Summary

The life of an omega isn't exactly glamorous. They're taken away from their families when they present, and not allowed back into society until they're safely mated. Stiles just came away from his coming out ball with two potential mates. Legally, he has to choose by the end of the season, or else he'll have to stay in the omega school for another year, until the next season, when all this will start again.

This is a story about what it's like to have your very existence regulated, and what happens when you defy society and fall in love.
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AND MANY MANY THANKS to HD-Hale for the amazing art.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Peter's phone vibrates in his pocket just as he's walking toward the entrance of the omega school. He stops, checks his messages just in case it's important, and sees the text from his sister.

Don't forget Derek is going to be there. Please keep an eye on him.

Peter rolls his eyes. As if he could forget. Talia has talked of practically nothing else for the past two weeks, ever since she got Derek to agree to attend the coming out ball. He gets it; he knows where she's coming from. Derek going to this kind of function is right up there with turning water into wine when it comes to miracles. Talia is desperate to get Derek mated, but because of Derek's unique situation is (rightfully) worried. So yes, Peter will watch out for his nephew, and try to keep him calm and relaxed in an environment that's likely to make him anxious and uncomfortable. He just wishes Talia would remember that he's looking for a mate of his own, and this isn't exactly a cakewalk for him, either.

Talia, of course, would scoff if Peter voiced his own insecurities, so he never mentions them. Let her think he's completely confident. Let the whole fucking world think he is, for that matter.

Those thoughts make him pull himself out of his slouch and tilt his head at a cocky angle. So what if he's older than most single alphas, and to hell with the idea that his scars make him anything but distinguished and intriguing.

Derek won't be arriving at the venue for another hour, so Peter has that long to take a look at the available omegas and see if any of them turn his head before his handsome nephew comes in and sets everyone to swoon.

He huffs to himself and shakes his head. That thought sounded almost jealous. God knows Derek needs his looks since his personality won't do him any favors. Peter loves his nephew deeply, but he's aware of how difficult it will be for him to snare an omega's heart. Especially if the omegas at this particular event are like all the ones at previous balls Peter's attended. Traditional omegas have been the norm at past events. As he shows the attendant at the door his invitation, he wonders why he even decided to return. Year after year, he's found no one even close to suitable.

As he steps inside, the scent hits him, and he remembers. He's an alpha and he craves a mate. He may never find one, but the lure of unmated omegas is too great to ignore. The scent is heavenly, though it doesn't come from just one person. It's a mix, pheromones from several different omegas. He also smells nervousness, excitement, and desperation.

The desperation is probably coming from a few of the alphas. Alphas outnumber omegas these days, though it wasn't always the case. There has been a sharp decline in omegas born in the past fifty years. There are many theories as to why, but no one has so far found the definitive answer.

So it goes on like this. Omegas are whisked away to 'boarding schools' as soon as they present, and alphas are only allowed to interact with unmated omegas in carefully regulated situations, like this coming out ball (and the upcoming season's events). It causes a lot of frustration, but it keeps feral alphas — and betas who think they have something to prove — from just abducting omegas and force-bonding them.

It's easy to sympathize with the omegas. Talia's mate, Joseph, has told him all about the omega schools. Having to leave families and friends when they present isn't pleasant. He looks across the room and lets his eyes roam to the stage. All the omegas seem to be on their best behavior. Their
dresses and suits are all white, symbolizing purity. They are sitting on uncomfortable looking chairs, and they all sit the same, with their knees and ankles together and their hands folded gently in their laps.

It should be time for their coming out soon. Peter has been to several of these, so he knows what to expect. Ms. Martin, the headmistress of the school, will read out a name and a short blurb, and the named omega will get up and do a bit of a walk across the stage. It's very much like an auction, now that he thinks about it, except the alphas don't put in their 'bids' — or rather, their courtship requests — until the days after the ball.

When all the omegas have been introduced, the ball will begin. Alphas will clamor for the omegas' attention, basically making a fool of themselves, and the omegas will be polite but aloof. He knows it's part of their schooling, that they're trained to be what society calls 'the perfect omega', but Peter is so bored with it.

He wants someone with a bit of spirit, who isn't afraid to show their intelligence. Is that so much to ask?

"Please, everyone, have a seat and we'll get started," Natalie Martin says into the microphone on stage. She's dressed elegantly, with her hair coiled on top of her head. She's different from the school's previous heads. She has a commanding presence, despite the fact that she's an omega. Everyone in attendance hurries to do her bidding.

Peter finds a chair about midway to the stage. It's impossible to get a seat up front, what with alphas growling at each other for a good spot. Peter's not about to act that foolishly.

Once everyone is seated, the headmistress nods and the show begins. There are ten omegas in total who are 'coming out' tonight, ten omegas who've recently come of age and are now available to bond. Peter looks around the room and counts at least forty alphas. The deck is stacked against him once again, but he won't let that bother him unless he sees an omega who actually intrigues him.

There's movement on the stage, though no name has been called yet. One of the omegas is fidgeting. Ms. Martin gives him a look, and the omega's eyes widen and he gives a 'who, me?' look. The headmistress looks exasperated and turns away. The omega sticks his tongue out.

It happens so quickly that Peter's not quite sure he actually saw what he thinks he saw. Beside him, another omega widens her eyes at the cheeky omega. Cheeky omega rolls his eyes and looks out over the audience.

For some reason, he looks right at Peter. Maybe because Peter is smirking. The omega blinks his big eyes and Peter... winks. He doesn't know why. It's just an impulse.

The omega's eyebrows climb. Then he quickly looks down at his hands in his lap and a delightful blush overtakes his cheeks.

It's the most animation Peter's seen from an omega at this function yet. The rest of them are all sitting still, looking pleasant but stiff, and the headmistress is starting to read names. Peter pays attention to what is said, to how the omegas walk, to where they look. Everything is too pretty, too nice.

Peter isn't interested until she calls out "Stiles Stilinski" and the fidgety omega Peter's watching stands and walks the length of the stage.

"Stiles comes from Beacon Hills. He graduated earlier this year at the top of his class. He enjoys gardening, reading, and playing chess."
There are others after Stiles, and Peter tries to pay attention, but he finds he doesn't care about them. His attention has been well and truly caught.

Stiles listens to Natalie list his most boring qualities and struggles not to make a run for it. He walks across the stage and doesn't trip. He doesn't look at the alpha with the scars again, not yet, though he can feel his eyes on him.

There are a lot of eyes on him, actually. He looks over the crowd and spots his dad. There's pride there in his eyes but also more than a little trepidation. Stiles knows his dad has been worried about tonight. Stiles tilts his head in a nod and gets a thumbs-up in return.

It's enough to put Stiles's head back in the game. He's been planning for this awhile. He wants to find an alpha as soon as he can so he can get the hell out of this place. He's been in the omega school for two and a half years now, though that's short compared to his friends here. Stiles was a late bloomer. Everyone figured him for a beta until his first heat hit him suddenly right after he turned fifteen.

From there on out, his life changed for the worse. Now he has a chance to get away from the omega school's oppressive walls, but he has to choose somebody who won't hide him away or keep him from his father.

He hopes to find someone in Beacon Hills. He wonders where the scarred alpha lives. He doesn't know why he's already wondering about an alpha, except that wink was unexpected and made his heart flutter.

He sits and waits for the rest of the introductions to end. Next will come mingling, as omegas move from table to table meeting alphas. Then the ball itself will start, complete with dancing. Stiles hates dancing, but he's competent enough at it. His dance teacher made sure of that.

He looks down the line of omegas being introduced to the world tonight. He and Kira are the only ones wearing suits. The rest of Stiles's class opted for dresses. Something about being more traditional.

Stiles doesn't want to be traditional, and he wants the alphas to recognize that.

He locks eyes with Kira and she gives him a small smile. He smiles back, grateful for her friendship. Down the row, Jackson also smiles, though his smile is bland and looks forced.

Stiles risks a look out into the audience. The alpha with the scars is watching him. Stiles thinks he knows who he is, but he can't be sure until they're introduced.

The headmistress is saying something about the school raising the newest generation and how proud she's been to see them blossom into lovely omegas worthy of the best matings. Bleugh. But at least that means this part is almost over. Sure enough, the music starts and Stiles stands with his classmates to walk down off the stage into the audience.

He goes from table to table, just like he's been trained for weeks to do. The room is thick with alpha pheromones, enough to make his head dizzy and his movements slow. The air filtration system must be broken again. He wishes he could escape outside and get some fresh air.

As the introductions go on and on, names flit around in Stiles's mind but he knows he'll never remember any of them. There are guards — or rather, chaperones — making sure the alphas don't get too familiar, but they still seem to crowd in on him, blasting pheromones and making Stiles weak-kneed.
He tries to stay calm, but his breath is coming faster and he can't stand it.

"Back off," an alpha snarls, and the large alpha looming over Stiles — Ennis? — gives Stiles a little more breathing room.

Stiles looks for his savior and finds the scarred alpha looking at him. He seems worried. Stiles gives him a wan smile and holds out his hand. "Thank you," he murmurs.

"You're quite welcome," the alpha says. "I'm Peter Hale."

Stiles was right about his identity. He's even more intrigued now. "It's good to meet you, Peter." He realizes it's the first time he's used an alpha's name tonight, the first time he's shown a clear preference for someone.

He wishes he could stop to talk to Peter, but he's not done with the introductions. There are at least fifteen more alphas to meet. The task is daunting.

Thankfully, one of the alphas is his dad. Stiles leans in for a hug. The chaperone knows him and allows it. It feels so good. He hasn't seen his father in weeks. The hug and proud smile from his dad give him the fortitude to get through the rest of the introductions, but by the end, he's swaying. Every introduction has been met with a blast of alpha pheromones, and they've definitely affected him. He looks over at Kira and sees that she's not doing much better. He's grateful that the omegas get a short break before the beginning of the ball.

"There's got to be a better way to go about this," Stiles grumbles to his friend once they're safely backstage.

Kira flops into a chair nearby and nods. "It's exhausting. Did you see what happened to Jackson?"

Stiles shakes his head. He'd been too focused on keeping it together to notice the other omegas.

"He got a fever," Kira whispers, even though everyone can hear her.

Stiles's eyebrows shoot up. "Jackson's going into heat?"

Kira nods quickly. "None of us have ever been around this many alphas before, not since we presented. I'm surprised it's only happening to one of us."

"What's he going to do?" Stiles asks.

"I guess sit out the rest of the ball?" Kira says. "I mean, he can't go back out there, can he?"

"What's that going to do for his chances, though?" Stiles wonders. "Wait, maybe they got to him in time. They have those emergency shots in the infirmary."

Kira sighs in relief.

Stiles may dislike some of his fellow classmates, but he wants all of them — himself included — to get the hell out of the omega school and find good mates. If Jackson can't even attend the ball, how's he going to find a good mate? He really, really hopes Jackson got a shot in time.

Now that Stiles can think clearly again, his thoughts stray to Peter Hale. Maybe he could be the one? Peter seemed interested, didn't he? Protective, too, which leaves Stiles with a small smile on his face.

More alphas will come for the ball segment of the event, he reminds himself. He doesn't need to decide yet. And it's not totally up to him, either. The alphas' opinions matter, too.
He can't stop thinking about Peter Hale, though. He wonders if any of the other alphas will charm him enough to compare.

Derek's suit is uncomfortable, confining, and scratchy. He glares at the plate of canapes offered to him until the waiter takes the hint and scampers away. The music is tinny and boring, and the whispers and titters behind soft omega hands are starting to make the wolf want to lash out, find a fight. There are plenty of posturing alphas around he could clobber.

The 'coming out' ball is unnatural. All the 'civilized' rules and etiquette just rub his wolf the wrong way.

He knows times have changed, that society has changed, to protect young omegas from being raped and forcibly bonded by half-rabid alphas desperate for a mate and unable to control themselves. That doesn't mean a part of him doesn't ache to go on a mating run and follow the scent of his perfect partner. To give chase and prove himself.

However, there's a hole in his life where a mate should be and his family has talked him into doing this, so he's at this ridiculous farce, glancing around with a scowl on his face, wondering if there's anyone here who will catch his eye.

So far, he's seen nothing but fluttering eyelashes. The few conversations he's tried to have dwindled down to nothing before they began. He knows he's not the best conversationalist, but there has to be someone who'll give him a chance.

An alpha bumps into him. He knows her scent right away, and he's surprised. "Laura? What the hell are you doing here?"

"You don't even like omegas" is left unsaid.

His sister shrugs, but she looks across the room at a group of alphas. "I like the view." Just then one of the alphas laughs and tosses her reddish-blonde curls. Laura's scent goes sweet and Derek has to roll his eyes.

"Good luck," he says gruffly.

Laura turns to him and smiles. "Good luck to you, too. Try to keep it together. Remember what Mom said about-"

"Laura," Derek growls, looking around to see if anyone is listening.

She holds her hands up. "Just trying to help."

"Well you can stop," he grumbles.

Laura gives him a long look before she shrugs and wanders away. Derek lets out a long sigh and heads for the double doors leading to the balcony, determined to get some air.

The balcony is long and mostly empty save for two others who seem to be escaping the stuffy heat and uncomfortableness of the ball themselves. Derek doesn't look at them, just takes a deep breath and looks up at the waxing moon. He'd much rather be home on his family's land, maybe taking a run through the forest to burn off some of the energy that always seems to sit right beneath his skin.

He ignores the footsteps getting closer, scowling at the sound. He bristles when the person sidles up to him, hoping his body language will scare them away.

He's surprised when he hears an amused laugh. "You look about as thrilled to be here as I am."
He turns his head slowly, furrowing his brow, wondering what kind of person would approach him when he's doing his best to broadcast *stay away or I will rip your throat out with my teeth*.

It's an omega, male, with large brown eyes and an easy smile. Derek just stares at him, not knowing what to say.

The omega just smiles wider and says, "I'm Stiles."

Stiles is just close enough for Derek to catch a hint of his scent and for a moment Derek is dumbfounded. Stiles smells like faint thunderstorms and moonlight and wildness. Derek is leaning into his space before he can stop himself, nostrils flaring, and he can hear Stiles's heartbeat pick up. He doesn't move away, though. He stands stock still, nervousness rolling off him, until someone behind them clears his throat.

Stiles squeaks and jumps back two feet. "Dad!"

Derek turns slowly to find an Alpha looking at him with narrow eyes, arms crossed in front of him. "He didn't do anything!" Stiles says quickly.

The other alpha and Derek stare at each other for a few more seconds before Derek remembers himself and holds out his hand. "Derek Hale, sir."

"I know who you are," Stiles's father says, voice flat and expressionless. "I'm Sheriff Stilinski, Stiles's father."

Derek nods. "It's a pleasure to meet you, sir."

The sheriff's mouth quirks up in one corner. "You arrived late."

Derek frowns. "My uncle told me I would hate the coming out ceremony, so I skipped it."

Stiles snorts. Derek loves it.

He racks his brain for the proper words. "I would like permission to speak with your son." He doesn't know why he's asking, he should just go home and call it a night. But there's something in Stiles's scent that's driving him crazy and he's determined to talk to him. Maybe he's another 'traditional' quiet omega like the rest of them, but maybe there's something more there.

He has to know.

"Permission granted," the sheriff says after a long, agonizing moment, and strides over to the corner of the balcony, sitting down in a chair there, probably strategically placed just for chaperones.

Derek takes a breath and looks back at Stiles. "What about you?" he thinks to ask. "Would you like to talk to me?"

Stiles looks like he's about to start laughing at a joke only he's heard. Derek starts to scowl again.

"Wait, no. Don't make that face," Stiles says quickly. "I just find the situation a little… amusing."

"What situation?" Derek asks.

"I think he's referring to me, nephew," Peter says from behind them.

Derek blinks at him. "Peter?"
"Um, yeah," Stiles says. "Meet your, um, competition."

Peter smiles sharply and Derek feels something heavy in his stomach, like he's swallowed a brick. His uncle is more intelligent and full of charm. Unlike Derek, he's never at a loss for words. And Peter doesn't have Derek's control problems, either. If Peter wants Stiles, Derek doesn't stand a chance.

He'd give up now if it wasn't for Stiles's scent, which is still wrapped around him and urging him to do something. And when he looks at Peter, he sees some kind of understanding in his eyes. He knows that look. He knows his uncle. He's about to make something up about how Stiles really isn't his type or that he needs to go and he'll leave them to it. But Derek can't have that happen, either, because when is the last time Peter looked interested in a potential mate?

They stand there, staring at each other, understanding dawning on both their faces. They both want Stiles, but they want each other to be happy even more.

"Hello?" Stiles says. "You don't look like you're about to kill each other, but I'm not sure, and if someone could just say something?"

Peter turns toward him and smiles. The corners of his eyes crinkle and he's so attractive it almost makes Derek melt. Stiles responds with a smile of his own, and Derek acknowledges they would make a beautiful couple. Peter says, "It seems we have a bit of a problem."

Stiles licks his lips, likely a nervous habit, but it distracts Derek for a moment. Peter too, if his sudden stillness is any indication.

"Problem?" Stiles echoes.

Derek scowls. He can't think. Stiles's lips and his eyes and his scent are driving him crazy. He wants to say something but when he opens his mouth to do so, nothing comes out but a soft growl. Stiles's pupils dilate, making his eyes look impossibly large.

"I think I speak for both of us when I say we'd like to court you," Peter says. "Derek, you're swamping him with pheromones. Ease off a little, would you?"

Stiles tilts his head, exposing his neck just a bit above his collar. "Derek's not the only one with the pheromones, buddy."

Peter looks surprised and it startles a rusty laugh from Derek.

"Oh. I apologize," Peter says. He closes his eyes and takes some deep breaths. Derek follows his lead, trying to rein in his alpha instincts, but with Stiles right there it's difficult.

"Thanks," Stiles murmurs. When Derek opens his eyes again, he sees Stiles is looking over at his father. Derek can't read the look on his face, but he doesn't seem unhappy when he says, "So you both want to court me? Like, winner takes all or…" He trails off, unable or unwilling to finish the thought.

"I'm sure you'll have other suitors," Peter says. "It won't be much different just because we're related."

"It won't cause problems between you?" Stiles asks, sounding worried for them. It softens something in Derek, and he's the one who answers.

"We're adults. We can handle it."
Peter gives him a thoughtful look, then nods. "Our relationship is not your responsibility, Stiles. Let us worry about that part."

Stiles gives him a small smile. "Okay, then. You're both… interesting. I can't wait to get to know you better."

"You're not like the other omegas in there," Peter says, and Derek silently agrees.

But Stiles laughs. "Oh, man, you are so wrong about that. I'm exactly like the other omegas. Just a little twitchier, maybe."

Derek frowns. "But you're…"

"Oh, everybody's on their best behavior tonight, but we're all hellions, to hear the headmistress tell it."

Peter smiles and takes Stiles's hand in his own. Surprisingly, it doesn't arouse any of Derek's primitive instincts, not even when Peter slowly moves and kisses the back of Stiles's hand. Derek notices he did it slowly to give Stiles a chance to stop him. He also realizes Stiles didn't.

"May I?" Derek asks, holding out his own hand. Stiles smiles and nods at him, gently pulling his hand from Peter's and giving it to Derek.

He can almost taste Peter's lingering breath when he kisses Stiles's hand. He lets his lips linger for a moment, and watches Stiles's eyes go even wider when he meets them with his own. His lips trace the same spot as Peter's did. His wolf doesn't object.

Stiles is putting out pheromones of his own, but neither Derek nor Peter points that out. If Peter is anything like Derek, he doesn't mind at all.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

*weeps with joy* I got my power back! In case you didn't know, I was caught up in a hurricane and have been without power since Oct 10th. The first thing I'm doing now is updating this fic because it's all I've been thinking of. I hope you enjoy this chapter and I'm sorry for the wait!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter and Derek get back to the house at the same time. Talia is waiting up for them both. Though to be honest, she probably only cares about how Derek fared.

"Well?" she asks as they come inside, Derek trailing along behind Peter.

Peter gives her a wide, false smile. "It went splendidly."

Talia rolls her eyes at him and looks at her son. "Derek?"

Derek shrugs and holds up his papers. "I got stuff to fill out."

"You found an omega to court?" Talia asks, sounding hilariously breathless. "That's wonderful! Tell me everything!"

Derek scowls and Peter laughs.

"Leave him alone, Talia," he says.

"Why?" Talia asks. "I just want to know what happened. Who is it, are they from Beacon Hills?"

Derek looks like he would rather have his claws pulled out than talk to his mother about this. Peter gives his sister a look designed to shut her up. It almost works.

Talia sighs and waves her hand. "Fine. Don't tell me anything. I'm only your mother." She turns to Peter. "What about you, did you have any luck?"

"As a matter of fact, I did. But I'm not telling you anything about it, either. It's too early for that."

Talia looks stunned. "You actually…"

Peter barks a laugh and walks past her toward the stairs. He's not sure if he's angry or delighted at how shocked she is.

He hears Derek come up behind him. He expects his nephew to go to his room, but Derek follows Peter to his own.

Peter raises his eyebrows when Derek closes the door behind himself. Peter has one of the only soundproof rooms in the house. At least now he knows he and Derek can speak without Talia listening in.

"Yes?"
Derek sits down on Peter's bed and sighs. He looks exhausted. "I hated almost everything about that place tonight."

Peter watches him for a long moment, then decides to sit beside him. He puts a hand on Derek's back for comfort. "I figured you would. You would have really hated the opening ceremony."

Derek huffs a laugh and leans into Peter. It's easy to slip an arm around his shoulders.

"He smells incredible," Derek says quietly.

"That he does," Peter acknowledges.

"I don't want to fight you."

"I doubt it will come to that," Peter says wryly.

"No, I mean…" Derek huffs again, though this time he sounds frustrated. "My wolf was perfectly content with your scent on him. I didn't get upset. When I think about any other alpha touching him, I start to feel like I'm losing control."

"Hmm. Do you think it's because we're pack?"

Derek shrugs and snuggles closer. He's always been tactile, but more so since the fire, at least once Peter was healed enough to be touched again.

"Well, that makes things easier, I guess," Peter says. Then with a smile, "Good to know you don't want to claw me apart."

Derek snorts softly. He's giving off a sleepy, content scent and Peter doesn't want to send him to his room. Derek's tired from dealing with society all night. Peter just wants to wrap him in a blanket and make sure he's comfortable.

"He didn't seem curious about my face," Peter says in the otherwise quiet room.

"What about your face?" Derek mumbles sleepily.

Peter hums and waits for Derek to understand. When he does, the familiar guilt smell wafts from him. Peter squeezes him. As many times as Derek's been told Kate was not his fault, he still doesn't believe it, not entirely.

Peter ignores the sour scent and doesn't let Derek pull away. "Which means he already knows. I don't know how much, but being the sheriff's kid means he probably knows more than most."

Derek pulls a little more insistently and this time Peter lets him. "Do you think he knows about Kate? About… me?"

"Probably not the details," Peter says. "But if you're serious about courting him, you'll have to tell him sooner or later."

"I vote later," Derek says with a scowl. He's still holding the paperwork in his hands and he looks down at it now. "All this to court someone. It's so unnatural."

Peter smiles. "What would you prefer, a mating run?"

"Yes, actually." It makes sense. A good chase would appeal to Derek's wolf.
Peter's own paperwork is folded inside the jacket beside him on the bed. He pulls the sheaves of paper out now. There are five pages and he looks through them quickly. This is only the beginning, he knows. Courtship these days is regulated by the government, which means lots of red tape.

"Want to fill them out together?" Peter asks.

"Now?" Derek asks, sounding like it's the last thing he wants to do.

"Tomorrow."

"Okay." Derek gives his paperwork one more scowl before setting it aside. "Do you think he'll have a lot of suitors?"

"Probably." Peter doesn't like the idea, but he's sure his and Derek's chances are better than most. "Don't forget he spent most of his time at the ball with us, when he certainly didn't have to."

Derek nods, though he still seems worried. Peter leans in and kisses his temple. Derek gives a little sigh. He's radiating exhaustion, the way he always does after he's had to interact in public for a long period of time.

Peter stands up and takes the paperwork, walks over to his desk and puts them down. He looks at the way Derek keeps blinking slowly, his eyelids heavy, and his chest tightens.

"Want to stay?" Peter asks.

"I need to change," Derek answers, which isn't a real answer but Peter knows what he means.

"You can wear something of mine," Peter offers, letting Derek know he doesn't have to go back to his own room.

Derek nods, a soft smile on his lips. Everything about him seems soft right now. He only lets himself be this vulnerable around the pack, and even then just a select few. His wolf is wary with others, but understandably so. In moments like this, Peter is reminded just how much he wants to protect his nephew.

Derek scrambles out of his suit and tie, and Peter decides to change now, too. Once they're wearing t-shirts and sweats, Peter turns down the bed and yawns.

"Thanks for this," Derek mumbles, squishing one of the pillows beneath his head.

Peter turns off the light and lies down beside his nephew. "Anytime."

Derek picks up one of Peter's hands and brings it to his face. He breathes in and Peter frowns, not understanding.

"I can smell his skin on you," Derek explains.

Derek's sense of smell is much more refined than Peter's own, but when Peter sniffs for himself, he does pick up a hint of Stiles's scent. He smiles.

Derek snuggles closer, his head on Peter's shoulder. "Night."

"Goodnight, sweetheart," Peter says quietly, though he's sure he won't go to sleep immediately. So much has happened tonight, and he expects to flip through his memories to examine them.

But with Derek's heavy warmth beside him, his slow, even breaths lull Peter into sweet dreams.
After the ball wraps up, Stiles is allowed some time to visit with his father. It's late, and Stiles is used to going to bed at a certain time, but because of the circumstances, Natalie has given the omegas permission to spend an extra hour with their families.

Even Jackson, whose heat was apparently caught in time to be stopped.

"You look tired, kid," John says when he sees Stiles walk toward him.

Stiles gives him an exhausted hug. "It's past my bedtime." He wishes he was joking.

John pats his back and gives his head a kiss before he pulls back. "So. Two Hales, huh?"

The blush can't be helped. "Yeah. I liked them both."

"You had some jealous alphas looking on, as well. You're bound to get more than just Peter and Derek as suitors."

Stiles wrinkles his nose. "I can't imagine-"

"Son, the point is to find the best match. How are you going to do that if you shut out anyone who isn't named Hale?"

Stiles pouts. "But I really like them." He knows his father's right, though.

"And you may end up not liking either one, once you get to know them," John says carefully.

Stiles picks up on something in his tone and he narrows his eyes. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"With their history, the Hales are bound to have some… issues."

"You know something," Stiles accuses, pointing a finger and poking his dad in the chest. "Spill."

John looks reluctant. "How much do you remember about what happened to Peter?"

"Not a lot," Stiles says. It happened before his mom died, but she was sick and he and his father were preoccupied with that. His dad was a deputy at the time, and not in charge of the investigation. Still, Stiles knew what had been in the papers at the time, since it was a big deal locally. "It was an attack, and…" He searches his memory for the answers, but they just aren't there.

"Some details were kept out of the news," John says. Then, pointedly, "When a minor is involved, we try to protect them."

Stiles frowns. That many years ago, Peter would have been in his twenties. Derek would have been a teenager. He gives his father a searching look. "What do I need to know?"

"You know I'd tell you if I could." John sighs and clasps him on the shoulder. "But I'm sure it'll come up in courtship proceedings if it gets that far."

Stiles's eyebrows climb. "I'd rather hear it from you than some government paperwork."

"And I'd rather you hear it from the source," John points out. "If he's got any sense, Derek will tell you himself."

Stiles is puzzled. What the hell could it be? Maybe something happened, but if it's in the past, sealed away in legal paperwork, why would it be pertinent to the here and now? Unless there are lingering
effects, and something's wrong. Was Derek somehow caught up in the fire, too? Is he burned somewhere Stiles couldn't see tonight? Not that he cares. Peter's burned, some might even say disfigured, but Stiles barely noticed once Peter's personality came out. Hell, that wink alone…

But what if it's not physical? What if it's mental, what if Derek has PTSD or a brain injury or-

"Don't worry about it now," his father says, cutting off his thoughts. "I can see your mind working you up, but it's not…” He trails off for a moment, obviously searching for the right words. What was he going to say, 'permanently debilitating'? But couldn't say it because it is?

What could it possibly be?

"Dad," he finally whispers. "Can he still… I mean, is he… can he father children?" It wouldn't be a huge hurdle, but Stiles does want babies. And having an alpha who can give them to him would be good. But there are plenty of kids out there without a home, and Stiles doesn't care if his kids come out of his own body, does he? It might… it might suck, a little, or a lot, but-

"He wouldn't be allowed to court you if he couldn't," his dad says gently. "Geez, where did you even come up with that?"

"I just thought, maybe the fire, and… wait, what?" Stiles is relieved, but he's also getting angry. "What do you mean he wouldn't be allowed to court me?"

"It's the law. There are so few omegas, infertile alphas aren't allowed to-"

"That's such bullshit!" Stiles says, exploding with anger. "How dare they… What if the perfect alpha for me was infertile, what if we were made for each other, what if-"

His dad smiles and shakes his shoulder. "Hey. You've got a big heart, and I love that about you, but there's nothing you can do about this. It's the law."

"The law is bullshit," Stiles says, "and in more than one way. God, I hardly see you at all. I fucking hate this place. I hate the laws. Sometimes I hate being an omega, it's just…” He looks away and swallows, blinking back tears of frustration. Just when he thinks he's heard every single stupid rule about being an omega in this day and age, he learns something new to get pissed about.

"As an actual officer of the law," his dad says, and Stiles swears he'll hit him if he says something stupid, "I agree with you."

Stiles opens his mouth to argue, realizes what he said, and deflate. "Oh."

John smiles and pulls him in for another bone-crushing hug. "You're gonna drive those alphas crazy."

Stiles laughs against his dad's shoulder and closes his eyes. God, it feels so good to be hugged by his dad. By an alpha, to be honest. For the past two and a half years, almost all his contact has come from other omegas. And while that's absolutely awesome sometimes, he's missed this so much.

"You've got to get back to your dorm," his dad tells him, then pulls away. Stiles wants to whimper at the loss.

"Yeah."

"Get all the rest you can get, because the season just started. You're going to be busy."
Oh, right. Tonight was only the beginning.

Derek goes for a run in the early morning, the way he always does. His wolf loves the exercise and being in the forest. While he runs, he tries to clear his head, but something is bothering him.

Before he left Peter's room once dawn hit, he'd taken another look at the omega school's paperwork. Right on the first page, there'd been a blank for 'occupation'. Next to that, he's supposed to fill in his salary range.

The problem is that Derek doesn't have either. He barely got out of high school with a diploma. He didn't go on to college, and he doesn't have any marketable skills, not to mention his personality defects would make working with the public a big problem.

The only reason he got an invitation to the coming out ball is because of his name. And yeah, his pack has money. His parents give him a good-size allowance, pay for his car insurance and whatever other bills he's accumulated, and he has a trust fund waiting for the day he bonds with an omega. He doesn't have to do anything, not really. He can support a mate.

But it feels cheap. He doesn't want to rely on his family. More than that, he doesn't want to go to Stiles with nothing to offer but his name. He doesn't want to be useless.

He runs faster through the forest, looping around and coming back to the house. He feels like this is a thing he should talk to someone about, but when he imagines going to his mom or dad with this, he has to cringe. Both of them would probably try to tell him what a good boy he is and how he's not useless. Peter at least will listen, and won't try to coddle him. His uncle's advice is usually pretty good, as well.

He jogs slowly around the house to cool down, then stretches. The routine calms him, makes him feel more centered. The sun is higher in the sky now, and he can smell the breakfast his dad is cooking.

He's glad it's the weekend, so Peter's home, though that means almost everyone else is home, too.

Walking back into the house has him wondering where Stiles would prefer to live. Should they buy a place, maybe somewhere in town so Stiles is close to his father? Derek's wolf bristles at the thought of living away from the Preserve. There's a house standing empty on Hale land, but it's old and in disrepair. Could Derek fix it up? Or maybe Stiles would prefer building a new house. What would Peter want to do, if it was his choice?

"You look like you're miles away," his dad says with a smile. "Waffles or pancakes?"

