seat on his right and places a hand on his knee to quell his jittering leg. Derek doesn’t remove his hand.

Deaton takes Stiles home. They don’t talk, but there’s the sound of the car, the sound of Derek’s hands on the wheel and his foot shifting on the pedal. They breathe together and Stiles revels in it until they pull up to his driveway.

Stiles says, “Goodnight,” as he unbuckles his seatbelt, just to add another sound with them inside the
car. Derek says, “Goodnight,” as well, and Stiles feels lighter as he shoulders open the car door.

This is how he’s learned to live. To the sound of a car door accidentally slamming too loudly, to the rev of an engine and a key sliding into his front door lock. His feet are loud on the stairs. His dad’s snores are aggressive at this time of night. Everything is in motion, everything is as it should be - so, so very much alive.

He colors in his sunflowers until three a.m. just because he can, and also maybe just because he wants to avoid another inevitable thing, like ugly circling thoughts that only happen when you’re just about to fall asleep.

He focuses on the calming yellow and presses harder against the pencil for shadows and depth. He enjoys every schwoop schwoop of it until he sees the time and sighs, figuring that he needs to at least try to sleep at some point.

Because he’s tired, and emotional, and just so very fucking drained, he doesn’t think twice about adopting a frame of mind to help him knock out as he lays in the dark under his covers. A shadow of the hand that was on his knee has stayed with him since he left the car, and now he lets the memory flair alive. His knee had felt very warm, and it was an unwilling pleasantness that distracted him as his mind did it’s best to be negative. Now he hopes it will help again.

So he imagines that the touch is still there, that Derek’s hand is placed assuredly on his knee. The warmth of it centers on that bone then slowly spreads down his calf and up his thigh, across his hips and waist and chest, traveling slowly and calmly across his entire body. His whole mind focuses on the progression of it until it reaches every part of him, and then somehow, reaches even more than that and even begins to calm his heartbeat and breathing.

In a silence that doesn’t feel the least bit tremulous, his body feels very, very, very warm, and he falls asleep.

The Messaging

Stiles wakes up to the sound of his phone buzzing on his nightstand. At first he thinks it’s a phone call, and shoots up blearily to grab at the device. But when he presses where the accept button usually is and gives a gruff “Hello?”, the phone continues to buzz against his ear.

After blinking tiredly a few times, he realizes he should read the screen. When he brings the phone down to his lap he sees that it’s an ongoing group text conversation between most of the pack members. He glances at the time, at first annoyed that if it’s not an emergency call then why should they be messaging this early, and - oh. It’s eleven-thirty. That’s respectable. His sleepy ire is quelled immediately.

He unlocks his phone and scrolls to the beginning of the new messages that started at ten a.m.:

Derek: Boyd will be fine. Come to house @2p.

Erica: UHM?? U mean now right? Im coming now

Lydia: What was it?

Derek: I mean 2p. He’s still with Deaton, who will bring him at 2p.
Derek: Deaton will explain at 2p.

Isaac: some kind of creature thing stealing his energy

Lydia: Creature thing? Descriptive.

Erica: omw

Isaac: if ericas going i wanna go too lydia im ignoring you

Derek: He won’t be here until 2pm.

Scott: what’s happening? Emrgncy

Jackson: see you at 2 then

Lydia: Rude.

Derek: Scott, read. OK Jackson.

Jackson: rude? What did i do, he said 2pm right

Isaac: on my way

Lydia: Not you, sweetie.

Derek: Yes, 2p. Isaac, they won’t be here until 2p.

Erica: almost there

Scott: oh good im glad hes fine

Jackson: wait is everyone going now then?

Scott: y are you all awk

Scott: awek

Derek: No, 2p.

Scott: awake

Scott: :D

Lydia: I’m coming now. Scott, please enable your spellcheck, you’re hurting my eyes.

Scott: but i gotit

Jackson: got it, omw then

Allison: Glad he’s okay. I’ll be there around noon

Scott: I thought derek said 2
Derek: Just come over if you want. Erica and Isaac are already here.

Erica: hell yea we are

Scott: ok cool

Scott: be there soon

The conversation ends before Stiles finishes reading, and by Scott’s last message, he’s laughing at the screen. He falls back onto his bed with a full bodied sigh.

He entertains the thought, for the briefest of moments, of bringing his art stuff to the house to work on while they wait for Deaton and Boyd to arrive. His hands are itching to sketch something. But then he imagines bringing his chibi drawing of Boyd to the house and laughs at the ridiculousness of it. _Here Boyd, you survived another weird-ass creature trying to kill you. Here’s a cute doodle of yourself. Look, you’re blushing!_ 

Stiles rolls his eyes. If he brought a more detailed one maybe it would be less silly -

But wait, no. The pack doesn’t know. And he likes that. He likes that no one knows.

Right.

So he sits up and unlocks his phone again to the group message.

_Stiles: be there in 30_

As he dresses, his phone buzzes and he unlocks it to see:

_Derek: See you soon._

Stiles smiles, and he can’t find a particular reason besides the fact that Derek was the one that acknowledged his message first. Usually it’s Scott or...anyone else, really. He knows it’s not a big deal. This is whatever.

As he’s getting ready he thinks about the turnaround his brain always leads to. A blip of excitement, and then an immediate put down of _it’s most likely nothing, or going to end soon anyway._ But along with the excitement of seeing Boyd and the anticipation of being with the pack again after a rough day, this is the first time there’s so much of a difference between reality and where his mind wants to put him, that he’s really seeing just how hard his brain works at keeping him negative.

He mulls this over on the drive to the house. Allows himself a bubble of excitement for where he’s going, feels the immediate guilt that tramples it down to dust until he just feels tired again. He gets a flashback to that one evening in the car, when he had to pull over. It makes him uncomfortable.

And that’s...that’s frustrating. Yesterday sucked. And you know what - a lot of things have sucked. Why can’t he be excited to be with the pack? Why can’t he want to see them?

You know what - fuck you, brain. Right now, Stiles wants to see his pack. You hear that? He’s driving to them right now and there’s not a damn thing you can do about it. He’s going to see Boyd, and Boyd will be fine, and they’ll have answers at two p.m. on what the hell happened, and his pack is ridiculous and has way too many morning people and - and Derek drove him home last night and unknowingly helped him fall asleep - and yes he realizes that maybe that was a little creepy but he’s ignoring that for now because one goddamn thing at a time, brain, please - and seeing all of their messages, and Derek responding so fast even though it’s such a simple stupid little thing, to be
noticed - he’s...thankful. He’s thankful Boyd’s alive, he’s thankful he has the pack, he’s thankful that even if none of them know that he’s been drawing for almost a year now, at least they’re available in his life to tell at any time he’d want to and that - that’s pretty damn awesome.

He sighs slowly as he parks in front of the house and determines that after the kind of night they all had yesterday, that maybe today, right now, it’s okay for him to feel a glimmer of something traveling through his body like sparks of light, something that he can maybe call happiness.

Yeah. It’s okay.
Happy Saturday everyone! Here's the next chapter :)  

The Wait

Stiles knows by now that he’s most likely never been in love, even in the case of what he felt for Lydia. What he’s turned over in his head a million times about his feelings for her is this: He admires her, cares deeply for her, and is also a little bit jealous of her.

But he wasn’t in love with her. Just a bit obsessive with his affection, which thankfully he now understands how to handle better.

So when Stiles thinks to himself, I want to hold Erica until she’s okay, he knows he doesn’t mean it in any lovey-dovey context - he just literally wants to sit her down, roll her up in a blanket and wrap himself around her so tight that the energy consuming her is quieted into a distracted patience, so they can all wait peacefully for Boyd to arrive. He wants to feed her cookies until she stops sighing. He at least wants her to sit the fuck down.

Because right now she’s giving him anxiety with all the stress pacing she’s doing.

Stiles totally gets why she’s doing it because all of them are pretty anxious right now for obvious reasons, and that’s why he’s not actually going to say anything. But by the fourteenth turn she does from the far end of the living room to continue wearing down the carpet, he wants to scream. Just a little bit. The room is completely quiet besides her footsteps, her continuous monotonous footsteps, as if just the action of her pacing silences any possible words from everyone else’s mouth.

Stiles glances over to Derek, who’s in the loveseat, staring morosely at the floor. Stiles tries to glare hard enough so that Derek can feel his eyes. It doesn’t work. Fuck. The one time Stiles actually wants the guy to notice when Stiles is staring, and he’s completely enraptured with the carpet’s stitch count.

Erica sighs heavily again and lets it last for half a minute. When she finally breathes in, there’s an obvious tremble to it. Her arms are crossed so tight against her chest that Stiles would think it hurts. Her hair is loose across her back and shoulders which is worrying in and of itself, because nowadays she’s been loving her hair in braids, no matter how tired she is.

Stiles doesn’t look too closely at her face. He thinks it’s a mirror of everyone else in the room, just probably double the amount of stress.

He tries to tap the toe of his shoe towards Derek’s eyeline since he’s only a couple seats away on the couch. Isaac, to his left, glances at him curiously, then keeps watching the frantic tap tap of Stiles’ foot in amusement. The asshole doesn’t try to help.

Stiles extends his leg as straight as it can go and taps his foot on the edge of the table instead. He keeps it as quiet as possible though, not wanting to be the one to interrupt Erica’s frantic pacing. This is Derek’s job. Derek should be the one to possibly get yelled at by an emotionally stressed
werewolf.

Derek still doesn’t notice and though no noise is coming from Isaac, his shaking shoulders bump into Stiles every other second. When Stiles whips his head around, Isaac’s hands are covering his nose and mouth, and his eyes are crinkled in silent laughter.

‘Help me,’ Stiles mouths to him. Isaac pulls away his hands just to shrug dramatically and it puts his huge smile on display. Stiles sneakily elbows him in the side but it just makes a huff of noise escape Isaac. Stiles thinks, unfortunately, that it was more laughter, not a huff of pain.

Then Isaac leans forward and grabs something off the table quickly, before Erica turns around again for another lap toward them. He keeps his left hand over his mouth but with his other, slides the object into Stiles’ hand.

Stiles leans forward with his elbows on his knees and surreptitiously opens his hand.

It’s an eraser.

Stiles very, very calmly takes a deep breath in and turns to Isaac with wide eyes, hoping his ‘What the fuck is this and why the fuck would this help me you asshole?’ look is coming through strong.

Isaac just shrugs again and motions with his free hand to Derek. Stiles glares at him in confusion and bites his bottom lip to keep any noise escaping from frustration. Isaac rolls his eyes and does the same motion again, as if the same exact thing will help Stiles understand what he still doesn’t understand, Isaac what the fuck are you saying?

Then it clicks after Isaac motions the fourth time. Stiles stares at him in bafflement then decides, yeah, okay.

When Erica starts her pacing away from them, Stiles quickly turns to Derek, and knowing he doesn’t have much time until Erica turns around again, throws the eraser at Derek’s head with much more gusto than he had meant to.

The eraser hits Derek directly in the temple and Derek full-body startles into a ramrod straight posture and looks around wildly. Stiles, horrified, covers his mouth with his hands and rears back against the couch cushions. His attempt to cover his gasp though is completely pointless, because Isaac immediately erupts into explosive laughter and rolls off the couch with the force of it.

Everyone in the room flinches from Isaac’s sudden laugh and looks to them both in confusion. Erica whips around and glares daggers at Isaac, who’s now heaving on the ground, laughing so hard he can barely breath. Stiles thinks he sees tears.

“You’re laughing? Why are you laughing?” Erica demands, setting her hands on her hips.

“I’m so sorry,” Stiles finally gasps out to Derek, trying hard now to not laugh along with Isaac’s ridiculous reaction. He’s on the fucking floor, jesus christ, Isaac, why. Derek turns to Stiles and gives his best what the fuck? brow placement.

“I was just trying to get your attention -” Stiles starts.

“You - heave - actually - heave - threw it -” Isaac hysterically laughs.

“What in the world,” Lydia calmly adds from the other side of the table as Erica continues to try to get Isaac’s attention.
Stiles continues with a laugh in his voice, “- it was just so quiet and weird in here, I wanted you to do something -”

“Well you did it for me,” Derek bluntly responds, and looks to Isaac who’s now definitely shedding tears of mirth.

“It - heave - hit you - heave - right in t-the face -” and Isaac erupts again. Erica gives up on getting his attention and sits down at the table with Jackson and Lydia. Finally. She does it with a pout, but Stiles counts it as a win.

“What happened?” Allison asks. They’re all bemusedly staring at Isaac.

“I - uhm.” Stiles can’t continue and he clears his throat, but the more he tries to stop the laughter the more it bubbles up inside of him.

“He threw a…” Derek digs into the cushion space beside him and pulls out the eraser. “An eraser at me.”

Jackson snorts and Isaac says, “Fuck yeah he did,” from the ground, apparently finally able to get out a full sentence. “He threw an eraser at our alpha and hit him square in the face,” and nope, there he goes again.

A giggle builds up in Stiles’ chest and he covers his face to hide his smile. Scott laughs from where he sits with Allison and that doesn’t help.

“So...why?” Allison asks, a smile in her voice.

“I wanted him to do something to ease the tension in the room,” Stiles says through his hands. “It was awful in here.”

Isaac sighs from the ground and Stiles peaks through his hands to see everyone glancing at each other, trying not to make it obvious that they’re glancing mostly at Erica.

“Well, that help-” he loudly bangs his head on the edge of the table.

That’s it. Stiles loses it. He doubles over in laughter so hard that it takes every ounce of breath from him, and he can only keep gasping against the laughter to try and get it back. It feels so good after sitting in such tense quiet with everyone. Wonderfully, the others erupt as well, and even Erica snorts into her hand as if it’s against her will. Isaac mutters his way back onto the couch, cursing them all as his face reddens with embarrassment.

Once Stiles can sit straight again, he looks over at Derek and sees that his hands are covering his face. They slowly slide down once the laughter peels off from everyone. “How about,” Derek says into the oncoming silence, “we look through our scrapbook until they get here. There’s only a little more than thirty minutes until Deaton and Boyd are supposed to arrive.”

No one objects and Scott jumps up to get the book, which is really still the sketchbook Derek had with the pictures taped to the pages.

Scott opens it in the middle of the table and everyone either slides to the ground or inches closer to better see the photos. Scott opens to the first page and Isaac covers his entire face with his hands in an obvious attempt to stop his oncoming laughter. It’s the photo of Erica annihilating her pizza from
the first set of photos.

“You’re a dick,” Erica states, glaring daggers at Isaac. Everyone laughs as Isaac nods in agreement without dropping his hands.

As Isaac tries to take slow breaths beside him, Stiles glances over the other photos on the pages with a smile.

His heart loosens. There’s all of them, together, smiling wide eyed at the camera or in action shots with faux angry faces. There’s him and Scott, on the third page, huddled close in conversation on the ground in the living room. There’s Lydia, in a surprise shot, half a stick of gum in her mouth, but with an incredibly amused look sparkling in her eyes. Lydia scoffs at the photo with a smile and elbows lightly in the side, to which Erica smiles the tiniest bit to, finally an upturn to her mouth that lessens the stress in her eyes.

Everyone has mostly quieted down besides the huffs of random laughter and everyone remembering the instances from certain pictures. On page seven, there’s a photo of wolf Derek sleeping against Stiles on the back porch, their backs to the camera and the forest line in the background. Stiles lets his eyes trail across the details for as long as they’re on this page, and when it turns, he doesn’t necessarily want to draw it, but he knows he’ll revisit the memory in questionable times.

Derek is sitting to his right and it’s not until that picture that Stiles starts to pay attention to his presence. He may be imagining it, but every photo that passes by starring the two of them, he feels a tension that travels down his spine of the both of them very carefully not looking at the other for the duration of the page. There’s a lot of them together, too - Stiles noticed, he supposes, how much time they sit together, especially since Derek showed them his shift, but - well. Stiles guesses he never let himself think about it too deeply anyway, so of course this would still be a bit of a surprise to him. It’s certainly not a bad thing to realize, though. More like...a hopeful thing.

Erica has silent tears trailing down her face near the end of the sketchbook. Lydia has her arm tight around Erica’s shoulders, her face set in forced peace, most likely trying not to cry as well. Stiles can admit that he’s having a bit of difficulty blinking the tears from his eyes, and everyone else at the table has certainly dissolved into a quiet state of soft smiles and sighs.

He’s so thankful they started this. He’s so thankful that they get to see their progress, their relationships in snapshots that don’t only include the difficult and shitty times. He thinks of the photos of his mom placed throughout the house. He thinks, thank god they have those, because the last of her face he saw was one sunken and grey, and memories from the mind aren’t as stable as he used to believe they were. Now he knows that colors and words can shift without your knowledge simply because time has passed, and there’s no way to avoid it. When he thinks back on a memory, sometimes good ones are better - sometimes bad ones are worse.

Stiles stands from the table and leaves the room to grab the camera from a little table near the front door. He turns it on as he walks back to the living room, and at the threshold he holds it up and says, “Guys.”

They all turn to him with varying facial expressions and he takes the shot.

“Stiles,” Lydia reprimands roughly, blinking the wetness from her eyes. “Warn us.”

He only laughs and strides back to his seat. “As if that’s the point of these photos. None of these are glamour shots, and the best ones are a surprise.” He sets the camera down and takes his seat.

Isaac quickly grabs the camera from the table and leans as far back as he can, taking a shot of Stiles,
Derek and probably half of Erica.

“Nice,” Stiles raises a brow at him.

“Now you’re here too,” Isaac shrugs with a smile. “With the picture you took it’ll look like you weren’t.”

Stiles smiles fondly at him as Allison says softly, “Ah, the curse of the photographer.” She’s still going through the book. “What’s everyone doing with the pictures they keep?”

“I have mine on a corkboard in my room,” Lydia says. “I’d like to get a collage frame to put them all in, but the collection keeps growing so I’m holding off for now.”

“Mine are on my desk,” Jackson shrugs.

“Taped to my wall.” Isaac is looking through the pictures on the camera. “Holy shit, I already know which one I’m taking next.”

“No peeking.” Derek leans over the table and grabs the camera from Isaac’s hands.

As Isaac complains, Scott says, “I have mine in a journal in my room. I’m afraid of ruining them somehow.”

“We’ll frame ours at the same time,” Allison smiles, “cause mine are on my desk and I keep worrying they’ll somehow get lost.”

“Mine are in a folder for now,” Stiles says, watching amusedly as Derek and Isaac stare each other down, Derek unmoving and Isaac pouting. “I look at ’em a lot, I just don’t have a place to hang them yet.”

“Aww, you sap,” Erica smiles. “Boyd and I have ours together in his room.” She says Boyd’s name softly but easily, and Stiles is relieved.

“Because your room is a nightmare,” Lydia comments, and Erica not-so-lightly elbows her in the side, to which Lydia grunts softly and covers her smile with her hand.

Isaac has given up on convincing Derek to give the camera back and it sits between Derek and Stiles on the table. “Mine are in my room,” Derek throws in.

“How incredibly vague,” Lydia rolls her eyes. “We’re so flattered.”

“They’re probably somewhere super secret, like under a floorboard or in a hidden journal,” Stiles says, smiling.

“Mine are in a journal,” Scott shrugs.

“Hidden journal, Scott. There’s a huge difference. Yours is probably asking to be picked up and you wouldn’t mind.”

Scott laughs. “Yeah. It’s next to my school stuff. Sometimes I even bring it to school without realizing.”

Stiles laughs and glances at Derek. He notices a pinkish hue to Derek’s cheeks and tries not choke on his gasp. “Oh my god, am I right!?”

Derek only glares at Stiles and everyone laughs.
“Which one is it, the floorboard or the journal?” Jackson asks excitedly.

“Probably the floorboard,” Stiles answers for Derek. “It’s so extra that it totally fits his aesthetic.”

“How does hiding something under floorboards match an aesthetic?” Erica asks.

“I get it,” Allison smiles wide. “Leather jacket, nice car, pouty face - a dramatic course of action for a dramatic looking dude.”

“Pouty?” Derek says quietly besides Stiles and he almost loses it.


A camera click sounds to his right and Derek doesn’t even bother pretending he didn’t take a picture of them conversating. And actually, once Stiles faces the camera, another click sounds out and Stiles pushes the lens away with his hand with a roll of his eyes.

“Fine, fine, we’ll stop making fun of you, god.”

“Thanks,” Derek responds sarcastically.

“You’re wel~”

The sound of a door opening stops everyone’s talking and they collectively whip their head to the front of the house.

It’s silent for a breath then Deaton calls out, “Could someone help me with Boyd?”

Erica is the first to stand and run from the room. Everyone else is close behind, and Stiles turns the corner in time to see Boyd standing at the door frame, exhausted and listing against the wall.

But standing. Breathing. Looking fucking worse for wear for sure, but, damn it.

He’s okay.

There’s a tightness in his chest that eases once he quietly sighs it out. He swallows down any relieved noises he might make, not wanting to distract from Boyd. But his arms feel like noodles and his heart is beating faster, just from the fullbodied thank goodness that starts as a thought then shivers slowly down his skin to his toes.

Thank goodness.

Most of them don’t help directly because it’s unnecessary, but they all hover around Erica and Boyd as she helps him into the living room.

“I’d like to do another check on Stiles and Scott while I’m here,” Deaton says as they all make their way to the living room. “I don’t expect there to be any issues. It’s only a follow-up.”

“Alright,” Stiles says for them both, but everyone is focused more on Boyd so very slowly being fed into the couch, where he sinks so far in with his eyes closed that Stiles can imagine he fell asleep while being sat down.

Stiles looks to Boyd’s arm and is surprised to find that it’s completely healed.

Deaton gets right into it. “A few things to expect as the days go on. Boyd will be very tired, as essentially the entity was sucking energy from him. He’ll fall asleep randomly and suddenly. I expect
that once he finally has acquired some of his previous stamina, he’ll be famished and eat more than usual to stock up on what he lost.”

“He already eats so much,” Isaac whispers somewhere around him, and not in a way to reject Boyd eating more, but more like it’s a wonder to him that Boyd would eat any more than he usually did. Stiles has to agree. It was fascinating (and a little disgusting) to watch just how much Boyd was able to put into his body.

“So it was just energy the thing took? Not, like, his life source or...something like that?” Erica asks nervously, petting Boyd’s head, then shoulders, arms, and back again to his head. She hasn’t stopped touching him since she sat beside him, and Stiles is assuming that Boyd actually did fall asleep since there’s not much reaction to her touches, just continuous slow breathing. There are dark circles under his eyes and a sickly tone to his overall skin. It looks like he had the flu for weeks and is only now beginning to heal.

“Just energy,” Deaton confirms. “I’m assuming it had never fed on a person before, or else I’m sure we would have found it closer to town. It’s strength had almost doubled by the time I got it off.”

“What did you do with it?” Derek asks.

Deaton looks to Derek. “I destroyed it.”

There’s a pause. Everyone waits quietly for an explanation, but nothing else is forthcoming so Derek asks, “Where did you put the remains?”

“There are no remains,” Deaton responds. “It completely combusted when trapped in the magic release circle. When the flames dissipated, there was nothing inside, or on Boyd’s arm.”

Derek blinks. “You did the spell while it was still attached to Boyd?”

“No choice,” Deaton says simply. “Unless I wanted to rip Boyd’s flesh off along with the bracelet in order to do it separately.”

Derek sighs shortly and Deaton side-eyes him.

“As you can tell, his arm is fine,” Deaton states, in a tone that Stiles imagines is the closest Deaton can get to comforting, yet somehow sassy at the same time. “His body healed with its usual speed once the object was gone, and I made sure to add some healing salve and herbs to the wound before it completely sealed, in case there was anything hiding underneath the skin. Of course, if anything out of the usual ordinary happens, don’t hesitate to call me.”

Stiles is briefly baffled by how simple that could be, but realizes that after he woke from his faint the day before, it didn’t take him or Scott that long to get back on their feet. They were even sitting in the waiting room soon after waking the same day. He flexes his own fingers, takes a slow, deep breath in, and feels fine.

Derek nods sharply after the explanation. “Thank you.”

Deaton nods to Derek and apparently has nothing else to say on the matter. He looks around for Scott and Stiles. “Boys. Time for a check up.”

He stares at Boyd for a moment before following Deaton and Scott to the kitchen.

Boyd will be holding the trident in his mermaid drawing. He thinks that makes sense, since he’s wielded an object that honed energy and light and survived.
Stiles smiles at the stupid thought.

(But he’s totally going to do it.)
The Talk

His dad is in the kitchen when Stiles comes down the stairs tightly carrying a folder in his hands. He’s having a bit of difficulty keeping his breathing steady, but Stiles knows that most anxiety stems from the moment before action. It’s best for him to get it over with.

“Hey dad?” he calls out casually.

“In the kitchen.”

Stiles walks in as if he didn’t already know where his father was, and sets the folder down on the table as if it wasn’t something important.

“How’s your morning?” he asks calmly, as if his heart wasn’t in his throat.

“It’s going good,” his dad answers just as calmly. “What’s the folder?”

Stiles doesn’t expect him to get right to it and accidentally rams the side of the refrigerator door into his hip when he opens it too fast. He grunts at the impact and lets out a breathy laugh.

“Uh. It’s something.”

“Something?” His dad repeats, suspicious.

Stiles didn’t really mean to end the sentence there. He meant to say, ‘It’s something I’d like to show you,’ but he couldn’t get all the words out.

As the cold air from the fridge passes over the front of his body, he realizes he has a choice. He could leave it there, say that yes, it’s just something for school, don’t worry about it. Or he could open the folder and fan out some of his life from the past year across the kitchen table.

He closes the fridge door.

“It’s something,” Stiles repeats, as he reaches for the folder and opens the flap. His dad’s attention is completely on him, probably because Stiles is acting a little weird, so when the folder opens and Stiles drags a drawing from the pile to lay in front of his dad, his dad doesn’t immediately notice what it is.

“If this is some supernatural stuff to be worried about, Stiles,” he starts as he places his coffee to the side and picks up the drawing.