"He's thinking about his mysterious omega," Talia says as she comes into the room. Her hair is swept up into a messy ponytail, and without makeup covering her freckles, she looks much younger than she is. This morning, you'd never be able to tell she's head of the city council. During the week she's no-nonsense and professional. On weekends, when it's just the family, she's much more relaxed.

"Waffles, please," Derek thinks to say, hoping he gets them soon. Maybe he can avoid questions about Stiles by keeping his mouth full.

Right then, Laura comes in the kitchen door wearing a wrinkled evening gown and a grin. She's got her high heels in her hands, walking in on bare feet. "Oh, is it that late already?"

"Once the sun comes up, it's called early," Talia scolds. "What on earth kept you out so long?"
Laura smiles even brighter. "I met the woman I'm gonna marry."

"At the omega ball?" Joseph asks, sounding as surprised as Talia looks.

"Don't get your hopes up, Dad... she's an alpha," Laura says lightly. There's a familiar pain in her eyes, though. Their dad's never really accepted how gay Laura really is. He keeps hoping she'll find the right omega and settle down. He's mentioned it less and less lately, but Derek can tell he still feels the same. Like right now, as the smile drops of his face and he turns to make Derek's waffles.

"What's special about this one, Laura?" their mother asks, breaking into the unhappy silence.

Laura gives Talia a quick hug. "She's brilliant. A banshee. Eighteen years old and already a member of MENSA. She was valedictorian and she's going to MIT. She's going to storm the mathematics world and win a Fields medal."

Derek's a hundred percent sure Laura didn't know what a Fields medal even was until last night. It's amusing to him, imagining the pretty redheaded alpha talking to Laura about math of all things, with Laura hanging on her every word.

"Didn't you fail algebra?" Derek says, just to tease her.

Laura narrows her eyes and opens her mouth to either deny it or retaliate.

"I think she sounds wonderful," Talia says. "What's her name?"

Laura gives Derek one more dirty look and smiles at their mom. "Lydia Martin."

Talia nods. "Are you having breakfast with us?"

With a yawn and a shake of her head, Laura declines. "Nah. I spent most of the night eating diner food and drinking coffee with Lydia."

Derek's eyebrows try to climb off his forehead. He'd assumed Laura spent the night in Lydia's bed, not in a 24-hour diner talking. And Laura talks about her like she wants to bite her, so maybe this is serious after all.

Laura heads upstairs just as Peter's coming down.

Derek gets a plate of steaming hot waffles. He pours warmed maple syrup on them and forgets to thank his dad until his mouth is full. He gives Joseph a thumbs up and a happy grunt.

"What would you like, Peter?" Talia asks when her brother sits. "Joseph has batter, so waffles or pancakes?"

Peter looks over at the kitchen. "Is that sausage I smell?" He ends up with a stack of silver dollar pancakes and enough sausage to satisfy two werewolves. And when Derek eyes the sausage, he doesn't have to say a word. Peter forks three big sausages onto his plate and Derek gives him a grateful look.

During breakfast, Talia tries to turn the conversation to the omega ball, but Derek and Peter are both reluctant to talk about it.

Finally, Peter just says, "C'mon, give us a break. It's new. The season's just started. There's not even much to tell."

Joseph reaches out and smooths a hand over Derek's hair. "Okay. We can respect your privacy. We
only want the best for you though. You know that, right?"

Derek sighs. "Of course." He and Peter exchange a look.

"I just wish-" Talia says, and bites off what she was going to say when her mate gives her a look of his own.

Derek stands up and grabs the last sausage on his plate. He can eat it on his way upstairs.

On his way out, he hears Joseph sigh unhappily and Talia murmur some soothing nonsense. Peter says, "This is enough pressure on Derek. He doesn't need more."

Derek scowls. He doesn't want them treating him like glass, either. He's both grateful and annoyed by Peter's words and retaliates by using the last of Peter's favorite body wash in the shower.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know if you liked it!
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Peter's waiting when Derek gets out of the shower. He's got the paperwork spread out and a couple of big books to use as lap desks. His laptop is open in case they need to research something. And he has pencils and rollerball pens for the actual filling out part of this endeavor.

He thinks he's ready.

He's not, because as soon as Derek sits on the bed, smelling like anxiety and Peter's shower gel, Derek says, "Stiles is going to think I'm useless."

"Why would he think that?" Peter asks, though glancing at the paperwork, he thinks he has an idea.

"No career, no education… I don't even have a job," Derek says.

"None that pay, no," Peter says. "But it's not like you just sit around doing nothing all day, is it?"

Derek frowns. "Well, no."

"How many times a week do you get called by Fish and Wildlife to help? You're practically a full-time wildlife officer, just without the salary. Not to mention the volunteering you do with those kids."

"That's just wolf scouts," Derek mumbles. "I'm not a real volunteer, anyway."

"You do more work with the kids than the troop leader does," Peter points out.

Derek scowls, but Peter can tell he's thinking hard.

"And then there's your art," Peter says gently. It's a touchy subject, he knows, but Derek needs to learn to accept his talent as something to be proud of.

"It's just therapy," Derek mumbles.

Peter sighs. "Maybe it started as therapy, but tell me the truth. Do you enjoy it?"

"...Yes," Derek says, sounding like the word is painful.

"You have talent, and you've honed it. When I see your paintings, I'm astounded. I'm sure Stiles would be, too."

Derek's quiet. Then he says, "My therapist said I should enter one of those community art shows."

"That would be a good start, yes." Truthfully, Peter can see Derek becoming popular enough to have his own shows. Baby steps, he reminds himself.

"I can put those things on my courtship application?" Derek asks.

"Of course you can," Peter answers. "And you definitely should."

Derek nods and grabs a pen. His handwriting is usually sloppy, but Peter notices he's taking extra care.
Peter starts to fill in his own paperwork. He's a professor at the nearby community college, and he's written several nonfiction books. Should he list 'writer' or 'history professor' first? He's made more from writing in the past five years than he has at his day job, but the writing is more of a hobby than a career. He started doing it when he was still recovering from the fire, before he went back to teaching. He enjoys it, but teaching is his calling as well as a career.

"We should ask Stiles where he wants to live," Derek says.

Peter doesn't look up from the paperwork, but he does smile. "That's a little premature, don't you think?"

"Stiles should have a say from the beginning," Derek says firmly, and Peter looks at him. He looks like he's given this some thought. "I don't think he's had a lot of choices in his life."

He's right. As an omega, Stiles gets his life regulated by law and has very little say in what happens to him. At this point, he can choose who courts him but that's about as far as it goes. It would be good to give Stiles as many choices as they can offer, including where he'll live once he's mated.

Peter smiles softly at his nephew. "We'll talk to him about it, see what he says. I wonder if he'd like to go to college?" It's unusual for omegas to seek higher education before they've raised their children, but Stiles may want to do it the other way around.

"When can we talk to him?" Derek asks.

"There's a luncheon tomorrow," Peter says. "We turn in our paperwork then. You should know this."

Derek ducks his head and mumbles something that sounds like, "I wasn't listening."

Peter laughs. Derek looks so cute when he's embarrassed. The tips of his ears are even pink.

Now, Peter prides himself on his self-awareness. He knows what he thinks and what he feels. Which is why a sudden something catches him off guard. It's a feeling, followed closely by a thought. Or maybe he thinks it first and then the feeling comes after. Does it matter?

He's hit with the realization: he's in love with Derek.

"Peter? What's wrong?" Derek asks, looking at him with concern. "Your heart…"

He can feel it. His heart is thundering in his chest. He puts his hand over it, as if to quiet it or slow it down. He tries to think of something else, anything, some kind of calming thought to drown out his emotions. He closes his eyes, focuses on his anchor.

He feels the pack bonds in his chest. They shine brightly, though none as bright as Derek's. He takes slow, even breaths.

"Peter?" Derek asks again.

His heart is starting to get back under control. He keeps breathing evenly. He can't look at Derek, though.

Derek puts his paperwork aside and pulls Peter into his arms. It's a role reversal — usually, it's the other way around, Peter comforting Derek. Peter closes his eyes and holds on. Derek has his chin on top of his head, and Peter can take deep inhalations of Derek's scent.
"It's okay," Derek whispers. Peter shakes his head, but Derek says it again. "It is. It's okay. You think you're the only one with a fucked up mind? Kicks you at all the exact wrong times, doesn't it?"

Peter feels like crying. How is Derek so good? He's come up with a reasonable excuse for him, though Peter's reluctant to use it. Peter and Derek both have trauma from what Kate did to them. Sometimes a memory surfaces, or a scent triggers them, or someone says the wrong thing, and it hits all at once.

"I'm sorry," Peter murmurs against Derek's chest. Derek lets out a soft rumble, more wolf than man. It's comforting, though. Familiar and loved.

How could Peter have missed it? He loves Derek so much.

And there's no chance for them at all.

At the omega school, Saturdays are special. Spa days. Stiles may not like everything about it (he hates getting waxed), but he loves the way he feels when the regimen is over: soft and polished and shiny.

It's been optional since Ms. Martin started at the school, but since the first official luncheon of the season is tomorrow, all of the final year omegas are expected to participate.

At the moment he's getting his feet scrubbed and buffed by one of the betas who come in on spa days. Erica's beside him getting a pedicure of her own.

Kira's already under the nail dryer, though her polish is clear and her nails short. Just like Stiles likes for himself, too.

"I think I'll get a dark pink," Erica murmurs quietly. Her head is clearly somewhere else, though, and has been all day.

Kira and Stiles exchange a look. They can't get her to talk freely in front of their visitors, but maybe they can get her to spill later. They know it has something to do with the new omega who came in this morning.

"Where are the others?" Stiles asks.

Kira checks her nails. "Danielle's getting a massage, Jackson and Brett are getting waxed, Isaac's getting his eyebrows threaded… Heather was just in here, but I think she went to get her hair done. Greenberg said something about the sauna, though Theo claimed the sauna an hour ago and I doubt he and Liam want to share." Kira gives him a look and Stiles nods. Yeah, Theo and Liam are going to get caught — again — if they aren't more careful.

Erica narrows her eyes at Kira. "It's creepy how you know all that."

Kira shrugs. She keeps tabs on everyone at all times, just in case of emergency. The first year she came to the omega school, there was a break-in, a beta with a grudge against omegas. Kira had only been thirteen, but she fought the intruder off with her kitsune powers. Not before the beta seriously injured Greenberg first, though. (Greenberg's been anxious ever since.)

From then on, Kira wanted to know everyone was safe at all times. She's relaxed a bit over the years, doesn't patrol the halls quite as much anymore, but the habit's still there.

She doesn't normally get teased for it, though sometimes a classmate, like Erica, will roll their eyes,
tell her it's weird, or even to get over it. Not Stiles. He's glad someone's watching out for them. The school guards are worthless, or at least oblivious. Some of the omegas sneak out on a regular basis and never get caught. How much easier would it be for someone to sneak in?

"So Erica, are you looking forward to any particular alphas tomorrow?" Kira asks.

Erica picks out a color for her toenails and shakes her head. "Not really. I won't be in high demand, either."

"You had at least five alphas falling over themselves to talk to you at the ball," Kira says wryly.

"Not a single one under forty, either," Erica grumbles. "But I mean… once they see my medical history, they'll change their minds."

"You're a werewolf now," Stiles points out. "No more seizures. What would they care about it now?"

Erica scowls. "I still get seizures sometimes if I… if my fever gets too high. My last heat brought one on. And epilepsy can be genetic. The kind I have is. Nobody's gonna risk their babies having it, too."

"The chance has to be really small," Stiles says. "Especially if you bond with another werewolf."

Erica sighs. "The chance is like five percent in humans," she says. She bites her bottom lip. "There haven't been any studies with werewolf parents because it's just so rare."

"I doubt it's going to be a problem," Kira says with a small smile. "You're beautiful and strong and… tenacious!"

"You mean obstinate," Erica says with a laugh. "I'm stubborn as a mule."

"But that's such a good thing," Stiles says. "You go after what you want and you don't let anything stop you."

Erica looks down at her freshly painted toes with a smile. "I guess."

"You'll have plenty of suitors," Kira says.

Erica sighs and nods.

The beta in charge of Stiles's pedicure asks, "What color, dear?"

Stiles looks down at his toenails. "I think… just a buff this time." Everyone in the room stares at him. "What? No one's going to see them anyway." He rarely wears sandals.

Kira smiles at him. Erica rolls her eyes. And the beta nods. Stiles looks at her nametag.

"Thank you, Anna."

Anna looks surprised and then smiles. "You're welcome, dear."

After their mani-pedis, Kira and Stiles decide they're done for the day. Stiles has decided not to get his hair cut. He's kept it super short lately, just so it's less fuss, but now he wants to look nicer. He has the passing thought that it's weird for his hair to be shorter than Derek and Peter's, and then quickly stamps it down. He's not a traditional omega. He can keep his hair as short as he wants.

"What was that?" Kira asks as they enter the room they share.
Stiles flops down on his bed. "What was what?"

"You looked mad for a minute. You okay?"

Stiles sighs. "Had one of those weird old-fashioned omega thoughts again."

Kira nods knowingly. "What was it this time? Are you anxious because of your toenails?"

"No," Stiles says, laughing and throwing a pillow her way. She catches it easily.

"I'm not gonna judge. Last night I thought maybe I should get a padded bra."

Stiles makes an exaggerated squinty face and Kira laughs.

She tosses the pillow back to him. "See? So spill. You know talking about it helps."

She's right. They do this all the time, and it does help. Talking out their internalized notions of what they should or shouldn't be always makes Stiles feel better, especially when Kira understands so thoroughly.

"It's so stupid," Stiles says. He puts the pillow back and sits up. "I thought… I thought my hair shouldn't be shorter than the alphas I like." He shakes his head. "But I do want to grow it out a little, I think, and not just because of what society expects. But… I just think it would look nicer. And I want a different look, not just because of what an alpha might think, but because of what I might think. So it's okay, right?"

Kira nods and is quiet for a minute, thinking. Then she says, "It's hard to untangle the things we want for ourselves and the things we want because our biology tells us to, and the things we've been told to want. But I think it's okay to want to look nice, even for an alpha. As long as we don't do it solely because we've been raised that way."

Stiles nods. "I think my hair will look nicer just a little longer on top. That's all." He looks down at his hands. "And maybe I've thought about an alpha touching my hair, maybe running their fingers through it."

Kira smiles. "It does feel nice."

She'd know, since she has a girlfriend. Which reminds Stiles…

"Are you meeting her tonight?"

Kira blushes and her eyes shine. "Yes! Everyone's going to bed early tonight because of the luncheon tomorrow, so it'll be easier to sneak out. She's meeting me over by the oak, and we're going to the overlook."

Stiles's eyes widen. The overlook is a big cliff on the edge of town that looks out over all of Beacon Hills. He remembers going with his father once before he presented. The lights below had been beautiful. He can see the appeal, but… "That far?"

"It's our anniversary." She bites her lip. "We've been together for a year now."

Stiles knows it may not last much longer. He doesn't see how it could. He wants to ask what she's going to do now that she's of age and the season's started, but she looks so happy right now, looking forward to her date.

So Stiles stays quiet about it. "What do you want to do now?"
Kira grins. "I'm going to get a massage. Don't worry, I won't drag you with me. I know you want to read."

Stiles has a stack of books he hasn't had much time for, notably a biography on the omega queen, Elizabeth I. "Okay. Thanks, Kira."

She smiles brightly and heads out, and Stiles picks up his book.

He never noticed the author before today, hadn't had a reason to. "Peter Hale?" he murmurs, tracing the name on the cover.

He smiles. At least he'll have something to talk about to Peter at the luncheon.

### Sunday

Once the paperwork is completed, Derek feels like a weight's been lifted off his shoulders. Because of Peter's help, he looks perfectly suitable on paper. Good with children and animals, helpful to the community, with a talent for art. Peter even had him list his trust fund as a future source of income. Derek didn't want to do it, but Peter has a point. He needs to show he can support a family and isn't 'just a starving artist', as Peter put it.

Peter's acting strangely, though. They're getting ready for the next event at the omega school, but Peter's not teasing him or helping him pick out an outfit uninvited. Actually, Peter's been uncharacteristically quiet since the day before, when they were filling out their applications. He won't talk about what's wrong, either. After Derek held him for awhile, Peter had pulled away both physically and emotionally. Derek knows something is troubling him, but not what.

Peter can't go to the luncheon like this. Derek has to do something.

They have to leave in half an hour to get to the omega school on time, and Derek's still only half dressed. He knocks on Peter's door. There's no answer so Derek just walks in. He finds Peter sitting on his bed and looking lost. Derek approaches him but he doesn't look up, so he slides to his knees in front of him.

"Please tell me what's wrong," Derek begs, looking into his uncle's face. "I need you, Peter. I can't do this without you."

Peter's eyes soften as he looks at him. "It's nothing important," he says, but his heart jumps.

"It is important. Let me help you."

Peter sighs. He reaches up and cups Derek's face, his thumb tracing his cheek.

Derek leans into the touch. "Tell me what I can do."

"You can put a shirt on," Peter says with a smile. He glances at the clock. "You need to hurry."

"We both do," Derek says. "We shouldn't be late, we don't want Stiles to think we're unreliable."

There's a subtle shift in Peter's expression that Derek can't read. "Maybe you should go alone."

Derek frowns. "Why?"

"You have a better chance with him," Peter says. "I'm... older, and scarred, and-"
"You're beautiful and clever," Derek tells him firmly, cutting off any other lies. "Anyone would be lucky to have you as a mate. Is this what's been wrong? You've been doubting yourself?"

Peter doesn't answer so Derek takes it as a yes.

Derek leans in and scents his uncle, rubbing his cheek against Peter's. Then he stands up and says, "Help me pick out a shirt, and then you're driving. I need you there. We have to court him together."

"Why?"

"I can't do it alone," Derek says truthfully. To himself, he acknowledges he doesn't want to. "I need you, Peter. Please."

Peter sighs, but gives a little smile. "Okay. You know I can't say no to you when you give me those eyes."

Derek huffs a laugh. "I don't know what you mean."

"Sure you don't."

Peter follows him into his room and goes through his closet. He picks out a shirt that he says matches Derek's eyes. Derek slips it on and Peter buttons it for him, then smooths his hands over his shoulders.

"This looks good. Stiles isn't going to know what to do with himself," Peter announces. Derek gives him a dubious look but Peter just smiles. "Your hair looks good, too. Ready to go?"

"If we can get out the door without Mom grilling us," Derek says.

Peter makes a dismissive gesture. It's good to see him acting like himself again, and now at least Derek knows what's wrong. If Peter starts acting weird again, Derek's going to be right there to tell him he's wonderful, and that no one in their right mind would think otherwise.

It's easy to say because it's true. They're going to court Stiles and make sure they're the only alphas he could possibly want.

Chapter End Notes

If you like it, let me know!
Chapter 4

Peter and Derek drop off their paperwork and show ID at the entrance, then they're led inside. The luncheon is being held in the ballroom, but now tables and chairs and long buffets of food fill the space.

Stiles spots them almost immediately. He doesn't wave them over, but it's near enough. He smiles widely like he can't wait to talk to them. Peter looks at Derek, sees the pleased smile on his face, and thinks this is worth it. Derek is besotted, and he was right. Derek wouldn't be able to navigate these events by himself. He needs Peter, so Peter is going to be there for him.

Peter tries not to think about what he wants. It's a major departure. He's always been selfish, so this is a new experience for him.

Peter and Derek sit down at the table with Stiles, each of them on either side with Stiles in the middle. Stiles seems pleased.

"I'm glad you got here on time," Stiles says. "I've been saving these seats but I don't know how much longer I could keep-"

Another alpha interrupts. It's the looming alpha from the ball, Ennis. "Hello, Stiles."

Stiles gives a frigid smile as Ennis sits down — beside Peter.

Derek gives Ennis a narrow look as if even that close to Stiles is too much. Or maybe he doesn't like him crowding against a packmate.

Two other alphas sit at Stiles's table. Peter recognizes Deucalion, a friend of Talia's, but not the other, who introduces herself as Briar.

Briar shakes Peter's hand. She's confident and beautiful, or maybe she's confident because of her beauty. She looks at the other alphas with a smile not quite sharp enough to be considered a direct challenge. Stiles looks at her with interest, and Peter knows, then, that she may be a problem.

"What do you do, Briar?" Deucalion asks her. He sounds only mildly interested, but Peter knows they all need to know their competition. If Deuc hadn't asked, Peter would've.

"I work for Omega Rights Watch," Briar says. "It's a nonprofit based here in the States, but I travel all over the world, and frequently present my findings to the UN."

Peter checks everyone's expressions quickly, wanting to know what they think of this. Ennis is sneering, but Stiles leans forward with interest. Derek frowns thoughtfully. Deucalion nods and Peter smiles.

"I suppose you aren't home much," Deuc says lightly. "However will you have time for a mate?"

Briar smiles and looks at Stiles. "Some of the places I go are dangerous, but for the most part, an alpha and her bonded omega would be perfectly safe. Do you want to travel, Stiles?"

"What would you do with the children," Ennis says, sounding hostile. "Leave them at home by themselves?"

Briar just keeps smiling. Peter can tell she's had to face much worse alphas than Ennis. "I suppose
any mate of mine would have to put off having children for a few years. The work is too important. But my mate would be involved closely with making the world better for their fellow omegas. I can't think of many who wouldn't mind waiting to start a family if that was the reason."

Stiles is nodding. This is bad. "It sounds fascinating. But what about in this country? Do you ever work toward making the lives of omegas better here?"

And here is where Briar falters. "Well, I. For the past two years, most of my work has taken me to the near and middle east. Our organization of course has a presence in North America, but it's rather low-priority at the moment."

Stiles looks disappointed at that.

"What would you rather do, Stiles?" Peter asks.

"Oh. Well, I'd love to work toward omega rights in this country, to be honest," Stiles says. "Briar, could you recommend an organization working in the US or Canada?"

"And when would you have time for this?" Ennis asks. His face is reddening. "Some light work is fine for broken omegas, but--"

"Excuse me?" Stiles says slowly. "What, exactly, is a 'broken' omega?"

Deucalion smiles blandly. "He probably means infertile."

Ennis nods, not even realizing he's in trouble. Peter sits back with a smirk on his face.

"An omega is not an incubator," Stiles says. He starts speaking slowly and evenly, but as he goes on, the volume increases. "We are not broken if we're infertile. We're not playthings, or property, or baby-makers. We are not a status symbol, or a trophy to be won. And if you think for one moment that I'm interested in mating with someone who has such a disgusting view of the world, there is something wrong with you. And I can guarantee with that attitude, there's not a single omega in this school who will give you a chance. So you, sir, can just fuck off."

By this time, everyone in the room is listening, and when Stiles is finished, a cheer goes up. Every omega in the room claps and Peter and Derek immediately join in.

Briar has a huge smile on her face, and she's clapping, too. Deuc smirks at Ennis, whose face is an angry red now.

Two chaperones appear on either side of him, and he's politely — but in no uncertain terms — asked to leave.

Stiles's eyes are bright with indignation, and he keeps his eyes on Ennis as he's escorted from the room. He sighs in relief once the alpha is out of sight, then turns back to the table.

Derek is staring at Stiles with admiration in his eyes, and Peter's got to admit he feels the same. Briar and Deuc are smiling, too, but none of them seem to know what to say.

"Good riddance," Stiles mutters under his breath. Then, "Can you believe the nerve of that asshole? He had a lot to say at the ball, too. I mostly ignored him then, but for him to show up again and think he had even the slightest chance…" He shakes his head.

"You were magnificent," Derek murmurs.
Stiles looks surprised. "For speaking my mind? Buddy, that was nothing."

"It was everything," Deuc says. "If more omegas were as outspoken."

Stiles frowns. "Most of the time, we're in situations where it's dangerous to be outspoken. And then about 90% of the time we're called ungrateful bitches if we speak up. Our words are ignored, belittled, or made into jokes. Right now you're all happy because I've chased off one of your competitors. How would you feel if I was calling you out?"

Stiles watches their faces. Maybe he was a little heavy-handed, but his blood is up and he wants these alphas to know he means business.

"If I ever say something stupid, please let me know," Derek says.

"You say that now, but-

"I mean it," Derek says, and he sounds earnest about it. Stiles's heart flips over. He looks at the other alphas, and they are nodding, though Deuc looks less thrilled about it than Briar and Peter.

"Okay," Stiles says. He smiles. Maybe this will work out after all.

He wonders how his classmates are doing. He looks over to Kira's table and sees her smiling back at him. She gives him a thumbs-up and he grins. Her suitors look on like they don't know what to think. But he should be paying attention to his own. He turns back and looks around the table. Deucalion looks bored, Briar is watching him, Derek is looking down at his empty plate, and Peter is looking at Derek.

"I think it's past time we get our food," Stiles says, and Derek looks relieved. "Hungry there, big guy?"

"Skipped breakfast," Derek mumbles.

"So did I," Stiles tells him. He'd been too nervous to eat. He wonders if Derek had the same problem.

"I called ahead but didn't get much of an answer about a vegetarian option," Briar says.

If Stiles hadn't known before that she was human, he would certainly know now. "I think I heard there would be vegetable frittata."

Briar smiles. "Oh, that does sound good."

They eat, each of them going to the buffet and getting what they want. The werewolves at the table pile their plates with various meat dishes, which Stiles finds hilarious. Briar finds her frittata, and Stiles decides he wants some, too. It's light and delicious, which is just what he needs. He's still nervous about things going well, and anything heavy would just sit in his stomach like a boulder.

Stiles wants to ask Peter about his book, but there's never a good break in the conversation to bring it up. Deucalion starts talking about his multi-million dollar company, and when that doesn't work to impress Stiles, he brings up his charity work, which has something to do with werewolf culture in mixed werewolf-human families. It doesn't take long for him to mention the charity is his own, something he's worked toward for years.

Peter seems to know all about it, which seems strange until he mentions his sister and Deucalion are
friends, and that Talia has given advice from time to time on materials for mixed species families.

"It's important," Deuc tells Stiles. "Our children would be raised to respect both sides of their heritage."

The comment has Derek growling low. Stiles instinctively puts a hand on his arm beneath the table, which makes him instantly settle. Peter looks between the two of them, worry evident on his face.

Stiles smiles. "Any children of mine will be raised to acknowledge their heritage, to follow the traditions of both sides of the family." He thinks that's a diplomatic enough answer. It appeases Deuc, who sits back with a smile, but Peter and Derek both smile as well.

"Do you want children right away?" Briar asks.

Stiles bites his lip. "I'd really like to get a degree first," he says quietly. He knows it's a bold statement — omegas usually wait, raising their children to their teen years before pursuing higher education, if they do at all. But Stiles has talked about this with Kira so much he knows it's what he wants.

Deuc sits back in his chair and frowns. Peter and Derek nod, looking thoughtful. Briar frowns as well, though she doesn't look as disapproving as Deucalion.

"Do you know what you want to major in?" Peter asks. "Where would you like to attend college?"

"I don't know yet what I want to focus on," Stiles admits. "And I'd really like to stay close to home, so I'd probably just go to the local community college at first."

Briar sighs. "What about distance learning? You could choose a better school that way, and you could go anywhere."

Stiles knows she wants a mate to follow her around the world as she works, but he can tell right now that won't work. "I want to stay near my dad." He tries to put a note of finality in it.

"I work at BHCC," Peter says. "I teach history there. It's a good place to go for your first two years, and then you can try distance learning for your Bachelor's."

"Why not just try distance learning for the whole thing?" Deuc asks.

Stiles frowns. "I just want to be a normal college student for awhile. Go to school with people, make friends, that sort of thing." He tries to keep the nervousness out of his voice. He wants it, more than anything, but for years he's only attended class with a few people, and he knows BHCC has a large student body. Plus, being an omega, he's likely to have a harder time than the other students. People will look down on him for choosing school before babies.

"I could go with you," Derek says softly.

"Did you not go to college already, Derek?" Deuc says, sounding smarmy.

This time, it's Peter who growls. Ah. It must be a touchy subject, and Deucalion already knows that. Derek looks down, clenching his jaw.

"Oh, that's right," Deucalion says. "You barely finished high school."

Stiles gives Deuc a cold look. "I care more about the character of an alpha than their education or fortune."
"Well said," Briar murmurs.

Deucalion narrows his eyes, just for a moment, and then smiles. "Of course. Forgive me, Stiles. I'm letting the competition get to me."

Peter lets out an angry huff.

"It's not me you need to apologize to," Stiles says.

Deuc goes still, like he's keeping himself from bristling. "Yes. Well." He clears his throat. "I apologize for that, Derek."

Derek glances at Stiles, then back at Deuc. He nods. Stiles can't help but wonder what he's thinking. It will be nice, once their courtship continues, to have time alone with his suitors. He's looking forward to getting to know Derek better.

Peter, too. He's still stiff and angry beside Stiles, and Stiles reaches under the table to squeeze his fisted hand. Peter looks at him in surprise and Stiles gives him a smile.

"You do more than just teach though, don't you?" Stiles asks Peter. "How many books have you written?"

"Five so far," Peter says. "How did you know?"

"I'm reading one," Stiles says. "The Omega Queen."

"I hope you'll tell me what you think once you've finished it," Peter says.

"I like it so far," Stiles says. "What other topics have you written about? I'll have to order your other books, too."

"All history so far, I'm afraid. I'm predictable that way," Peter says. Even his eyes are smiling. Stiles likes the way that looks.

On Stiles's other side, Derek has relaxed. Stiles peeks over at him and sees he's smiling as well, obviously pleased and proud of his uncle's accomplishments. It's good to see he's not letting Deuc's previous comment ruin his mood.

Briar leans forward and asks Peter if he's studied India's past, since she spends a lot of time there. Stiles uses the break to ask Derek if he enjoys history as much as his uncle, and is surprised at his answer.

"I love art, and the history of the world coincides with the history of art." It's more than Stiles was expecting to hear, as Derek hasn't seemed like much of a talker before this. But it seems all he needs is the right topic. "Much of what we know about ancient civilizations is through their art."

"Are you an artist yourself?" Stiles asks.

Derek ducks his head, looking shy. Peter proves he's not so deep in conversation with Briar that he can't interject.

"He is," Peter says proudly. "Don't let him try to get out of it by calling it a hobby, either."

"It is just a hobby," Derek mumbles. The tips of his ears are endearingly pink.

"I'd like to hear more about it," Stiles tells him.
Derek glances at Deuc, who looks bored and irritated. "Maybe some other time."

Stiles understands immediately. "That's fine."

"I think I'll get some dessert," Briar announces. "Anyone else care to join me at the buffet?"

Stiles looks at the clock. There isn't much time left before the chaperones start politely escorting the alphas away.

Sitting beside Stiles means Derek gets to breathe in his scent. It's a blessing and a curse. If Derek was a romantic, prone to indulgent imaginings, he'd say he knew Stiles was for him right away. Love at first sight. Or first sniff, to be honest. Stiles smells like good things, both familiar and unfamiliar. Like a home he never knew he had.

"You're smelling me again," Stiles whispers, leaning in close to him with a smile. Derek wants to reach out and touch, to trace over the delicate moles on Stiles's cheek and leave a bit of his own scent behind on the omega's skin.

Derek forces himself to look away. "It's hard not to," he whispers back, even though he's sure everyone can hear them. But when he looks up, he sees Deucalion and Briar are at the buffet, and Peter is just looking on with a smile.

"You do smell quite tantalizing, darling," Peter murmurs.

Stiles glances at the buffet and then pulls a phone out. "Put your numbers in before anyone sees."

Peter raises his eyebrows but takes the phone. "Naughty."

They aren't supposed to have contact outside planned activities yet, not until their applications are cleared. Peter's mentioned something about a background check as well, and that eventually, all the suitors have to be cleared with a psych evaluation. Derek's not looking forward to that, but he does like the idea of having Stiles's number. Derek's not good with conversation, but he's better at texting.

Stiles's eyes twinkle. He takes the phone back once Peter is finished and gives them both a big smile. "The rules are ridiculous."

"Made to be broken?" Peter asks.

Stiles's smile goes even more mischievous. "Some of them should be bent beyond all recognition."

Derek wants to kiss those lips so badly. Peter gives him a knowing look, likely smelling his pheromones. Stiles leans into his space more, eyes half-lidded.