“It’s nothing to worry about.” Stiles brings his hands in front of him to wring his fingers together. He’s trying not to smush the paper into his dad’s face in impatience.
“Alright.” His dad finally looks at the drawing and a brow raises. “Well, then. This looks like the little guy that tried to poison our water, right?” A chuckle suddenly booms out of him. “What in the world happened to his eyes?” He flips the paper over. “Did you print this from the Bestiary book?” He runs his finger over the pencil lines. “Oh, this is...which one of you drew this? It’s very good. Looks exactly like it, except for the face,” he says with another chuckle. When Stiles doesn’t immediately answer, his dad turns to him. He stands in sudden worry. “Oh, Stiles. What’s wrong?”

“What?” Stiles asks, and his voice sounds rough so he brings his hands quickly to his face and realizes he’s crying. “Oh, shit,” he laughs.

“What’s wrong?” his dad asks again, putting the picture to the side. He stops at the edge of the table, arms about to reach out, but he hesitates when Stiles smiles.

“You really like it?” Stiles asks quietly. His hands tangle in the edge of his shirt.

“Like what?”

“The drawing.”

“Do I - I mean, I suppose, yes,” he answers in confusion.

“You suppose?” Stiles sniffs.

“No, well, I mean, it’s a very good drawing, it’s just that - you’re crying. Why are you crying? You don’t cry a lot. Are you okay? Is it a normal thing or a Derek thing, because I can call them for you, or we have mac and cheese in the cupboards,” his dad says gruffly, thoroughly confused, worried, and already reaching for the cupboard door.

“I drew it,” Stiles says. His shirt will probably be stretched out after this.

“You -” His dad stops and turns away from the cupboard towards Stiles. “You drew it.”

“Yea. I’ve been drawing a lot, for a while. That’s one of the first ones I drew. Uh, here,” and Stiles motions to the open folder then decides to get them out himself.

He pulls out the mermaid and pixie first, then a couple pages of wolf poses and some pack pictures. They’re scattered across the table, out of order and overlapping, but Stiles starts rambling about them all and pointing from one to the other in explanation. His dad keeps silent as Stiles shows him picture after picture, but his eyebrows slowly raise with each drawing passed into his hands.

His dad is holding the drawing of Erica and Boyd together at school when he leans down to pick up one of the wolf collages. He holds them side by side in his hands and glances back and forth between the two.

Stiles stops rambling and watches him look between the drawings.

“Uhm.” Stiles shrugs. “Yea, so.”

“For a year?”

“About a year, yeah.”

“I’ve noticed pencil residue on your hands more often,” his dad murmurs. “But wow. Never noticed any art stuff.”

“Oh, well, you wouldn’t ’cause I don’t really have any,” Stiles shrugs again. “I just use my printer
paper and whatever pencils and markers I’ve stocked up on over the years. Nothing fancy.”

“Aah,” his dad slowly nods. “I see. Well. Do you want to go to school for this?”

Stiles is taken back. “I - I never thought of that. I just, I don’t know, I really like doing it.”

“Well, I can see you’ve progressed.” He glances at the two drawings he’s holding. “I’m assuming you drew the people first and the wolves later?”

“Y-yea.”

“They’re very good.” His dad continues glancing between the ones in his hand and the ones on the table. “I really thought that first one you showed me was from that book you all use.”

“Oh,” is all Stiles can say through his surprise.

“And you’re showing this to me like it’s very important to you,” His dad says with a raised brow at Stiles’ eyes, even though his tears have stopped for the moment.

Stiles slowly nods. “Yea. It’s important. It’s, uh. Well, it’s been helping with, like. I don’t know. When things happen I draw them out and it helps me wrap my head around it.”

“That’s great,” his dad says in surprise. “That’s great. Well, this is great.”

“Is it great?” Stiles smiles. His dad huffs out a laugh.

“Yes, in case I didn’t mention. It’s great.” He sets the drawings on the table. “These aren’t all of them?”

“I have a whole closet full,” Stiles says, a bit embarrassed. His dad outright laughs.

“Wow. Well. You know, if you wanted to go to school for this, it’s certainly not what I expected, but there are schools that -”

“I haven’t really thought about that yet,” Stiles interrupts quickly. “I just enjoy it and I wanted to share.”

“Ah. Okay.” There’s a brief silence between them before his dad says, “Well, if you ever want to show me something you’re working on, I’d love to see it.”

Warmth blooms in Stiles’ chest and he can’t help but smile. He shrugs. “Alright.”

His dad laughs at Stiles’ forced calm. “Alright.”

“I’m, uhm. Working on a pretty big one right now. I’m drawing everyone as mermaids. The research for it is really cool, too, cause I mean we’ve never encountered mermaids before -”

“They exist?” His dad interrupts, baffled.

“Oh, I don’t think so,” Stiles quickly says. “I’m just looking up myths and lore and stuff. Other artists’ renditions. Just to figure out my own way to do it.”

“Ah.”

“Yea, and it’s really cool so far. And kind of freaky. God, I hope they don’t exist,” Stiles laughs. His dad raises a nervous brow and Stiles clears his throat.
“So yeah, I’ll show you that when, you know, I’m done. I’m just starting the sketching and I’m thinking I’ll outline it.”

“With your stash of pens?” His dad smiles.

Stiles laughs. “Yea, I have some nice ballpoint ones.”

“Hmm.” His dad’s eyes crinkle with his smile and he turns back to the pictures on the table. “Well, I can’t wait to see it.”

Stiles beams as his dad starts rifling through the drawings, picking up ones he wants to take a closer look at and *hmm-*ing and *aw-*ing at certain things. Stiles feels himself choke up, but keeps it down.

Usually, at the end of an anxious encounter that goes well, there’s a lightness at his belly that carries him on for days. Right now, the lightness overwhelms his whole body, and he sits on one of the kitchen chairs and lets it wash over him as he watches his dad. He can’t believe it. He’s a little lightheaded, and he’s smiling, and he’s...happy.

He doesn’t focus much on the word itself because he knows he scares easy. He instead pulls out more drawings from the folder for his dad to see, and lets the feeling consume him like a ripple of sunshine across his skin.
Good morning & long time no see! I've gotten a couple awesome lovely comments this week asking about this story and it kind of got my ass in gear to let you guys know what's going on. This story is still IN PROGRESS and my goal is to have it finished before posting again so that ya'll don't have to wait an undetermined amount of time for updates. But, also, it's been like six months since I've updated, so here's a chapter to let you all know that I haven't given up on this, the chapters are just taking longer than expected.

Thank you so much to the commenters and readers that are still with me. You're super fricken sweet and I really appreciate it <3 Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Thinking

Stiles is sitting at his desk with his door wide open, unafraid of being found hunched over, pencil gripped tight in his hand as he swipes the lead across the paper to shade in Boyd’s mermaid tail.

He told his dad. He told his dad!

There have been bubbles in his throat that erupt as laughter from stupid things, like hip-checking his desk on accident or fumbling over his blankets that fell from the bed. The giggles trickle from his vocal chords as if they were waiting for just an excuse to show, as if it was building up and up until they couldn’t help but find such a silly thing so funny, such a silly thing that Stiles would have just moved on from before yesterday.

Boyd is holding his trident proudly, doesn’t yet have a detailed face, but his body will be finished once Stiles finishes the detailing of his fin. Then he’ll do Boyd’s face and try his hand at the ocean background.

As he sketches, he’s smiling. He thinks about pictures on refrigerators, knows that there’s none on theirs yet but knows that now it’s possible. He thinks, and thinks, and thinks about the wonder of this feeling, and tries to find a way to describe it, words echoing in the back of his mind as he finishes the tail and moves on to Boyd’s face.

Relief. Yes, he’s absolutely relieved. His dad took it well and was encouraging.

He was encouraging.

His dad asked him about going to school for drawing. Like, fuck. That’s pretty cool. Stiles knows he’s been practicing a lot, obviously, but that his dad took one look at the drawings and thought, ‘Career?’ is pretty bomb ass diggity, ya know?

Stiles knows that no matter what, if he decided he wanted to go to school for this, it wouldn’t matter how good he was, just that he had the passion to better himself. Seeing Lydia’s journey in her studies has helped Stiles understand that things just take effort, and you have to decide to put that effort
towards your goal - and now look at her. Straight A’s and confidence - hashtag, goals.

He bites his thumb as he fills in Boyd’s eyebrows, thinking, thinking, thinking.

He was so nervous to tell his dad. It was something building up over time, something rough around the edges of his mind, an anxious pang pang in his gut whenever his dad passed by. Something ever present, something annoying, something that made him sweat.

Thinking, thinking.

But now - now, oh god. Stiles feels so much better. He feels like a walking smile, like there are goosebumps in his soul that he can’t shake. Stiles told him, and it went well, and maybe there wasn’t a possibility of it going bad because his dad loves him, Stiles knows this, but having the proof in front of you makes such a difference when you’re finally out of your negatively charged brain and are able to grab the bad thoughts, shake them, and say with no possibility of ‘what if?’:

LOOK! It happened. It’s over. It’s great.

It gives him hope that honesty like this can make things better. It gives him hope that the honesty with himself, in regards to why he started drawing in the first place, was a good choice. Is a good choice. That maybe he’s not fucking up in his life as bad as he sometimes thinks he is.

Life, it kind of - well it kind of fucking sucks sometimes. But moments like yesterday, and moments like this, where he’s peaceful in his room, door open, sunlight filtering through an open window and thinking about the people he loves and that love him back, and feeling relieved and grateful and - God.

It gives him hope.

He feels cheesy. Like triple cheese on a pizza. Spilling off the sides and taking so long to chew. Delicious.

He finishes Boyd’s face. He stares.

Thinking.

He’s supported by his dad. But not just his dad.

And things went well with his dad. Maybe they’d go well with…

Stiles thinks, thinks, thinks, as he draws rocks and fish and algae and seaweed, maybe, maybe, just maybe in terms of a different something building up over time, a different rough around the edges situation, another thing that’s an anxious pang pang in his gut whenever he sees... it.

Something ever present. Something annoying. Someone that makes him sweat.

He shades a rock, still smiling, but now a nervous tingle shivers across his body.

Nervous - but not scared.

Stiles giggles.
In the pack house the next day, Stiles carefully lifts Boyd’s head from the couch and sits in the space so his head is on Stiles’s thigh. Boyd only sighs once he’s settled again and Stiles continues reading the book he had left here a while ago.

Erica has finally allowed space between her and Boyd. Her and Lydia were in the kitchen doing who-knows-what and the rest of the pack members were coming in and out of the house for their own reasons. There was nothing life threatening - they were all just going about their days. The front and back doors were open, sending a fresh chill throughout the house. The humans were wearing sweaters and the wolves probably didn’t even notice the breeze. Derek was his wolf self, napping on the lounge-chair in the living room.

Stiles let everyone’s voices and the noises of their actions fall around him as he read. In between each page turn, he rests his left hand on Boyd’s chest and doesn’t think twice about it.

“We’re going to get some coffee,” Lydia says from the doorway. “Do you want anything, Stiles?”

He lifts his eyes from the page to Lydia. “Starbucks or -?”

“Yeah,” she says, glancing behind her to Erica leaving the house. “Text me if you want anything,” she says before pivoting and following Erica out.

Stiles carefully digs his phone out of his back pocket, not wanting to jostle Boyd more than necessary. As he’s texting a caramel macchiato to Lydia, Boyd starts mumbling in his sleep.

Stiles sends the message and breathes out a light laugh. Boyd’s been talking in his sleep a lot since being so out of it. Well, Stiles thinks, maybe he talked in his sleep before and Stiles never noticed. Boyd didn’t talk that one day Stiles drew him, but maybe -

“Stars,” Boyd mumbles, a distinct word instead of the usual indiscriminate vowels.

Stiles waits for more but nothing’s forthcoming. “Stars?” Stiles pushes quietly, hoping to get more out. He hasn’t seen Boyd really interactive yet beside stuffing four times his weight in food then knocking out immediately.

“Stars,” Boyd says again, and this time he licks his lips and tries to clear his throat. Boyd’s eyes don’t open, but Stiles would dare say he’s actually awake. Stiles’s hand tightens on the front of Boyd’s shirt in excitement. Boyd says, “Drink stars.”

“Drink...stars?” Stiles repeats when Boyd is quiet again.

Boyd nods his head slowly and sighs. “I want to drink stars.”

“Uhm,” Stiles starts, now a little worried. “I think it’s pretty difficult to drink stars, my dude.”

“You are,” Boyd mumbles quietly enough that it takes Stiles a second to parse out.

He is...drinking stars?

“I’m not drinking star - ooooolllhhhh,” Stiles gets it.

Starbucks. He’ll be drinking starbucks. He laughs softly and pats Boyd’s chest. “You miss coffee?”

Boyd lets out a short groan of agreement and Stiles smiles wide.

“You’ll get there, bud,” he can’t help saying. “You just need to rest a few more days.”
Boyd grunts in disapproval and Stiles laughs again.

“I miss stars,” Boyd mumbles.

“We’ll get you a bucket of stars when you can stand more than thirty minutes,” Stiles promises.

That seems to quell Boyd a bit because he only gives a tiny nod. Stiles stares at his face on the oncoming silence. Boyd’s been looking better. More color to his face. Thank god.

“Derek?” Boyd suddenly mumbles. Derek’s head shoots up from the chair.

“He’s in the room,” Stiles says. “He’s a wolf though, so he can’t talk.”

“I know,” Boyd mutters, as if insulted Stiles gave him the information. “Derek. Can Stiles give me some of his…” he breathes in slowly then breathes out the rest of the sentence. “Some coffee.”

The immediate reaction from Derek’s wolfy face is disapproval. Stiles bites his lip to keep from laughing.

“What does he say?” Boyd asks Stiles, a bit louder and more distinct, although because of the exhaustion it makes his words slur a bit as if drunk.

“Uh -” Stiles hesitates. “It’s a hard no, dude.”

Boyd releases something akin to a wolf whine. Derek’s ear twitches, but he lays his head back down without a response.


Derek’s ear keeps twitching from the whining tone but otherwise he doesn’t move. *Harsh.*

“Boyd,” Stiles says quietly and leans a bit over his face even though Boyd’s eyes are still closed. “I promise. I’m gonna get you so much coffee when you’re feeling a bit better, okay?”

Boyd whines again but huffs, “Fine,” and goes quiet.

Stiles leans back with a smile, so sad that no one else is running in and out of the house right now to have witnessed that.

“You’re a good team,” Boyd mumbles.

“Hm?” Stiles hums, picking his book back up.

“You’re a good team,” Boyd speaks up with his distinct but drunk voice. “You ‘n Derek.”

Stiles pauses.

“You’re like the bad cop, good cop duo,” Boyd continues. “Good dad, bad dad.”

That takes Stiles by so much surprise that he snorts out a laugh before he can help himself.

“He’s like - uuuuuuhhhhh,” Boyd keeps talking, “scary supportive, you know? And you’re like - annoying supportive.” Aw, what the hell? “But like, nice about it.”...okay?

“I know what you’re saying,” Isaac suddenly yells from somewhere. Stiles jumps as Isaac then
appears and leans against the door frame. “It’s like, they have the same goals, but bounce off of each other to make it happen. You know like how there’s always the mean parent and nice parent?” Isaac is smirking like a hellstorm, obviously enjoying this.

“Har har,” Stiles glares.

“Yyyyyeeaaaahh,” Boyd breathes out. “Yeah.”

“Yes,” Isaac emphasizes again with a huge smile on his face. At this point, Stiles realizes Isaac is trying to fuck with Boyd moreso than he is with Stiles. Stiles shakes his head and slaps his book on his forehead to hopefully hide himself from Boyd’s future embarrassment.

“They’re like,” Boyd starts, then continues with, “and yeah,” without actually adding an explanation in between, and Isaac tries to hide his laughter so hard that Stiles hears the harsh breath from where he sits.

“Yes,” Isaac repeats again, “Tell me more!”

“They’re dads,” Boyd states, and both Isaac and Stiles chuckle abruptly, Isaac hiding his with an “Ah!” sound of agreement and Stiles trying to press the book harder against his face. From the chair, Derek sighs a tired sigh of ‘Why do I deal with this,’ which makes Stiles snort with another wave of laughter.

“They’re like dads that you know love each other but also look like they’re on the verge of divorce and so no one really knows what’s going on but somehow they’re still together and still make you take the trash out every night even though it’s eleven p.m. and the trash isn’t coming for four days anyway,” and what the fuck. Isaac throws away the illusion of straight face and explodes with laughter. Derek is resolutely keeping his eyes closed, ear twitching like crazy, as Stiles grips the front of Boyd’s shirt and says, “What?!”

“Love, love, love,” Boyd says, and the motherfucker is smiling. “But you give Derek a run for his money if you don’t agree on something.”

“Ain’t that the fuckin’ truth,” Isaac gasps in laughter. “You’re right. They’re married.”

Stiles throws his book at Isaac, who smacks it down but still runs from the room, laughing so loud someone could probably hear it from the outside.

“You’re both grounded!” Stiles yells in jest and Isaac chokes on his laughter and it turns into loud coughing from the other room.

“No coffee for you ever again,” Stiles mumbles to Boyd, staring despondent at his book still laying on the ground.

“Liar,” Boyd says, still smiling, and Stiles sighs.

“Yeah.”

Stiles looks over to Derek, whose eyes are on Stiles. Their eyes connect, and Stiles can’t help but smile at him. Derek’s tail lifts briefly in an almost wag then he closes his eyes.

“What the fuck is going on?” Erica yells from the front of the house.
“Oh thank god,” Stiles yells back. “Can you get my book?”

“How’s Boyd?” She asks, coming through the door holding two Starbucks cups.

“He’s great!” Isaac yells from somewhere in the house.

“He’s good,” Stiles agrees with a roll of his eyes. “He’s been talking, a bit. He wants coffee.”

Erica hands Stiles his coffee then grabs his book from the floor. “Fat chance.” She hands him the book. “There was a little hipster shop next to Starbucks. Guess what we got.” She sits on the floor in front of the couch they’re on and sets her coffee on the little table. “Lydia!” she yells.

“Excuse you,” Lydia yells back. “I’ll take my time.”

“Take your time faster,” Erica yells back, and leans her head back until it’s resting against the side of Boyd’s waist.

Lydia comes in a moment later holding a marker, tape, a very thick book, and their self-made sketchbook scrapbook.

“Oh!” Stiles smiles.

“Yep,” Erica says.

“Finally,” Lydia gushes, and sets their sketchbook scrapbook and the empty scrapbook on the table. The new scrapbook is a simple light blue, no accents or words etched across it.

“What?” Isaac yells from somewhere again. “No one is actually saying anything!”

“Come look for yourself!” Erica yells.

Lydia has already opened both books by the time Isaac saunters in holding his own ice blended drink. “So, what?”

“You have eyes,” Lydia states with the distinct tone of you dipshit.

He sits at the end of the table and hums. “Cool.”

They start going through the pictures in the sketchbook scrapbook and transferring them over to the new scrapbook pages. Lydia tapes them methodically as collage style pages, trying to fit as many as she can on one page. “We’re going to have a lot of scrapbooks at this rate,” she says as she works. She sounds pleased by this.

They date the photos as they go, and Stiles is viscerally reminded of when he went through his own pictures, the moments of memories that stopped you for some time before you remembered to continue. Scott joins them at some point, then Jackson and Allison. Derek stays a wolf the whole night, his tail randomly lifting as the memories continue. The living room is a scene of them all mostly smiling and laughing, some pouting here and there, and Stiles can imagine this as a final scene to a ridiculous HBO holiday movie.

Stiles sinks into the sounds again like he did when he was reading. He thinks of his drawings, he thinks of everyone here. All of his friends are now chibi’s, are mermaids, are memories. Stiles imagines them on paper and folds it into a square. He puts it into his pocket for safe keeping.

They’re with him, always.
He sinks in that feeling and sips on his coffee.

Stiles can tell Derek is staring at him again from his peripheral vision.

The caramel lingers on his tongue and everything is sweet.

Chapter End Notes

I have an instagram dedicated to my current projects and some fan projects, including this one! I've posted a drawing of Stiles’ first mermaid drawing on there: https://www.instagram.com/p/BohVzxLn961/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

<3
Words and Outlining

Chapter Notes

Short but sweet <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Words

How can Stiles tell Derek?

Boyd’s mumblings have sat with Stiles. He’s running in circles with himself about what he knows of him and Derek, and about what others are apparently seeing of them as well. These musings make him want answers. They make the nerves that force him to giggle erupt form his sternum.

But words aren’t something that Stiles can articulate well. They’re something that escapes suddenly from his mouth like that moment you feel something graze the back of your neck and your body twitches without your permission. Those are words to him - a deluge of nonsense and sudden noise, a waterfall of conjunctions that maybe mean nothing and maybe mean the world and then some. Even Scott sometimes doesn’t know the difference. Sometimes Stiles himself doesn’t know.

He thinks about Shakespeare and admires the nerve of the guy to make up words so that what he felt could maybe make sense, and then Stiles realizes that he’s already done that through the scheuts of his art, and he laughs.

The nerve of him.

He laughs again.

And Derek nodded and smiled and copied his hand motions.

God.

He’s in a play, Stiles thinks. He’s in one of Shakespeare’s plays. That’s why the nonsense here makes sense, that’s why there are words that aren’t words that have meaning, and that’s why Stiles is even entertaining the thought of telling Derek that he’s - that he -

It’s a play in the third act of something that’s been building over time. This is the monologue he states with perfect diction, before the next scene starts and all that ensues is Shakespearean chaos.

‘Is it worth it?’ Asks the doubt.

‘Am I tired of the waiting?’ Stiles asks in response, and the reply to both is ‘Yes.’

So back to the matter at hand - how can Stiles tell him?

‘Are words necessary?’

He sighs out heavily through his nose and twists back and forth in his chair.

Sometimes, unfortunately, yes.
He twists, and twists, then spins, and he’s dizzy with the knowledge that he has no answers to accompany the butterflies in his stomach.

He’s also physically dizzy and stops his chair. Eugh.

He pulls out a new sheet of paper and starts in on some roses, because he’s feeling cheesy and wants a break from sunflowers and mermaids. Lines form without him really focusing on them and he hums responses to his own thoughts without really focusing on finding an answer. He rides the in between of focus and space, because sometimes there are some things so important to a person that there needs to be a moment where there is nothing of them at that time, or else you go insane.

This is important to him.

Derek is...important to him.

He sighs deeply again and fills the entire page with petals instead of adding a stem.

Derek, Derek.

What color will be this rose?

A red rose means passionate love. Something brimming and blooming within you at the sight of them, something on edge and smiling with teeth.

Derek never really smiles with his teeth.

Yellow is friendship. Easy, breathable, soft around the edges.

Ha.

Pink is happiness, grace, admiration.

He bites his own lips in the smile that blooms and shakes his head at himself. He feels like that’d oddly be heavier than telling Derek he lo- likes him a whole bunch.

He has orange. Are there orange roses?

He drops his pencil and wakes up his computer to google roses.

Oh shit, there are. Cool. And they mean - oh. Hm.

He finishes the pencil lines of the petals and grabs the orange colored pencil.

Derek, Derek.

He shades it dark to light for each individual petal, creates a contrast and depth for the flower until he’s proud of the realisticness of it. He holds it up above his head so that the light shines through it and contemplates.

He turns it over, dates the back, and below the date writes:

*Energy, enthusiasm, desire and an excitement of the relationship with your loved one.*

He thumb-tacks it to the wall above his desk, easy as daylight to see with a meaning only he knows hidden behind it.
He falls asleep in his chair and dreams of falling within the rose petals like a vortex of ever changing color and emotion. It shifts back and forth from orange, red, orange, pink, orange, then stays the longest as white.

Even in his dream, he laughs - of all things he would equate with him and Derek, he never would have imagined innocence.

**The Outlining**

His dad drops a plastic bag of something on the kitchen table the next morning at breakfast.

“I thought you could use them,” he says gruffly, not really making eye contact and obviously making a show of rushing to work. He leaves as Stiles is opening the bag.

It’s a small packet of Pigma art pens, five sizes of width in black ink and a pencil to come with it.

He leans his weight against the table and stares, stares, stares, until he rips the package open with fervor and uncaps them all, possibilities ravaging his mind.

Emotions swell and he rushes up to his room and uses the fervor of unshed tears to outline random sunflowers he’s drawn, then the mermaids he’s been drawing of the pack. He spends the day adding to pictures.

It’s fucking *awesome*. The dimensions become distinct, the colors pop, and any black and white picture is as dramatic as he intends them to be.

That night, Stiles leaves one of his outlined sunflowers on top of a paper towel that’s covering a plate of fries, salad, and chicken on the kitchen table. This family may not be the best with words, but at least their actions make up for it most of the time.

Chapter End Notes

Intsa @trickeynite
The Idea

It’s a Saturday morning and with a slow blink of his eyes, Stiles wakes up thinking mid sentence *I should talk to someone about this.*

*This* being Derek, and *this* being the start of an avalanche inside him from *thinking, thinking, thinking* so much.

Stiles thinks that it’s the best course of action, since he hasn’t acted on anything yet despite the frequency of Derek being in his presence.

So, he texts Scott.

**Stiles: Come over today!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Stiles lets himself laze in bed for a couple minutes then jumps out to make breakfast. He’s not expecting an answer until the afternoon so he may as well go about his regular day.

At about two p.m., as he’s finishing up the series of mermaids, his phone vibrates multiple times in quick succession.

**Scott: Hey**

**Scott: Hey!* **

**Scott: okay ltre?**

**Scott: later**

**Scott: what time tho?**

Stiles laughs and replies.

**Stiles: any time, honestly have something i wanna talk to you about so be prepared**

**Stiles: *lion king plays in the distance***

He continues drawing while he texts.

**Scott: oh!!! LOL k ill be there soon**

**Stiles: how soon**

**Scott: tenmin**
Stiles: *what's tenmin*

Scott: *shut up*

Stiles chuckles and starts putting together all of his drawings and the photos of the pack to hide them in the closet. He puts the art pens in his desk drawer and heads downstairs for something to eat while he waits for Scott.

While Stiles is in the kitchen he hears a sudden *bang* on his front door, then *knock knock* a moment later.