Deucalion clears his throat and sits down with a disapproving look. His plate hits the table loudly. Stiles straightens, his cheeks pink.

Briar is still at the buffet. She's deep in conversation with one of the other omegas.

"Who's that?" Derek asks.

Stiles looks over and gets a thoughtful expression. "Isaac."

"It is possible for a suitor to change their mind," Deuc says. "I wonder. She does look interested."

Derek knows he's looking to thin the competition, but the statement still gets under his skin. "It's
possible to speak to an omega without an ulterior motive."

Deucalion waves his hand. "Yes, of course."

"I think Isaac would love to travel," Stiles says, ignoring Deuc.

"Do you know him well?" Peter asks.

"We're a small school and a small class. Of course I do," Stiles says with a smile.

Derek wonders what it must be like, to have to live in the school, to be separated from your family. He would have gone mad. The omegas here must be strong. All of them, not just Stiles.

He looks around the room. He focuses on the omegas this time, not just the fact that there's a crowd and he doesn't like it. Each omega, at first, appears to be holding court at their table. But when he looks closer, he sees some of them give off tell-tale signs of anxiety or even fear. They don't like this any more than Derek does. He turns his attention back to Stiles and sees he's looking at him now.

Derek can't understand, fully, what it's like to be an omega. But he can sympathize. Surely they'd rather be making relationships organically, naturally, the way the rest of the world is allowed to do outside the restraints put on alpha and omega pairs. He thinks back on what Stiles told Ennis, and wonders how many of the alphas here are looking for a trophy. How many alphas see the omegas as things and not people?

Briar comes back to the table without a plate, a flush to her cheeks. "Sorry, got caught up in conversation," she says.

Stiles smiles, and it looks genuine. "It's fine."

"I see you forgot your dessert," Deuc says.

Briar colors even more. "Oh! Oh…"

Stiles laughs. "There's only about ten minutes left if you want to scoot on over to Isaac's table."

"You wouldn't mind?" Briar asks. "I just want to talk to him a little more."

"I don't mind at all," Stiles says. His scent tells Derek that he's amused and a little relieved. "And I think Isaac would be happy."

Briar smiles and nods at everyone as she departs. "It was nice meeting everyone. Stiles, it was a pleasure."

"Good luck," Stiles tells her.

"And then there were three," Deucalion says, sounding satisfied with himself, as if he had something to do with Briar's departure.

Stiles ignores him.

"She could come back," Peter says.

"She's besotted," Deuc says. "Just look at her."

They all turn to see. Briar does look happy, talking with the other omega. Stiles smiles and shrugs. He doesn't seem at all perturbed.
Derek hates that they have to go soon. He doesn't like being around so many people, but being next to Stiles somehow makes it okay. Especially when he's held onto Derek's hand.

As if he can read his mind, Stiles reaches down and touches his hand again. "It's almost time to go."

"I hope to see you again soon, Stiles," Deuc says.

Derek nods. "Soon?"

Stiles squeezes his hand. "Soon."
Chapter 5

Peter isn't expecting to hear from Stiles right away — but he does. Stiles texts him and Derek to say hi the next morning, and when Derek gets called in by Fish and Wildlife to help track a poacher, Stiles keeps talking to Peter. Summer classes don't start for another week and Peter doesn't need to be at work, so he has all the time in the world to spend texting Stiles.

Peter takes his phone out into the preserve, the places he's sure has service, and ends up sitting on the steps of the old house smiling at his phone.

He tells Stiles about the house, remembering that Derek wanted to know if Stiles would like it fixed up. He takes and sends a few pictures, then says, *It's the house the pack lived in before we got too big in the 50s. It's been maintained for the most part. It could use some renovations though.*

Stiles is quiet for a few minutes, possibly going through the pictures, possibly doing something else entirely. Peter gets up and looks around the house, really looks. He and Derek aren't really handyman types, but they could certainly pay for the work it needs.

*Is that a greenhouse I spy out the window in that backyard pic?* Stiles asks.

It is, and Peter walks to it to take some more pictures to send him. Some of the glass needs replacing, but it's in relatively good shape. Overgrown, of course, but Stiles doesn't seem to care.

*I love it.*

Peter smiles down at his phone and takes more pictures of the house. It's old but there's plenty of room for a growing family, and soon Stiles wants more pictures.

*I think that rug has seen better days. Is that hardwood underneath it?* he wants to know.

Peter dutifully pulls the dusty old rug back and takes pictures of the wood floors beneath. From there it's pictures of the kitchen, the porch, then the master bedroom and surroundings. There's no ensuite bath. There's only one bathroom in the house. Peter thinks it will be a problem, but Stiles seems excited.

*Knock down a wall, turn two bedrooms into the new master and add a bathroom. Voila!*

There's certainly enough space to do it, and Stiles's enthusiasm is rubbing off on Peter. He wants to do this for Stiles. For Derek.

Maybe a little bit for himself, too.

Stiles and he chat for another hour, until Peter's stomach starts to rumble and he realizes it's past lunch. The sun is high in the sky.

*Send me a selfie?* Stiles asks as Peter is returning to the house.

Peter smiles. *You first.*

There is nothing suggestive about the picture Stiles sends, but it still manages to make Peter lick his lips. Stiles is making an exaggerated pout, likely just to be silly, but Peter wants to kiss the expression right off him.

Peter quickly takes a pic of himself, then another, and another, until he's satisfied with how it looks.
He has his head turned, so his scars don't show as much, but there's no escaping that he's just not as attractive as he was before the fire.

Stiles doesn't seem to care, though. Rroawrrrr, he sends. Then immediately after, In case it wasn't clear, I think you're hot.

Like a melted candle, Peter thinks automatically, but he can't deny the compliment warms him.

Well in case it wasn't clear, I think you're absolutely gorgeous, Peter texts.

There's no answer for a minute, and then there's a surprisingly short, g2g, and Peter blinks at the suddenness of it. He knows Stiles isn't supposed to be texting him, and he only hopes he hasn't been caught out.

He puts his phone away and walks into the house to get a late lunch.

Talia's at work, but Laura's there.

"What are you up to?" Peter asks. Laura's got her purse and is on the way out the door.

Laura shakes her head. "You and Derek are completely oblivious to everything, aren't you?"

"What?" Peter asks.

"What's today?" Laura asks.

"Monday?" Peter says.

"Right. And what's happening on Monday?" Laura asks, a teasing lilt to her voice.

Peter wracks his brain. Is he missing another event? No, surely Stiles would have mentioned that. He shrugs. "I give up."

Laura rolls her eyes. "Cora's coming home! I'm picking her up at the airport. Want to come?"

Oh, shit. He's forgotten his youngest (and favorite) niece's return. "Do I have time to change?"

Laura looks at her watch. "If you hurry."

Peter gives her a grin and makes his way upstairs as quickly as he can. He changes into a pair of slacks and a short-sleeved henley. He does a quick check of his hair, uses the bathroom, and then he's ready. He shoots a quick text off to Derek telling him where he's going. He doesn't get a reply, but he isn't expecting one while Derek is tracking.

Once he's in the car, he sends a text to Stiles, too. Going to the airport to pick up my niece Cora. He's not expecting a reply to that one, either.

The drive to the airport will take a couple of hours, which gives him plenty of time to catch up with Laura. He relaxes as she pulls out and toward the highway.

"So how are things going with the Martin girl?" he asks, and watches as Laura lights up and begins to talk.

"Talk," Stiles says when Kira comes out of the bathroom. He shoots off a quick g2g to Peter, then turns his phone off.
Kira's eyes are red and puffy. Her nose is red, too. When she talks, she's stuffed up, and it's obvious she's been crying heavily. "It's nothing."

"Bullshit."

He expects her to sit on her bed, or maybe at the desk, but Kira comes over to his bed and sits right beside him. She starts to cry — again — and Stiles can't help but be alarmed.

"What is it? Did… is it Allison?" Stiles asks, keeping his voice quiet because while all their classmates know Kira has an alpha girlfriend, not many know her identity.

Kira cries harder and leans on his shoulder. Stiles pulls her into his arms and lets her sob. It seems to be what she needs right now.

They cuddle together often for comfort and reassurance. Stiles is used to being close to Kira; she's his best friend and closest confidant. He knows her and she knows him, as much as someone can know another person.

"Did she break up with you?" Stiles asks worriedly. He knows it's coming — it has to — but he thought they'd at least try to work around mating season as much as they could before they figured out it was impossible.

"No," Kira sobs.

Stiles takes a deep breath. "Did you break it off with her?"

It would be the smart thing to do, but he also knows Kira loves Allison more than anything. Neither of them are giving up the other this easily.

Kira just shakes her head.

"You gotta give me something here," Stiles says helplessly.

Kira pulls away from him and gives him an absolutely wrecked look. She gets up and goes into the bathroom. When she comes back, she's holding something, a white stick, and when she shows it to him his stomach bottoms out.

"No…" Stiles says.

"Yes," Kira says, her breath hitching. She lets him take the stick and then wraps her arms around herself. She's standing there looking miserable, like she's about to get yelled at. And yes, Stiles wants to yell at her, because this… this is so irresponsible, and yet…

He knows if this was him in her spot, the last thing he'd need is his best friend treating him like a dumbass. Even if he deserved it.

He puts the pregnancy test down and holds his arms out for her.

She moves fast, practically jumps back into his arms, and starts sobbing again. He rubs her back and tries to think just what the hell they're going to do.

All he can think of is how they need to hide this as long as possible. Mating season, and Jesus fucking Christ she's got to get mated right away, so nobody knows. Except that isn't fair to anyone, not Kira and not Allison and not whatever ignorant alpha they'd get to mate Kira.

It's just… this, that Kira and Allison have been doing, is straight up illegal. Stiles knew they'd have
sex sometimes, when they could sneak away and get some privacy, but he never actually considered that Allison might knot Kira, and Kira getting pregnant outside of heat is just really such a slim chance, and yet here Kira is with a positive pregnancy test.

"Are you sure?" Stiles asks. "There's such a thing as a false positive, right?"

Kira holds on tighter and lets out a hiccup. "Erica could smell it on me last night." Werewolf noses. Shit, how many alphas could smell it on her at the luncheon yesterday? He asks and Kira says, "None of them get close enough. Erica and I were cuddling."

Omega cuddling happens a lot, but Kira and Erica aren't usually so close. "Can I ask why you and Erica were cuddling last night?"

"I was just overwhelmed. After the luncheon and... you seemed so happy, I didn't want to get my emotions all over you..." Kira sniffs.

"You are my best friend and one hundred percent allowed to get your feelings all over me, anytime, no matter what," Stiles says, shaking her gently to let her know he's serious.

"Well, Erica was kinda upset too, and we both needed a good cuddle, and I guess... I guess my hormones are already kinda wacky because I cried all over her and then she was like, 'Oh, you smell like my mom when she was pregnant with my little brother,' and then I realized I haven't had a period in two months and god, Stiles, what am I gonna do?"

She goes back to crying, and Stiles just holds onto her, rocking her back and forth slightly while he thinks.

Finally, Stiles says, "We have to tell Natalie."

Kira pulls back and shakes her head. "Allison could go to jail."

It's true. Legally, technically... except maybe not.

"You're of age now," Stiles says. "The law says you're an adult."

Kira's puffy eyelids blink at him. "I am now, but-"

Stiles smiles at her. "No one can prove you were together before your birthday."

"I guess not? It's still, I mean, Allison can't court me."

"Why not? She's young but she's the heiress to her dad's company, right?"

Stiles licks his lips, then gets up, starting to pace as he thinks. As he thinks, he talks. "Lydia was here for the ball, which proves you don't have to be a certain age to be considered a suitor..."

"She's our head's daughter, that doesn't prove anything," Kira argues.

"It proves that some rules can be bent, and that Natalie's able to do that," Stiles says. "What if Allison... what if she was invited but just hasn't shown up to any events yet?"

"She would have told me if she was," Kira says, adorably confused.

"But we can lie and say she was," Stiles says. "Or rather, the headmistress can say she was." He gives her a triumphant smile.
"Do you really think Natalie would do that?" Kira asks.

"I think she's the best headmistress this school has ever had, and that she'll do a hell of a lot for her omegas." He's thinking ten steps ahead, picturing Kira and Allison bonded and living in a little cozy house with a picket fence and a baby and he realizes, suddenly, that he hasn't even asked Kira what she wants. He sits down suddenly. "Wait, wait."

"What?"

Stiles takes her hands in his and looks at her seriously. "Is that what you want? Do you even want a kid this soon? What about school? What… I mean, you don't have to keep it. You have options."

Kira's bottom lip wobbles. "Do I really, though?"

"I would fight anyone who said you didn't," Stiles says seriously. "And you don't even have to decide right now."

"It depends on Allison," Kira whispers.

"Okay…?" Stiles says, not understanding.

Kira's eyes start to fill with tears. "What if Allison doesn't want the baby?"

"She loves you," Stiles says, a little helplessly. Then, he thinks about what he'd do if Allison decided she wasn't going to support Kira. Allison might be a badass Olympics-ready archer, but Stiles could totally take her down. Enough rage and fury for his friend and he could do it. "But even if she doesn't want the baby, I will be with you every step, no matter what. It's down to what you want, Kira."

Kira puts a hand on her flat stomach. "I want it," she whispers. "I just want Allison, too."

"Okay," Stiles says with a nod. "So. I say you tell Allison what's going on, and then if everything is good then the two of you go talk to Natalie."

"And if it's not good?" Kira asks.

"Then me and you and Natalie will figure it out." He gives her a confident smile and she smiles back, though hers trembles with anxiety. He gives her another hug and she clings. They stay like that for a long time.

Derek gets back from the Fish and Wildlife office and takes a shower. His mom is home from work, but Peter and Laura are still on their trip to get Cora and won't be back for another hour or two, at least.

Derek doesn't like it when Peter's not around and there's nothing else to occupy his mind. Peter keeps him grounded, and when he's not there Derek feels a little like an unmoored boat, bobbing around to the water's — or life's — will.

He lets himself into Peter's room, closes the door, and texts Stiles. Are you busy now?

Stiles doesn't just answer. A moment later, Derek's phone rings. He answers.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Derek," Stiles says. He sounds tired.
"Are you okay?" Derek asks.

Stiles huffs a laugh. "I'm exhausted, to tell the truth. Lots of... emotional stuff going on over in the ole omega school."

"Anything I can help with?"

Stiles sighs. "Nope. But you can talk to me for a little while before I fall asleep."

Derek looks at the clock. "You'll sleep through dinner."

"I don't think I could eat tonight," Stiles says.

Whatever is on his mind, it must be big. Derek asks, "Are you sure you don't want to talk about it?"

"Not yet. Tell me about something else, instead."

"Okay," Derek says. "Like what?"

"What'd you do today?"

Derek tells him. Talks about the poachers who were hunting deer out of season in the Preserve, not realizing Fish and Wildlife were onto them, or that Derek is on their speed dial.

"They were surprised, huh?" Stiles asks.

"Yeah," Derek says. He grabs some paper and starts sketching, doodling really. But the picture soon starts to take the shape of Stiles's face.

"Anything else happening?" Stiles asks. "Peter went to pick up your sister?"

"Cora, yeah," Derek answers.

Stiles is quiet for a moment. "I went to school with her before I presented."

"Were you friends?" Derek asks.

"Nah. We ran in different circles. I doubt she remembers me."

"I don't know how anyone could forget you," Derek says honestly.

"You can't just say stuff like that," Stiles says after a few seconds.

Derek laughs. "Why not?"

"I don't know," Stiles says, but he sounds happy. "Hey, so Peter sent me all these house pictures today, he said it was your pack's old house?"

Derek finishes drawing the bow of Stiles's lips. "Did you like it? We can fix it up, if you do. If you want to live there."

"You don't mind? It'd be a lot of work," Stiles says.

"We can hire people to do the work," Derek says. "And it'd be nice, to be close to our pack, but... to have our own place."

"Yeah," Stiles says. "I'd like that. The greenhouse is amazing."
"You like to grow things?" Derek asks.

"Love it. I have such a green thumb, you don't even know. I'm practically magic." He sounds so happy talking about it. It makes Derek smile and add a sparkle to his drawing's eyes.

"You are," Derek says seriously.

"There you go again," Stiles says, but Derek can tell he's pleased.

Derek finishes the sketch and takes a quick picture of it to send before he loses his nerve. "Hold on," he says as he sends it through.

He hears when Stiles gets it. "Oh, wow. That's me!"

"Yeah."

"You're really talented. I love it. Thanks, Derek."

"Yeah," Derek says, a little gruff because he's embarrassed and doesn't know what else to say.

But Stiles doesn't seem to mind. "Hold on, I'll send a selfie. I sent one to Peter today, and it's quid pro quo so I want one of you, too."

"Okay," Derek says. He's never been good at selfies, but he manages a half decent one and sends it on.

"Nice," Stiles says when he gets it. "You look comfortable."

"I'm in Peter's bed," Derek tells him.

"You're really close," Stiles says.

"Yeah, we are."

"I like you both a lot," he says.

Derek looks at the selfie he sends and wishes he could get scent through the phone. "We both like you a lot, too."

Stiles yawns. "I'm falling asleep."

"Okay," Derek says. "Want me to go?"

"You should. Unless you just wanna hear me snore into the phone for a few hours," Stiles says with a sleepy chuckle.

"I wouldn't mind," Derek says truthfully.


It's not night, not even close, but Derek answers in kind. "Goodnight, Stiles."

After they hang up, Derek decides to take a nap of his own. He's comfortable, like Stiles says, and the room smells of Peter and home. The only thing that would make it better would be Stiles's scent. Then it might be perfect.

He rolls over, his nose in Peter's pillow, and falls asleep.
Cora's always been Peter's favorite niece. She's the youngest, and by the time she was born Peter was old enough to appreciate her. Not that he didn't appreciate Laura and Derek, but they were more like younger siblings when it comes to their age differences.

Peter taught Laura how to spit and Derek how to make himself a sandwich. Cora came later and got the rest of Peter's knowledge. How to skirt around the truth without outright lying. How to tie her shoes. How to talk to girls and boys she liked. And how to discourage a bully from ever bothering her.

Cora had been distraught after Peter was injured. The whole family was, of course, but Cora took it hard. Not as hard as Derek, maybe, but Cora had only been eleven and one of the adults in her life had proven himself vulnerable.

It was a hard lesson, and it toughened something inside her, just like it did Peter. They understand each other. Always have.

On the way back home, Cora tells them all about the boy she dated who turned out to be a beta supremacist. "He was just so normal at first," she says. "But then he'd say some weird things, and I was getting red flags, so I asked him outright. And he didn't want to, but eventually he just admitted it!"

Cora's the only beta in the family. They all waited for her first rut, thinking she'd be another alpha, but it never came. When they took her to the doctor, to see if she was just a late bloomer, some tests confirmed the truth. None of them had been disappointed, just confused. Cora was a strong, independent young woman. She showed possessive tendencies from the time she was little, but the doctor explained that was more down to her being a werewolf than an alpha.

Peter, once he thought about it, was happy for her. Betas often had it easier than alphas, and definitely better than omegas. She wouldn't be stereotyped as being led around by her hormones. She'd be treated fairly in school and later in a career.

"What did you do?" Laura asks Cora.

Cora smirks. "Oh, I made sure it got out. Hardly anyone wanted anything to do with him after that."

Beta supremacists are dangerous. Cora learned that at a young age when Kate Argent went after their family. After what Kate did to Derek and then to Peter, Cora is wary of any beta who thinks they're somehow better than alphas or omegas, even if it's just casual overconfidence. They never knew what pushed Kate over into extremist territory, and it seems sometimes that it maybe didn't take much.

"What else did you do?" Peter asks knowingly.

Cora widens her eyes, a perfect picture of innocence. "Nothing bad."

Peter laughs. He's missed her so much.

There's a knock on Stiles's door and when he opens it, he sees a worried-looking Erica.

"Is Kira here?" she asks in a whisper.
Stiles shakes his head but invites her in.

"Where'd she go?" Erica asks. She sits in the desk chair and Stiles flops on his bed.

"To tell her alpha."

"You know? About…" She trails off and makes a gesture that might mean 'pregnant' or might mean 'secret katana-wielding spy'. Which Kira could be. She's that badass.

"I'm her best friend, what do you think?" Stiles says.

Stiles snorts. "Super smellers. Getting all up in my business."

"What's going to happen to her, Stiles?" Erica's hands are trembling. She's anxious, too.

"I wish I knew." He looks at her, then relents. "Wanna cuddle?"
Erica nods and soon Stiles ends up with Erica's hair in his face as she snuggles down close to him.

"I hate it here," Erica whispers. "I hate being an omega."
Stiles sighs. "It's not all bad."

"Do you remember when Alicia came?"

For a moment, Stiles can't think of who Alicia is, but then he remembers. She's their newest omega. She was scared when she showed up, and there was a struggle as her older brother yelled about it not being fair, about the school 'stealing' his sister.

"Yeah."

"I used to have such a crush on Boyd. Before I presented, I mean. He was always so nice to me. I had dreams of growing up and marrying him."

Stiles remembers Boyd — they'd been in the same class. Boyd was quiet, but when he did talk he was smart and funny. His family was all betas, at least they were. Until Alicia, Stiles guesses.

Erica sighs. "I didn't care that he was a beta. I hoped I'd be a beta, too."

"You wouldn't have gotten the Bite if you were a beta," Stiles points out.

Erica's quiet. "I don't know which is worse. Epilepsy was like a prison. I had to take meds, I knew I wouldn't be able to drive. I was tired all the time. I thought I'd die if it didn't stop. But then… this place is a prison, too. Being an omega, you lose all your freedom."

It's true. The only omegas with freedom are widows, like Natalie. Or those with extremely lenient alphas.

"Courting isn't going well?" Stiles asks her.

"I don't like any of them."

Stiles wonders if she's given them a chance. "You don't have to choose any of them, you know."

"And then I have to stay here another year, until next season. What if I don't like any alphas then,
"It's not fair, I know. They say we're adults, we should be allowed to decide what we want to do with our lives. What if we want to stay single?" Stiles asks.

Erica giggles. "I wouldn't go that far. I do want a mate."

"But what if you didn't?" Stiles asks.

Erica shrugs. "Then I'd just be miserable, I guess."

"I think Theo's gonna turn his suitors down," Stiles says.

"He wants to stay with Liam," Erica says. It's common knowledge in their class. In the whole school, really. Theo and Liam are in love. That's all there is to it.

"So then… what? They have another year together, but then Liam comes of age and he's up on the auction block, too."

Erica snorts, then shrugs. She doesn't know any more than Stiles does.

If it was Stiles, he'd find a way, he thinks. He'd do something crazy like run away. Theo might do that, but Liam? Well, Stiles doesn't know Liam as well. He's in the class below them.

"I wish I could help them," Stiles murmurs.

"Me too," Erica says with a sigh. "Well, at least we don't have to get mated as soon as we've presented." In some places, that's common practice.

"Yeah, it could be worse. But it could be a whole lot better, too."

"You're right. But what good does it do to talk about it? It's just wishing for things we can't have."

Stiles sighs. He misses Kira in conversations like this.

"Tell me about your suitors. Do you like them?" Erica asks.

He can't help but smile a little. "Yeah."

She shifts on the bed and looks at him. "Really?"

"I like Derek and Peter," Stiles says. "My other suitor isn't… as great."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, he seems… mean? Petty."

"Are you talking about Deucalion Blackwood?" Erica asks.

Stiles nods.

Erica looks incredulous. "He's rich as fuck and handsome. How can you not like him?"

"I don't like how he talks to my other suitors."

"He's competitive. He's supposed to be."
Stiles sighs. "I guess."

"You're so annoying, Stiles. You have three good suitors and all you can do is complain."

"I'm not complaining about the Hales."

Erica sighs. "When is Kira getting back?"

Stiles looks at the clock. "Soon, I hope."

"And then what?"

"Depends what happened."

"Maybe I shouldn't stay," Erica says, frowning. "I'm not really... I mean..."

Stiles hugs her. "We're friends. You can stay. If Kira wants you out when she gets back, she'll tell you."

That's not what happens, though. Kira comes in about half an hour later and heads straight to the bathroom. Stiles and Erica can hear her throwing up.

"I'm out," Erica says with a wrinkled nose, and just like that, she leaves.

Stiles shakes his head and taps on the bathroom door. "Is this morning sickness? Evening sickness?"

Kira groans.

"I'm coming in," Stiles says, steeling himself. He's not big on vomit, but he's not going to get sick just from seeing it. Or smelling it. He hopes.

Kira looks like she's been crying again. Hell, she looks miserable. Stiles starts plotting ways to get back at Allison as he fills a cup with cool water and gives it to Kira.

"You were gone awhile," he says. "We were worried about you. Erica came over for awhile to wait."

Kira's face crumples and she starts crying. Stiles winces and sits down on the floor with her. She leans against him and sobs when he wraps an arm around her.

He's never seen her like this before. It's a little scary. "Kira? What did she say?"

But Kira shakes her head and chokes out some words. "She was... she was so happy. She wants the... the baby."

"Then why are you crying?" Stiles asks, inwardly relieved he won't be fighting Allison.

Kira calms down a little, takes another sip of water, and breathes. Then she starts to explain. "Allison wanted to take me to her family, so we could tell her parents together. She lets out a miserable little noise and buries her face in Stiles's neck.

Oh no. "What happened, Kira?"

"Her dad wasn't home. She wanted to wait, but her grandfather came in and... and she told her mom and her mom..." Kira's breath starts coming faster and Stiles is afraid she'll have a panic attack.
"They didn't take it well, huh?"

"Her mom slapped me. Called me a slut and slapped me!"

"What?" Stiles yelps. He's shocked. "How... how fucking dare she hit you!"

"Allison got really upset and pushed her mom away from me and then her grandfather started yelling at her, and told her to get ahold of herself, and somehow he ended up driving me back here but he was so creepy in the car, and..." She trails off and swallows. "He..."

Kira moves quickly and is retching into the toilet again before Stiles knows it's going to happen.

This time, Stiles is there to hold her hair back. There's not a lot to throw up this time, at least, so Kira ends up just dry heaving after a minute.

She wipes her mouth with some toilet tissue and Stiles hands her the water again. Her eyes are full of tears.

"What did he do?" Stiles asks, though he thinks he knows. Allison's grandfather is probably old enough that Stiles can kick his ass.

"Touched me," Kira whispers. "Tried to kiss me. He... he said if I was nice to him, he'd talk to Victoria. Allison's mom, I mean."

Stiles pulls her into his arms and she shakes. She doesn't sob this time, but this is somehow worse.

"I'm calling my dad," Stiles says. "He can arrest this asshole. That's assault. Hell, what this Victoria did to you is assault, too. Battery, if we can make it stick."

"No," Kira says in a small voice.

"We can't let them get away with this," Stiles says vehemently.

But Kira shakes her head. "I think... I think I need to wait and see what Allison says."

"Kira," Stiles says, helplessly, unable to come up with anything else.

"She's my alpha," Kira says softly.

Stiles is completely confused. "Since when do you care what an alpha has to say when it comes to your own... your safety and your... your autonomy?"

"Right now I just want my alpha," Kira says in a miserable voice. "It's pregnancy hormones or something, omega instincts, maybe. I don't know. I just know I want Allison."

"Where's your phone?" Stiles asks. "Has she tried to get ahold of you yet?"

"I think I left it somewhere," Kira says. "Can you call her?"

Stiles has Allison's number for emergencies, so he nods. "Yeah. Hold on and I'll do that."

But the call goes straight to voicemail. He frowns when he tells Kira that.

Kira widens her eyes. "What if she got it taken away?"

"Okay, how about you take a shower, nice and hot and long, and I'll try to figure this out?" Stiles
Kira nods silently and Stiles leaves her to it.

He doesn't know what to do. Kira doesn't want him calling his dad. He's got to do something. He tries to call Allison again but hangs up on her voicemail.

There's got to be something...

Hell, if he has to, he'll go out there and find Allison himself.

Derek is sitting in the living room with his family, listening to Cora talk about school, when his phone goes off. Not just his, but Peter's as well. They both take them out and look at them, and Peter must see the same thing Derek does: a group text from Stiles that just says I really need some help.

Derek looks at Peter, sees he's already looking back.

"Excuse us," Peter says, and gets up. Derek moves to follow.

"What is that?" Talia asks.

Derek's not sure what to say but Peter just smiles. "None of your business, sister."

Then Laura's phone buzzes. She frowns at whatever text she's gotten, and says, "You'll have to excuse me as well."

That's interesting, though Derek doubts Stiles is texting Laura, too.

Derek thinks Peter will go to his room for privacy, but he goes outside, instead. Derek follows closely behind. Peter is calling Stiles, he thinks, and he's on his way to his car.

"What's wrong?" Peter asks when Stiles picks up.

Derek can hear well enough through the phone, but Peter brings it closer to make it easier. Stiles's voice is strained when he says, "I need a ride. I think. I have to find someone, and I don't know how, but... I swear I'll go out there and find her myself if I have to."

"Darling, slow down," Peter says. "Tell us what's wrong."

"Derek's there?" Stiles asks.

"I'm right here," Derek says, loud enough that Stiles will hear him.

Stiles breathes out. It sounds like relief. "I've got to find someone. Allison Argent."

Derek feels hot and cold at the same time. Just the name Argent is enough to make him want to snarl. Possibly bite someone.

"And why do you need to find this Argent girl?" Peter asks evenly.

Stiles gives a rambling answer. "Her family is shit and I think she probably isn't home, or she's killed her mom, and if she knows more she'll definitely kill her grandfather, and Kira needs her. Kira really, really needs her right now, and I don't know what'll happen if I can't find her."

Derek looks at Peter. He's clenching his teeth. "Sweetheart, I need more to go on than that. I know of
the Argents, but I don't think I'd be welcome to search their house for their daughter."

"She's probably not there. She… I don't know. Her best friend is Lydia Martin, maybe try her house?"

Derek frowns. Isn't that Laura's girlfriend? He looks toward the house. "Hold on."

As he goes back inside, he hears Peter speaking calmly to Stiles over the phone, and he hopes it helps to make Stiles feel better. He can tell from his voice that Stiles is upset, and his alpha instincts are screaming at him to make it better.

He heads toward Laura's room but bumps into her in the hall. Derek says, "Can I call your girlfriend?"

Laura frowns. "What?"

"Your girlfriend," Derek says, slower and with more of a scowl.

"I'm on my way over there. Something about preventing a murder." Laura sounds confused but eager to help Lydia.

"Is Lydia's best friend there?" Derek asks.

Laura raises her eyebrows but nods. "Yes, actually."

"Okay," Derek says, and stands there thinking. "Okay, I'm coming with you."

"What?" Laura says, but lets Derek pull her down the stairs and out the door.

Outside, Peter is talking seriously to Stiles and Derek wonders what's been said. Derek tells him quickly what's going on, and Peter nods. He speaks into the phone, relaying the information.

"Oh, thank god," Stiles says, loud enough for Laura to hear.

"Who's that?" Laura whispers.

Derek gives her a shrug. "Our omega."

Laura's eyebrows do something complicated. "O…kay. You still coming with me?"

Derek looks at Peter, who's still speaking calmly. Peter says, "I can pick you both up, but you need to be careful."

"Pretty sure this is life or death," Stiles says.

"Darling," Peter drawls, "I'd rather not get arrested for kidnapping two unbonded omegas."

"We'll be careful. We'll meet you by the oak."

Derek doesn't know what oak Stiles is talking about, but Peter nods and agrees. "Derek is going with Laura, so it'll just be me."


Peter huffs. "I will obey the speed limits. I don't need your father pulling me over on my way to abduct you."
"What in the fuck is even going on here?" Laura asks aloud.

Derek opens her passenger door. "C'mon, let's go."

"Maybe I don't want to know," she mutters. She gets into the car and starts it up. She looks at him. "You two know what you're doing?"

Derek gives her half a smile. Peter might even call it a smirk. "Sure thing."

He texts Stiles, *I'm going with Laura. Will meet you at Lydia's.* It's probably not necessary. Peter's surely told him this.

He sees Peter in the rearview, getting in his own car and following them out of the driveway. Stiles texts back.

_Thank you. I know you guys are risking a lot for me and for Kira._

_And you don't know Kira._

_So you're doing it for me and I appreciate it._

Derek types back an easy, _Anytime._

"So what did you mean when you said 'our omega', Derek?" Laura asks. "Are you and Peter courting the same person?"