“Did you just try to barge in?” Stiles asks as he opens the door.

“Not barge, per se.” Scott is smiling sheepishly as he passes Stiles into the house.

“*Per se,*” Stiles rolls his eyes. “What hipster literature are you reading to have actually used that in a sentence?”

“Not literature, just Lydia!” Scott says from his kitchen. Stiles follows him in and catches him eyeing Stiles’ sandwich with greed.

“Why are you spending time with Lydia and stay away from my sandwich,” Stiles says quickly.

“There’s more in the fridge, feel free to make one.”

As Scott fist bumps and practically skips to the fridge he says, “Just kind of happened, really. People came and left and we got to talking in the living room for a while.” Something that sounds heavy drops in the fridge and Scott lurches forward.

“What was that?” Stiles says around a mouthful of his own food.

“Isn’t it cool recently?” Scott says really loudly, head completely in the fridge and purposefully not answering Stiles’ question. “How much people are hanging out together?” his head comes out and there’s no condiment or loose pickles that follow him, so Stiles is gonna give him the benefit of the doubt and think that whatever dropped didn’t break. “Everyone’s been really chill, you know?” Scott transfers an armful of sandwich fixings to the table and starts building his own.

“Yeah,” Stiles says slowly. He hasn’t really been paying attention to everyone else with how much he’s been inside his own head, but thinking back on the frequent days he’s been spending at the pack house, he realizes it’s been incredibly...pleasant. Not as much drama and glaring as there used to be. “You’re right.”

Scott nods sagely, focused on his sandwich materials. “I am, I am.”

They sit in silence while Scott prepares his food. Stiles watches him absently while eating his own. He knows Scott is giving him time to bring up the topic himself, which he appreciates, but he’s also finding it difficult to speak now, and not just because he keeps stuffing his face with.

“So...?” Scott finally starts.

“I’m crushing hardcore on Derek,” Stiles blurs around a mouthful.

There’s a pause and Stiles doesn’t look up. In his peripheral he sees that Scott continues making his sandwich as normal.

“...So...?” Scott starts again. “That’s it?”
Stiles looks at him, confused. “What do you mean, that’s it?” He thought it’d be a pretty bigger deal than that.

“Well,” Scott hedges, then sighs and shrugs. “Dude, it’s kind of obvious.”

Stiles slams his sandwich on his plate. He’s pretty sure some lettuce drops to the floor. “What?!”

“I mean,” Scott looks heavenward and flails his hands around as he tries to explain. “It’s just - you know, I know you, and like - your heart does stuff when you’re around him, and at first it might of been fear but lately -”

“My heart?!” Stiles yells, standing.

“Well yeah ;’,” Scott responds loudly, matching Stiles’ fervency without realizing. “It’s all skippy and shit which is pretty worrying but now I’m used to it so it’s okay, and now I know it means you like him! Well, I was pretty sure before today,” Scott smiles awkwardly, “Like, a hundred percent sure, but!” he yells when Stiles yells gibberish in response, “there’s always room for error! So I’m glad you’re telling me!”

“Is the rest of the pack -” Stiles can’t finish the sentence, and when Scott stares open-mouthed at Stiles for a beat too long, Stiles falls into a puddle on the ground with a groan in embarrassment. “Oh my god,” he says into the floor. “I can’t show my face ever again.”

“What, as if you thought you could be subtle?”

“Ouch, Scott. Ouch.”

“Look at yourself,” Scott says from above him, laughing. “For a second, dude.”

Stiles rubs his cheek on his kitchen floor with a pout. “I don’t know what you mean.”

Scott wraps his arms around Stiles’ torso and heaves him up into the kitchen chair. “Sure, man. Eat your sandwich.”

Scott finishes making his sandwich and by the time the food is back in the fridge Scott says calmly, “It’s nothing you should be embarrassed about. We all know a little too much about each other, you know?”

Stiles stews on that for a moment and nods slowly. “Yeah, you’re right.”

“Was this the reason you asked me to come over?”

Stiles shrugs. “Yeah. I want outsider input.”

“Oh, okay.” Scott chews on a bite. “On, like, you guys being together or just you liking him in general?”

“Both? I guess?”

“Hm.” Scott stares at his food as he chews and Stiles knows he’s thinking.

“Well...in a....weird way, uhm. I think that you liking him and him liking you is kind of...understandable? Or like,” he clears his throat. “Inevitable?”

“Whoa, wait,” Stiles interrupts. “Him liking me?”
Scott looks at him like he’s crazy. “Dude, you -”

“Whoa, wait,” Stiles interrupts again, “Inevitable??”

Scott looks like he wants to smack Stiles upside the head, which is a very strange turnaround for them. He puts down his sandwich and stares right at Stiles as he speaks, and Stiles feels sort of nailed to his chair. “One: Him liking you is a totally real thing, dude. If you’ve been thinking this is a one way street, you’ve frankly been wrong. Think of it like this - everyone can tell you like him because of certain mannerisms, and everyone can tell he likes you because of certain allowances. Your heart triple beats - yes, triple - when he comes around and you’re a little more antsy, too. And for him, just - jesus, dude, he doesn’t let all of us get all up in his wolf face as much as you do. You practically drool on him and he’s chill with it. Among other things.”

A strangled sound comes from Stiles’ throat and Scott just nods.

“Yeah. Same.” he picks up his sandwich again and continues eating. “So, like, don’t worry about that. He’s into you. Now, two: what I mean by inevitable is that you guys have been through a lot together. And, uh, it started rough, you know.”

Stiles scoffs.

“But,” Scott smiles. “We’ve all kind of grown from the start, right? And none of us can deny that your guys’ personalities mesh together pretty fucking well. We’ve talked about it a couple times, you know. We’re all kind of waiting for something to happen.”

Stiles sighs shakily and shakes his head. “Well. Cool to know I’m not the only one.”

Scott slams his sandwich down. “Could something have happened already?” he asks with surprise.

“Yyyyyeeeeeaaaaaaahhhhhhh,” Stiles admits slowly, looking everywhere but Scott. “We’ve actually been hanging out together a lot recently. There’s been a couple times where I thought we’d...uh. But nothing’s happened.”

“Yet.”


“Nah dude,” Scott shakes his head. “You have good intuition. Don’t forget that.”

Stiles doesn’t answer. Not really a denial, but not really an agreement either. Scott scoffs.

“Do you want something to happen?”

That’s a good question. He knows that there’s a difference between imagination versus being faced with the reality. Does he want Derek to...what, kiss him? Hug him? Hold his damn hand?

Stiles groans as if with disgust, but really it’s just the fervor of his want. “Yes.”

Scott laughs his ass off, bread crumbs flying from his mouth before he covers it with his hand.

“Shut uuuuup,” Stiles yells uselessly, a smile is tugging at his mouth, but he won’t give Scott the satisfaction.

Scott finally stops laughing enough to talk, breathlessly. “So you’re gonna tell him?” Scott waggles his brows. “Get something started?”
A ball of nerves settle in his stomach, but he hears himself say, “Yes.”

Scott smiles big. “Awesome.”
Risks

Chapter Summary

Happy Wednesday, all! Thank you so much for all the comments I've been getting on chapters. I'm so glad you're enjoying so far and are still with me on this journey <3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Risks

Stiles is sitting in his car a little ways down the road from the Hale house, parked on the side of the road. He’s gripping the steering wheel and staring at some trees to the side blankly, trying to psyche himself up.

He’ll do it. He’ll tell Derek, just - just get it out there. Whatever happens, happens. Stiles is pretty sure that Derek is already pretty aware of whatever thing that’s been going on between them, anyway. With the pen thing and they eye contact and the pictures and the sleeping as a wolf and - wow, Scott was right. Stiles totally get allowances from Derek.

That should make him feel better, right? Not necessarily that he gets treated differently than other pack members, because maybe that can be a bad thing, but in this instance it’s all good things, right? All good things. Cuddling with a sleepy wolf is totally a cool, awesome, wonderful thing, and when Stiles tells Derek he has a super amount of feelings for him, it’ll still be a cool, awesome, wonderful thing. Right?

Right, Stiles decides. Right. It’ll be fine. It won’t be much of a surprise for Stiles to say anything. About it. And if Derek doesn’t have much to say on it immediately, then Stiles will wait until he does. And it’ll be fine.

He puts the car in drive and steers slowly out onto the road.

And they’ll talk about it. They’ll communicate, which is something that Stiles has been working on, and it’s been helping a lot of things. He has actual proof of that, like the art pens on his desk, or the dirty sandwich plates in his sink, or the random knowing eye contact that Isaac and him share sometimes that’s super weird but also totally awesome.

Stiles is almost to the house and tries to breath slowly.

They’ll talk about it. It’ll be okay.

Unless it -

No, no, shut up, brain. Shut up.

Stiles parks his car in the lot in front of the house and unbelts his seat belt. He jumps out immediately after turning his car off, not giving himself time to think anymore.

He whistles as he approaches the door, just to pretend with himself that he’s not so incredibly
nervous that the wolves will be able to tell by his heartbeat.

When he saunters in no one yells hello. He doesn’t hear anything from the kitchen, but when he walks to the living room, Isaac is curled up on the couch and doing something on his phone.

Stiles stays by the doorway. “Where’s everyone?”

Isaac shrugs and doesn’t look up from his phone. “Boyd is asleep upstairs and Derek is out back. Everyone else is doing their own thing, I guess.”

“Cool.” Stiles heads to the back doors and slides one open to get outside.

Derek is training on the grass. He waves when he sees Stiles, but otherwise doesn’t say anything and doesn’t stop his movements. Derek is pretty dedicated to practicing when he gets a chance, so Stiles just stays standing on the porch and leans against a pillar to watch Derek and wait until he’s done. He’s got patience.

Well, not really, but watching Derek train is pretty sweet, so he’ll pretend that he does for now.

Stiles crosses his arms as Derek folds himself over, places his hands flat on the ground, and lifts his legs into a steady handstand.

*Jesus.* That’s incredible.

“You’re just gonna watch?” Isaac says from behind him and Stiles startles a bit then shrugs. “You don’t want him to teach you anything?” Isaac says, and Stiles can hear the smirk in it.

“God no,” Stiles smiles. “Don’t set me up, dude. If he hears you he’ll actually try.”

“He’s focused.” Isaac saddles up beside him and watches Derek, too. “Although, usually when the other people get here they’re too distracting for him to finish. He’s used to my presence, though.” he side eyes Stiles. “Seems he’s used to yours.”

Stiles huffs a laugh but doesn’t comment.

Isaac nudges Stiles. “How are our dads doing?” he mumbles quietly enough for just Stiles to hear.

Stiles snorts into his shoulder and shakes his head. “Fucking stupid.”

Isaac smiles a little bit and rolls his eyes. “Stupidly true.”

Stiles’ heart stutters, but there’s doubt in his chest accompanying it without his permission.

He rubs his chest with one of his hands. “What if we’re bad parents,” Stiles whispers, but he doesn’t mean to say that out loud and blushes when Isaac’s eyes snap over to him in surprise.

It takes a moment for Isaac to respond, but finally he just says, “As if.”

“But what if.”

“Uhm,” Isaac starts, then flounders. “Dude, if…” he seems at a complete loss of what to say.

“What if it fucks everything up,” Stiles keeps whispering.

“Not possible,” Isaac says quickly.
“As if anything in our lives isn’t possible,” Stiles says fiercely, then pushes from the pillar and rushes back into the house.

“Uh - wait, Stiles!” Isaac yells after him, then starts following him through the house. “Y-you know, if, if you don’t try, then -”

“Then nothing will change,” Stiles cuts him off, reaching the door. “And it’s probably best that way.”

“Well - no, I don’t agree,” Isaac says, and Stiles is already out the door and he’s standing on the porch. “Dude, I’m not - I’m not good at these things, obviously, you’re the one who helped me with - well, just let me get Derek and you can talk -”

“No,” Stiles interrupts again, opening his door.

“Talk about what?” says Derek’s voice, and he’s standing behind Isaac, who actually jumps like he didn’t notice Derek had crept up. Derek is staring at Stiles, sweaty and obviously worried, but Stiles crams a smile on his face.

“Nothing.”

And he gets in his car and drives off.

Here’s the thought process.

Anything is possible.

It is possible that everything will be fine. It is possible that everything won’t be.

The latter gives Stiles such an incredible amount of anxiety that on his drive home he thinks back to his mom in the passenger seat, he thinks back to every sad and hard moment in his life, every awkward comment and action he made in third fucking grade, and it’s a rain of memories that choke him up on the inside and make it so his fingers are white on the steering wheel and make it so his mom stares at him sadly from beside him and even she doesn’t know what to say.

When he gets home he races to his room and locks himself in.

What is he comfortable with risking?

He’s throws blank paper to his floor like he did for his butterflies and grabs his markers, slams himself down to his knees.

What would he be risking?