"Yeah," Derek answers.

Laura whistles low. "When Mom finds out, it's gonna be hell."

Derek scowls. He's tried not to think about it.

"Do you know what this is all about?" Laura asks, thankfully changing the subject.

Derek shakes his head. "You probably know more than me."

"I know Lydia's friend has been secretly dating an unbonded omega. After that, it gets fuzzy."

"Kira is Stiles's roommate and best friend."

Laura nods then tentatively says, "And Lydia's friend is an Argent."

Derek swallows. "Yeah."

"Shit."

Derek snorts. "I know."

"She can't be awful if she's Lydia's best friend," Laura says quietly.

"We'll just have to see," Derek says, though his wolf is agitated. He calms down by imagining being near Stiles tonight. Both he and Peter get an opportunity to be with him, outside of the omega school and their red tape.

Laura looks over at him. "Doing okay, Der?"

"You'll get to meet him," Derek says just as it comes to him. He doesn't know how to feel about this. He wants his family to like Stiles, wants them to accept him. He wants him to fit in and be loved.
Laura grins. "I'm looking forward to meeting the omega who turned both your heads, that's for sure."

The drive isn't that long; Lydia lives in town, not too far from the omega school. They get there before Peter, of course, and Lydia lets them in.

Lydia looks different than she did at the coming out ball. Less makeup, less sparkle, but just as much put together. She hugs Laura tightly and gives Derek a tight smile.

"It's good to meet you," Derek says, remembering his manners. "My sister's crazy about you."

"Der," Laura hisses. Her cheeks pinken. Derek's never seen her so flustered before, and now he's glad he has. His unflappable big sister is… flapping. He grins at her.

"I like her, too," Lydia says, giving Laura a soft look. "Come on into the living room and meet Allison, I guess."

Allison looks up quickly when she hears them enter, but when she sees they're strangers, her face falls. "Oh," she says quietly.

"This is Laura and Derek Hale," Lydia says.

Allison blinks, and then her face goes blank, hard, like glass. "Hello," she says stiffly.

Lydia cocks her head. She looks at Laura.

Laura shrugs helplessly. "Our families have history."

Which is a really breezy way to explain it, Derek thinks.

Laura sits down on a loveseat with Lydia and wraps arms around her, like she can't stand to not be touching her. Derek stands in the middle of the room, awkward, trying not to stare at the Argent girl.

He hopes Peter gets there soon.
Chapter 7

Peter turns off his lights as he rolls up to the large oak behind the omega school. He doesn't want to alert anyone to his presence, and headlights in a place no one has any business being could definitely put him in hot water.

Two faces peek out from behind the tree, and he hits the brakes. He's fully aware of all the trouble he could get in for this, but he's found he's soft for Stiles. Besides, it's far from the most illegal thing he's ever done.

The two omegas scramble into his backseat. Kira's scent hits him immediately. She smells of the unmistakable foxfire of a kitsune, but also something that makes Peter's instincts rattle — the scent of distressed omega. And she's very distressed, both anxious and miserable. No wonder Stiles is so worried about her.

Besides worry, Stiles smells of anxiety and a little excitement, too. He probably hasn't sneaked out of the school much.

"Seatbelts," Peter murmurs, and waits for them to put them on. Then he pulls out, waiting until he's some distance away from the school before putting his headlights back on.

"Thank you for this," Stiles says, sounding genuinely grateful.

Peter meets his eyes in the rearview mirror. He nods, not knowing what to say. Stiles gives him a small smile, then turns back to his friend. She's sniffing a little, but not crying.

The Martin house isn't far. Derek opens the door for them, and Stiles seems to relax immediately. Because he saw Derek, because he favors him, perhaps?

Kira looks fragile in the dim light of the foyer, but when she walks into the living room and sets her eyes on the Argent girl, she transforms. She rushes into Allison's arms and the two collide, cling, and suddenly they are the only two in the room. Or at least that's how it must feel for them.

Peter doesn't have all the facts, but he knows Allison is too young to court an omega, but the two are obviously in love.

He looks at Derek, knowing exactly what it's like to be in love and having no real chance to be with them. Beside him, Stiles lets out a small breath that sounds like, "Oh." When Peter looks at him, Stiles isn't watching his friend, but Peter.

"Are you okay, sweetheart?" Peter asks.

Stiles smells of uncertainty. "Peter…"

The Argent girl stiffens and looks his way. "Peter Hale?" She steps away from Kira and then moves in front of him, watching him. He's not in love, but he might be close to it, to her at least.

On one side of him, Derek growls low. On his other side, Stiles takes his hand and asks, "What's wrong?"

Allison doesn't look away from Peter. He squares his shoulders and faces her head on. Her eyes scrutinize him, looking at his scars. Peter narrows his eyes.
"Allie?" Kira asks.

"You killed my aunt," Allison says.

Derek's growl goes louder, and while Peter expects Stiles to pull away, he just tightens his hold on Peter's hand.

Peter swallows. "I did. I barely remember doing it, since I was burning half to death at the time, but yes. I killed her."

Allison's lips tighten. "It was ruled self-defense."

Peter nods stiffly.

"What do you want?" Derek growls.

Allison flinches, and Peter wonders if she knows what her precious aunt did to Derek. The girl shifts from foot to foot, looking nervous now. Unsure. "I loved her. My grandfather tells me all these stories about how great she was, but I know what she did. I know she was… she was a monster." She swallows. "But I loved her."

Kira rubs at Allison's back and makes a soft cooing noise. Tears fill Allison's eyes and she turns and puts her face in Kira's neck.

"Well now that that's over, does anyone want something to drink?" Laura's girlfriend asks.

Laura snorts. "Lydia…"

Lydia tosses her curls and shrugs. "What? I need some wine after that, I don't know about you."

Stiles is looking at Peter and Derek, questions in his eyes. Now would be a good time to talk about what just happened, and what happened in the past. Derek won't get another good chance to talk to him privately, not for awhile anyway.

Derek looks at Peter and Peter nods. Derek takes a deep breath. "Lydia, is there somewhere we can go to talk in private?"

Lydia nods. "Of course." She leads them to a large room upstairs that looks more like a small apartment than the master bedroom. There's an overstuffed couch Stiles immediately sits on, and Lydia points out the bar in the corner if they need a drink.

She leaves, closing the door behind herself, and Stiles sighs. He looks exhausted, but determined.

"Kira's pregnant," he says without prompting. "And Allison's family is nuts."

Everything makes a lot more sense now.

Peter sits down beside Stiles so that their sides touch. It's the closest he's ever been to him, and he just wants to pull him closer. The thought catches him off-guard. He distracts himself by saying, "Yes, we need to talk about the Argents. Or rather just the one: Kate."

He watches as Stiles holds out a hand to Derek, and pulls him to sit on his other side. He doesn't let go of his hand, and with his other he reaches out to Peter, too.

They sit together, Stiles in the middle of them, and it feels so right.
"Tell me?" Stiles asks Derek, knowing, somehow, that he needs to be the one to tell it.

His heart beats faster once he has his alphas on either side of him. He likes it. He feels small compared to them, small and safe. But also like he needs to protect them, because even though he doesn't know exactly what happened, he can tell Kate fucked the Hales up.

He holds onto their hands, letting them know he's there for them. He looks at Derek struggling to start talking, and squeezes his hand harder. He nods at him when Derek looks his way, and Derek seems to take heart. He starts to talk.

"I was sixteen," Derek says. "Kate was a beta, but she smelled like an omega. I found out later that she used fake pheromones. But she… she got some magic, too. She paid someone to put some kind of spell on me. At first it was just… I was attracted to her."

"How old was she?" Stiles asks quietly.

"Twenty seven," Peter answers.

Stiles closes his eyes in disgust.

Derek goes on. "The magic did something. Fucked with my control, made the wolf stronger. I nearly went feral."

"Why didn't you?" Stiles asks.

Derek looks over at Peter. "My anchor was too strong."

"You're the strong one," Peter murmurs.

Derek looks down and smiles, small and shy, before continuing. "Kate's plan was to make me lose control and prove alphas were unstable. When it didn't work, she went after my anchor."

"She trapped me in a shed with magic, and set it on fire. Set… set me on fire," Peter says. He closes his eyes and shudders. Stiles can't imagine what it must have been like, how much pain the fire caused. "I couldn't get out. She was laughing and… I killed her, somehow. Then the magic broke and I was able to escape."

"I'm so sorry," Stiles says. "You've both been through so much."

"We're dangerous," Derek says. "The magic never really left me, or the effects didn't, anyway. I'll always struggle with my wolf."

"I killed someone," Peter says quietly. "Neither of us are… whole. My scars may be the only ones visible, but Derek has scars of his own. But you deserved to know everything."

Stiles leans in and gives Peter a kiss on the cheek. Then he turns and does the same to Derek. "Thank you for opening up to me. I… It means a lot. But now I just care about you more, okay? I'm not put off."

More than that — he's terrified he's already fallen in love with them both. How will he ever choose?

And then there are other factors, like the way Peter looks at Derek, and the way Derek's anchor is his uncle. Are they in love with each other, and would they have room for Stiles if they are?

"You're exhausted, sweetheart," Peter says, and Stiles has to agree. He looks over his shoulder at the
four-poster bed longingly.
"You wanna lie down?" Derek asks.

Stiles stands, still holding their hands. He tugs them toward the bed. "If you cuddle me."

Peter looks surprised. "Both of us, sweetheart?"

Stiles shuffles from foot to foot. "If you don’t mind."

"It sounds perfect," Derek says, a low timbre to his voice that Stiles understands on a bone-deep level.

They end up lying on top of the beautifully made bed, Stiles's head pillowed on Peter's chest, Derek spooned behind him. Stiles has never felt so content.

This is what he wants for the rest of his life, but how?

Holding Stiles makes Derek's wolf yip with happiness. Derek dips his head, noses against the nape of Stiles's neck, and inhales. His eyes close as the heavenly scent fills his senses. Has anything ever smelled this good?

He's also a little in awe of Stiles. Their omega is sleeping now, his breath calm and even. His heartbeat is still a little quick, even in his sleep, but he's relaxed around them. He just found out Peter is a killer and Derek is more wolf than man, and yet here Stiles is, sleeping in their arms as if it's the safest place he could be.

Is it bravery, or faith, or something else entirely?

Stiles sighs in his sleep and moves a little. He's always twitchy, then.

He smells like contentment, though, and Derek wants him to always smell like this.

"He's really something," Peter whispers. When Derek picks his head up to look at him, his uncle is looking down into Stiles's face with an expression Derek can't recall seeing before, not toward someone who isn't pack. It's soft.

Derek wonders if Peter loves Stiles. If he doesn't yet, he will soon enough. There's something special about Stiles, something that's pulling both Hales toward him like a magnet. If Stiles didn't smell a hundred percent human, he'd guess there was something magical about it.

"He's… yeah," Derek whispers back, and smiles at his uncle.

Now Peter is giving Derek the same look, though it melts soon to worry. "What are we going to do?"

Laura's words come back to him then. Once Talia finds out, it'll be hell. She'll meddle. She'll ruin what's going right, in the name of making things better. Or at least, she'll try. They can't let it happen. Derek loves her, as his pack alpha and his mother, but he'll fight for his future.

The bedroom door opens and the light flicks on. Derek growls, unsure at first if the intruder is a threat. He doesn't have time to even recognize who is standing there before she says, "What the hell is going on? Stiles Stilinski!"

Stiles bolts up. "Yes, ma'am!" He stares at the woman and then looks around him, at Peter and
Derek, who are sitting up now.

Derek knows her now. Natalie Martin, the omega school’s headmistress.

"This isn't what it looks like!" Stiles says, scrambling off the bed.

"You're in bed — my bed — with two alphas. You are not on school grounds. You are unbonded." She's ticking things off on her fingers, giving Stiles a stern look. "And Kira's downstairs with three other alphas! I cannot believe how careless and irresponsible this is, not to mention illegal!" She looks at Peter and Derek. "You two know better than this, I know you do. If someone else had come in here, had found out about this, you'd be headed for jail on abduction charges."

"They didn't-" Stiles starts to say, but Ms. Martin gives him a glacial look and he cuts himself off.

"You and Kira are in so much trouble, Stiles," she says.

"But not them?" Stiles asks hopefully.

"Oh, these alphas are in trouble, too. I just haven't figured out what I'm going to do, yet."

"If I may explain, Ms. Martin-" Peter says smoothly, but Derek can hear his heart beating faster. He's not as calm as he appears.

"I got an explanation from Kira and Allison, and that is all the explanation I need to hear tonight. If yours is anything like unplanned pregnancy, Stiles, I will lose my shit."

And now Derek realizes how unnerved she is. Her hands are shaking. She walks over to the drinks cart in the corner and pours herself a short glass of something clear. Vodka or gin, maybe. She tosses it back and makes a face, then pours another finger of the liquor.

"What's going to happen with Kira?" Stiles asks tremulously.

Ms. Martin shakes her head. "I thought of going to Allison's parents and working out a way for her to court Kira legally, but after what Allison told me about her mother and grandfather…" She sighs heavily. Takes a drink.

"Have you talked to her father?" Peter asks.

Derek's met Chris Argent. He apologized for his sister, after everything. Derek remembers he was… kind. He hadn't appreciated it at the time, but maybe that might mean something good for Allison and Kira.

"He's out of town on business, or so I gather. He was supposed to be home today but got held up." She waves her hand. Then she looks at Stiles. "What am I going to do with you?"

"Natalie, nothing happened," Stiles says. "We were just cuddling, I promise."

"Yes, I saw. But leaving school grounds is still very dangerous, Stiles."

"I was safe," Stiles says stubbornly. "I was with my alphas the whole time, and they'd rip someone to shreds if they tried to touch me."

Ms. Martin then looks at Peter and Derek, her head tilted. "This is highly unusual."

Derek doesn't know what she means, but he's stuck on the way Stiles called them both his alphas. He likes how it sounds. There's a sense of rightness to it.
"Go downstairs, Stiles," Ms. Martin says. "I'll drive you and Kira back to the school in a few minutes."

Stiles gives them a long look, as if to check they're okay, then reaches out and squeezes their hands. Ms. Martin clears her throat and then Stiles nods and leaves the room.

"Are you going to strike us from the suitor list?" Peter asks quietly.

Derek would gasp if he thought he had the breath to do it. He can't imagine giving Stiles up.

But Ms. Martin shakes her head. "No. Then I might have to deal with an actual abduction, or at least a runaway omega. Stiles is set on you."

Peter frowns but doesn't say anything, and Derek feels like he can breathe again.

"But I expect you two to jump through every single hoop to court him," she says.

"Yes, ma'am," Derek murmurs, and Peter nods.

"If you don't treat him well, you'll regret it," she says, sounding almost flippant. The smell gives her away, though. She blasts enough protective omega scent to get the point across. "Now straighten my bed and then go home. Don't worry about Stiles; I'll make sure he gets back safely."

She turns and leaves the room. Derek looks at Peter, relief flooding him. They came so close to losing Stiles. The headmistress had all the power in the situation, and she could have chosen to cut their courtship off. It would have been over.

Peter is watching him, understanding in his face. "Come here," he says, and Derek falls into his arms for a hug.

"Fuck," Derek whispers.

Peter rubs his back, grips the nape of his neck. "I know. I know."

Derek lets out a long breath and then pulls back. They share a long look. Then they quickly smooth out the wrinkles on the bed and head downstairs. They get down just in time to see the back of Ms. Martin's hair as she escorts the omegas outside. They hear a car start and drive away. They sigh in unison.

"Go on home," Laura tells them. They turn to see the others in the room. Derek feels his face heat. He's not usually so oblivious to his surroundings.

Allison is sitting alone on the sofa now, looking slightly bereft. Lydia sits down beside her and hands her a glass of water.

Laura looks on with a slight smile on her face. "I'll stay here?"

Lydia nods. "if you want to."

"Of course I want to."

Derek gives his sister a quick hug, then he and Peter leave. But Peter doesn't drive straight toward the preserve.

"I'm starving," he says. The car's clock says it's 3am.
"Diner breakfast?" Derek asks. He can't stand to go to restaurants during the day when there are lots of people there, but at this time the crowd is thin.

Peter grins. "You read my mind."

Derek tries not to think about what the 'hoops' they have to jump through might be. He eats steak and eggs and a stack of pancakes, enjoying his uncle's company, and they start talking about renovating the old house.

"And the greenhouse," Peter adds. "Stiles is excited about that the most, I think."

Derek smiles. "We should make it special for him."

Peter looks at his watch. "I'll start calling contractors in a few hours."

"When you should be sleeping?" Derek asks.

Peter tilts his head. "Okay, maybe after we've gotten some sleep first."

Thankfully, once they get home, everyone is in bed, so they don't have to explain their quick departure or where they've been all this time. Derek doesn't think, just follows Peter to his room and sheds most of his clothes so he can lie down in Peter's bed.

Peter looks at him for a moment, eyebrows raised, but doesn't ask why he's there and not his own bed.

Derek's glad because he wouldn't have an answer for him anyway.
Chapter 8

To get back on Natalie Martin's good side, Peter sends a check to the school, earmarked for a new air filtration system. In return, he's scheduled for a psychiatric evaluation. So is Derek, who worries something will go wrong.

"You go to therapy regularly," Peter points out. "You're probably better adjusted than I am."

Derek snorts but seems to settle.

Besides the psych evals, the coming month has other events to attend. One-on-one dinners are spread throughout the month, nights where Stiles will cook for them. Peter knows Derek doesn't want to go without him, and to be honest Peter feels like he's cheating somehow to have time alone with Stiles. That doesn't mean he doesn't want to, though.

To his dismay, he finds he's falling in love with Stiles as well. Part of him is thrilled, but for the most part he's angry with himself, and confused because how can he feel this way? It almost feels like he's betraying Derek by falling for Stiles, and in more than one way. He's in love with his nephew, but also wants the omega Derek should have for a mate.

"What's wrong?" Derek asks.

Peter looks at him helplessly. He can't tell him. What would Derek think of him, if he revealed his true feelings? Would Derek hate him for it?

"You smell miserable," Derek points out, and pulls him close. Peter sighs and lets him, because he's a weak man, at least for this. Derek has a few inches on him now, enough to make Peter feel a bit small in times like this, when Derek tucks him close and Peter can smash his face against Derek's throat.

Peter remembers how he used to be the taller one, how he'd do just this for Derek when he was feeling low. It's a role reversal he finds he doesn't mind. Being this close means feeling Derek's heat against him and the easy flex of his muscles. His scent, too, fills his senses and Peter can feel his dick start to take an interest.

Time for a change of subject. Peter pulls away and says, "I feel like doing some renovations with the contractors."

Derek's nostrils flare. Does he smell the desire? Will he call him out on it?

Peter looks away and says, "Maybe they'll let us knock down some walls." Derek's watching him closely so Peter shrugs. "Or I could go alone."

"No, we should do it together," Derek says. "As much as we can."

And that's how Peter and Derek end up at the old house, swinging sledgehammers at the walls to open up space. The first wall they tackle is the one between the master bedroom and the room beside it. The master suite is going to have room enough for the bed, a seating area, and the ensuite bathroom.

The house is solidly made, and it's a surprising amount of work to knock down the strong wall. Near the end, Derek loses his shirt, so Peter slips his phone out to take a picture. Derek catches him and raises his eyebrows.
Peter shrugs. "Sending it to Stiles," he says, which is the perfect excuse.

Derek gives him a slow grin. "Yeah?"

Peter looks down at his phone and studies the picture as if he doesn't have the real thing in front of him. Derek's muscles flex as he swings the hammer, and the photo has picked up the fine sheen of sweat on his skin. It's hard to see the chips of paint in his hair, so Peter takes another picture, zoomed in on Derek's face, which is colored with his exertion.

His phone buzzes in his hand and he opens the text.

*Are you trying to kill me here?* Stiles wants to know.

Peter can relate. He looks at Derek and feels the same way.

"Get over here and help me," Derek says. "It's not a free show."

"It's hot as fuck," Peter grumbles, putting his phone away. None of the contractors are on this floor, so he strips out of his v-neck and uses it to mop his sweaty face. He hears a camera sound. When he looks over, Derek's messing with his phone.

"Don't send him that," Peter says, suddenly self-conscious of the scar that mars one side of his neck down to his chest.

Derek scoffs. "Tit for tat."

"That doesn't make sense — that would mean getting a picture of Stiles."

"Whatever. You look hot."

Peter walks over, peering at Derek's phone. "Did you at least get my good side?"

"It's all your good side," Derek assures him.

Peter gives him a look that he hopes adequately shows his disbelief.

"If you don't want me to send it, I won't," Derek says. He holds up the phone and shows Peter the picture. "But look. You're gorgeous."

"This is my dubious face," Peter murmurs, but tries to look at it objectively. His neck is thick, his shoulders broad. If you ignore the scarring, he has good definition. He's not smooth like Derek, but…

"You're gorgeous," Derek says again, this time softer. More honest.

Peter's heart flips over. He swallows hard. "Fine. Go ahead."

Derek smiles and hits send. Peter's tense as he waits for Stiles's reply.

He knows Derek's beautiful, that he doesn't even compare. But Stiles has never stared at him, has never said anything to make him think he doesn't find him attractive. The opposite, really. Still.

Both of their phones vibrate at the same time. Stiles has sent them both the same text.

*You're making me wet.*
Derek and Peter both suck in a breath. It's the most overtly sexual thing Stiles has ever said to them. Peter looks at Derek and watches his nephew's eyes flash. Derek growls low in his throat, and the sound makes a shock of want pulse through Peter's body.

Derek looks at him, nostrils flaring. There's no mistaking it this time. Peter's putting out the strong scent of alpha desire, and Derek knows it.

"Well," Peter says, but can't think of anything else. His mouth is dry, his heart pounding.

Derek sucks in a breath and lets it out slowly. Then he smiles. "He's perfect."

Peter laughs, relieved and nodding. "That he is."

"It smells like heat in here," Erica complains. She's opened the door but looks reluctant to close it behind her. "Stiles, is that you?"

Stiles is already flushed from looking at the pics from Peter and Derek, but he blushes harder now. "Sorry."

"Are you going into heat or are you just horny?" Kira asks.

Stiles turns around and smothered his heated face in his pillow.

"Horny," Erica says. "How are you doing, Kira?"

"Could be better," she answers.

When Stiles lifts his head again, he sees Erica and Kira hugging. He sighs. Kira's not doing so good, not while the whole pregnancy and mating thing is unsettled.

She's canceled her suitors. Everyone in the school knows it by now, but not why. So far just Erica knows, besides Stiles and Natalie, and Erica's proved to be a good friend. She hasn't breathed a word.

"So what's got you so worked up?" Erica asks Stiles.

He doesn't want to share the pics, so he says the other thing that's got him going. "Peter and Derek are working on our house. They're denning. I've got all kinds of omega instincts working overtime because of it."

Kira gives him a knowing look. Stiles shrugs. Just because the pictures are hot doesn't mean the denning isn't, too.

There's a knock on the door. Erica opens it and steps back when she sees who it is.

"Kira?" Natalie says. "Come with me to the office. You have visitors."

"Who?" Kira asks, getting up.

Natalie smiles. "You'll see."

"That sounds promising," Stiles murmurs as Kira follows Natalie out.

"Who do you think it is?" Erica asks.
Stiles shrugs. "Could be her mom? Or it could be... you know who."

"Voldemort?" Erica asks drily.

"No," Stiles says, laughing. "I mean Allison."

"You think Natalie would just let her come in here?" Erica asks dubiously.

"Maybe?"

Erica sighs. "Well as fun as guessing is, we might as well just wait and see. Now tell me about your dinners. Who's on the schedule?"

"Derek's first," Stiles says. "Tomorrow night, actually. Then Peter's three days later, then three days after that, I've got Deucalion."

"Thank fuck we've got them spread out," Erica says. "I can't imagine cooking night after night."

Stiles laughs. "You'd better snag an alpha who likes to cook, then."

"I hate Culinary Arts," Erica says. "I've failed that class twice. The only reason I passed this last year is because Meyers took pity on me."

"What are you doing for your dinners?" Stiles asks, genuinely wondering. If she's as bad as she says, she'd better pick something easy.

"I'm making macaroni and cheese," Erica says.

Stiles snorts a laugh. "Really?"

"A little bit of dijon and some hot sauce and it tastes just like it came from a restaurant!" Erica defends. "What are you making that's so great?"

That reminds him. He picks up his phone and texts his alphas. What's your favorite food? "I will let you know in a minute."

"Does Natalie know you have outside contact with them?" Erica asks.

Stiles bites his lip. "She's probably figured it out. But she hasn't taken my phone, so." He shrugs.

"Do you have Deucalion Blackwood's number?" Erica asks innocently.

"Actually, no." His phone buzzes. Derek sends spaghetti bolognese followed quickly by Peter's anything you want to make. Stiles rolls his eyes at Peter's answer. "Apparently I'm making spaghetti bolognese and my mom's lasagna."

"And what are you making for Deucalion?" Erica asks.

Stiles shrugs. "I'll think of something."

The look Erica levels at him is unimpressed.

"Fine. He's a werewolf, he probably likes steak. Rare."

Erica sighs. "I wonder if he likes mac and cheese."

"I can ask him," Stiles says. "I'm actually... I'm probably going to tell him I don't like him at his
"Why wait so long?" Erica asks.

"I promised my dad I wouldn't do it too soon. I said I'd get to know all my suitors first. But... I only like Peter and Derek. So." He shrugs.

"You know you can't pick them both, right?" Erica asks gently.

Stiles sighs and rubs his face. "Shit. I know, okay? I just... They're both so great."

"Well, you have some time until the end of the season."

"A month," Stiles says flatly. "That is not enough time to decide who I want to be with for the rest of my life." Especially when he doesn't want to have to decide between them at all.

"It is what it is," Erica says.

The door opens and Kira walks in, beaming brightly. She doesn't say a word until the door is closed and locked behind her, and then she flops face-down on her bed and squeals into her pillow, kicking her feet.

Stiles and Erica exchange amused smiles.

Kira sits up suddenly. "Me and Allison are getting bonded!"

"What?" Erica asks, eyes wide.

"How?" Stiles asks, which he thinks is the more pertinent question.

Kira flaps her hands excitedly. "Her mom and dad are getting a divorce, and her dad is totally on our side. He's got full control of the company and he's making sure Allison's got an income, and he wanted to buy us a house but Allison and I just looked at each other and we just didn't want Chris to be alone, so we're gonna live with him so he can be near his grandbaby and you should have seen his face when Allison said 'your grandbaby', he was so happy!"

Kira jumps up and hugs Stiles, then pulls Erica into it. Kira's crying happy tears now, and Stiles isn't too far away from doing the same.

"I guess we can have happy endings," Erica says quietly, and buries her face in Kira's neck.

Yes, we can, Stiles thinks.

They aren't alone, not entirely. Stiles's father is in the far corner, in a chair, acting as chaperone. Derek's not sure how he feels about that. Family, pack, should be together.

"Do you get to spend time with your dad tonight?" Derek asks Stiles.

"Some," Stiles says, though it doesn't sound like a lot.

"How much food did you make?" Derek asks. "Enough for three?"

"Um, more like enough for an army," Stiles says. "I've never fed a werewolf before, so I wasn't sure on the portion sizes."
Derek leans in. "Invite your father to eat with us."

Stiles blinks at him, and then his expression morphs into a big smile. He turns toward his father. "Dad!" he calls and motions him over. "You can eat with us!"

The sheriff raises his brows as he comes to the table. "You alright with that, Hale?"

Stiles pokes him. "It was his idea, Dad."

"That so," he says. He sits down and gives Derek a long look. "Thank you, then."

Derek nods. "You're welcome." Awkwardly, he searches for something to say. "You can call me Derek."

The sheriff sighs. "I suppose you can call me John."

"Dad," Stiles grinds out.

"What?" John asks innocently. "Now, what's for dinner?"

"Spaghetti bolognese," Stiles says. "It's Derek's favorite."

"Hmm," John says. Derek wonders what it means. "Let's eat, then."

The first bite makes Derek moan. The sauce practically melts on his tongue. It's not the same recipe as his dad's, of course, but it's almost as good.

"This is amazing," Derek says.

Stiles gives him a pleased smile. "Thanks."

"He's right, kid," John says. "Good job."

Stiles gives him a wink and finger guns and it's so ridiculous and cute that Derek just smiles helplessly.

After that, John gives him a knowing look and relaxes, as if he was waiting for just that. Maybe he can see how Derek feels about Stiles. Maybe he just wanted Derek to make a fool of himself.

"Did you learn to cook from your father?" Derek asks Stiles.

John snorts. "His mother was the cook in the family."

"Yeah, Mom taught me a lot," Stiles says. "But I've learned even more in Culinary Arts here at school." He licks his lips. "Mom died when I was ten."

"I'm sorry," Derek says. He doesn't know what it's like to lose a parent. It must be painful. "Was she an omega?"

"No, she was a beta," John says, like a challenge. "I'm an alpha, but I loved a beta more than anything in my life. It's bullshit that alphas can only be really happy with omegas."

"Yes, sir," Derek says, not sure what John is trying to say. He's confused.

"Dad," Stiles says, embarrassment rising from his skin.

John waves his fork around. "I'm just telling the truth."
"Right," Stiles says. "And omegas should be able to love whoever they want, too, but the law says I need to mate with an alpha. That's also bullshit. But I happen to want these alphas, so it's a moot point, isn't it?"

Derek tilts his head at Stiles's phrasing, trying to pick a deeper meaning from it, but he gets stuck on how unfair Stiles thinks the law is. "If you had a choice, would you rather be with another omega? Or a beta?"

John raises an eyebrow at Derek. "Do you actually care?"

Derek wants to growl, but he swallows it. "Of course I do."

John sits back with a thoughtful frown on his face.

Stiles sighs. "I've thought about it, extensively, because I overanalyze everything and I wanted to be sure, you know? And I've pretty much come to the conclusion that I could fall in love with anybody, whatever their orientation or gender presentation or… anything. But I'm most attracted to alphas." He smiles. "Two alphas in particular."

Derek nods.

"What about you?" Stiles asks him, a challenging glint in his eye.

John huffs a laugh. "Son."

"It's a fair question," Derek says. He shrugs as he thinks about it. He's always assumed he'd bond with an omega, if he did bond at all, but lately he's had… thoughts. Feelings. And he's sure he could love an alpha just as strongly as an omega. "I just guess it depends on the person, for me."

Stiles leans forward, his elbows on the table. "You think you could love an alpha?"

"Definitely," Derek says.

"Have you ever had a relationship with an alpha before?" Stiles asks.

"Son, I don't want to hear about this," John says.

Derek huffs in amusement.

"What? Dad, we're getting to know each other," Stiles says, nearly knocking over his glass. He steadies it and keeps talking. "This is date conversation!"

John gives him a level look. "Do you want me to go back to the corner so you can have your 'date conversation'?"

"No!" Stiles says quickly.

"We can talk about something else," Derek offers.

"What's for dessert?" John asks.

"Key lime pie," Stiles says. "You can have a small piece."

"That's Peter's favorite," Derek tells Stiles. "I like it, too."

"What's your favorite?" John asks. "Just so we know."
"You've probably never heard of it," Derek mumbles.

"I'm even more interested now," Stiles says, leaning in.

Derek shrugs. "Stollen. It's a German fruitcake, or kinda more like a bread? It's got marzipan in it. My grandmother used to make it and I haven't had it in years."

"I'm gonna remember that," Stiles says with a smile. "Maybe I'll surprise you sometime."

"Christmas. It's usually eaten for the winter holidays."

"I thought born wolves celebrated the solstice?" John asks.

"My grandmother was human," Derek says. "We celebrate Christmas and the pagan holidays, too."

"Did she take the bite?" Stiles asks.

"She didn't want to," Derek says. "My grandfather respected that."

"I like being human," Stiles says quietly. "Is that okay?"

"It'd better be," John says, nearly growls.

Derek smiles. "You're perfect just the way you are."

"You're damn right he is," John says, and now he sounds satisfied.

Stiles beams at them both.
Three days later, it's Peter's turn. He's ready to have the sheriff join them, but when he gets to the small dining room, there's a different chaperone in place.

"Dad had to work," Stiles says.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Peter says, only half truthful. He'd rather have Stiles to himself, but he knows how much Stiles likes to spend time with his father.

"Okay, you ready for this? You said I could cook whatever I wanted, so I picked my favorite," Stiles says. "Sit down."

"I'm looking forward to it," Peter says, seating himself at the small round table. It's set up to look almost like he's in a restaurant, but he's not really paying attention to the decor. He can't look away from the happiness in Stiles's eyes.

"I hope you're hungry!" Stiles says, and takes the lid off the hot food dish. "I'll serve."

"It smells wonderful. Is that lasagna?" Peter asks.

"Yeah," Stiles says, cutting and dishing a large square of it out onto a plate. He sets it in front of Peter, smiling but looking a little shy. "It's my mom's recipe."

Peter would be able to tell how much it meant to him just from Stiles's face, but the additional information gives him the rest of the story. He knows Stiles lost his mom when he was ten and that he still carries the ache of her loss. By sharing this with Peter, though, he's giving a peek into his life, into his heart.

He waits until Stiles has served himself before taking a bite. It's perfect. He was expecting ground beef, but he gets the more superior flavor of pork, instead. The noodles aren't too thick or soft, but just the right consistency. The sauce itself is a tender, sweet taste, with just a bit of spice. Ricotta isn't Peter's favorite, but this has a bit of basil mixed in the cheese filling, giving it a delicate herb taste. And the cheese on top…

"Do you like it?" Stiles asks. His voice should never be so small.

Peter realizes he's taken three bites without saying a word. He swallows and nods. "Sorry. Yes. It's exquisite, darling. Did you use fresh mozzarella?"

"Yeah, only the best ingredients," Stiles says. "You really like it?"

"It's the best lasagna I've ever had," Peter says truthfully. "I hope you made plenty."

Stiles grins. "Two pans. You could take some home, if you want." He bites his lip. "Um, could you take a plate to my dad, though?"

"Of course," Peter says. "Anything you want."

"He's probably at the station," Stiles tells him.

"I will head straight there from here," Peter promises.

Stiles beams at him, and it makes Peter's heart feel tight. How will he ever give this up? He wants
Stiles and Derek to be happy, and he's mostly certain Stiles will choose Derek as his mate. How will it feel, to watch them build their lives together from the sidelines?

"What's wrong?" Stiles asks.

Peter pastes on a smile. "Nothing, darling. Everything is going well. I love your mother's lasagna, and I'm sure your dad will be surprised to get some of it tonight."

"Don't do that," Stiles says, his voice soft.

Peter tilts his head in question.

"Don't pretend everything is fine when it obviously isn't. I may not have a werewolf's senses, but I'm observant. I can tell when you're upset about something."

"I'm not upset," Peter hedges.

"But something's wrong. Did I say something?"

Peter quickly shakes his head. "Nothing at all. You're perfect, sweetheart."

Stiles snorts. "I'm really not. I'd appreciate it if you and Derek would just... not put me on a pedestal. I don't belong on one, don't want to be there, either. I just want to be an equal."

"Okay," Peter says, not really knowing how to respond. Has he been putting Stiles on a pedestal? Because he's an omega, maybe?

"Being equals means we should talk, be honest with each other," Stiles says. "And I know that's hard, but if you want, I can go first."

Peter leans in, wondering what Stiles has to say.

After a deep breath, Stiles starts to talk. "In three days, I'm going to tell Deucalion I'm not interested. I'm going to cut off our courtship."

Even though Peter was expecting it to happen at some point, a thrill goes through him at the thought. "That's good," he purrs.

Stiles huffs a laugh. "I thought you'd like that. I hope he takes it well."

"But you have to," Peter says gently, completing the thought.

Stiles swallows hard. He opens his mouth to say something else, and Peter isn't sure what it will be. But then Stiles stops and shrugs, though he smells upset now.

"I'll stand by your decision, whatever it is," Peter says. He feels helpless, doesn't know what to say to
make it better. "You haven't had enough say in your life so far. This is all yours."

Stiles nods and finishes his food. Peter follows suit, though he asks for more. That gets a smile out of Stiles, and the tension eases.

When Peter is done with his second helping, Stiles grins. "I hope you saved room for dessert."

As soon as he sees what it is, Peter grins back helplessly. "How did you know?"

"Derek told me it was your favorite," Stiles says, sounding smug. "I was going to make poached pears and pastry, but I had to make this."

"There's nothing better than key lime pie," Peter says seriously.

Stiles beams.

After dessert, it's almost time to go. Peter sighs, wishing he could give Stiles a kiss goodnight. Stiles looks like he's thinking the same thing. The chaperone may be unobtrusive, but he would definitely step in if they tried to kiss. They clasp hands instead, and then Peter leaves with the leftover lasagna and what's left of the pie.

He drives to the sheriff's station, checks in at the front, and is led back to Stiles's father's office.

"I come bearing gifts," Peter says when John Stilinski opens his door.

The sheriff looks surprised.

"Stiles made a plate of lasagna for you," Peter says. "And I'm smuggling you some pie, too."

"Come in," the sheriff says. "Sit down. You can tell me all about your intentions toward my son while I eat."

And suddenly Peter is on the spot. Shit. He gives an uncomfortable laugh. "I'm not sure what you want to know, sir. I'm head over heels for him, and so is Derek. Both of us just want to give him a good life."

"Hmm. Call me John." He takes a bite of lasagna and closes his eyes. He chews slowly, and Peter can tell he appreciates the food just as much as Peter had. "Just like his mother's."

"It's really very good," Peter says. He feels so unprepared. He didn't think about having to sit with the sheriff, just that he would drop off the food for him, earn a few points with the man, maybe. But now he feels like he's being judged by his omega's father. It's not a place he wants to be.

"So. You and Derek," John says. He gives Peter an intense look.

"Am I being interrogated, John?" Peter asks, hoping to ease the tension.

John smirks. "Call it what you like. I just want to know more about who's courting my son."

"You've got me in the hot seat," Peter says. "Ask whatever you want."

"What does Stiles see in you? What's set you apart from all the other alphas sniffing around?"

Peter huffs. "I honestly don't know." He thinks back on what Stiles said tonight. "Stiles wants to be equals with his mate, and I want that too."
John nods. "Respect. That's a good start. Now, I hear you and Derek are denning."

"We want to be prepared," Peter says, feeling his face heat.

"I bet Stiles likes that," John says under his breath. "I doubt Deucalion Blackwood's even asked Stiles where he wants to live."

"Stiles has made it clear he wants to be near you," Peter says. He watches as John polishes off his lasagna, and Peter hands him a small plate with the pie.

John takes a bite of pie and moans. "So good."

Peter smiles.

"Thanks for bringing the food, Peter," John says when he's finished. "Was that your idea?"

"Yes, sir," Peter says.

"Hmm. I still don't know what to think of you and Derek, or the way you're courting my boy, but Stiles is dead set on the two of you."

"Un fortunately, he can only choose one of us," Peter murmurs.

"Legally," John says.

"Sir?"

John shakes his head. "Nothing. I'm not getting in the middle of it. You three will have to figure this out for yourselves."

"It's Stiles's decision," Peter says, confused by what John is saying.

"Go on home," John says. He shakes his head again. "Maybe I'll come out to check on that house of yours."

"You're welcome to whenever you want," Peter says, on firmer ground now. "The contractors just finished replacing the glass on Stiles's greenhouse."

John smiles. "Stiles will love it."

"That's the idea," Peter says. He gets up and gives John a firm handshake.

When he leaves, he keeps turning John's words over in his head. What did he mean, that they would figure things out? There's nothing to figure out. Stiles has a choice to make, and Peter has to stand by it, no matter what it is.

He heads home and his thoughts turn to Derek. He's sure his nephew will love the lasagna.

It's time for Stiles's third and final one-on-one dinner. He bakes sweet potatoes, tosses some herbed asparagus with oil in a frying pan, and lastly grills some humongous sirloin steaks. There's an easy fruit trifle for dessert if Deuc stays to eat it.

He hopes Deuc enjoys the food. It's about the only thing he'll enjoy about tonight.

"Why are we having dinner so early?" Deuc asks. It's the first thing out of his mouth when he enters
It's 5pm, not *that* early. "It's just how it was scheduled," Stiles says.

Deuc doesn't look impressed by that answer, but he sits at the table and waits for Stiles to serve him. He sees the steak and says, "It looks lovely, dear."

"Eat up, then," Stiles says.

"You seem tense," Deuc says, and takes a bite of steak.

Stiles nods. There's no reason to hide it.

Deuc puts his fork down. "Is there something you want to share?"

"I don't know how to tell you," Stiles says. "It would be a lot easier if you were a douchebag."

Deuc stiffens.

"Yeah," Stiles says with a nod. "After tonight I'm... I guess I'm turning down your suit."

Deuc's eyes flash red, but he holds himself very still. "I see."

"I'm sorry," Stiles says.

"Have you made up your mind, then?" Deuc asks.

"No. It's between Peter and Derek now," Stiles says. He tries not to sound morose about it.

Deuc pushes back from the table.

"Wait," Stiles says. "I have an alternative for you."

"And what would that be?" Deuc asks, his eyes narrowed.

"Um. My friend Erica doesn't like her suitors, but she does like you," Stiles says carefully.

Deuc's hands fist on the table. "So you want to foist me off onto someone else, now?"

"I just think-"

"Oh, shut up, you stupid boy," Deuc says.

Stiles isn't sure how to feel about that, but he finally settles on angry. "Why don't you go ahead and leave. I'm sure you can find better company somewhere than this 'stupid boy'."

Deuc stands, and so does Stiles. It looks, for a moment, that Deuc wants to slap him.

"Goodbye, Stiles," he says instead, and turns toward the exit.

The chaperone comes over once Deuc has left. "You okay?"

Stiles nods. "Yeah. I've got to clean up all this food. Do you like steak?"

"I'm vegan," the chaperone says. "But I'll help you clean up."

Once everything is put away and the kitchen cleaned, Stiles has a sandwich and some trifle for
dinner. Then he heads back to his dorm, humming 50 Ways To Leave Your Lover.

"That was quick." Kira says.

"And now I'm all freed up to make the most difficult decision of my life," Stiles says, faux cheerful. Kira tilts her head and smiles. "Is it really that hard?"

"I think I'm in love with them both," Stiles says and plops down on his bed.

"You should probably tell them that."

"So they know I'm a greedy bastard?" He sighs. "Nope. Not gonna happen."

Kira just watches him.

"Maybe I won't pick either one," Stiles says. "Maybe I'll just become an old maid omega, and spend the rest of my life here."

"You're ridiculous," Kira tells him.

"Yeah, I know." He sighs and picks up his phone to text Derek and Peter.

Good news! Deucalion is officially out of the running.

They've just sat down to eat. Derek barely has a chance to smile at the text before he hears a car barrelling down the driveway.

He looks at Peter. Hears the car hit the brakes in front of the house.

"What on earth?" Talia asks, getting up to look out the window. "It's Deuc."

Peter and Derek get up as one and head to the front door. They may as well cut him off before he comes inside.

The rest of the family scramble after them.

"Should I call John?" Derek asks Peter.

Peter shakes his head and calls out to Deuc, who is striding toward them. "Is this a challenge?"

"What the hell is going on here?" Talia asks.

"It's about time you knew what was going on with your boys," Deuc says.

Derek growls. "This is between us. There's no reason to bring our pack alpha into it."

"What, you think I want to fight you?" Deuc sneers.

"Someone start talking to me right now," Talia growls.

Deuc turns to her, his smile malicious. "They're courting the same omega."

"What?" Talia sounds surprised, and her question is echoed by Joseph and Cora.

Laura sets her jaw. "This is none of your business, Deuc."
"No, I'm out," Deuc says. "The little brat decided to cut off our courtship."

Derek growls again, flashing his eyes.

Peter sneers. "And this is how you deal with it? How petty of you."

"Let me get this straight," Talia says. "The three of you were courting the same omega, and now he's rejected Deuc, and it's just between the two of you?"

Derek glances at Peter, but nods.

Talia sighs. "That will be all, Deuc."

He smirks as he leaves, driving away quickly, kicking up dust in the driveway.

Cora whistles low. "I'm going to my room."

"You haven't eaten dinner," Joseph says.

"I'll get something later," Cora says, walking back inside. Joseph tsk.

Talia looks at Peter and Derek. "You two. In my office. Wait, no. Just Peter."

Derek opens his mouth to protest, but Laura gets there first. "Mom, maybe you should leave it alone."

Derek nods emphatically. "It's Stiles's decision."

But Talia's angry. Her eyes burn red and Derek finds himself cowed. He doesn't want her to turn those eyes on Peter. What will she say?

"Laura, stay out of this. Who does he favor?" Talia asks.

Derek shakes his head. He doesn't know. He doesn't think Stiles prefers one of them over the other.

Talia looks at Peter and he shows his throat. It doesn't seem to diminish her anger. "Come inside with me, Peter."

"I'm coming with you," Derek says, adamant about it.

Laura gives them both a look of sympathy, but slowly walks back inside behind her sister and father. It's between the three of them now.

And Derek has no idea what way it's going to go.
Chapter 10

Peter knows, as he follows Talia into the house, what she's going to say to him. Or at least what she wants to say — it's unclear if she'll do it in front of Derek.

"Explain this to me," Talia says once they're in her office. She sits at her desk, like the boss that she is, and looks at Peter. "How did this happen?"

Both Derek and Peter remain standing. "We met an omega and both of us were interested," Peter says. "It's that simple."

"There's nothing simple about this!" Talia says. "Why are you still courting him, Peter?"

Beside him, Derek sucks in a breath.

Peter spreads his hands, palms up, and bares his heart. "I'm in love with him, Talia."

His sister doesn't like that answer. "The hell you are!"

"Mom," Derek tries to say, but she's not listening. She points at Peter.

"You never change. You're still the most selfish person I've ever known."

"That's not true," Derek says. "Peter's-"

"Derek, if you aren't quiet, I'm going to ask you to leave," she says without looking away from Peter. "Do you care nothing for Derek's future? For Derek himself?"

Peter swallows. "I love Derek. Of course I do, and I want him to be happy."

"You could have fooled me," Talia says. "This is the exact opposite! He has a chance of having a mate, an omega mate, and you're standing in his way!"

"This isn't your decision," Peter says.

"Oh, you're the one who gets to choose Derek's future for him now?" Talia sneers. "I am his mother, and your pack alpha."

"It's Stiles's decision," Derek interrupts to say. "He's the one who should have all the say in this."

Talia looks at him in disappointment. "I warned you to stay silent."

"Stop treating me like a child!" Derek says.

"Get out and let me talk to your uncle," Talia says, and purses her lips.

Derek shakes his head. "No."

Her eyes blaze red. "Derek, now."

Peter sighs. "Go ahead and leave. She just doesn't want you to hear her talk shit about me."

Derek is frowning, looking like he wants to protest.

"I'll be fine," Peter says gently.
Derek leaves, in the end. Talia starts in as soon as the door closes behind him.

"You're going to drop your suit," Talia says. "This is ridiculous. I can't believe you've gone this far with this... this farce."

Peter sits down. Looks bored. "I will do no such thing."

"This is probably Derek's only chance," Talia says. "Do you remember how long it took to get him to go to the omega school in the first place?"

"I'm not doing anything to hinder his courtship," Peter says with a frown. "It's up to Stiles."

"And what would this omega want with you, anyway?" Talia asks. "Derek's handsome. Talented. And once he mates and gains control of his trust fund, he'll be rich as well."

Peter doesn't know how to answer that.

Talia goes on. "God knows you don't have his looks or his youth."

"Go ahead and say it outright. I know I'm disfigured." It hurts to say, but to throw it in her face like this is worth the pain. Unfortunately, it doesn't do what he thinks it will. She doesn't back down.

"I'm surprised this omega even accepted your suit to begin with," Talia says. "What did you offer him?"

"Just myself," Peter says, knowing how inadequate that actually is.

"And he still hasn't chosen Derek?" Talia asks, laughing slightly. "He must be stupid."

Peter growls. "He's not. Maybe he knows a good thing when he sees it."

"A good thing like you?" Talia asks. "Don't make me laugh."

"Where is all this hostility coming from?" Peter wonders. "I know you don't hate me, though right now it certainly sounds like it."

Talia squares her shoulders. "I am a mother, and Derek is my only son. I want the world for him."

"I do, too," Peter says quietly. "But this choice belongs to Stiles, not me and certainly not you."

"We could help it along," she says with clenched teeth.

"Stay out of it," Peter says.

For a moment, he thinks she will try to order him again to drop his suit. He has the perfect answer prepared: Fuck off.

"Get out of here," she says instead, suddenly sounding very tired.

He nods, stunned, and leaves. He feels sick to his stomach, though. Or maybe that's his heart breaking. Are the things she said to him how she really feels? Her heart didn't stutter. She didn't smell of deception. If his own sister thinks he's too old and ugly to find happiness, how must the rest of the world see him?

How can Derek stand to touch him? What does Stiles see in him?
He trudges up the stairs to his room. Locks the door behind himself before he sees Derek sitting on his bed, waiting.

Derek whines and gets up. Peter flinches back, causing Derek to whine again.

"What did she say to you?" Derek asks softly. "You smell of misery and heartbreak. She didn't convince you to stop seeing Stiles, did she?"

Peter shakes his head. " Barely. I told her the decision was Stiles's." His voice is breaking. God, please, don't let him cry.

Derek takes his hand and leads him to the bed. " You're doubting yourself again."

" Only a little," Peter says, trying to sound cheery but failing hard. He sits on the bed and Derek kneels before him, untying his shoes and removing them carefully.

Derek looks up into his face. " You're gorgeous."

" I'm really not," Peter denies, ever mindful of the scars.

Derek frowns. Reaches for his shirt. Peter lets him unbutton the row and slip it off Peter's shoulders. He looks away, not wanting to see Derek's face when he spies the scars again. The ones on his shoulder are worse than the ones on his face, Peter thinks sometimes. Gnarled and ugly, like a monster movie.

Derek reaches up and traces the burn scars. Peter closes his eyes. He feels a tear slip out and roll down his cheek.

" You're beautiful," Derek whispers. " Strong. Smart. And you're far from selfish." He leans in and kisses Peter's shoulder.

Peter doubts he knows what he's doing. " Derek, don't."

Derek nuzzles him, his nose dragging along the sensitive edge of where scar tissue meets smooth skin. " Why? Do you want me to stop?"

Peter looks down at him. " I don't know what I want." His heart pounds, but it's steady, even though he's sure it's a lie.

" You want Stiles, don't you?" Derek asks.

Peter nods. And you, he thinks but doesn't say.

Derek presses him down against the bed, scoots them both up so that he can spoon behind Peter. " It's not selfish to want love," he whispers against Peter's nape.

Peter shivers. Derek pulls the covers up over them, even though it's early, even though they're mostly still clothed.

" You're not selfish," Derek repeats. His breath evens out, and soon he's asleep.

" I love you," Peter whispers into the darkness. It's the truest thing he's ever known.

It's movie night, but Stiles is skipping it. He's spending time alone with his alphas… sorta.
He's gonna try sexting. He's horny as hell and he hasn't seen them in a week. He stares at their shirtless pics a lot, but it's not enough. He needs more.

So he tells Kira to stay longer at the movie they show in the auditorium and settles in for a night of dirty texting. Maybe calling, too. It depends. He's not really sure what to expect.

He starts the night off right, he thinks. He sends them a picture of himself. Well, it's a pic of his torso, from chin to navel. His nipples are peaked from just thinking about them. He hopes Derek and Peter like moles.

The phone vibrates. He opens the text.

Derek sends, *You're so beautiful. I want to touch you so bad. Smell you. Taste you.*

Stiles breathes out shakily. Then Peter sends, *Gorgeous. Can't wait to spread my scent all over you.*

He wants them both. He wants Derek tasting him and Peter touching him at the same time. He'd kiss them both. Maybe even watch as they kissed each other.

He moans at the thought. He feels slick between his legs as his body says *oh, yes.*

He sends them both a text with shaking fingers. *I'm wet for you. I want you both so much.*

His phone makes the familiar 'boop boop' sound that indicates a call. He answers it, getting up to double check he locked the door. He did.

"Hi," he says, already breathless.

"Sweetheart, are you feeling a bit naughty tonight?" Peter asks.

Stiles licks his lips. "Kinda. Is Derek with you, too?"

"Right here, baby," Derek says. Stiles wonders at that, if they've got their faces pressed close together so they can both talk into the phone.

"What do you want, darling?" Peter asks. "Do you want us to make you feel good?"

"Please," Stiles says, running a hand down his chest, his belly, to cup his cock.

It's small, his cock. Hardly fit to be called that, really. He's an omega, not really made to fuck. But his hand lets go and he reaches behind it to touch himself, his slick hole, and it's so empty. He wishes he'd gotten a toy out.

"Tell us what you like," Derek says.

"Hold on, I'm gonna get a dildo," Stiles says.

He hears Derek growl at that and smiles.

"Are you going to fill yourself up?" Peter asks. "It could never be as good as the real thing."

Stiles finds his dildo in his chest and takes it out of the bag that keeps it clean. "Yeah, but you're not here right now so I have to do the next best thing."

"Got it?" Peter asks.
"Yeah." Stiles isn't sure what to do now. He's holding the phone in one hand and the dildo in the other, listening to Peter and Derek breathe. "Um."

"Get on the bed, baby," Derek says.

Stiles's heart starts beating faster. "On my front or my back?"

"Your back," Peter says. Stiles hurries to obey.

"Put the phone by your head so you don't have to hold it," Derek says.

That's easy enough to do.

"Are you wearing anything, sweetheart?" Peter asks.

"No. Just… just my socks." Stiles frowns. Maybe he shouldn't have mentioned the socks.

"Touch your nipples," Derek says. "Do they feel good? Are you sensitive?"

"Yeah," Stiles says, and rubs his fingertips over his stiff nipples. "God. I wish you were touching me."

"Pinch them," Peter says, and Stiles gasps when he obeys. "You've got such pretty little tits."

Derek growls in agreement. "So pretty."

He hears Peter and Derek breathing hard and that's sexy, too.

"Are you going to touch yourselves?" Stiles asks.

"Do you want us to?" Derek asks.

Peter makes a soft 'unf' sound. "We can."

"It's only fair," Stiles says, imagining it now and getting really into the picture it makes in his head.

"Tell us what you usually do," Peter says. "Do you start with fingers?"

"I usually start by touching my dick," Stiles tells them. "But I'm so wet I think I'll skip that. Go straight to my… my hole."

Derek makes a low, pleased sound. Peter breathes heavier against the phone. "Tell us what it feels like, darling."

Stiles swallows and touches himself. He's slick, soft. Ready, and too empty. He says that, and then, "I need it."

"Use your fingers, baby. See how that feels," Derek says.

Stiles's fingers were already slipping inside himself so it's not like it's difficult. Two fingers push in easily and he makes a soft, needy sound.

There's a growl, and a short scuffle over the phone. Then, a lot clearer, Derek says, "I think Peter's going into rut."

Stiles moans. "Fuck. Peter."
There's a noise like… it's a snarl, Stiles guesses, followed by a whine. One is Peter, the other Derek.

"What are you going to do?" Stiles asks. Alphas need a safe place to go through rut the same as omegas do with heat, though for alphas it's more for privacy and comfort, not safety. "Do you have a place?"

"The door's locked. The room is soundproof. I wish we could go to the house, though," Derek says.

Stiles licks his lips. Grabs the dildo. He can imagine Peter trying to get his cock in, a little uncoordinated because of his rut. Stiles pulls his knees up, imagines wrapping his legs around Peter's waist. Maybe Peter would get frustrated, pull Stiles's ankles up around his broad shoulders.

"I think I'd better go," Derek says, though he sounds reluctant.

"Wait," Stiles gasps, filling himself with the dildo. He whimpers at the stretch. He didn't prepare himself enough, though the toy isn't particularly thick. "Can he hear me?"

Derek swallows hard enough that Stiles can hear it over the line. "Yeah. You're… what are you doing, baby?"

"Fucking myself with this toy," Stiles says. "Thinking about Peter in rut. Thinking about you helping him through it. Oh!" He angles the toy to hit that spot inside. "Are you going to, Derek?"

"What… what should I do?" Derek asks.

"God, I wish I was there," Stiles gasps. He puts his feet flat on the bed for more leverage. Touches his dick. "But maybe… give him something to fuck against. He wants something tight. Wet."

Derek moans. "He wants your pussy, Stiles. I can't give that to him."

"No, but. Get some lube. Put it… god. Put it between your thighs and let him fuck you there?" Stiles is going out of his mind fantasizing about it. The dildo is hitting him just right and he can feel tears spring to his eyes. It's so good. And he knows it's only this good because he can hear their voices.

"Yes," Peter growls. "Want it. Want you."

Is he talking to Stiles or Derek?

"Kiss him, Derek," Stiles pants. He's so close. "He wants you... to kiss him."

"Baby, I'm not sure-" Derek says, but it's cut off by a slick sound and moaning.

Stiles comes, sobbing, his body clenching around the toy and his dick spurting across his belly.

Derek and Peter have only kissed once before, like this, when Derek was young and going through his first rut. It had been Derek's idea — he grabbed his uncle and kissed him for all he was worth while rutting against his thigh.

At the time, Derek had been thirteen. Too young for sex, he knows now, but at the time he'd been devastated when Peter gently but adamantly stopped him. Peter had helped him strip down so he wouldn't chafe, then he'd set up a pillow for him to rut against before leaving him alone for it.

Is that what Derek should do now? The kiss is good. Peter growls against his mouth and kisses him like he's been hungry for him, like maybe he's thought about it before.
Over the phone, he hears Stiles come, and it just serves to drive Peter wilder. His cock is out, bare already because of the phone sex, and it feels even larger than it looks. Peter's rutting against Derek's thigh, precome making a sticky trail through the sparse hair there.

"Hang on," Stiles says, and then a few moments later there's a buzz.

Derek pulls away from Peter, making his uncle whine. "Just a minute, Peter…"

He opens the message and taps on the picture to enlarge. It's another of Stiles's torso, though this time his spent cocklet is in the picture, along with the evidence of his orgasm splattered over his stomach.

He shows the picture to Peter. "Look what we did."

Peter's eyes glow.

"I'm gonna go now," Stiles says, sounding sated and relaxed. "Good luck." He disconnects the call and Derek is able to focus completely on his uncle.

"Did you hear what he said?" Derek asks. "Do you maybe want that?"

Peter seems to come back to himself for a moment. He frowns. "Don't need a pity fuck."

Derek leans in. Kisses him gently. Rubs their cheeks together, his scruff pinkening Peter's smooth skin. "It wouldn't be. I promise. Do you want me?"

"Pup," Peter says, eyes going soft. "Always want you."

Derek smiles at Peter's rut-added words. He puts the phone aside on the bedside table. He knows there's lube in the drawer but he doesn't make a move for it, yet. "You sure?"

Peter growls and kisses him again, then reaches in and gets the lube for himself. "Yes."

Derek nods. His cock is still hard. Is it because of Stiles, or Peter? At this point he can't be sure. Both of them are tempting, look delicious to him, but Peter is the one he can taste. His uncle doesn't want to let go of him, but Derek needs to take his jeans the rest of the way off so Peter has better access.

Peter whines when he pulls away, but Derek shushes him. "Just getting naked," he says, which Peter seems to like. He watches Derek kick off his shoes and skim out of his jeans. He's not wearing underwear.

Peter's seen him naked plenty of times, but never with intent. Never while he's in rut, that's for sure. He's watching him with glowing, hungry eyes, and as soon as Derek's back on the bed, Peter's all over him. Kissing. Tasting. Biting with blunt teeth, then soothing the sting with his tongue.

But Peter's a bit uncoordinated, too. His hips stutter and his cock presses everywhere — against the bed, against Derek's hand, and even against his knee for one uncomfortable moment.

Derek has to help steer him to the right spots. He takes the lube from Peter's hand and slicks his thighs. On second thought, seeing how addled the rut has made Peter, Derek decides to just slick from his knees up to behind his balls. It takes a lot of lube but it makes him slippery. It feels weird, but not in a bad way. And Peter loves it.

"Want me to turn around?" Derek asks. Maybe Peter would rather have it that way, he's not sure.

"See you," Peter says, pressing him back down against the bed. He presses a sloppy kiss to Derek's chest, to his neck. "Kiss you."
"Oh," Derek says, stunned. Turned on, as well. Peter doesn't just want him as a body to rut against. He wants Derek.

Derek's so hard at this point, his dick is throbbing. He's never responded to alpha pheromones like this before, but then again he's never been so close to an alpha in rut. The scent makes him dizzy, giddy, ready to give Peter anything he wants.

Peter's fucking between his thighs now. It's shallow, so Peter adjusts his angle, and then he's fucking long and fast, the tip of his dick sliding across Derek's balls now and then.

"Can I…" Derek asks, wrapping a hand around his own cock.

Peter watches him. Growls. "So pretty."

"You're out of it," Derek says fondly, but wraps an arm around Peter's neck to bring him close. They kiss again, though this time it's more desperate, more frenzied. Derek feels himself melting into it.

Peter does something with his hips that has his cock slipping free of Derek's thighs. It bumps against Derek's knuckles instead, and Derek does what feels natural. He wraps his hand around both of them at once, squeezing.

Peter moans. "More."

Derek huffs an incredulous laugh. He strokes down their lengths and at first it's an awkward feeling, but that's just because it's new. As his hand sweeps down, he can feel Peter's knot starting. "Fuck."

"Derek," Peter breathes.

"Feel good?"

Peter answers him with a kiss. It's… sweet. Compared to the other kisses they've shared, it's downright gentle. Like Peter's trying to tell him something.

Derek tightens his hand around them, stroking harder. It's difficult because now Peter is thrusting against him, making his toes curl. After a few more strokes, Derek just gives up on the stroking and lets Peter do his thing.

Peter holds himself up with one arm and wraps his own hand around Derek's. Somehow it makes the act even more profound, and Derek's toes curl. His head thrashes as the pleasure hits him, and then Peter swoops in to kiss his throat.

For a wolf, there's almost nothing more intimate to have a lover at your throat. It's trust and love and things Derek has no words for, just feelings.

Peter's knot is swelling. Derek tightens his hand to imitate a tight hole around it. Peter growls and then he's coming, again and again, marking Derek all over with hot come.

Derek had no clue he was so close until now, when the scent of Peter's come hits his nose and then he's coming, too. They make a mess together, a white, sticky mess that comes together to give a distinct scent of Peter and Derek. There is no individual scent left, it's all them.

Derek loves it.

Peter collapses on top of him, though Derek knows he'll be ready to go again in just a few minutes. The shortest ruts last a matter of hours, but it may take a day or two. Derek doesn't remember the last
time Peter had one, let alone how long it lasted.

"Okay?" Derek asks.

Peter picks his head up just enough to kiss whatever skin his lips can reach. "Perfect."

"Can I take a pic for Stiles?" Derek asks.

Peter huffs. "Of what?"

"The mess. It's only fair." Derek smiles. "I have a feeling he'll love it."

Peter's quiet for a moment. Then, "Did you?"

Derek picks up his head so he can look into Peter's eyes. "Yeah."

"You came," Peter points out.

Derek smiles. "Hard not to, after all that." He reaches for his phone, takes a picture of their bodies together, the sticky mess between them. Sends it on.

"Are you staying?" Peter asks. He looks so vulnerable right now, and Derek just wants to kiss him again. So he does. He forgets there's come on his hand, that he's spreading it over Peter's cheek as he touches him, but he figures it doesn't really matter.

"Yeah," Derek says, a little helplessly.

"It shouldn't last too long," Peter says. "My ruts are usually short."

"Well. I'm all yours," Derek tells him.

"For the time being," Peter says with a strange inflection.

Derek frowns. "As long as you need."

Peter opens his mouth, and then the phone buzzes.

_I think I'm gonna need to come again now._

Derek smirks. Puts the phone away again. He looks down at the come smeared all between them. "Do you want to clean up before it starts again?"

Peter smiles. "Nah." Then he reaches for Derek and they're kissing again, and nothing else matters.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

A little bit early...