He grabs the brown marker and swipes shapes quickly across the page. This is the living room. This is the couch, the chair, and floor and table. This is in the Hale house, and this is where he’s comfortable. He’s risking comfort, if it falls through. He’s risking comfort for awkwardness if Derek and him aren’t able to look at each other afterwards. Even if it goes well now - what if it doesn’t later? He’ll be in a pack with an ex? Jesus.
He grabs the orange marker. This is the T.V., this is the window. These are the picture frames and side table that everyone puts their drinks on and never cleans up. This is the little rug under the chair. These are what accents a living space, these are what he looks at without really seeing, because it’s so every day and so unassuming, but he looks at the jagged edges of his marker drawing and knows he’ll miss them if they’re gone, knows the last thing he wants is to be sad if he looks at them.

He grabs the red marker and fills in the people, fills in his pack. Red blobs of humanoid likeness that he’s drawn to with such fondness that sits at the core of his body.

He grabs the yellow marker and adds simple sun rays from the window into the room, practically haloing the people he loves. The room is light; is sunny; is happy. He’s happy here.

He’s happy here.

He caps the marker and stares for a moment.

Stiles loves Derek. So much. Cares for him, so much.

He’s risking a lot.

And in the possibility of it working well, he’d gain a lot. He’d be taking a risk.

Is it a risk worth taking?

Yes and no bloom across his mind and he’s at war with himself.

Keeping things as they are, accepting the ease of his life with his pack that they’ve learned to develop over time, not reaching for more than that, keeping the balance, the balance of the entirety of them -

Stiles throws the markers at his closet door.

He’s - he may be crying. He wipes at his cheek. Yeah. He’s crying.

Maybe he’s being a bit dramatic about this. Maybe it’s -

Ah, no. No. That doesn’t sit right with him. This is - it’s very important to him. Derek is very important to him. His friends are very important to him.

This is important.

He sniffs again and sighs. The picture is a bit rough looking, what with the unclean and scattered edges. He kneels over to his desk and grabs his art pens then settles himself in front of the picture again. He needs to clear his head. At least calm down a little.

He uses the pens to outline the objects and people. Adds little details within the picture frames, adds fabric textures to the couches and curtains. He doesn’t add details inside the red ones, but he does outline them so it’s more obvious that they’re people. He leaves the sun rays alone.

All the while he’s sniffling, but he is calming down. It feels really good to have everything make a little more sense, even if he’s not necessarily closer to a solution.

Stiles will...he’ll get to one. He’ll have to.

Chapter End Notes
Overthinking is risky as well.
Overthinking

Chapter Notes

Just a brief note to touch on some confusion from the last chapter - Some were wondering why Stiles was so anxious about telling Derek if he had already told Derek he loves him, but my intention for this conversation isn't just "I love you", it's "I want a relationship with you", and that's my fault as the writer for not making that more clear, so I'm sorry for anyone who was confused! Stiles is anxious about taking the next step forward with Derek, despite already feeling pretty settled that Derek at least likes him back. But change is stressful. Weh.
I changed up some of the verbage in this chapter so hopefully my intention is more clear! Thank you guys for sticking around <3 <3

The Overthinking

The same night that Stiles has his moment with the drawing of the Hale living room (now hiding in his closet), he decides to keep his blinders up a little bit longer and practice some trees. His dad arrived home about an hour ago, but since it had been nine, he had already eaten dinner, so they had their hello’s and then separated to their rooms.

Now just a little after ten, he hears a knock on their front door downstairs. He hesitates for just a second, but doesn’t want it to wake up his dad in case he’s already asleep. He jumps up at the second knock and rushes downstairs as quietly as he can.

When he checks the peephole, it’s Scott on the other side, phone to his ear.

Stiles opens the door and Scott hangs up. “Heeeeeeey,” he says with an awkward smile.

“Heeeey?” Stiles glances behind Scott, but it’s just him on the porch. “Is everything okay?”

“No emergency,” Scott says, and walks into the house. “Just stopping by, you know. Saying hello. I was with Allison today. We saw a movie.”

Stiles stares at Scott while he tries to keep up with the conversation. “Are you sure everything is okay?” he asks while closing his front door.

“Yeah, you know. So. How are you?”

There’s an awkward silence they share. Him and Scott. Awkward.

“Dude…” Stiles stares.

Scott bursts in under twenty seconds. “Isaac called me and said you went over to Derek’s and that you guys got into a fight about something and he wouldn’t tell me what it was but I have a pretty good idea about what and basically he’s worried but I was in the movie while he was trying to call and I’m sorry I’m late, but do you wanna talk about it?” He takes a deep breath in when he’s done then sighs.

“So…” Stiles blinks at him a couple times. “Isaac called you to check on me?”
“Yeah. You guys fought?”

“Not...really.” Stiles thinks back on it and… “Maybe a little bit, but that’s my fault. I think I snapped at him a little.”

“Did you…”

“No.” Stiles looks away and heads to the kitchen. “You want something to drink?”

“No, I’m good.” Scott follows him in. “Why didn’t you talk to Derek? You okay?”

Stiles doesn’t know how to answer either of those questions. He grabs a ginger ale from the fridge and leans against the counter.

“It seemed all good yesterday.”

Stiles picks at the tab of his can and shrugs. “Yeah, well. I got to thinking.”

Scott leans against the table and crosses his arms. “About what?”

“About...I don’t know.” He can’t quite look at Scott and sighs. “About how stupid it is, I guess.”

“He likes you,” Scott says. “We talked about -”

“No, it’s not about that. I know he...you know. It’s just.” Stiles taps his pointer nail on the top of the can. “What if actually doing something about it...ruins everything.”

Scott waits for more, but Stiles just keeps tapping his finger against the can and doesn’t say anything else. “...what’s everything?” Scott presses.

Stiles sighs out through his nose. “Everything. The pack dynamics, our...our friendship. Whatever nice thing Derek and I have going on right now, what if it just - blows up?” He glances up at Scott, and Scott is listening patiently, just watching Stiles. Stiles looks back down at his drink and finally stops tapping the top of it. “I don’t know. It’s just...there’s a lot riding on this, a lot that might be badly affected if I act. It’s just...I should probably think about whether or not I actually want a relationship a little longer, you know?”

“You’ve already been thinking about it for a while, though,” Scott says. “How much longer are you just gonna...wait?”

Stiles rolls his eyes. “I don’t know. However long it takes, I guess. I just want to be sure.”

“I think you’re sure.”

“Obviously not,” Stiles replies, getting a little irritated.

“No, I think you are. You’re just avoiding the conversation.”

“I’m worried,” Stiles snaps at him. “What if it makes things awkward? What if we get sick of seeing each other?”

“What if you don’t?” Scott counters back.

Stiles throws his hands up. “Yeah, but what if it does?”

“And what if it does?” Scott repeats, still staring steadily. “Will you leave the pack?”
That halts Stiles and he stares at Scott incredulously. “What? No, I...no, I wouldn’t leave the pack. But it’d make things harder.”

“So you’re afraid everything will go wrong and that you or Derek will break each other’s heart and that things with the pack will be awkward?”

“Yes,” Stiles breathes, feeling like Scott finally gets it.

“So...is it that you don’t like Derek as much as I thought?”

“Wh...wait, what?” Stiles is gripping the can with both his hands. He feels a little wayside at the moment.

“Did he do or say something that’s giving you second thoughts?”


“Because now you’re second guessing,” Scott says, looking as confused as Stiles feels. “Yesterday you were actually kind of excited. It’s just really different in a short amount of time.”

“No, no, he didn’t - no. Nothing’s different.”

“So you still like Derek?”

“God yeah,” Stiles enthuses. Scott looks like he doesn’t really believe him. “Scott, I still like him.”

“Okay,” Scott says hesitantly. “You’d tell me if he were like...taking advantage of you, right?”

“Dude,” Stiles steps back and glares. “He hasn’t -”

“I’m just asking, just making sure. He didn’t say anything rude to you, or is like pressuring you or anything -”

“He’s respectful,” Stiles almost yells, but then he remembers his dad might be asleep and continues more quietly. “He’s sweet, and patient, and listens to me and other gross poetic shit, he’s treating me awesomely. He hasn’t pushed at all.”

“Well -” Scott starts, but Stiles cuts him off.

“Fuck off, dude, you haven’t seen him with me, not really. He’s - he’s great, okay? Really fucking great. And that’s part of the problem.” He slams his can on the counter swings his hands around as he speaks, working himself into a tangent. “In the risk of getting too cheesy, sometimes I feel like he just reaches in and takes my heart from my chest, and he holds it delicately, despite how rough he can be. At the same time, I’m so scared he’ll shred it between his fucking nails, I’m so scared he’ll squeeze it and blood will flow between us, and nothing could heal it. But above everything, and I’m so, so scared that he’ll just go away, and my heart will mean nothing, not even something to hurt.”

He pauses. “Which isn’t good, I know, I mean, you should take nothing over an eviscerated heart, but Scott, dude, when I imagine my life, it’s with Derek. Not even necessarily in a relationship way. Even if we end up crashing, or pull at each other until someone breaks, even if standing next to him winds up feeling like being stabbed with a thousand needles at once because he puts me on edge or I can’t stand him, or he can’t stand me, or - or, well, whatever. The point is that I’m still standing next to him.” Stiles sighs shakily. “We’re all in this together whether we’re on good terms or not, and I wouldn’t want that to change. I like having him in my life. I - I love it. But do I want to fuck with where we are right now by pushing for something more? He hasn’t given me much of a response in what he thinks of us, but he’s still with me, almost every day, being supportive, being - fuck, dude, I
just.” He looks to Scott, who’s silent and staring. “Do I want to risk unsettling our balance? ‘Cause this is - it’s nice. It’s simple. But.” Stiles flounders for words but can’t find them. He ends with a shrug.

Scott’s eyes skirt away from Stiles to the kitchen window. “I don’t think you should take nothing over an eviscerated heart,” Scott says quietly. “I think that...I think…” he sighs out slowly and looks at Stiles, eyes unfocused and obviously deep in thought. “So, dude - what’s the alternative?”

Stiles opens his mouth to ask what he means, but Scott keeps talking.

“You drive yourself crazy with wondering if it ever would have worked out, you hang on the balance of ‘what if?’ for the rest of your life, your patience is tested, your love grows for something you’ll consider untouchable, and then - then, what?” Scott’s eyes pin him down, now. “What happens?”

Stiles is thrown off.

“Nothing,” Scott answers after a moment of quiet. “Nothing will ever happen except you building a whirlwind within yourself that no one can touch because there are no answers you’ll believe.” Scott shrugs. “I’m not saying go throw your heart in his face and expect it to be hurt. I’m not saying he’ll be gentle about it, either. But dude, there’s nothing I can tell you to really ease your mind of the what if’s or possible scenarios, because neither of us will know anything until you act.” Scott steps forward and throws his arms open wide. “So I’m just gonna tell you to get your ass back to that house and do something, because you obviously have a lot of feelings, and no matter what happens, at least by the end of this you can say you tried.”

Stiles has nothing to counter that. He breathes in shakily and throws himself into Scott’s arms. They hug for a moment, then Stiles says into Scott’s shoulder, “You pissed me off on purpose.”

“Love you,” Scott says with a smile that Stiles can feel against his head. “I know he treats you right. He fucking better. He’s just also the most emotionally constipated person we’ve ever fucking met, so maybe you have to slap him a little.”

“Ass,” Stiles laughs into his should.

“Just a little,” Scott enthuses with a bigger smile, and squeezes Stiles tighter.

When they’re done hugging, Stiles grabs his car keys and they leave his house together, but with different destinations in mind. Scott’s going back to Allison.

Stiles is getting his ass back to the Hale house.
Moonlight

Chapter Summary

My gift to ya'll :)  

Happy Holidays!!!

The Moonlight

Stiles stares straight at the road. “Stars shining bright above you.,” he sings. “Night breezes seem to whisper, ‘I love you’. ” It’s a distraction tactic. A song he used to hear in his house when he was younger. His mom would smile.

He got it in his head because through some of the clouds, stars are visible. It’s grossly romantic in terms of where he’s going and why.

He pulls up to the Hale house and turns his car off. He just sits for a moment.

“Dream a little dream of me,” Stiles mutters at his steering wheel. Then he takes a deep breath and exits his car.

It’s about midnight at this point. Stiles knows he probably should have called, but he also knows that Derek wakes pretty easily and should know that Stiles is coming up. It’s not like Derek has work in the morning so Stiles doesn’t feel too bad for being here this late.

When he gets to the door, it opens quietly and it’s Derek standing at the threshold. “Everything okay?” he asks, and he was definitely asleep by the sound of his voice, but his eyes are alert, glancing behind Stiles.

“Yeah,” Stiles says. “Just wanted to talk.”

Derek looks him over slowly, nods, and steps to the side so Stiles can walk through. Stiles heads straight to the living room and sits on the couch.

When Derek comes in, he sits on the armchair. “Earlier today -”

“Sorry about that,” Stiles interrupts. “I was stuck in my own head. Overthinking things.”

Derek waits in the quiet for Stiles to continue. They didn’t turn on any lights, so it’s just the light from the moon that’s filtering in through the window. Stiles can still see Derek, though. He’s where the beams are aimed. Derek probably can’t see much of Stiles, since the window is behind him. Stiles keeps his hands between his knees and nervously picks at his nails.