After Peter's rut is over, Derek goes back to acting like everything is normal, like he never held Peter's knot in his hand, like they never even kissed.

Which is fine. Peter's fine.

Talia keeps shooting them looks, but she doesn't say anything. She knows what happened, or at least can guess. There's no mistaking that scent.

The rest of the family follows suit by not mentioning it, either. Which Peter is thankful for. He doesn't know how that conversation would go.

But he doesn't have a conversation with Derek, either. Thankfully, there are other things to think about, like renovating their house and getting ready for the upcoming charity ball.

The omega school's charity ball is one of the only times of year that the general public is allowed in. It's a big deal for the entire county. It's a black-tie event, which Derek will hate, but Peter knows how good they look in their tuxedos. Stiles will be blown away.

Derek and Peter go together, both eager to see Stiles.

He's told them ahead of time that he's not going to wear a formal gown. That he's not wearing a dress at all. But when they see him wearing his all-white tux, they don't care. He's gorgeous like this. His hair is spiked a bit, and he's wearing subtle makeup on his eyes and gloss on his lips.

Peter wants to devour him. Beside him, Derek lets out a soft, pleased growl.

Stiles watches them approach, and when they're close he holds out an arm for each of them to take. "My alphas." He tucks his hands into the crooks of their elbows and lets them escort him around the room.

Deuc is there, but his eyes are elsewhere. He doesn't even seem to notice them.

Allison and Kira walk hand in hand onto the dance floor and start to sway to an old tune. A young alpha on the sidelines watches, his eyes wide. He seems to be taken by both of them, and Stiles grins when he spots him.

"Scott!" Stiles says. "Hey, man."

Scott reluctantly looks away from the dancing couple but lights up when he sees Stiles. "Hey! It's been years, dude."

"Two and a half, yeah," Stiles says. "How's your mom?"

"Good, good," Scott says. He looks like he's about to hug Stiles, but Derek growls low in warning.
Scott's eyes flash gold and Stiles sucks in a breath.

"You're a fucking werewolf now?" Stiles says. "How did that happen? I thought you didn't want the bite?"

Scott blinks. "Oh, um, rogue alpha came crashing into lacrosse practice one day, and I was the slowest."

"I'm sorry," Stiles says. "But you look better. Um, healthier."

Scott nods his head and grins. "Yeah. Got rid of the asthma and I made first line! I got a scholarship to UC Davis out of it."

"That's great," Stiles says. "Still want to be a vet?"

"That's the dream," Scott says. "What about you?"

Derek and Peter have been silent so far, but now Stiles introduces them. "These are my alphas. I'm, um. Bonding with one of them. Don't know who yet," he says. His voice is melancholy, a little wistful.

Derek holds out his hand to shake, and he narrows his eyes as he does it. Peter laughs to himself and shakes Scott's hand right after.

"It's always good to meet a friend of Stiles's," Peter says.

Scott's eyes are wide.

"Did you meet Kira yet?" Stiles asks, gesturing to the dancers.

"I know Allison," Scott says. "I've asked her out a couple of times, but I didn't know she had a girlfriend."

"It's… relatively new," Stiles says, bending the truth. Relative to what, Peter wonders.

"They're both so pretty," Scott says, his eyes going dreamy.

Stiles rolls his eyes. "Yeah. Well, it was great catching up, but I see someone else I want to say hi to." Peter follows his line of sight and smiles at John Stilinski.

"Okay. Bye," Scott says, watching the girls dance.

"Former best friend," Stiles murmurs as they move away from him. "Pretty much forgot I existed once I presented."

"I wouldn't have been as friendly, then," Peter says.

But Stiles shakes his head. "Everybody does it. It's like we disappear. Dad!"

Peter and Derek let go of him so he can hug his father. Then John gives them warm smiles and clasps their hands when they shake.

"Good to see you boys," John says. Peter isn't sure how he feels being called a boy, but he lets it slide. John takes a long look at Stiles. "You look good, son."

Stiles pinkens. "So do you. Damn, you do that tux good."
"It's a Stilinski thing," John says. "Or maybe it's a Hale thing, too. You boys are all decked out, too. Looking good."

Peter smirks, feeling every bit as good looking as Derek tonight. He's got the swagger, and he still turns heads.

Stiles gives him a knowing look and leans in to kiss his cheek.

John clears his throat. "You know you're not supposed to do that yet."

"You're right, that's entirely unfair to Derek," Stiles says, and gives Derek a quick kiss on the cheek as well.

John shakes his head as Peter laughs. Derek looks pleased, touching the trace of pink lip gloss Stiles left behind. Which means Peter has some, too, but he doesn't care.

"Look," Stiles suddenly says in a hushed tone, and they look to see Deuc approach a blonde omega. "That's my friend Erica. She's got it bad for him."

"She's looking at someone else, though," Derek says with a frown.

Stiles sighs. "That's Boyd. She used to have a crush on him before she presented."

"Is he another alpha?" Peter asks.

"Ha, he looks like it, right? Nah, he's a beta."

They watch as Erica turns to Deucalion's voice, and her face goes from gloomy to surprised and then excited in a matter of seconds.

"I hope he likes macaroni and cheese," Stiles murmurs. "Okay. Think we can slip outside together?"

"Stiles," John says, reminding them all he's still right there.

Stiles looks innocent. "I just want to show them my vegetable patch, Dad."

"Really," John says flatly.

"My rhubarb is first rate, and I should've been able to enter the county fair with my eggplant, but there are rules against it, since I can't leave the school grounds." Stiles looks suddenly hopeful. "Maybe next year."

Derek is looking across the ballroom. "I see someone I know," he says, and sounds like he's surprised himself.

"A friend?" Stiles asks.

"Jordan, from Fish and Wildlife," Derek says. "Oh, he's waving me over." He looks at Peter for direction.

"Go," Peter says with a smile. "You can find us after."

Derek gives him a pleading look and Stiles says, "No, go with him."

"Please," Derek says, and gives Peter the eyes.
"I'm going to talk to Briar and Isaac," Stiles says. "You two go ahead."

Peter kisses Stiles's hand and gives him a wink. Stiles beams at them both and shoos them away.

On his way to see Briar, Stiles spots Brett and a familiar bulk looming over him. "Shit," Stiles whispers, and changes course.

"I have suitors," Brett says with a light laugh. "I'm having a hard enough time choosing."

"Don't say that," Ennis is saying. "Why don't you-"

"He said no," Stiles says, trying to stand tall, but Ennis has about five inches on him when he straightens.


Brett gives Stiles a grateful look. "I was just getting some water… I need to get back to my suitors."

Stiles nods and lets him go, then leans in to hiss at Ennis. "Why are you here? No one wants you for a suitor. You're out."

"You little bitch," Ennis growls. "You should get on your knees and be thankful you have anyone who wants you at all." He takes a hostile step forward and Stiles's heart starts to pound.

"Get out of here," Stiles says. "Before I have you escorted out. Again."

But Ennis grabs his arm and pulls him close against his hard body. Stiles feels small and vulnerable, and not in a good way. This close, he can smell Ennis's pheromones, strong and aggressive. Ennis takes a deep pull of his scent as Stiles struggles to get away.

He tries to remember what to do in this situation. He tries to knee Ennis in the crotch but Ennis turns and laughs, then shakes him a little. Scream, Stiles thinks, but can't do it. He's frozen.

But then he hears a roar and he's free. There's more noise, and the scent of blood, but he's in Peter's arms. He must have rushed to his side. He hides his face against Peter's throat and trembles.

There's a lot of noise then. An uproar, but Stiles is too shaken to move.

"Is he okay?" he hears his dad ask.

Peter puts gentle hands on Stiles's face, pulls back to look into his eyes. "Sweetheart, can you talk? Are you hurt?"

Stiles shakes his head. He feels tears start to fill his eyes. What is this, is he some wilting omega who falls apart at the first bit of trouble?

Peter checks him over, scenting him as he goes, Stiles knows. He picks up Stiles's arm and looks at the place where Ennis grabbed him. "That's going to bruise," he says, sounding as upset as Stiles feels.

Derek. Where's Derek? Stiles turns his head.

"Don't worry," Peter says.

There's certainly nothing to worry about now. Ennis is laid out on the floor, His torso slashed red.
He's moaning, so he's still alive, but Stiles doesn't think he's getting up any time soon.

Derek's being held back by two alphas. Stiles wants to go to him but he doesn't want to leave Peter's arms.

"Take him outside," Stiles's dad says to Peter. "Get some fresh air. Go look at his rhubarb."

Stiles wants to protest. "Derek," he croaks.

"Let John handle this," Peter says, leading him to the side doors. "They probably want to question Derek, but John won't let anything happen to him. It'll be okay."

Stiles looks over his shoulder and meets Derek's eyes. "Okay."

Derek relaxes, seeing Stiles isn't injured. Peter nods at him and Derek nods back, some kind of secret language Stiles can't decipher.

Outside, the moon is bright in the sky. It's not quite full, but very close.

"Which way to the vegetable garden?" Peter asks, and Stiles takes his hand. Leads him to his patch of garden, the one with the hand-painted sign that says 'Salads by Stiles'. Peter huffs a laugh. "Very nice."

Stiles leads him over to the nearby stone bench. Peter sits and Stiles plops down in his lap instead of beside him. Peter lets out a pleased rumble, putting his arms around him.

They're quiet. Stiles rests his head against Peter's shoulder and looks up at the stars. Peter tightens his arms, holding him close. It's just what Stiles needs.

"Feeling better?" Peter says after long minutes of this.

Stiles sighs. "I froze."

"What?"

"He grabbed me and I couldn't get away, and I froze," Stiles says. He swallows hard, remembering. "I couldn't even scream."

"It's not your fault," Peter says, sounding a little helpless.

"I know. Do you think he'll go to jail?" Stiles asks. "Ennis, I mean."

Peter sighs. "Probably not."

Stiles touches the spot where Ennis grabbed him. It's sore.

"Hurt?" Peter asks, and then he's touching him there and drawing away his pain.

"Thank you," Stiles whispers.

"He'll probably get probation and some kind of order to stay away from the school," Peter says.

"And Derek?" Stiles asks.

"It was defense," Peter says. "And Ennis will be healed in no time, so he can't really say he was grievously hurt."
Stiles nods. He picks his head up and looks at Peter. He wants to kiss him. There's really no reason why he can't. No one is around to stop them.

Peter smiles. "What are you looking at?"

It's easy to lean in and press his lips against Peter's. Peter lets out a soft sound of surprise, but then he's kissing back, and it's nothing like kissing another omega. Peter isn't hesitant, isn't shy. He kisses Stiles like he wants to eat him up whole.

Stiles moans and shifts in Peter's lap, wrapping his arms around Peter's neck. Peter's hands run down his sides to land on his hips and hold him there.

Peter pulls back, panting, his eyes glowing in the dark. "Stiles."

"Peter, don't stop," Stiles whines. "What's wrong?"

"Something's missing," Peter says softly.

Stiles nods. "Derek."

"Yeah."

"You love him," Stiles says. It slips out, but he doesn't regret it. This is something they should talk about.

Peter freezes.

Stiles cups his face. "It's okay."

"He's my nephew," Peter says slowly.

"And you're in love with him," Stiles says gently. "It's okay."

Peter leans forward and puts his forehead against Stiles's.

Derek finds them by scent, but when he hears his name he stops to listen. He's always been told that eavesdroppers never hear good things, but he can't help it and his curiosity gets the better of him.

"I love him, too," Stiles says.

"Are you… are you going to choose him, then?" Peter asks.

Stiles lets out a sad laugh. "I'm greedy. I want you both."

"So do I. I thought I was being selfish."

"What happened, when you went into rut?" Stiles asks.

"What do you think?" Peter asks. "He helped me through it, and then afterward acted like nothing had changed."

"But it had," Stiles says.

Derek crouches behind a hedge, silent, and listens closer.

"I thought it had," Peter says. "We kissed. I got to kiss him, and touch as I've wanted… But I don't
"I don't want him to feel like he should care about me that way," Peter says, sounding small and hurt. "I don't want to make things... awkward."

"But you'll miss out on so much if you don't give him a chance," Stiles says softly. Derek watches as he runs a hand through Peter's hair, soothing him. "And I want... it would be so much better if the three of us..."

"What is it, sweetheart?" Peter asks gently.

"I think... I think I love you both. And I want you both. I want us to be together, the three of us."

Derek sucks in a breath. Peter turns his head toward the noise. "Did you hear that?"

"No," Stiles says. "Human here."

Peter and Stiles stand, and Derek knows he needs to do something. Either run away like a coward or step forward.

Derek stands and walks into their view. "Hey."

Stiles smiles at him. Peter frowns, probably wondering if Derek heard what they were saying. Derek decides to ignore it.

He can't handle it right now. He needs to think. "Are you okay?" he asks Stiles.

"Much better," Stiles says. He reaches out to Derek and when Derek comes close, he ends up with a clingy omega in his arms.

Not that he minds. Not at all. He wraps his arms around Stiles and kisses his temple. "Good."

He looks at Peter. Peter's watching them, a glint in his eyes. Derek quickly looks away, feeling unaccountably shy.

"John settle everything?" Peter asks.

Derek nods. "And he took Ennis away. Arrested him for assault."

Stiles snuggles closer to him, trembling a little. At the memory? Derek kisses his head. His hair is soft, despite the product in it, and underneath that fruity scent is the scent of Stiles. Derek doesn't want to let him go.

"Peter kissed me," Stiles says.

"Oh, yeah?" Derek asks, pulling back to look into his eyes.

Stiles smiles up at him. "Kiss me. It's only fair."

Derek's immediately reminded of the last kisses he had, with Peter. They were heated and hungry, and Derek doesn't want to scare Stiles away with a kiss like that. So he leans in and kisses Stiles gently, trying to be careful. His wolf wants more, of course, but Derek isn't letting it happen.
Stiles makes a frustrated sound. "Kiss me like you mean it, Derek."

"Okay, baby," Derek says, and lets himself go. He pulls Stiles closer and slicks his tongue into Stiles's mouth. He tastes good. Like Stiles, and a little like Peter, which drives him wild.

It's Stiles who pulls away, panting. Derek's kissed his breath away.

"Much better," Stiles says. He pats at Derek's chest and whistles low. "Muscle. Both of you. It's... so nice. Wow."

Derek raises his eyebrows.

Stiles laughs. "What?"

"You're ridiculous," Derek says with a helpless smile.

"You love it," Stiles says.

Derek kisses his forehead. Lets his lips linger there for a long moment. "I do."

He feels Peter's eyes on him but he can't look that way. Not yet. He's got so much to think about.

"I'm gonna go back inside," Stiles says. "Actually, after the night I had, I'm probably going back to my dorm."

Derek's immediately worried. "Are you sure you're alright?"

Stiles waves him off. "I'm okay. I just want to get out of my tux and go to sleep early."

"Yeah. I can't wait to get out of mine," Derek says. "I think I'll go for a late night run." He chances a look at Peter. He would usually invite his uncle along on a run, even if he knew he'd turn him down. But tonight Derek needs to be alone to think.

Peter looks back at him, steady and strong, but there's something in his eyes. He knows. He knows Derek overheard them, and he thinks he's being rejected.

Derek swallows hard. He doesn't want Peter to hurt, but he's not sure how he feels. He needs to run, clear his mind until the truth of his feelings becomes apparent.

"You're going running this late?" Stiles asks.

Derek turns back to him. "Yeah. Sometimes I just need to."

Stiles searches his face. "As long as you always come back to us."

Derek turns his head meet Peter's eyes. "I do. I always will."

Peter nods and Derek feels like he can breathe again.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Merry Christmas to those who celebrate.

Derek runs until dawn when a blue haze of fog covers the forest floor. Peter knows because he follows him, worried when he doesn't come home by 3. Derek has never run so long, at least not in the past few years. After Kate, it was frequent, when Derek would run all night, flat out, until he collapsed. But as they healed together, the runs became shorter.

So Peter knows without a doubt that Derek heard him talking to Stiles, heard him say he's in love with him. His reaction is to run, and that's not a good indication of how he's taking it.

He doesn't think Derek knows he's there, not until Derek circles back right to him and drops down to a knee, panting, exhausted.

"You're going to kill yourself doing this," Peter says quietly, as he always used to. "Is it so bad?"

Derek bows his head, still panting. His eyes are closed. Peter wants nothing more than to help him stand and lead him back to the house for a shower and a nice long sleep. But he's not sure if he's allowed. Will Derek even let him touch, now that he knows how Peter feels?

Peter feels like he's bound up, tied in wolfsbane rope, unable to move. What can he even do?

But then Derek reaches out, his hand on Peter's knee. He looks up, his eyes shining. "I… think I've figured it out."

Peter slowly extends a hand, not sure if it will be accepted. Derek takes it easily, and Peter helps him to his feet.

Derek turns and starts walking, but it's not back toward the main Hale house like Peter would expect. He's walking toward their house, as they've started to call it. The house they're renovating for Stiles.

Derek walks slowly, as if he's run all the speed out of himself. Maybe he has. When they're almost to the clearing, right before their house comes into view, Derek reaches out.

Peter frowns but lets his nephew take his hand. Derek entwines their fingers and Peter's breath catches in his throat. What does this even mean?

When the house comes into view, Peter's breath catches and Derek squeezes his hand.

"It's so different, isn't it?" Derek asks.

There's a fresh coat of paint on the house, and the roof's been reshingled. So much has changed in just a month. Peter's paid dearly for the quick work, but he thinks it was worth it. He can't wait to see Stiles's face when they bring him here.

"But that's good," Derek says. "Sometimes different is just what you need."
Peter squeezes Derek's hand but stays silent. He knows his nephew well. Derek has something to say, and sometimes there's no coaxing it out. Peter just has to be patient.

They stand there until the sun breaks through the trees, lifting the fog and shining brightly on their house. Derek nods to himself, then finally breaks the hush. "We're going to live here."

Peter looks at him, but Derek's still got his eyes on the house. "Well, that was the point," Peter can't help but say.

Derek's scent turns sweet, and he smiles. "The three of us." He turns away from the house. Faces Peter head on. "We're going to give Stiles what he wants."

"Is that what you want?" Peter asks carefully. "To share our omega?"

"What I want...," Derek says quietly, then huffs a laugh. "Remember when we held him, the two of us, at the Martin house?"

Peter nods. He thinks of it often.

"I want more of that. I want us to share a bed. I want to wake up in the morning and see him there... and you, too. I want us to make him happy together."

Peter's heart flips. "I want that, too."

"But you want more."

It's not a question, but Peter finds himself answering. "I only want..." He starts to say, but that's a lie. He rephrases. "I don't want to ask for more than you can give."

"If you don't ask me, if you don't give me the chance, how can we know?"

They're still holding hands. Peter can practically feel Derek's frustration.

"But you know, now. How much of our conversation did you hear?" Peter asks.

"Enough to know you're in love with me," Derek says quietly.

"Did you feel anything, that night I was in rut?" Peter asks. He feels brave to ask, but maybe it's just stupidity. He can get his heart stomped on right now, and it will be his own fault for asking the question.

"I don't know what I felt," Derek answers. "I wanted to help you, to be close to you. You were so hot, and it was intense, but I didn't..."

He was right. It does hurt.

"I do love you," Derek says. "I just don't know how I feel... romantically. Is there some kind of sign, something..." He breaks off. He smells of frustration.

"Derek," Peter says, his heart breaking. "How do you know you're in love with Stiles?"

"It's easier with Stiles," Derek says. "My instincts take over, and I want him. I want to take care of him and fuck him and fill him with pups. But you're an alpha, my instincts with you are different."

Peter nods. That does make sense. "What does your heart say?"
"That the three of us should be together," Derek says. "I just get tripped up on how."

Peter pulls him into his arms and they hold each other close. Derek snuffles against Peter's neck, breathing him in, scenting him like he always does.

"You and I don't have to be together in order to give Stiles the two alphas he wants," Peter says. "Relationships don't have to be a circle. Or a triad, it's called. We can be a V."

"I'm not saying I don't want to try with you, though," Derek says.

"What?" Peter asks, pulling away to look at him.

Derek is flushed now. "I want... I want to try."

A ray of hope starts to shine in Peter's heart. "How?"

"I don't know," Derek says with a huff.

Peter thinks a moment. Then asks, "Will you give me permission to court you?"

"I'm not an omega," Derek says. "But... maybe? What kind of courtship?"

Peter smiles. "I don't have a goddamn clue. Maybe I'll ask Laura for tips. Then I'm going to do it right."

He feels giddy, like he's young again. Derek didn't turn him down outright, and he's smiling back now. Maybe this can be a thing Peter can have.

Peter takes Derek's hand and lifts it to his face. He gives him plenty of time to pull away, but Derek just smiles. Peter kisses his hand, just a brush of his lips over the skin.

"Thank you," Peter murmurs. "For giving me a chance."

"Why don't we have self-defense at this school?" Stiles asks as soon as he's in the head's office. He's come straight after he got off the phone with his father. He's scared, though he won't admit it.

Natalie sighs. "Hello, Stiles."

"Yeah, hi," Stiles says. "So why don't we?"

"In the past, no one saw a need for it," she says. "I'm changing things, a little at a time, but I can't do it all at once. This is only my first year."

Things have changed since Natalie was named headmistress. The classes became a little more academic. Bedtime moved up an hour. And from what Stiles can tell, this season has been better for the omegas as well, giving them more choice and less stringent rules to follow. He knows she has a board to answer to, and can't change things too drastically all at once. Still...

"But I need it now," Stiles tells her.

"You heard Ennis is out on bond?" Natalie asks.

Stiles nods, hoping to keep the fear out of his eyes. "It's not just him. What if that happens again with someone else? I'm just human, and my alphas won't always be around."
"I'll call around, see if I can find someone suitable to come in for a self-defense demonstration," Natalie says. "Nothing formal, not yet. But a seminar might work."

"Thank you," Stiles says, honestly relieved.

"You're welcome. Now go get dressed for the gift-giving ceremony," she says.

"Oh my god, I almost forgot," Stiles says, looking at the clock.

Natalie's light laughter follows him out as he hightails it back to his room.

The gift-giving is an old custom and an important part of the courting. It's supposed to show how well the suitors know their omega, or at least how they can provide for them.

Stiles doesn't care what Peter or Derek give him. He just wants to see them. Plus his dad will be there today as a witness, so that's awesome, too.

Today he can dress casual, to a point, so he gets to wear jeans and Converse. He pairs a graphic t-shirt with a blazer and runs his hands through his hair. It's getting longer. He likes it.

"That was a quick change," Kira says. "Which is good because otherwise you'd be late. C'mon, let's get out there."

They walk out to the ballroom together, which is decorated a bit more understated this time, with chairs making up an audience, and two large tables at the front for the omegas to sit at.

"There she is," Kira whispers when she sees Allison. They beam at each other from across the room. Allison is sitting with a middle-aged man (a really good looking one, too) who Stiles assumes is her father.

Stiles searches the audience and finds Derek, Peter, and his dad all sitting together. He grins at them and takes his seat at one of the tables. He's seated between Isaac and Erica. He leans against Erica a little, and she gives him a big smile.

"Deuc's here," she whispers. "For me!"

If they weren't in front of an audience, he'd give her a big hug. He squeezes her hand instead. "Good." He's heard about what Deuc did, telling the Hale alpha about the situation, but he's willing to let it go, for now. For Erica's happiness.

Stiles isn't sure if Isaac prefers Briar the most of his suitors since they haven't talked about it, but he spots her out in the audience and gives a small smile. She's barely paying attention; it's like all she can see is Isaac. Stiles ducks his head and grins to himself.

The gift-giving is done alphabetically, which means Stiles is seventh in line. Heather's up first. She has several suitors still, coming up to the stage one at a time, and they seem to be trying to outdo each other with expense rather than giving Heather personal gifts. Boring.

Heather seems thrilled with it, though. Well, good for her. But it takes awhile, and this is just the beginning. Stiles surreptitiously pulls his phone from his pocket. First, he checks the time. Then he shoots a text to Peter and Derek.

*This is going to take forever.*

He makes sure his phone is on vibrate and rests it on his knee. Erica slants him a look that tells him...
she knows exactly what he's doing.

The text he gets back is from Peter. *Good things come to those who wait.* Stiles looks up, meets Peter's gaze, and rolls his eyes.

Peter shrugs, but he looks smug.

Stiles's phone vibrates again and this time it's from Derek. *I wish we could do this in private.* Stiles quickly shoots off a text agreeing.

After Heather comes Greenberg. Thankfully, they only have the one suitor, and the gift is... a blanket? No, he sees as they take it out of the box, a weighted blanket. Stiles knows those blankets are good for anxiety, and Greenberg often needs help with that. And there's a note.

Stiles can't see what it says, but when Greenberg reads it, they laugh out loud and give their suitor a fist bump. Stiles shakes his head. He knows Bobby Finstock from school. He had him as a coach before he presented. Finstock's a little crazy but always seemed like a good man. Stiles hopes he'll be a good alpha to Greenberg.

By the look on Greenberg's face, they're definitely going to accept Finstock's proposal at the end of the season.

Isaac's up next. Surprising Stiles, he only has the one suitor, too. Now, Stiles knows he had four at the beginning of the season. Did the suitors go the way of Ennis, or did they find other omegas to court, or did Isaac tell them he wasn't interested?

Stiles would bet on the latter because the shy smile Isaac gives Briar as she presents her courting gift says it all. Isaac's smitten, and Briar can't look away, either.

Since he's sitting right next to Isaac, Stiles gets a good view of the gift Briar gives him. It's a passport cover with a note tucked inside. Stiles is just nosy enough to read it.

*We'll get this filed as soon as we can, and it'll be full of stamps in no time. I want to show you the world, and together we're going to make a difference.*

Stiles nearly awwws aloud. He has to settle for gently bumping into Isaac as Briar walks back down to her seat. "Good pick," Stiles whispers.

Theo's gift giving does not go smoothly. He sneers at every single offering, all six of them. The alphas probably think he's playing hard to get, and they seem the competitive sort. None of them know what Theo's classmates do. He's in love with Liam, and no alpha's going to win his heart.

Erica jitters in her seat next to Stiles and he tries to calm her with a hand on hers. It doesn't work.

Three alphas come up bringing her gifts. Stiles vaguely recognizes the first two, but the third in line is Deucalion.

The first gift is a cookbook, personally signed by some famous Food Network star. Erica gives it a glare and nods for the next suitor to come. The cookbook gets shoved aside.

The gift the next alpha gives is a leopard-print silk scarf, which looks like it might double as a dress, it's so big. Erica smiles and pets the scarf, then looks up in anticipation. It's plain to see she's only really interested in Deucalion, and the man himself practically swaggeres forward to present his small box.
Erica opens it and finds a key. She looks up, confused.

"I hope you can drive," Deuc says with a smirk.

Erica gasps. "You got me a car?"

Deuc produces a slim booklet showing what the key goes to. Stiles doesn't know anything about cars, but he knows what expensive little convertibles look like.

"What color is it?" Erica asks.

"What's your favorite color?" Deuc asks with a smirk. "Turn it over, there's a picture."

Erica turns the booklet over to see a real photo attached. Candy apple red, is what Stiles would call it. The car is parked in front of what looks like a mansion. Erica is grinning so hard it probably hurts. It's contagious. Stiles smiles just as big.

Deuc leaves, not even looking at Stiles. Is it supposed to be a snub, or is he that infatuated with Erica? Stiles doesn't care. Erica’s happy.

Danielle's gifts are next, but Stiles can't see them well since she's at the other table. He goes back to texting.

*Erica is so stoked. I bet you can smell how happy she is from the audience.*

Peter texts back, *I think Deuc found what he was looking for.*

Stiles smiles at him and Derek. He wants to know how everything is going with them, but he hasn't had a chance to ask yet. There's time, though.

He's next, and he only has the two alphas. The only two alphas who matter.

Derek and Peter approach the stage, their eyes on Stiles. He smiles at them, knowing Derek's got to be hating this. Still, Stiles finds it exciting. He can't wait to see what they got him for their official courting gifts.

Derek's present is big and flat, and Stiles has an idea of what it might be. Peter's gives him no clue, though. Thankfully, Peter goes first, and Stiles doesn't have to wonder for too long.

Stiles opens the box and his eyes widen. "You got me a stun baton?"

"As much as we'd like to be, we can't be there to protect you all the time," Peter says. "But with this, you can protect yourself."

"Wow, thank you so much!" Stiles gushes.

"It's got enough juice to take down a werewolf," Derek adds from behind Peter. "So be careful with it."

Stiles nods, and sets it down carefully. He'll read the included instructions *thoroughly* before he touches it again.

Then Derek approaches with his gift, and Stiles unwraps it carefully. It's a painting, and he recognizes the subject from pictures. This one is more fantasy, though, since it's full of flowers and other plants. "My greenhouse," he murmurs, his eyes tracing the brushstrokes lovingly. In the corner, tucked away, is the suggestion of three figures. It's blurred, being in the background and behind
some greenery, but Stiles knows it's supposed to be them.

Them. His new family, everything he wants.

He looks up at Derek. "Thank you. It's lovely."

Derek is blushing hard. This is the first painting he's showed Stiles and the first he's let out in public for others to get a peek at, as well. Stiles is so proud of him.

"You're both so wonderful," Stiles whispers, tears coming to his eyes. Good tears, though. He's full of joy. These are his alphas, and together they are going to be so, so happy together.

The rest of the ceremony goes by, but Stiles barely registers any of it. He feels like he's floating on a cloud.

"We're not going to dinner with Mom?" Derek asks as Peter takes a different turn than the driveway.

"I have something to show you first," Peter says. He drives to their house, instead. When it comes into view, the first thing Derek notices is that it's lit up, the windows shining out into the darkness.

They changed the electric bill to Peter's name the day before. They've agreed that Derek will pay his fair share of the household's expenses, but the utilities are Peter's responsibility.

They've been denning quite hard for the past few days. Derek's been out buying furniture and appliances while Peter's been handling things with the contractors. Almost everything is ready now. All the house needs is a few touches by Stiles, to add his style to the decor.

Derek's not sure what Peter's going to show him, but he can practically feel the nervous energy coming off his uncle. It's something important.

They go inside, and Derek follows Peter up the stairs. Peter doesn't stop going, though. He walks down the hall and there, tucked away where Derek never looked, is another set of stairs. Peter motions Derek to go ahead of him.

"What's this?" Derek asks.

"My courting gift to you," Peter says.

Derek looks back at him before he opens the door at the top of the stairs. "The attic?"

"Just go," Peter says, sounding almost terse. He's anxious. Derek wants to hug it out of him.

He opens the door, instead. And beyond the door is a room, large and airy, with large windows. And in the center of the room, to make the most use of the light that comes in, is a brand new easel.

"It's night, so you'll have to imagine the natural light," Peter says, almost babbling.

Derek smiles. "I already have."

He walks around and Peter stands back and lets him. There are adjustable spotlights for working at night. There's a sink for cleaning his brushes. There are brushes, and paints, and a giant stack of art reference books in the corner. Stacked along the walls are blank canvases of various sizes and styles. There's a desk, too, and it's stocked with pencils and pens and markers and pastels and things Derek doesn't even recognize.
He turns around to face Peter. "Come here."

Peter approaches, looking cautiously happy. "You like it?"

"Peter, I love it," Derek says, and pulls him close for a hug.

"This room is all yours," Peter says. He tightens his arms and holds on, making Derek feel loved and secure. "Stiles and I will have our own spaces. I have an office downstairs for school work and writing. Stiles has his greenhouse, and we'll make sure he has room to study. But this? This is all yours, pup."

Derek closes his eyes and basks in the love. He feels so, so grateful. Peter's given him something he didn't realize he needed. "Thank you."

"I told you I was going to court you right."

Derek pulls back just a bit so he can rest his forehead against Peter's. They end up swaying as if there's music playing. All they can hear is their heartbeats and the sound of their breaths, but something about the moment is just right. Magical.

And Derek knows, absolutely, that's it's possible to fall in love with this man.
I gotta get out of here.

Stiles sends Peter the text a little after midnight. Derek is on an overnight camp-out with his merry band of wolf scouts, but Peter's been putting some finishing touches in the kitchen of their new house. He spent the afternoon buying gadgets like a kitchen scale, a timer, and the fancy KitchenAid stand mixer he knows Stiles wants. It's the full moon, and Peter's expending all his energy by denning.