“When, uhm...when I started drawing, it was...it was so that I could vent.” Stiles chews on his lip. Hopefully if he just starts talking, he’ll get to his point somehow. “The first drawing I did that made me notice how often I drew was a mermaid in my Geometry class. I was feeling like I needed a normal day. Just a night with Scott. Video games, junk food. I guess I was feeling stressed.” He clears his throat. He’s talking quietly, but Derek can still hear him. Derek always hears him, anyway, no matter how loud it may be wherever they are. “And it was really obvious to me when I saw it.
And I realized that everyone has a way of handling things, and sometimes it isn’t the best way to handle something, but I thought that drawing could be a...a healthy way for me to figure out what I’m thinking and how I’m feeling, you know?” He smiles a bit. “I drew a lot after the pixies, after the butterflies, and even just at school or home or -uh, well, everywhere, I guess, now that I really think about it. And I drew the pack. Not you, a lot, at first, but then you shifted into the wolf and I just...I couldn’t stop drawing you.” Stiles licks his lips. His mouth feels dry. “You’re very beautiful. And drawing wolf-you makes me happy. All those tiny details.” He glances up and flashes a smile at Derek, moonlit on the chair, staring steadily and listening intently to Stiles, and Stiles shivers at the thought that perhaps Derek is waiting. Waiting.

“I know you know how much I care for you. I was pretty blunt about it when I showed you my drawings.” Stiles breathes in slowly. “Will you ever make a move?”

There are crickets outside.

“No,” Derek says softly.

“Why not?” Stiles whispers back.

Stiles can hear Derek breathing.

“You shared something very important with me,” Derek says carefully. “I don’t want you to feel like...like if I...did anything else besides look or listen, that it would be that...I was only interested because…” Derek huffs a breath out and Stiles can see him roll his eyes. “If I - If we -”

“If you kissed me,” Stiles says, “after I showed you my drawings?”

Derek breathes out shakily. “Then maybe you’d worry it was the only reason I was looking at them.”

They stare at each other. Derek probably can see him, actually. He has better eyesight than Stiles.

The crickets are very loud compared to them in the living room.

“You’re not great with words,” Stiles mutters, and Derek’s head falls forward in embarrassment. “I already kind of knew that, though,” Stiles smiles. “What you do makes up for it most of the time.”

“What do I do?” Derek asks, head still lowered.

Stiles slides off of the couch and crawls to Derek, placing his hands on Derek’s knees and placing his forehead against the top of Derek’s hanging head. “You protect me. Make me feel safe. You challenge me. You piss me off, but I also piss you off, and then you still look at me the way you do and allow me to look back at you. I know I’m kind of a creep,” Stiles laughs nervously. “But you’ve embraced it so well that I...I trust you. A lot. And you’re just - you’re so kind, and great. And I know you want me to be happy -”

Derek lifts his head just far enough for his lips to catch on Stiles’, and they’re frozen for a second, eternity, lips placed gently together, not moving, just resting, breathing, until Stiles’ heart picks up so much that he feels it pounding in his ears.

“You deserve to be happy,” Derek breathes against his lips, and something inside Stiles breaks.

Stiles closes his eyes as his breath releases shakily and his hands slide up to grip Derek’s thighs. Stiles presses his lips more firmly against Derek’s, and Derek presses back. His own hands come up and cradle Stiles’ face, turns Stiles’ head to the right so their lips can slot together and their noses don’t bump uncomfortably, and it’s sweet, so sweet, so slow, and Stiles can feel his nails digging
into the fabric on Derek’s thighs, but he can’t be sorry when Derek’s thumbs are grazing softly against the skin of Stiles’ cheeks and his fingers are holding the curve of Stiles’ head so perfectly.

Stiles is goo and Derek’s hands and lips are keeping his body from separating and spilling out onto the living room floor. There’s a space between his sternum and stomach that is blooming, that feels like hope and love and relief, and it ripples across his skin, and it makes him take deep breaths between each separation and meeting of their lips, and they’re the easiest gulps of air he’s ever had to take.

Stiles can feel himself shaking, just a bit. There are stars behind his eyelids. He can feel Derek. Not just on his lips and from his hands, but he can feel what Derek wants to say but can’t find the words for, he can feel why Derek lets him stare and why he scheuts with Stiles. He feels it in the soft breaks of the kiss and the returning grazes of Derek’s lips on his, how Derek keeps it slow but allows Stiles to keep pressing forward until he’s between Derek’s knees and his stomach is against the chair, until he literally can’t press forward anymore.

“I love you,” Stiles mouths against Derek’s lips.

Derek breathes in so shakily that Stiles thinks he’ll shatter underneath his hands.

“I know,” Stiles says, “I know. I know.” He kisses Derek’s lips, cheek, nose, chin, back to his lips and all around again. “I know. I love you. It’s okay.”

Derek’s fingers are gripping the back of Stiles’ head, but he doesn’t force Stiles to still. He sighs and hides his face in Stiles’ neck, his lips pressed gently against the skin.

“I love you,” Derek breathes against him, his lips gently forming the words against the skin between Stiles’ shoulder and neck, and the sound of those syllables make goosebumps rise across Stiles’ skin and he’s definitely gripping Derek’s thighs way too hard.

There’s a silence that carries both of their hearts across the seconds that tick by. It’s peaceful.

Stiles leans his forehead against Derek’s shoulder and he may or may not be smiling, he’s not focusing on that because there’s so many other things to focus on, but he can feel that his cheeks hurt and that makes a wave of giddiness shiver down his spine.

“Can I hold your hand in public?” Stiles asks, vulnerable, nerve-wracking.

“Yes.”

“Can I kiss your cheek in public?” Stiles turns his face closer to Derek’s until his lips meet the underside of his jaw.

Derek shivers. “Yes.”

“Can we go to a park and we’ll sit on a bench and I’ll pretend I’m not drawing you but I’ll totally be drawing you -”

Derek huffs laughter into Stiles’ neck and he’s nodding, sliding his hands down until his arms wrap around Stiles’ back. “Yes, yes you can -”

“Can I sit on your lap after pack meetings and make everyone uncomfortable even though we won’t even be kiss HA,” Stiles bursts with a loud laugh when Derek’s hands suddenly slide down to Stiles’ sides and squeeze against his waist, startling and tickling him so that he twitches away from Derek in laughter. Derek growls playfully but doesn’t say yes.
Well, he also doesn’t say no.

“You love me,” Stiles states, locking eyes with Derek, and now he knows for sure that he’s smiling because he sees Derek glance down to it, to his lips, and the tiniest bit of a smile quirks on Derek’s own lips in response. Derek looks back up to his eyes and presses the tip of his nose lightly against Stiles’. Derek’s eyes are - wow.

“Wow,” Stiles says, to Derek’s eyes, to the moonlight shining against them, to the emotions that dance within the iris and reflect back to Stiles. In his peripheral, Stiles sees that Derek is smiling softly now, and it would take an inch of a page for Stiles to sketch Derek’s lips, and any pocket of his jeans to keep it with him even if Derek is away.

Stiles brings up a hand from Derek’s thigh and lightly taps his palm against Derek’s cheek. He looks confused, and Stiles can’t help but giggle.

“Scott said I may have to slap you a little,” Stiles grins. “To help with your emotional constipation.”

Derek rolls his eyes so hard, but he’s smiling, and Stiles laughs against his cheek, and Derek grips his waist and pulls him forward until their lips can meet again. Stiles loses time and space and thought from the way their lips move and fit together, and the way Derek flicks his tongue at the roof of Stiles’ mouth.

There’s still more to talk about, Stiles knows, like how to better communicate with someone who has incredible difficulty with words even on a good day. Where they’ll go from here, or if it even matters to know those specifics, if they’ll just glide through time in each others arms and wait for the next step to crash onto their heads.

But for now, in the moonlight, in one of his favorite living rooms, with stupidly loud crickets singing outside, and something precious in his hands -

For right now?

Wow.
Chapter Summary

Hello, a thousand years later!
No, I have not forgotten or given up on this story! I reached a block, and then life happened, and now I'm at home recovering from a surgery (a good one!) so what better time to update a story than when I can't leave my house, lol.
Thank you so much to everyone who has commented since the last update, I went back and replied to a few today. I hope to see you again after this one and I hope you all continue to enjoy <3 Lets commence the feels party!

Without further ado, time passes for our characters, and things are accomplished.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The In Between

Is there a word to describe the half a second between when you take a breath and release it?

That night with Derek was the deepest breath Stiles ever took. He’s still reeling from it. Goosebumps rise on his skin randomly, his breath whooshes out of him in sudden intervals, and he thinks he’s making his dad nervous by how much he’s been smiling.

Is there a way to draw breathing? Stiles supposes he could start with a mouth, but the only mouth he wants to draw is the only mouth he wants to kiss, so that’ll probably lead to an awkward moment of contemplating being attracted to a piece of paper.

Is he down for that? Maybe.

He still wants to stay innocent with his drawings, though, so human Derek is still not as common as the others.

But that moment he mentioned. The space between a breath. He feels like he’s in that right now.

Because everything is pastel. If that makes sense. Soft around the edges and pretty to look at. It’s a pastel week.

The last pack meeting, Stiles sauntered into the living room and kissed Derek’s cheek. It was the best reveal of something Stiles has been a part of, one because usually when there’s a reveal in this living room it involves a supernatural death crisis; two because Jackson spit out soda onto his jeans. Now 5% of Stiles’ smile is remembering the look on Jackson’s face.

Everyone else took it in stride. He had told Scott earlier, but he still received a pretty dope high five from him, a really aggressive back slapping from Erica, and a shy smile from Isaac, which was just as effective as Erica’s bruising congratulations.

Stiles, one night, just dumps his colored pencils on the floor and scribbles pockets of color on a sheet of paper, in different gradients of hardness. It’s a vomit of light and neutral colors.
Over the array, he uses his art pens to freehand some roses and sunflowers. He puts detailing into the petals and leaves but doesn’t color them with their respective colors, just allows the base mish mash of pastel be all the color there is.

He tilts his head sideways when he’s added all the flowers he wants.

Stiles doesn’t think this correctly represents the space he’s in.

But it sure is pretty.

### The Hands

Derek has beautiful hands.

He allows Stiles to take a picture of them with his phone, which he sends to his email then immediately deletes, cause how can he explain that.

Stiles goes home and sketches as many pages as he can before three am. Derek’s hands in fists, flat, pointing, relaxed. It’s a fantastic study, and isn’t so sexually driven for him that he can, at first, not feel really weird about staring at Derek’s hands so closely.

Stiles stares at Derek’s hands when he can, and yes, he’s in an obsessive bout at the moment. The pack just makes fun of how lovey-dovey they are and don’t ask awkward questions. Derek practically purrs under his attention, no words, just reflections that look like sparkles in his eyes.

Stiles turns them over, around, see’s the fine lines and observes the clean nails, covers Derek’s wrist with his hand and wonders how someone so strong can feel so delicate.

He watches when Derek moves them when he talks, how he holds mugs. Sometimes Stiles will glance up and see the sparkle back in Derek’s eyes, all the way across the kitchen as Stiles leans against the far doorway. Stiles isn’t at all embarrassed anymore. He lights up from it, the bottom of his gut unfurling like fire whenever Derek catches him out and stares back.

Stiles stares as Derek bakes, as Derek cleans dishes or flips a pack member on their back in training. How he buttons his shirt.

How he unbuttons it.

Stiles watches Derek’s hands on his body, the difference in skin tone, the difference in strength. He analyzes how Derek’s thumbs indent into Stiles’ hip bones. How Derek’s nails graze his sides all the way down to his thighs.

Could Stiles draw goosebumps?

He thinks only as well as he could draw the gasp it pulls from him. Namely, not very. There’s certain things that are either difficult to or you just can’t get on paper.

Like the burst of color behind his eyelids when Derek grinds into his hips. How perfectly Derek’s stubble burns against his neck, and chest, and stomach, and - god.

Stiles will never be able to draw Derek’s mouth again.
The Breath Out

Stiles thinks to himself, This is the breath out.

He stares up at a tall bookshelf he just finished setting up in his room. Right now it’s empty, but he plans on putting all of his art folders (he bought more so they’re not bursting), future sketchbooks and art books, and art supplies on it. His absolutely ridiculous pile of artwork that has been growing in his closet is currently in front of the closet, laid out, ready to be refoldered into new ones.

Stiles doesn’t let himself think twice. He texts Scott to come over.

“Hey man,” Scott smiles at the front door. Stiles steps to the side to let him in, closes the door, and they both amble their way up to Stiles’ bedroom.

“So I’m all for surprises, sometimes, usually, maybe,” and Scott huffs a laugh at himself as they climb the stairs. “But, uh, the vagueness does have me a little worried.”


“Yeah, you said that…” Scott trails off at the top of the stairs. “But when a finicky friend who slaps at the hands of someone who tries to set their coffee on the other end of the desk -”

“That is different,” Stiles interrupts. “When I’m in my research headspace, things have to be where I put them or I’ll go to grab my coffee and end up stabbing a pen cup in my mouth, filled with pens -”

“Dude, did that happen?” Scott asks, a smirk teaseing into a full blown smile.

As he follows Stiles in the room he starts saying, “Did you stab yourself with -” then pauses and says, “Whooooaaa. Nice bookcase.” Then pauses again and stares at the pile of papers on the floor. “Oh boy.”