I don't think Ms Martin will appreciate it if you go hying off again, Peter's quick to tell him. They don't have dish towels yet. He should let Stiles pick those out.

Sigh.
Yes I know I typed it out
There's no sigh emoji or I'd use that
What do you think a sigh emoji would look like?
Nvm that's a stupid question
I'm just rly bored

Peter smiles and sits at the kitchen table. You won't be there much longer, he reminds him.

Today was Saturday
Technically yesterday since it's after midnight
Do you know what that means?

That you should be sleeping? Peter sends.

Ha! You're one to talk. What are you doing? Stiles asks.

Peter takes a quick picture of the kitchen counter. The countertop itself is new, a beautiful shining quartz that Stiles picked out. He also chose the backsplash tiles, which give the kitchen a much-needed pop of color. The stand mixer Peter bought today matches perfectly. He smiles as he sends the picture to Stiles.

YOU GOT THE AQUA SKY MIXER!!! Stiles sends.

Peter laughs, feeling warm. His alpha instincts are working overtime, wanting to show off his denning skills. He wishes he could see Stiles's face right now. I take it you like my choice? I know we didn't ask your preference on the color.

Stiles answers back quickly. Are you kidding? The only other color that would have worked with the tiles is majestic yellow but the aqua looks so much better. When did you get it?

The warm feeling only expands. It came in today. Not much left for the kitchen but towels. I picked up some plain ones to get us started, but I know you want to choose what we use regularly.

And potholders to match.

Peter frowns. He completely forgot potholders. Do you want to order them yourself, or wait to shop after your bonding?

There's a pause, and Peter wonders if he shouldn't have mentioned the bonding. He knows Stiles is
having a hard time deciding who'll be his legal mate.

*I'll wait*, Stiles sends, then quickly changes the subject with a flurry of texts:

*So you didn't ask about today, but Saturday is spa day.*
I've been scrubbed and buffed and polished within an inch of my life
I don't usually go for waxing but
I was bored and I started thinking about stuff
Like how it would feel for you and Derek to touch me again
This time on my bare skin
My super duper extra especially bare skin
What I mean is
I went for the waxing today and I'm virtually hairless
Everywhere

It's definitely getting hotter in the room. Peter can picture it. His fingers itch to feel the freshly smooth skin. His mouth waters imagining getting his tongue on every inch of it.

*Is that okay?* Stiles sends, interrupting his fantasy.

He swallows hard, realizing he's been sitting entirely still for a full five minutes. With shaking fingers, he picks out his next text. *It's more than okay. You must be so sensitive right now.*

The phone rings and Peter swipes to accept the call immediately. "Hello, sweetheart."

"Did I break your brain?" Stiles asks cheerfully.

"I think you may have," Peter answers honestly. "But it sounds painful, darling. Are you okay? Any lingering side effects?"

Stiles lets out a soft laugh. "I'm a little bit... pink. And sensitive, like you said."

"You're a consummate tease," Peter murmurs. "Are you alone?"

"Yeah, Kira's out with Allison," Stiles tells him.

"Oh? Is Ms. Martin aware?" Peter asks.

Stiles laughs. "I think so. She was muttering something about locking the barn doors earlier."

Peter closes his eyes. Stiles's laughter isn't sweet or sultry, but it's arousing him anyway. Or maybe that's the lingering fantasy of his waxed *everything*. "I was going to say we should Skype-"

"Want me to put on a show for you?" Stiles asks.

Peter growls. He *wants*. He checks the time again, and does some quick calculations. He really shouldn't go to the school. Shouldn't ask Stiles to meet him at the oak. But the impulse is pulling at him, reeling him in. "I just want to put my hands all over you," Peter says.

"Can't do that on Skype," Stiles points out. "But..."

Peter knows what he'll say. He knows. He should stop him right now. But the temptation is so strong.

"...if you meet me at the oak, you can definitely put your hands on me," Stiles says, completing both their thoughts.
"I used to have common sense," Peter mutters.

"That sounds like a yes," Stiles says. His voice goes higher when he's excited. Peter finds it endearing.

"Be careful. Take your stun baton with you," Peter says. "I'll meet you in… twenty minutes."

"Twenty minutes," Stiles says, sounding a little breathless. "Okay. Are we going somewhere or staying close?"

"I'm not going to risk taking you too far away," Peter says, thinking of all that could go wrong. He knows Kira must go somewhere with Allison, but Kira's a kitsune with powers and can defend herself if need be. Peter can't risk somehow getting separated from Stiles and then something happening to him, especially with alphas like Ennis out in the world. If Derek was with them, it would be another story. Two alpha werewolves to watch over Stiles are much better than one.

"I can practically hear you worrying," Stiles says.

"I can't help it, sweetheart. You're precious to me." "Am I really?" Stiles asks, a little wistful.

Peter vows to show him just how he feels. "Absolutely. Now get dressed or… whatever you need to do. I'll be there. Be careful, though."

"Yessir," Stiles says cheekily.

Just as Stiles is going out, Kira is coming in. Kira takes one look at him and grins.

"That's different. Going out with your alphas?" she asks. She's glowing. She must have had a fabulous time with Allison.

"Just Peter," Stiles says. "Derek's got wolf scouts tonight."

Kira looks impressed. "That's so sweet that he works with them. He seems so… gruff? But gentle, if that makes sense. I wonder how he does with the kids."

Stiles smiles at Kira's description. She hasn't had a chance to get to know Derek well yet, but Stiles knows that will change once they're out and bonded. Stiles has sweet domestic fantasies of dinner parties and cookouts in his new house, playing host to his friends.

"Peter says they love him," Stiles says, and glances at the clock. "Shit, gotta go." He gives Kira a quick hug, grabs his stun baton, and then he's out the door.

It's too easy to sneak out. The security at the school is a lot more lax than it should be. It used to make Stiles feel better, less like he was imprisoned, but lately he can't stop thinking about what would happen if Ennis came after him.

He forcibly pushes that thought away. He's about to see Peter.

Stiles is wearing a dress, for once. Nothing fancy, just a gauzy white maxi dress, but it's long and flowing and feels good as it swishes against his bare legs. He's not wearing a stitch beneath it. It makes him feel delightfully naughty.

Peter's already there beneath the tree, and Stiles runs to him as soon as he's in sight. He jumps into
Peter's arms, knowing the werewolf is strong enough to catch him. Peter even swings him around before setting him back on his feet.

"Look at you," Peter murmurs.

Stiles bites at his lip. Peter's never seen him in a dress before. Maybe he won't like it. "Is it okay?"

"You look beautiful, sweetheart," Peter says. "I think that no matter what you wear. But what prompted this?"

Stiles shrugs. Runs a hand over the dress, letting the fabric slip against his sensitive skin. "I just felt like it. Plus I'm really kinda... raw feeling, after all the waxing, and my regular clothes would chafe too bad."

Peter's eyes flash. "Hmm." His fingertips run up and down Stiles's bare arms. "I brought a blanket. It's soft, so it shouldn't chafe."

"Are you going to lay me down on it, alpha?" Stiles asks teasingly.

"If you'll let me," Peter says, eyes flashing again. Stiles swears he catches a glimpse of fang.

"Oh, I'll let you," Stiles promises. "What else are you going to do?"

Peter pulls him close and kisses him gently. "I want to taste you." He pulls away to get the blanket. He shakes it out and lays it on the soft grass, just a little ways away from the tree, but hidden from the road and the school by a row of hedges. It's the perfect spot.

Stiles lies down on the blanket without prompting, just plops down and looks up at the sky. The moon is round and bright. "Is the full moon affecting you tonight?" He hadn't even taken that into consideration.

"I feel its pull," Peter says, which Stiles doesn't really understand. "I'm closer to my wolf tonight."

"It's not dangerous, right?" Stiles asks. He kicks out of his sandals and pulls his dress up a little, exposing his legs up the knee.

Peter kneels down and wraps his warm hands around Stiles's ankles. "You're the dangerous one here. You drive me crazy." He runs his hands up Stiles's calves, watching him intently.

"Not too crazy, though," Stiles says, a little breathless. Peter's gaze is intense, and Stiles finds himself falling into it.

The moment is broken when Peter leans his head down to kiss Stiles's knee. He doesn't stop there, though. He gently pushes up the dress to kiss Stiles's thigh. He inhales deeply while he's down there, breathing in Stiles's scent.

"I can take the dress off if you want," Stiles says, nervous and excited.

Peter pulls back. Looks at him hungrily. "Let me see you."

"Okay, let me just..." Because of the length of the dress, it's hard to take it off from a prone position, so Stiles wiggles around until he's on his knees then pulls the dress off over his head. Then he's naked, dressed in nothing but the moonlight. He moves to sit back on his heels, but Peter stops him. Keeps him kneeling there in front of him, eyes roving over his body.

Stiles is suddenly very aware of how exposed he is. He feels himself flush from head to toe.
"The pictures you sent don't do you justice," Peter says quietly. "You're so beautiful, sweetheart."

There's a breeze. It rustles the leaves on the oak, then passes over Stiles's now-overheated body. His nipples tighten and Peter growls.

Then Peter puts his mouth on them, and Stiles gasps loudly. Peter uses his tongue, his teeth, his tongue again. Stiles is super sensitive there, which Peter now knows.

"I could make you come like this, couldn't I?" Peter says. His voice is low, almost a snarl.

Stiles lets out a soft sob as Peter scrapes his blunt teeth over one nipple and pinches the other. He probably could make Stiles come from it. Peter spends a lot of time on his nipples, biting and sucking until they feel puffy and too sensitive, then he backs off.

"I'm going to make you feel so good, darling," Peter promises.

"You have," Stiles says. "You are."

Peter smiles. It's dark and knowing. "I'm going to make you feel even better." And then he pushes Stiles down carefully and gets between his legs.

"Oh," Stiles whispers.

"Stop me if I do something you don't like," Peter says, and leans in to kiss Stiles's dick.

"I'm liking it so far," Stiles says, but then Peter sucks him into his mouth and he can't find words anymore.

Stiles used to think having a small dick was a bad thing, or at least an annoying part of being an omega. But when Peter fits him easily into his mouth, engulfing him completely, it doesn't seem so bad. Not at all.

"Fuck," Stiles gasps. Then Peter licks over his bare balls and that's… sensitive. Wow. He gasps again, then lets out an embarrassing sob when Peter starts sucking on them, too.

He's wet. So wet. He knows Peter can smell it, but he's ignoring his hole for the time being. Which is… it's unfair, because he needs something.

"Shh, it's okay," Peter reassures him, then licks lower. "I know just what you need."

Stiles somehow ends up on his hands and knees with Peter behind him, eating him out until Stiles is a sobbing mess. He comes, again and again, pleasure rippling through him like electricity.

He keeps expecting Peter to fuck him, to slide right in and fill him up. He might even beg for it a time or two. But Peter just keeps at him with his tongue and then his fingers, and never lets up until Stiles is too busy pushing back on him to ask for anything else.

Stiles falls forward at some point, his ass still up in the air for Peter to do with what he wants. Peter keeps at him until it's just exquisite torture and Stiles has to beg him to stop because he can't come again.

"Okay, sweetheart," Peter says, smoothing his hands up and down Stiles's back. He lies down on the blanket with Stiles and cuddles up behind him. Stiles wiggles back against him, feels how hard his cock is.

Stiles makes a soft, questioning noise, and Peter seems to understand.
"Not tonight, darling."

Stiles hums. He feels himself floating. He's utterly exhausted and knows he should go back inside, but he doesn't want to move. Not yet.

He dozes for about half an hour, but then Peter gets him up and helps him put his dress and sandals on again.

"I'd walk you back to your dorm, but…"

"No, this is better," Stiles says. Peter puts his stun baton in his hand. Stiles doesn't want to admit it, but he almost forgot it.

Peter gives him a knowing look and another lingering kiss. "Sweet dreams, darling."

Derek loves his wolf scouts. There's something about eight-year-olds, maybe their honesty. Derek gets along with them well, sometimes better than their actual scout leader. He's spent the last day with them, camping in the western part of the preserve, near the lake. He's taught them tracking in the past, and yesterday had been a good day for them to practice their skills in identifying different animal tracks. The pups like raccoon tracks the best, finding the pawprints cute and/or creepy (depending on the child) because of their resemblance to tiny humanoid hands.

Derek thinks that one day, he'll be a good father. He looks forward to the day he can teach things to his own pups.

One thought leads to another, and soon he's imagining Stiles fat with Hale pups. He finds himself smiling as he parks in the driveway next to Peter's car, and he thinks maybe he'll share the thought with Peter. Has Peter thought about it, too? Is he as eager to be a father as Derek is?

Of course they have to wait until Stiles is finished with school, since that's what he wants. But Derek doesn't mind waiting, and there's plenty of time to practice breeding him.

Derek has to pause and take a breath. He has to be careful. With these kinds of thoughts he'll be going into rut if he's not careful.

"Hey, Der," his dad calls when he enters through the kitchen door. "Did you get breakfast yet?"

Derek nods. "Ate with the pups. Peter around?"

Talia walks into the room. There's a frown on her face. "Peter went out last night. He's still sleeping."

The way she says 'out' sounds like Peter was doing something unspeakably evil. Derek rolls his eyes and heads up the stairs. His mom's been weird about Peter ever since she found out about Stiles. He knows enough by now to ignore her.

Peter's door is left unlocked for him, so Derek slips inside and… gets a whiff of where, exactly, Peter was last night. Derek's cock immediately hardens in his pants.

Peter rolls over and opens his eyes. "Hey," he greets, his voice low and sleep-rough.

Derek locks the door. He closes his eyes and takes another deep breath. He can smell Stiles's slick, his desire. He walks closer. The scent is all over Peter, but there's something missing.

"Come here and I'll tell you about it," Peter says. Derek can't refuse that kind of invitation. He kicks
off his shoes and joins Peter on the bed. The scent of Stiles is even stronger closer up, mingling with Peter's and now Derek's. Derek leans in and now he can tell where the majority is coming from — all over Peter's face.

"How many times did you make him come?" Derek murmurs. He runs his nose along Peter's jaw. Peter huffs a laugh. "Four times. I think he had more in him, but the circumstances weren't ideal."

"Wish I could have seen it," Derek says. He's not jealous, though. He's glad Peter could make Stiles feel good, give him some of what he needed. He knows Peter didn't fuck him, though, that he wouldn't, not without Derek there. Not the first time.

"He looked so pretty, too," Peter says. Kisses Derek's cheek. "He wore a dress for me, with nothing at all underneath. He got waxed yesterday, so he was pink and sensitive and so smooth."

Derek moans at the words and his cock throbs. He rests his hand on Peter's waist. Squeezes. "You haven't gotten off yet."

"Wanted to wait for you," Peter says, searching his face. It feels natural, right, to kiss him then. Derek doesn't know what he's doing, just knows he wants to make Peter feel good like he made their mate feel good. His wolf growls in agreement. Derek pulls Peter closer, lets him roll on top and kiss him back, moaning when their cocks press together through their clothing.

They rock and rub against each other, gasping and moaning out their pleasure. Peter kisses him deeper, and Derek wishes he could taste Stiles there on his tongue. It's enough to know where his mouth's been, though. Derek bites at Peter's bottom lip, making him hiss.

Derek growls and rolls Peter beneath him, lets him feel the bulk of his muscles. The bed creaks ominously, but the wolf doesn't care. He only wants more of Peter, to taste him and feel him writhe in pleasure. His claws prick through Peter's clothes, teasing his skin. But Derek wants more. He wants to claim.

Peter cries out when Derek bites down on his shoulder, and the scent of come hits Derek's nose. It drives him to frenzy and he ruts against Peter's body, chasing his own orgasm.

It's only once he's come and he's resting in Peter's arms that he realizes what he did. "Shit."

Peter tightens his arms around him. "It's okay, pup."

"No, what, I bit you." Derek struggles away to look at Peter's shoulder. It's already healed, of course, but blood soaks his t-shirt and the sheet beneath him. He lets out a soft whine.

"Yeah, you bit me. And I came from it," Peter says. He takes Derek's face in his hands. "It's all right. I don't mind. It was good."

Derek swallows hard. "I lost control."
"Not really," Peter says. "You loosened up a bit. I wouldn't say you lost it. You knew it was safe to do, and you didn't really hurt me."

"I drew blood," Derek says softly. He can't meet Peter's eyes.

Peter sighs. "We're werewolves. What's a little blood?"

Derek's not sure how to answer. He whines again and hides his face in Peter's neck.

But Peter just strokes his hair. "It's perfectly natural."

"Right. Have you ever bitten someone?" Derek asks, knowing Peter would never lose control like that.

The answer surprises him. "No, but I'd like to."

"What?"

"You claimed me, pup. That's what it was."

Derek thinks for a moment and finds his uncle is right. He wants to bite Stiles, to claim him. He will, if Stiles lets him. But that's different. "Yeah, but you're another alpha. I'm not supposed to."

"Why not?" Peter asks.

"...I should at least have asked you first."

"True," Peter says. He wiggles around so that they're looking at each other. "But just so you know, you have permission. For next time."

"Next time?" Derek asks, but he can't help smiling.

Peter smiles back. "And hopefully then we'll think to get undressed first."
Have you started a bonding registry yet? Peter sends. He's on his way over to their house. There's not a lot to do, not really, but his denning instincts are running on overdrive. His hindbrain is telling him to make things right for his omega, to prove he can provide a comfortable home.

"Headed out?" Derek asks from behind him.

Peter smiles over his shoulder. "To the house. Want to come?"

His phone buzzes. **Yeah, at Macy's, but then I heard about Zola and now I'm leaning toward them. What do you think?**

Derek doesn't answer, just follows him out. "Walking or driving?"

"Let's take my car," Peter says. The sky's starting to go dark but it's only 11am. He doesn't want to trudge around in the rain and mud. They get into the car just as thunder rumbles.

"No texting and driving," Derek teases, plucking the phone from his hands and putting it in the cup holder.

Peter shakes his head, amused. "Text Stiles, then. And look up Zola, see what kind of site it is. Stiles wants to register with them."

"Register what?" Derek asks.

Peter puts the car into gear and pulls out of the driveway. "For the bonding." The drive to their house is short, and they arrive in a matter of minutes. Just as they head into the house, the rain starts pouring down.

Derek is frowning at the phone. "It says you can create your own personalized wedding registry. The samples look good. Is Stiles doing this?"

Peter picks up his own phone and searches. Looks at what the site has to say about itself, then texts Stiles. **Zola looks like a good choice, lots of bells and whistles. Have fun setting it up.**

He's a little nervous. The headings are all first names like Cori & Rob or Steve & Diane. He sees one inventive portmanteau, but the nervousness is still there. If Stiles does this, what names will he pick?

Peter knows Stiles has to choose between them. Legally, he can only be bound to one of them. He's pretty sure it's going to be Derek. He's not jealous, exactly, just anxious that somehow that'll mean he's left out in the cold.

*I may have already started*, Stiles sends, along with a link. Peter clicks it and it sends him to a personalized URL.

"What's wrong?" Derek asks, looking over his shoulder. "You reek of anxiety."

Peter lets out a breath. The heading at the top of the personalized registry page says **Stilinski + Hale.**

Derek hums. "Looks good." He gives Peter a kiss on the cheek. "Now tell me what's wrong."

Talking about his feelings isn't something Peter's used to doing. He's gotten a little better with it lately, but part of him still wants to automatically shrug everything off as he hides behind false
"I'm not ready for Stiles to make his choice," Peter murmurs. He scrolls through Stiles's registry, pleased by what he sees.

They take their shoes off. Derek takes him by the hand and leads him further inside. Outside, the rain comes down in torrents, but the inside of their house is cozy and dry. Peter's glad he got the roof done. Otherwise, they might not be so dry today.

They pass by the living room and Derek leads him upstairs.

"Where are you taking me?" Peter wants to know.

"I want you to take a look at the master bedroom," Derek says.

Stiles has sent his ideas along and Derek and Peter both have made decisions, too. The resulting decor is something all three of them can be happy with. Peter smiles when they walk inside, his socked feet sinking into the plush carpet.

"What do you think of it?" Derek asks.

Peter raises his eyebrows. "I think it's wonderful, and I can't wait to move in here with you and Stiles."

Derek smiles. "Exactly. It's a room made for three," he says and points to the closets. They had it customized for three people. In fact, the entire suite, no, the house is for a minimum of three, with room to grow. "No matter who Stiles picks legally, we're all in this together."

Sighing with relief he didn't know he needed, Peter pulls Derek into his arms. The embrace is easy, natural.

Derek nuzzles his shoulder, kisses his neck, and then pulls back to look him in the eye. "I think we should have a nontraditional bonding ceremony."

Peter lifts an eyebrow. "How so?"

Derek pulls back and takes his hands in his. "The legal stuff... whatever. We'll get it done. But I want the three of us to pledge our vows together. At a public ceremony in front of all our friends and family. I want that."

"Have you asked Stiles about it?" Peter asks with a frown.

"Of course," Derek says.

"And?" Peter asks impatiently.

Derek laughs. Throws his head back and exposes his throat. Peter wants to bite it. "He loves the idea. He said... he said he was scared one of us would feel left out when he has to choose."

"Our omega is remarkably perceptive," Peter murmurs. "Are you sure you want that? With me? We haven't exactly worked out what we are to each other."

Derek nods slowly. "I talked to Laura. Got some advice on having a relationship with another alpha. And it's really... it's not as complicated as I thought. We don't have to take on certain roles for it to work. We only have to be ourselves and see how we fit together."
"How did Laura take the news, though? About you and me?" Peter asks. He knows Talia will have a fit, but that's to be expected. Laura and Cora's opinions are much more important.

Derek blushes. "She told me it was about time I saw it and pointed out that you're my anchor and we sleep together most nights. I think she knows better than I do sometimes."

Peter lets out a breath. "So she didn't have anything to say about the... incest factor?"

"That sounds like a new reality show," Derek says with a smile. "The Incest Factor!"

"Stiles is rubbing off on you," Peter murmurs, more amused than he should be.

"Not as much as I'd like him to be," Derek says with a wry grin, making Peter laugh. "But, uh, no? She didn't mention it. Really, the only people who might have a problem with it are Mom and Dad. And the two alphas thing is likely to be the bigger problem with Dad."

"Well I'm not letting Talia and Joseph get in the way of our happiness," Peter says decisively.

Derek leans in and kisses his forehead. "Good. I won't let that happen, either. Why should I?"

"I don't want to cause friction between you and your parents," Peter says with a frown.

"It's their own fault, not yours," Derek tells him. He sounds so strong. Peter has to kiss him for that.

Derek smiles into the kiss, which makes Peter's heart soar. He's making Derek happy. Derek wants to be with him. Peter has two wonderful people in his life, both of whom he loves, and he's not letting anything get in the way of that.

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Stiles is nervous for the next event. It's a family picnic, focusing on the family part. His dad will be there, but so will the Hales, and Stiles is worried about the impression he'll make. What do they think of him for wanting two alphas? He's met Laura, likes her just fine, but he's yet to set eyes on the rest of the pack. The one or two times Peter's mentioned his sister it hasn't been especially good. Stiles isn't sure if he's going to be cowed or end up yelling at her.

He'd much rather be attending the self-defense seminar, but that's not scheduled until later in the week.

The day dawns bright, with only a few clouds in the sky. The forecast calls for sunny skies all day, so at least the picnic won't be ruined that way.

"I'm wearing a dress," Kira says, sounding decisive. "Allison and Chris already know I'm not traditional, I don't have to prove a point."

"Plus your pants are getting tight, right?" Stiles says.

Kira sighs. Pulls two dresses from the closet and tosses them onto the bed. "Well, you're not exactly wrong." She walks over to the full-length mirror and turns to the side. Runs a hand down her nightshirt. Sure enough, there's a bump. It's almost imperceptible, but if you know what you're looking for you can see it.

"That's going to be the most beautiful pup," Stiles says with a sigh. "Between you and Allison, they're gonna have all the good genes."

"Kit," Kira says. "Kitsune, remember?"
Stiles grins at his best friend and nods. "Right. Little baby foxlet," he says, already thinking of all the fox-themed baby items he can buy for her shower. He's gonna be the best uncle, and hopefully having a niece or nephew to spoil will tide him over until after he's done with school. He does not need to be getting baby fever. Even though the very idea of Derek and Peter holding a newborn pup in their arms does things to him.

"Whoa, what was that?" Kira asks, her eyes wide.

Stiles blushes. "Omega pheromones, sorry."

"Potent," Kira says.

"Oh, c'mon," Stiles whines. "Like the thought of Allison holding your kit doesn't do the same thing to you."

"But I'm already knocked up," Kira says, "so it's more of an inevitability. Yours smells like you're about to start an old-fashioned mating run."

Stiles tilts his head, imagining that. Derek might like it, he thinks with a smile. Too bad they can't tack one onto the end of their bonding ceremony. Not that he wants their first time knotting him to be in a pile of dead leaves on the forest floor.

Wait, stop, no. He cannot be thinking about sex right now. He's got to get dressed to meet the Hales. He needs to smell respectable. He turns back to his closet. Kira's wearing a dress. Should he…

No. He's meeting new people. He doesn't want to give the wrong impression. He's a strong, independent-as-legally-possible omega, he don't need no dress.

"What's wrong?" Kira asks. "Your face went from horny to worried in like two seconds."

"I've got to make the right first impression," Stiles says. "You can wear a dress. Allison and Chris know you. I'm meeting my future in-laws for the first time ever. I need to make sure they don't think I'm the kind of omega who…" He trails off, not knowing how to put it into words.

"Wears a dress?" Kira asks wryly.

"You know that's not what I mean." He sighs. "Okay, I need something that says 'I'm joining your family but you're not the boss of me' but also 'love me, accept me, approve of me'. What's that?"

"Too late to have a t-shirt made," Kira quips. Stiles turns away from the closet to give her a mock glare. She holds up her hands. "Chic jumpsuit?"

"I don't even know what that means," Stiles grumbles, but turns back to the closet. He does have something after all.

"Lies," Kira says. "You've got that ivory piece with the plunging neckline."

Stiles pulls it from the back of his closet. He's not sure. The halter style leaves his back completely bare. It's… sexy. Does he want to be sexy at a picnic?

"Needs pressing," Kira remarks.

"It needs some way to dress it down," Stiles says. "It looks like I'm going to a wedding, not a picnic."

"Don't wear glitzy heels with it, then," Kira says teasingly, and Stiles snorts. As if he would ever
wear heels. Converse, on the other hand…

"How would it look with Chucks?"

"Definitely dressed down," Kira says with a laugh.

"Great!" Stiles says. "I've gotta find an iron."

"Ask Brett or Jackson," Kira says. "They never have any wrinkles."

"Hmm, true. Thanks." He decides he'll ask Brett first since Jackson is usually kind of pissy to him for no reason whatsoever. Just his personality, Stiles supposes.

But first, he finds Isaac sitting in the common room, all alone. Isaac, who is freaking the fuck out and is in desperate need of a cuddle.

"Hey, man, what's up?" Stiles says, abandoning his search for an iron. Isaac's wearing a pretty flowered sundress with a silk scarf, but his mascara is running, which ruins the effect entirely.

Isaac's lips look almost bitten raw. He's nervous and putting off distressed pheromones. Stiles sits beside him and wraps an arm around him. Isaac's taller and broader than Stiles, but he collapses against Stiles neatly, whining a little. He reminds Stiles of a puppy. A big, overgrown puppy with sass for days, but a puppy.

Though Isaac doesn't seem really sassy at the moment. "My dad's gonna be out there," he whispers.

Isaac's never really talked about his family much. Stiles knows his mother left when Isaac was a kid and he had an alpha brother who died while deployed overseas. He knows Isaac talks about the omega school like it saved him, unlike how most of the omegas see it. Stiles has guessed a lot, but he's never gotten the truth.

He doesn't need to hear any details, though. It's clear Isaac is scared of his dad.

"Okay. You and Briar are strong, though. There's nothing he can do to you."

"He's a werewolf, now," Isaac says, cutting Stiles off. "He got lung cancer, so he went for the bite and lived through it."

Stiles doesn't point out that Isaac is a werewolf, too. Right now in Isaac's head, he's an abused kid again, having to face down his abuser. It's bullshit and Stiles wants to go yell at Natalie about it, for letting this happen. But he also knows Isaac's been closed-mouthed about the past. He doubts Natalie knows, or if she knows, has no proof and can't do anything about it.

"Okay," Stiles says. "Okay, stay here. I'll be right back."

Isaac looks confused but nods. Stiles gets up and runs to his dorm, finds what he needs, and runs right back. He's out of breath when he plops back down on the couch with Isaac. Isaac gives him a look and Stiles grins.

"Here, you can borrow this," he says.

Isaac's eyes widen when he sees the stun baton.

"It's okay, you can take it. Borrow it just for today," Stiles says. "I need it back right after he leaves, but yeah. He tries to lay a finger on you, he even looks at you wrong? Zap his ass."
"How's it work?" Isaac asks.

Stiles stands up and gives a demonstration. He's gotten good at this. He flicks his wrist and the baton extends. Stiles shows Isaac where to squeeze, and they both smile when it crackles loudly.

"You sure?" Isaac asks.

"You're just borrowing it," Stiles repeats. "Now take it, go back in your room, and fix your makeup."

Isaac takes a deep breath and lets it out. "Okay."

"Oh, hey, one more thing," Stiles says. "You got an iron?"

When Derek sees Stiles he nearly loses his ability to breathe. Beside him, Peter seems to be having a similar problem. Laura grins and whistles. Stiles spots them then and starts coming over.

"Is that Stiles?" Cora asks, her eyes wide. "Holy god, I want that outfit."

Derek doesn't take his eyes off Stiles until John nudges him. He didn't even notice the sheriff was walking with Stiles, and from the amusement in his eyes, he knows it.

"Hey," Stiles says. He looks at Talia nervously. Holds out his hand. "I'm Stiles."

John sighs and makes formal introductions as they shake. Derek's glad he's doing it since he still can barely speak.

"You look…" Derek says, and swallows hard.

"Stunning," Peter completes.

Talia is watching like she isn't sure what to say yet. Which is good. Derek wants her to stay out of it. He knows how she feels and he doesn't want Stiles to have to hear about it. It seems as though she's going to just silently preside over their area of the picnic, at least for the time being.

Soon Stiles is seated on a blanket between Derek and Peter, chattering away to Cora about her college experiences. Derek keeps finding reasons to touch him, because why wouldn't he? And so does Peter. They wipe a crumb away from his chin. The breeze blows a hair out of place and they smooth it down. Or for no reason at all, they reach out to him, just to remind themselves he's there, he's real, and he's theirs.

Stiles responds to every touch with a smile, or a laugh, and he touches back. Little things, like his fingertips to the back of their hands, or a just a friendly nudge with his bare shoulder. He never favors Peter over Derek or vice versa.

And Talia watches it all, the smell of frustration and anger rising off her.

Finally, after they've finished their food, she says, "So, Stiles. Haven't you decided yet who you're going to bond with?"

Derek freezes. Peter glares at her. But Stiles just smiles.

"Yeah. Peter and Derek," he says.

Talia narrows her eyes. "You can't bond with two alphas."
"Not legally, no," Stiles says. "But that's just a piece of paper."

"You can't be serious," Talia says incredulously.

"Mom, stop," Derek says. "We've worked it out."

"You mean your uncle and his slut have decided to take advantage of you," Talia hisses.

"Whoa," John says, straightening. "There's no call for that."

Talia turns to John. "How can you let him do this? He's your son, your responsibility."

"There's no 'letting' Stiles do anything," John says. "He's an adult and this is his choice."

"This is ridiculous!" Talia exclaims.

"Come, Talia," Peter says, sounding bored. "Don't tell me you've never heard of polyamory."

Talia snarls at him. "This is Derek's future we're talking about, I'm not going to let you ruin it! You're so selfish, Peter, and now you've found someone as selfish as you!"

Stiles flinches back at the words and Derek sees red.

"Shut up!" he says. "You don't know anything. I love them, and I want to be with them. We made this decision together, and it has nothing to do with you!"

"Don't talk to me like that," Talia growls. "I'm your mother!"

"Mom, stop," Laura tries to say, but it's clear Talia's not listening.