Stiles stands by the window and just...waits. It’s not that he has no idea how to broach the topic. Not at all.

Scott starts taking off his jacket with a wry smile. “How long are we gonna be here?” he jokes, and Stiles thinks maybe Scott doesn’t see what the papers are, and his anxiety blooms a bit, but then Scott turns to throw his jacket on Stiles’ desk chair and he sees the hung artwork of Stiles’ sunflowers, roses, and miscellaneous nature scenes. It’s certainly hard to miss them. They’re bright, colorful, and overlapping across most of the wallspace above Stiles’ desk, almost like a collage.

“Oh, those are cool,” Scott comments. “Not gonna lie, I didn’t peg you as a floral guy. Actually.” Scott wrinkles his nose. “Nah, it works. With all the mountain ash and weird magic stuff you’re up to, you’re like three steps away from being a hippie.”

Stiles snorts so hard that he coughs. His laugh sounds a little manic, but he clears his throat.

“You, uh...you like ‘em?” Stiles asks, and Scott glances at them again, throws his jacket on the chair, and shrugs.

“Yeah, they’re pret-”
“I drew them.”

Scott pauses and stares at the flowers a beat longer before looking at Stiles, then back to the flowers. “Huh?”

“I drew them,” Stiles says again, and tries to stay casual about it. He almost shrugs, but he thinks that’s too casual, so he stops halfway and his shoulders end up freezing almost to his ears, as if he’s waiting for a blow.

“You drew them?” Scott repeats.

“I drew them.”

“You drew them,” Scott says again, and leans over the desk to take a closer look. “Since when do you draw? These are dope.” He lifts the corner of one of the rose pictures to see the rest of a sketched treeline. “Is that a whole goddamn forest? You really did this?”

“Y-yeah,” Stiles laughs. He feels the bubbling sensation of giggles building in his chest. He’s smiling. “Uhmm, yeah, I’ve been drawing for a while. I drew those over there, too.”

Scott looked at Stiles, then where he’s pointing to the pile on the ground.

“THOSE ARE DRAWINGS?” Scott actually yells, “What the fuck dude, I thought that was research!”

Scott bounds over to the pile and lifts the first folder off the top, but the folders are bursting, so the papers slide out and scatter around Scott’s feet. “Shit, dude I’m sorry, I’ll - IS THAT ME??”

It was asked in such a flabbergasted and oddly honored tone that Stiles erupts in a cackling and heaving laughter that makes him grab his knees. Anxiety rolls off of him and is replaced by a dizzying amount of relief.

Scott drops to his butt and grabs his mermaid drawing from the pile. Because Scott picked from the top, he picked the most recent artworks, which includes the chibi’s, random day-in-the-life lineworks, and of course, the mermaid series.

“Holy shit dude,” Scott says about four times. “I look hot.”

There are tears leaking out of Stiles’ eyes, and it’s definitely just from how hard he’s laughing. Definitely.

“Wow, dude. Wow. How long have you been drawing? These are good. Is that Erica? Holy shit. Wait, that’s - oh, you drew the whole pack!”

Scott is beaming at the pictures, sifting through all of them now but keeping the one of himself off to the side. He finds the chibi of himself and laughs.

“I’m fucking adorable,” he smiles. “The others are, too, I guess.”

Stiles falls to his knees and tries to get his breathing in order against the giggles.

“Are you posting these anywhere, or -” Scott looks back at Stiles and immediately puts the drawings down. “Oh, Stiles,” he frowns.

Stiles doesn’t know what he looks like, but he’s stopped laughing for the most part and is just holding his hands against his cheeks. He’s still smiling, but there’s certainly wetness against his
He must look just crazy enough to worry about, because Scott crawls over to him and sits in front of him. “Uhm,” is all Scott manages. He hovers his hands out like he’s gonna hug Stiles, but Stiles is crouching and Scott is on his butt so the reach is too awkward, and Scott decides to just set his hands on Stiles’ shoulders. It’s so ridiculous that Stiles lets out a warbled laugh.

“Thanks,” he rasps.

“Yeah?” Scott says uncertainly.

They blink at each other and Scott waits patiently. Stiles breathes in to grasp the words from the pit of himself. He wrenches them up and through his throat, forces them to form around his tongue and lets it out into the universe. They rest delicately and sincerely against his lips, and only come out as a whisper.

“They’re very important to me.”

Understatement, but all he can manage.

He breathes shakily out as Scott slowly nods. “Then…” Scott whispers back. “Let’s take good care of them.”

Stiles beams at him and really, really wants to cry more, but decides he’s put Scott through enough awkwardness and breathes through it. Scott beams back and pats Stiles’ shoulders a couple times, then stands and sets his hands on his hips. “Well then!” he says loudly. “Let’s fucking do this!”

He helps Stiles up and Stiles takes an extra step forward and barrels into Scott for a hug. Scott hugs back tightly.

“I want to put them in new folders by timeline,” Stiles says into Scott’s shoulder. He clears his throat because he still sounds...well, teary. “Which should be pretty easy because I have them all generally in the order that I drew them.”

“Well…” Scott lets go of him and they both turn to the pile Scott scattered on the floor.

“Most of them,” Stiles laughs. He pats Scott on the shoulder and takes a steadying breath. Scott links his fingers together and cracks them.

Let’s fucking do this.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone is interested, I'm 10000% more active on my instagram @ trickeynite . I post artwork and nature and it'll be my stomping grounds for when I publish personal projects I'm working on. c:
Thank you to the well-wishers, I'm healing well *yay* And it was really nice to see so many people have stuck around from the beginning :) I love seeing yalls comments Not much to say this time around lol, enjoy! :D

The Organization

“So, like, you have a thing for mermaids.”

“Ha. Yeah, I like detailing.”

“Ah. Detailing. Right.”

“What?”

“Is there uh...is there something I should know, dude?”

“Well.”

“You can trust me.”

“Scott, I’m...I’m sexually attracted to fish.”

“Man...It’s okay. I’m here for you.”

“There’s just such a variety. And the scales...mm.”

“Okay, we’re done with this.”

“These papers weren’t originally white -”

“We’re done with this.”

“Ugh.”

“What?”

“The pixie. I mean, the drawing is good. Looks just like it. Which - ugh.”

“Oh. Yeah, I agree wholeheartedly.”

“They were - HA! Oh my god, hahahahahahahaha -”

“What!? What, what is it, which one - snort - oh yeah.”

“The - gasp - fucking - gasp - bug.”
“Jesus, dude, breathe.”

“I can’t.”

“If you die right now, I’m taking that as the highest form of compliment I could ever receive.”

“Coughs”

“Okay, but, like, don’t. I’m getting you water.”

“Wow, you draw a lot of wolves.”

“Uhm, yeah. Duh.”

“I know. Why am I surprised. Wait. Are these all the same wolf?”

“Shut up.”

“I think all of these are the same wolf. I wonder what wolf -”

“Oh my god, Scott.”

“Are these all - gasp! - could it be!? Are all of these DEREK?? Do you have a crush on Der - Ow, Stiles, jeez, I’m kidding.”

“Right, uh huh.”

“...Oh look, MORE WOLVE - no, I'm sorry, I'll stop!”

“Dude, I remember this.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah! I’ve drawn a lot of school...moments, I guess? And, like, everyone together. It’s good perspective practice.”

“Yeah, that makes sense. Is that - aw, man.”

“Hm?”

“It’s, uh. It’s me and Allison.”

“Oh, that’s a sketch from a morning when we wait for school to start.”

“Huh. I didn’t realize how often we’re hugging. Don’t snort at me, dude, I’m obviously a bit distracted while it’s happening.”

“Obviously.”

“Can I, uh...can I have this one?”

“...Uh-”
“It’s okay if not, I’m just -”

“Well, no, it’s fine -”

“No that’s okay, I’ll put -”

“Scott, take it, it’s just a practice sketch. It’s fine.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“...thanks.”

“Wait a fucking second - t his is the thing you mentioned a while ago that you’re doing to, like, make yourself feel better and shit!!!”

“Ha! Yeah, it is.”

“Thank fucking god. I was thinking the worst, man. You’ve gone into some weird rabbit holes. I’m glad it’s... this. It’s super creative and, like, awesome.”

“It really is. And there’s not just one way to draw, you know? I can switch from pencils, to markers, to pens, whatever. I can do whatever I want for how long I want.”

“And there’s no deathly consequence!”

“Cheers to safe self help!”

“Ha, cheers!”

“Although, who knows. Maybe one day I’ll become horribly desperate and search for my one true sexy mermaid love in the dark recesses of the sea. Gotta upgrade from the paper, youknowwhat’msayin’?”

“Yeah, absolutely. It’s just, you know, that’ll really suck for the one true sexy werewolf love you’ll leave behind. Aw, why are you blushing?”

“I hate you.”

They stand in front of the bookcase and survey their work. There are accordion folders for Stiles’ oldest works that were made in his spiral notebooks, and then folders separately dedicated to certain months of drawings. For the most recent works, since he’s mostly done bigger projects, he has individual folders dedicated to the projects themselves.

There’s space for the books he plans to buy, and space for sketchbooks he hopes to get. Although the sketchbooks are more of a maybe, since he’s still happy with printer paper. He knows, though, that the paper in sketchbooks would be better for drawing, it’s just that he doesn’t necessarily need one, and he’ll do what he can to save money. He’d rather spend it on some books he’s had his eyes on.
On one of the middle shelves there’s a new stack of printer paper, a cup filled with his art pens, and a couple plastic kids pencil boxes filled with his markers and colored pencils. Now he can allow his desk to be completely dedicated to his overabundance of research materials again. It was always annoying to him how much both of his hobbies competed for space at his desk.

Scott glances from the bookcase to the desk. “You’ll still draw at your desk? Won’t that be annoying to have to go back and forth?”

Stiles shrugs. “I have a rolling chair, so it’d be easy. Plus, I honestly draw on the ground a lot.”

Scott looks around on the floor. “What a back killer.”

Stiles shrugs again. “Eh.”

“You should get one of the lap desks,” Scott suggests as they’re heading down the stairs to get food. “So you can draw on your bed, too, and not completely have an eighty year old body by the time you’re twenty-five.”

“Scott, buddy.” He slaps his hand on Scott’s shoulder. “I’m a human who runs with wolves. I already have an eighty year old body.”

Scott rolls his eyes.

**The Forest**

Stiles doesn’t know how telling everyone else will go. It’s not like it’s a big dirty secret or anything. He may be being dramatic about telling everyone in the first place.

But there’s anxiety in his head about the what if’s.

What if someone tells him it’s ugly?

What if someone laughs in his face?

What if they just...don’t care?

He can’t actually fathom anyone in the pack giving him awful reactions, but it’s just there, hovering with sharp teeth over the corners of his mind, every time someone recalls a moment they couldn’t capture on camera, every time someone comments on artwork in a store. Every time, Stiles wants to turn to both situations and say, *I can draw that.*

Or, at least, he can try.

And he *wants* to try.

And it circles around his brain again, and he thinks of what Scott said while helping him with Derek, and he thinks about how more often than not there’s a gorgeous hand held within his own now, and he thinks, and he thinks, and he thinks -

Of the artwork on the fridge now, of the artwork on his wall, of the pencil greying out his fingers and palm from his haphazard shadings, of scrubbing the marker off his hands before going out and wishing he didn’t feel like he had to, of hiding his art, of it now being on his bookcase -

And he realizes that something he loves so much actually does *feel* like a dirty secret because he’s
been treating it like a dirty secret, but never once in this experience has he felt gross for doing this, he’s felt happy -

So why can’t he be happy all the time about it?

So what if someone doesn’t like it, or appreciate it, or care?

So what?

And there’s not really an argument that even his pessimistic side can come up with.

Because if someone doesn’t like something, then that’s all there is to it. The world doesn’t implode. He doesn’t suddenly stop being capable of drawing. Maybe it hurts a bit, but things hurting a bit has encouraged him most times to be stronger, and sometimes - sometimes things just hurt, and that’s okay. It doesn’t mean your picture doesn’t deserve to be on the refrigerator. It just means you felt like you had to work a little harder to get there.

Scott’s enthusiastic response to his treeline drawing inspires him to draw another forest. He uses his markers to draw the whole picture, brown lines of bark and green schwifts of leaves and grass. He quickly scheuts yellow sun beams from behind the trees to the top of the page. The only thing not marker is the sky, which he uses a colored pencil for.

He grabs his art pen in the smallest size and adds the minute detailing of the bark and leaves. He scheuts his heart away over the grass, and is humming to himself all the while.

He takes a picture of it with his phone and sends it to Scott. A couple minutes later he gets,

Scott: :D :D :D :D TREEEEEEEEES!!!!!!!!11!!!

Stiles huffs a laugh at the screen. He picks up the drawing and adds it to the collage on his wall. While he’s tacking it, he notices that his hands are a forest as well, awash with browns and greens and yellows, mostly around the side of his palm and tips of his fingers. There’s green under two of his nails as well, which he’s confused as to how it got there, but that seems to be the trend of art.

He stares at his hands, and for a moment, Stiles strips anxiety away like a blanket, and allows himself a thought.

His hands are beautiful.

He giggles.

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