"You're a controlling bitch!" Derek says without thought, and then she slaps him. It happens so fast, Derek's not entirely sure what's happened. But then he feels the sting, the heat, and he rears back in shock.

"Don't you dare hit him!" Stiles says, even as Peter snarls similar words.

Joseph makes a distressed noise and Talia turns to him, momentarily distracted by her mate.

"I think you should leave before I have you arrested for assault," John says evenly.

Talia turns back like she's going to argue, but Joseph tugs at her arm. "Tali, please. Let's just go home."

Derek gives his mother a hard look. The slap didn't hurt, not really, not like it could have, coming from the pack alpha. But it's clear it was done in anger, because she felt she was losing control, and he doesn't know what to do with that.

Talia stalks away. Joseph gives Derek an apologetic look, but then he follows her.

"That's going to leave a mark," Peter murmurs, touching Derek's chin and tilting his head to get a better look.

"I'll go get some ice," Stiles says, standing and brushing his outfit off.

"It's not that bad," Derek says.

"Let me do this for you," Stiles says. "I can't do anything about your mother, but I can get you ice so
you don't swell up and bruise."

Derek sighs and nods. "Okay." Stiles gives him a smile and leaves, walking across the grass toward the school buildings.

"Good," Peter says. "Now, I expect the rest of you to entertain yourselves in my absence. I'll just be a few minutes."

Derek sighs. "Peter…"

"This is something I have to do," Peter says grimly, then gets up and walks away, following in Talia's footsteps.

Derek looks at John. John shrugs. "I'll give him a head start."
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

The 'attempted rape' tag comes into play in this chapter. If you'd rather skip it, just don't read the middle section (Stiles's POV) and jump down to Derek's.

Peter catches up with them in the parking lot. "Talia!" he calls, angry and letting it show.

She turns around quickly, her eyes burning red. "What have you done?" Joseph tries to lead her into the car, but she shrugs him off. "You've turned my own son against me, Peter. You and that fucking omega, what have you done?"

"Oh, that's brilliant," Peter spits. "Blame it all on me, it's always me. Tell me what a bad man I am. Come on, let's hear it."

She shakes her head. "I'd gut you if I could. Derek could have had a family, a future-"

"He still will," Peter says. "He's just going to share it with two people instead of just one. It's not hard to understand. You're being so closed-minded." He laughs. "You're the one ruining things. Stiles will give you grandpups, and make Derek happy — hell, he already has, or have you missed the smiles on Derek's face lately?"

Talia narrows her eyes, but she's listening.

"Derek's not going to allow you in his pups' lives if you act like a monster," Peter says. "You hit him, Talia, what is that, how could you? Or do you want to turn into our father?"

"Don't you dare compare me to him," Talia says lowly.

"Viciously controlling, close-minded, with children who hate you. Sounds like him to me. Is that what you want?" Peter asks, knowing it twists the knife, but knowing it's the only way to get through to her.

Talia grasps at the one thing she can. "Derek doesn't hate me."

"Maybe not yet," Peter says. "But right now, I certainly do, and if you keep going, Derek won't be far behind."

"Why can't you just let Derek have Stiles to himself?" Talia asks. "I don't understand. How can you be that selfish?"

"It's not me," Peter stresses. "This is something all three of us have come into together. This is the relationship we chose. We want to share our lives together, loving each other, being there as support for one another. I understand it's not traditional. I get that it's highly unusual. But it's what we've decided, and what makes us happy — Derek included."

"But it was your idea, wasn't it?" Talia asks.

"I fell in love with Derek. That's on me. But Stiles is the one who wanted to try to work this out
between the three of us."

Talia sucks in a breath. "I knew you and Derek had… done things together. I'm not blind and I certainly haven't lost my sense of smell. But I thought you were just blowing off steam. You went into rut and Derek helped you, but… it's more than that?"

Peter doesn't feel right explaining their relationship in more detail when it's so new. He nods, though, giving her that much.

"Shit." She rubs a hand over her face and sighs. "I… cannot take any more of this today." She looks at Joseph, then back to Peter. "I'm going home to think."

Peter knows Joseph isn't going to agree with what they've decided. He's traditional, even more than Talia. But he also has learned not to rock the boat when it comes to things he doesn't like. He hates that Laura is queer, but he doesn't want to lose her over it. Maybe some of that will rub off on Talia.

"You don't have to like it, Talia," Peter says, taking the idea and running with it. "But you should try to accept it. Or else you're going to miss out on sharing Derek's happiness. Including those grandpups you want so bad."

Talia gives him a stiff nod.

Peter lets his voice turn syrupy sweet. "And if you hit Derek again, or Stiles, or someone else I love, I'm going to make you wish you were dead."

And there's that flicker of fear he's been looking for. Talia stares back at him, speechless. Joseph is holding his breath beside her.

Peter smiles and turns his back on them. He sees John — he didn't even realize the sheriff was standing behind him, listening. Peter wonders how much of that he was present for.

John nods at him, looking satisfied with what he heard, though. He clasps Peter's shoulder, and then they walk back to the picnic together.

Cora and Laura look up when they come back. "Is everything… okay?" Cora asks. "I can't believe Mom did that."

Peter smiles. "She'll think about it, and then if she knows what's good for her, she'll apologize. She just needs to go home and lick her wounds for awhile first." He looks down at Derek, whose face is starting to swell. "Okay, pup?"

"Did you hurt her?" Derek asks, looking at his clothes. Possibly for blood stains.

Peter rolls his eyes. "I thought trying to talk her around was the better option, given the circumstances."

"He did an impressive job of threatening her, though," John adds.

Peter sits down. Takes a closer look at Derek's face. "I think you'll be needing that ice. Where's Stiles?"

Derek blinks. Looks around. "He hasn't come back."

Something sharp-edged twists in Peter's belly. It's probably nothing, but…

"Let's go look for him," he says, and Derek frowns. "John?"
With Ennis out on bail, they can't be too careful, and John seems to pick up on that thought immediately. "All the security is outside for the event."

Derek's eyes flash. "But Stiles went inside."

Ennis had been watching, apparently. Keeping out of sight but waiting patiently. He grabs Stiles on the way out of the kitchen, and the ice he's carrying drops and slides across the floor.

"Gotcha," he rasps into Stiles's ear, then knocks him against the wall before Stiles can even think to fight back. The impact stuns him and sends him sprawling, but Ennis quickly picks him up again and pulls him tight against his body. "Let's go somewhere a little more private."

"No," Stiles says, and takes a deep breath to scream. Ennis wraps a hand around his throat, cutting it off before it starts.

"You're gonna be a good little omega for me, aren't you?" Ennis says, shaking him, tightening his grip.

Stiles feels like his eyes will bulge right out. For a moment he thinks Ennis is going to choke him to death then and there. Then Ennis lets up the pressure, and Stiles can sort of breathe again. Not easily, not evenly, but he can breathe. His throat hurts.

"Let's go," Ennis growls. He tries to pull Stiles along, but Stiles isn't going that easily. He braces his sneakers against the floor. Ennis snarls and drags him, but not before he backhands him. The blow is so hard Stiles's whole face feels numb.

Ennis takes him into an unused part of the school, where there are some renovations going on, and throws him down on the floor next to a pile of wood. Stiles squeaks; that's the only noise he can make. He wants to scream, wants to fight, anything. God, anything. But Ennis is on top of him, is everywhere.

Ennis smiles, and it's fucking scary. Stiles sucks in breath after breath but he still doesn't feel like he can get enough air. Did Ennis do something to his throat? Fuck, if his trachea is injured, he might die. Is he going to die?

Then Ennis is on top of him, pulling at his halter top. "You look like a slut in this," he says. "You are a slut, aren't you, Stiles? I know you are. Saw you that night you fucked around with your alpha. Watched him work you over, watched you come on his face. But he didn't give you a good dicking, did he?"

"Stop," Stiles says. It's a squeak. There's something wrong with his voice.

The halter top rips off and Ennis pulls the front of Stiles's jumpsuit down, exposing his chest.

"Stop!" Stiles gasps, trying to roll away, trying to kick, anything. God, anything. But Ennis is on top of him, is everywhere.

"Always thought omegas were special, but you're just a whore like any ordinary beta bitch, aren't you?" Ennis says. He grabs the front of the material and rips it down, then stops.

Stiles is gasping for breath, desperate for air, and Ennis is staring down at him.

"Look at that, you've got a cock littler than my thumb." Ennis reaches for it and Stiles lets out a frightened squeak. Ennis pauses to laugh at him. "You sound like a mouse. Scared little slutty mouse."
Stiles shakes his head and Ennis laughs again, pulls him up by the back of his hair. Ennis kisses him then, sloppy and forceful. Stiles tries to bite his tongue and gets bitten back in retaliation. His bottom lip throbs, and he tastes his own blood.

"You're gonna give it up, mouse," Ennis tells him. Then he lets go of him to pull his pants down off his body. Stiles squirms and manages to get himself turned over. He tries to crawl away, but Ennis grabs one of his ankles and pulls him back.

Stiles is naked and panicking and now he's crying, begging Ennis not to do this. Not very eloquently, because he can only say, "Please, no, please stop!"

Ennis growls. "Shut up. Stupid whore," he says, and jerks Stiles's legs apart. Stiles screams then. Not loudly, but he does. He screams and cries, and wishes he was somewhere else, anywhere else. There's movement behind him, the clink of a belt buckle, then the rasp of a zipper. Stiles squeezes his eyes shut tight.

"Hey!" A voice calls, and there's a loud sound, like a whistle.

Ennis turns toward the noise, snarl on his lips, and gets a board to his face, twice in quick succession. Ennis goes down, and Stiles twists around to see Greenberg standing there, trembling. Then they hit Ennis with the board again, over and over until it doesn't look like he can get back up soon.

Greenberg grabs Stiles, helps him up. Stiles is dazed and still afraid he's going to die. He grabs his clothes and holds them in front of his crotch. There's no putting them back on again.

"C'mon," Greenberg says. The whistle sounds again, and this time Stiles sees it. It's an actual shiny whistle around Greenberg's neck, and they're blowing it as they run, pulling Stiles along behind them.

Stiles clutches what remains of his clothes as he runs. Thankfully, just ahead, he sees Derek. Greenberg's still blowing their whistle, and runs right past Derek. Stiles stops and collapses against his alpha.

Derek growls and runs his hands down Stiles's arms. His eyes are glowing. He looks behind him, and Stiles knows he wants to go after Ennis, but he still can't breathe. Not right.

"Hospital," Stiles gasps out.

Derek suddenly looks scared. He picks Stiles up into his arms and strides outside with him. Stiles hides his face in Derek's neck, still breathing erratically. And shaking. He started shaking and now he can't stop.

"Is he hurt?" he hears. "He's naked!" and "Is that Stiles?" and "Where are you going?" and "Let me see him."

That last voice is his dad's and Stiles sobs in relief. Someone covers him with a picnic blanket.

"He said he needs a hospital," Derek says, voice tight with worry.

Peter's nearby now. He puts a hand on the back of Stiles's neck and draws pain he didn't realize he had.

"I'm calling an ambulance," John says. "And I'll get some deputies out here. Where's the bastard that did this?"
Stiles starts to cry harder, and now he can't stop, but it's still hard to breathe and he's afraid his throat is fucked up and god, it was almost really, really bad. But Greenberg saved him. Greenberg.

He picks his head up and looks around for them. They're in Bobby Finstock's arms, shaking a little. Stiles knows the feeling. He feels like he's going to shake and shake right out of his skin.

His face is starting to throb. Right, Ennis hit him.

Stiles tightens his hold on Derek and sobs.

Derek stays by Stiles's bed. He hates hospitals, but he loves Stiles, so it's not hard to do.

Peter comes in a few times in the beginning, but then after the third time he looks at Stiles's bruised face and smells the residual fear, he takes off.

"Where's Peter?" John whispers a few hours later.

Derek clenches his jaw. He thinks he knows where. He's probably tracking Ennis down. If he finds him, that's it for Ennis. He'll disappear. Derek looks at John and shrugs. "I sent him home to sleep," he says, grateful John isn't a werewolf to hear the lie.

John gives Derek a knowing look. "Right."

Stiles is still asleep. He was given sedatives when he came in, and he's still sleeping them off. He's injured, but not badly. Derek tries to take his pain from time to time while he dreams, but there's not a lot to take, just some dull throbbing. Derek knows his throat will hurt for a few days, and the bruising on his face will take some time to go down.

He looks so vulnerable. Derek's alpha instincts are yelling at him for failing to protect his mate. And his wolf wants to take Stiles out of the hospital and back to the den where he'll be safe and comfortable. The only thing holding him back is John, who keeps putting a hand on his shoulder to ground him and remind him that kidnapping an unclaimed omega is still a crime, even if said omega is yours.

Derek doesn't think he'll be able to rest, especially not in the hard hospital chair, but he does. He leans forward and rests his head on Stiles's bed, then falls asleep holding his hand.

He doesn't know how long he stays like that, but he wakes suddenly when Stiles starts coughing. John is already moving to pour him some ice water, giving it to him in a cup with a bendy straw.

Stiles takes a few sips, then leans back with a sigh. His eyes look unfocused still, like the sedative is still at work.

"Hey," Derek whispers.

Stiles looks at him and smiles. It's beautiful, though it's slightly marred by his split (bitten) lip. Derek does his best not to focus on that. At least it's not bleeding now. Finding Stiles naked and bloody scared the shit out of him. He'd been caught between wanting to hold on to Stiles to protect him and wanting to kill.

Derek leans in and closes his eyes, blocking out that thought. Stiles lifts his hand and runs his fingers through Derek's hair. Soothing him. It should be the other way around.

"What's wrong with my throat?" Stiles rasps, and Derek hushes him.
"Don't try to talk," John says, and offers him more icy water.

"You've got a bruised trachea," Derek tells him.

Stiles purses his lips and nods. He reaches up and touches Derek's face where Talia hit him. The swelling has gone down and it's healed up now.

Derek leans in slowly, afraid he'll spook Stiles. He gives him plenty of room to move away if he needs. Stiles doesn't. Derek kisses his forehead and Stiles leans into it and sighs.

That's a good sign, right?

"Where's Ennis?" Stiles whispers.

Derek looks at John. John explains the facts: Ennis was gone by the time they searched the school and wasn't at his home when they checked. Stiles shivers.

"But I've got a deputy on your door here, and two patrol cars outside. Plus you've got me and Derek here." John pats his sidearm. Derek can smell the wolfsbane.

Stiles nods and looks like he wants to say something else. Derek kisses his forehead again but Stiles rolls his eyes. "Peter?" he asks.

Derek doesn't want to lie to Stiles, but the county sheriff is in the room and he can't very well say Peter's is chasing Ennis down so he can kill him.

"Had to take care of something," John says, sparing Derek the lie.

Stiles nods tersely. Derek would ask him what's wrong but he doesn't want Stiles to talk more than he has to.

"I'm going to go get a nurse," John says, leaving Derek alone with Stiles.

"Peter went after Ennis, didn't he?" Stiles rasps.

Derek nods. Stiles clings to his hand and looks worried.

"You're safe," Derek says, to Stiles but to remind himself, too. Stiles is safe, and Ennis will be dead by morning if Peter has anything to say about it.

Part of Derek wonders if he should expect the law to take care of Ennis, that maybe he deserves prison instead of death. But then he remembers the sight of Stiles, naked and sobbing, clinging to him, the scent of his fear thick in Derek's nose. No, Ennis needs to die. Derek's not sure he could do it himself, but Peter can.

"Peter's taking care of it," Derek whispers.

Stiles scoots over, making room in the small hospital bed. He gives Derek a vulnerable, pleading look that Derek can't say no to. Derek climbs up into the bed on his side, and Stiles presses against him. He's trembling, Derek can feel now.

Derek scents him as best he can. Runs his stubbled chin over Stiles's hair. Rumbles low in his throat for comfort.

Stiles's fingers tangle in Derek's shirt, holding tight. He lets out a soft, sad sound.
"It's okay, baby," Derek murmurs. "You're safe now. Not letting anything else happen to you. Not ever."

"Can't promise that," Stiles whispers.

Derek pulls him tighter against him and shakes his head. "Get some more sleep."

They doze for some time, then wake around dawn when Peter comes in. Derek doesn't mean to jostle Stiles, but he wakes anyway. Peter leans down and drops a kiss on Stiles's head.

They look at him, not voicing their questions. Peter smiles, his human teeth glinting more sharply than usual. "It's taken care of."

Stiles can't smell it, but underneath the scent of Peter's body wash and shampoo is the slightest hint of blood and fear. Not his. It makes something settle in Derek, and he nods.

"Thank you," Derek says.

Peter nods and looks at Stiles, vulnerability painted in his features. Like he knew Derek would accept this but isn't sure it's the right thing for Stiles. It hits Derek then how much he loves his uncle. Not just as a packmate, not just as family. It seems like something he should tell him, but the moment is wrong. Later, he tells himself. Let Peter and Stiles have this moment.

Stiles reaches out and pulls Peter closer. "Thank you." Then Stiles kisses him, harder than he should with a busted lip, but needing to make a point. Then he says, "Can you fit?" and scoots closer to Derek, making room on his other side.

Peter laughs. "I'd better."

It takes some jostling, and lowering the bedrails, and then a little more wiggling around, but then Peter and Derek have Stiles sheltered between them, safe and whole.
They keep Stiles in the hospital for two days. Unfortunately, when the medical staff let him go 'home', it means he’s going back to the omega school. Peter doesn't like that one bit. For the past two days, he and Derek have been allowed to stay near Stiles. They've doted and hovered and made him as comfortable as possible while remaining vigilant about his safety.

Even though Peter knows for a blood-soaked fact that Ennis isn't coming back, he's still on high alert after the attack. So is Derek. Their wolves want to stay close to protect their mate, and now that it's time for Stiles to go back to school, they're a little… opposed to the situation.

John seems to understand but says he can't do anything about it. "You've got another two weeks. You can hold on."

Two weeks until their bonding. They're going to be the second bonding of the season. Only Kira and Allison are going before them, and he wouldn't begrudge them that. Still, two weeks seems a long time.

"It's not like you won't see him at all," John says. He means that there are two more events of the season, a garden party and a farewell dinner.

"I just want to take him home," Peter grumbles.

John clasps his shoulder. "Two weeks," he repeats. Then he walks back into Stiles's hospital room. "We ready?"

"I don't need a wheelchair," Stiles is saying. "This is ridiculous."

"Hospital rules," Derek says gruffly. "Get in."

Stiles sighs and sits in the wheelchair. Derek pushes him to the elevator, and they all go downstairs to the waiting car.

"Get in, boys," John says. "I'll give you a ride home."

They don't question it, though when John takes the turn away from the school's direction, they look at each other with raised eyebrows.

When the pass the sign for the preserve, Stiles can't hold in his excitement anymore, bouncing and grinning. "Yes!" he says, accompanied by a fist pump.

"Just for a little while," John says when he parks in front of their house. He looks at his watch. "We got out of the hospital ahead of schedule but Ms. Martin expects you back by lunch."

Stiles gives his father a smacking kiss on the cheek, then hops out of the car with a cheer.

"What do you want to see first?" Peter asks him.

Stiles takes them both by the hands and starts walking to the back of the house. Of course. "The greenhouse!"

They haven't ordered plants in yet, wanting Stiles to have that honor. But the greenhouse is huge and beautiful, ready for Stiles to make it his own. He looks at it with wide, happy eyes and Peter falls a little more in love with him.
"It's so much better than the pictures," Stiles murmurs. Then he jumps into Derek's arms and somehow manages to pull Peter into the hug, as well. "You two are the best alphas."

Peter laughs, so happy he feels like he could float away. "You haven't even seen the house yet."

Stiles beams at him. "So show me!"

The kitchen door is closest, so they go in that way. Stiles immediately starts running his hands over everything, unknowingly spreading his scent on his new home and making Peter's wolf extremely happy. From the look on Derek's face, he feels the same.

"This countertop is perfect, I knew it would be," Stiles says. "And the appliances! Everything's so shiny, I love it. I love the flooring, oh my god." He opens every drawer, inspects every gadget with oohs and aahs. He does this throughout the entire downstairs, then he takes his enthusiasm upstairs to the master suite.

"This is much bigger than the original plans," Peter explains to a gape-mouthed Stiles. "But we needed room for the extra closet and the bathroom sort of…"

"Grew and grew," Derek finishes.

"How does a bathroom grow?" Stiles asks. "I get it about the closets, but… oh!" He walks into the ensuite bathroom and suddenly grows speechless.

Peter ordered a huge tub. It's big enough for three grown men. And so is the shower, which has multiple shower heads, which Stiles feels like he has to test the water pressure of immediately by turning on the water and standing back, eyes wide.

"It's got its own waterfall!"

"Thought you'd like that," Peter murmurs. Then, to Derek, "I told you it'd be worth the look on his face."

Derek reels Peter in for a kiss. It's shocking — Peter is usually the one doing the reeling. But Derek takes the initiative this time, and ends up pushing Peter against the bathroom wall and kissing him breathless.

Peter blinks when Derek pulls away. "What's that for?"

Derek smiles, spots of color on his cheeks. "Let me tell you later."

"Dad will kill me if I take a shower now," Stiles says mournfully, his attention still on the shower.

"I think you can wait two weeks," Peter tells him.

"Easy for you to say," Stiles grumps. "You can take a shower in there anytime you want."

"We haven't yet," Derek says. "We haven't even moved in yet. We were waiting for you."

Stiles looks from him to Peter and Peter nods.

"But… that makes no sense," Stiles says. "You should definitely be here."

It's an attractive thought. Peter hasn't really seen Talia since the day of the picnic, and he's not looking forward to going back to live in her house for the two weeks until their bonding. He looks at Derek.
"You don't mind us living in the house before you?" Derek asks Stiles.

Stiles shakes his head. "Nope. I kinda like the idea of you being here, waiting for me. And you two could get a head start." He wiggles his eyebrows. "Have some time alone before I come to crash the party." From the tone of his voice, Peter can tell he does think it'd be good for him and Derek to spend time alone together. Again, Peter looks to Derek for the response.

"Then we'll move in today," Derek says, looking back at Peter with a smile. "Right?"

Peter's heart is full to bursting. He doesn't think he can take a bit more happiness.

Stiles pulls them together, squishing himself between them. "You've been such good alphas, denning like crazy for me, but you should definitely enjoy the place even without me."

"Two weeks," Derek murmurs, pressing a kiss to Stiles's temple. "And then it'll be perfect."

It sucks to go back to the school. Not just because it's not what he considers home, and not just because it's the scene of the crime, so to speak — though those are big reasons why. But now he's away from his dad and alphas again, for the first time since it happened, and it feels like his safety blanket has been pulled away and he's vulnerable again.

His dad promises to keep a squad car nearby, with a werewolf deputy for extra safety. When he's greeted back to school by Natalie, she promises him she's upped security both outside and in, and that everyone is remaining extra vigilant in the days since the picnic.

And the self-defense seminar the following day is now a mandatory attendance event for all the omegas and the staff. In fact, the seminar will be taught twice, in two groups, to make sure everyone can attend.

Stiles returns to his dorm but is stopped on the way back. The first person he sees is Greenberg, who's been sitting outside the office waiting for him.

They've never been really close, but they've spent enough time together, and now they've been through a trauma together and Greenberg saved him. It comes rushing back and Stiles hugs them without warning, whispering thank you, thank you, thank you in their ear.

Greenberg smiles. "Anytime, man."

Stiles laughs and hugs them again. He does have one question, though. "Where'd you get the whistle?"

"Bobby gave it to me," they say. "You gonna be okay now?"

Stiles nods. "Yeah. Thanks to you. You were a badass."

"You think so?" they ask, sounding unsure. They run a hand through their spiky hair, making it stick up even more.

"Totally," Stiles assures them. "Anything I can do to pay you back, you just ask me. Anything. Anytime."

Greenberg smiles back and nods. "You don't owe me anything. Just paying it forward."

Stiles is reminded of the beta who attacked Greenberg a few years back, and how Kira had saved them. "Us omegas gotta stick up for each other."
"Yeah, exactly," they say, nodding profusely. "Hey, I gotta go. But yeah, glad you're okay."

Greenberg wanders off in the direction of the pool and Stiles shakes his head.

Before he can get to his room, he's stopped again. This time by Isaac in the common room.

"Stiles!" he calls, and runs up to him. He pulls out the stun baton from his waistband. "Here. I'm sorry I had it. I shouldn't have borrowed it. Maybe if I hadn't been so scared, you could've used it and-"

Stiles hugs him. "Shut up, Isaac. It was my idea and it's not your fault."

Isaac hugs him back. He's strong and much taller than most omegas. It's almost like hugging an alpha, Stiles thinks. He's gonna be good backup for Briar when they go off saving the world.

"I'm so glad you're back and okay," Isaac whispers.

Stiles doesn't know what to say to that.

Jackson walks past and nods at him. "Hey, Stilinski. Good to see you in one piece."

Stiles pulls back from Isaac and blinks at Jackson's retreating back. "Did he just say something nice to me?"

Isaac laughs and one of the dorm doors opens. There's a happy shriek and then Erica's throwing herself into Stiles's arms.

For a moment he almost can't breathe because of all the hair in his face, but when he makes some loud spitting noises, she pulls away to look at him. "How are you?"

"Good," Stiles says honestly. "Still a little banged up, though." He points to the bruise on his face.

"As long as it's gone in time for your bonding pictures," Erica says breezily, but she bites her lip when she looks at him.

"I really am fine," Stiles says. "I'm barely even traumatized."

She searches his eyes. "Hard to hear the lie when you say it like that."

He shrugs and turns away. She sees way too much.

And there's Kira. She's got her arms around her middle and she's staring at him like he might disappear.

"Hey, bestie," Stiles says, as light and cheery as he can manage.

Kira looks like she's not sure what to say or do. Stiles knows she needs a hug even more than he does, though, so he motions her over.

"C'mere," he says. Even though he's expecting it, she bowls him over with the force of her hug. They end up sprawled on the carpet and Stiles huffs. Kira holds on tighter, sniffing. She doesn't say anything, though, and now they have an audience. Stiles huffs again and says, "Let's go to the room. I think I have some mini Reese's cups hidden away in the closet."

Somehow they help each other off the floor. Kira looks guilty, now. "I found them while you were gone."
"You did? Did you eat them all?" Stiles asks.

Kira sniffs. "Maybe?"

He wraps an arm around her and leads her to their room. "Well, I guess you're forgiven under the circumstances."

He's not completely happy about being back at school, away from his protectors, his alphas, but he's got omegas here who love him. He forgot that for a little while, but they've reminded him.

Stiles calls them to make sure they've settled in. Derek answers it and tells him, a little giddily, that everything has worked out just fine. They've moved their books and clothes over to the house, and they'll go back for the rest tomorrow.

"Okay," Stiles says. He yawns, sounding tired. "Just checking in. Give Peter a kiss for me."

Derek hums and looks at his uncle. "I'll give him more than that."

"Mmm, sounds good," Stiles says. "Now I'm definitely going to have sweet dreams."

"Goodnight, sweetheart," Peter calls from across the room.

Derek tells Stiles goodnight, too, and then they're off the phone and Derek can focus on Peter.

Now would be a good time to let Peter know how he feels.

"Your heart just sped up quite a bit," Peter says, walking over to wrap his arms around Derek. "Thinking about that 'more' you're going to give me?"

Derek takes a deep breath. Lets it out. Swallows, then realizes he's stalling. How do you tell someone you're in love with them?

"What's wrong?" Peter asks.

Derek kisses him. Puts his hands on Peter's face and kisses him for all he's worth. He pours his heart into it, and Peter stumbles back a bit but Derek's there to make sure he doesn't fall.

"Derek," Peter murmurs against his lips. "Sweetheart. What's all this?"

He smiles. "I love you."

"I love you too," Peter says quietly.

Derek searches Peter's eyes for some kind of recognition, for understanding, but Peter just doesn't get it. Not yet. So Derek says, "No, I really love you. I'm in love with you."

Peter sucks in a breath, naked hope in his expression. "Are you sure?"

"Never been so sure of anything, except maybe Stiles," Derek says truthfully.

Peter's face transforms as he smiles, his eyes lighting up and filling with happiness. It's a good look for him.

This time when they kiss, they stumble back to the bed, and they don't stop for breath or for words for anything else until they have to. Then they gasp in unison and reach for one another's clothes.
They undress quickly, somehow managing it even though neither of them is thinking enough to be coordinated.

"I've never sucked a cock before," Derek says. "But I want to do that. With you."

"Be my guest," Peter murmurs.

Derek smiles at him and wraps his hand around the base of Peter's cock, then lowers his head. Peter offers encouragement as he starts to suck on the head, but as soon as Derek throws away his inhibitions and starts blowing him in earnest, Peter loses the ability to form words.

Derek would laugh about it if he wasn't so turned on. He ends up stroking himself as he sucks Peter off, and when Peter sees that he has to warn Derek he's close.

Not that Derek cares. He wants Peter to come in his mouth, wants to taste his pleasure and swallow it down. When he doesn't pull away, Peter gets the right idea and so Derek gets his wish.

"Jesus fuck, Derek," Peter gasps when he can speak again. "I thought you said you'd never done that before."

Derek moves so he can mark Peter's skin when he comes. He jerks himself off and Peter makes a noise of protest, tries to move to help, but Derek holds him back. Comes all over Peter's chest and belly.

"Fuck," Peter says.

Derek grins down at him, and Peter pulls him into a kiss, smearing Derek's come between them.

All in all, it's a good way to christen the bed.

In the morning, Derek wakes up to breakfast in bed. "You don't have to keep courting me, you know," he says, sitting up to appreciate the tray of food Peter's made him.

Peter sits beside him on the bed. "Yes I do. I want you to know how much you mean to me."

Derek smiles at him. "I should be courting you."

"You've got me, sweet boy."

They kiss and then Derek eats his food, chewing thoughtfully, wondering what he can do for Peter to make him realize just how special he is.
Chapter 17

The garden party falls on a Tuesday. Peter is sure to talk to Talia's emissary beforehand, so he can give Stiles good news.

"Deaton was the most excited I've ever seen him," Peter says, then explains himself. "Which means he smiled and agreed with me almost immediately, without beating around the bush for an hour before answering. Something about the balance of a triad being sacred to him."

"And who's he again?" Stiles asks. He seems distracted today. Peter chose to wear a v-neck so deep it shows off cleavage. Stiles keeps staring and licking his lips.

Derek looks on, amused. They can both smell the desire and pheromones Stiles is putting off, and Peter's grateful they're outside and not in a closed room.

"He's Mom's emissary. The druid who's going to officiate our bonding," Derek reminds.

"Your Mom's letting him do this?" Stiles asks.

Peter hums. "It's a good sign."

"Has she apologized to both of you?" Stiles wants to know.

"Not quite," Peter says. He doesn't care about getting her apology himself, but she certainly owes one to Derek and Stiles. "I think she's hoping actions speak louder than words. She's been planning our reception, sparing no expense, and she's paying for everything herself."

Stiles makes a face. "Do we want a reception?"

Derek grunts in agreement.

Peter shrugs a shoulder. "Not really, but we do want Talia to grovel. The more elaborate the reception, the more she shows she wants to work things out. From what I can tell, she's putting a pretty big dent in her wallet."

Stiles looks thoughtful as the band starts playing an old jazz standard. "I really would rather her tell me to her face that she's sorry."

"She'll do that, too," Derek assures him.

"You don't have to forgive her, though," Peter says with a frown. "What she said to you was… harsh."

Stiles smiles but changes the subject. "Who wants to dance?"

It's a slow, dreamy song, and suddenly Peter wants nothing more than to pull Stiles into his arms. But Derek answers first by standing and offering a hand.

Stiles beams and lets him lead him up to the dance floor.

Peter looks on, watching them sway together to the music. They're a stunning couple. He's so entranced that he doesn't notice he has company until someone clears her throat.

He turns to smile at Kira and Allison. "Hello there."
"Our bonding is next week, the day after the farewell dinner," Kira says. "Stiles is standing up for me, but you should be there, too."

Allison nods and hands him an invitation with his and Derek's names on the envelope.

"We'd be honored to attend," Peter says.

"Good," Allison says. "My mom and grandpa won't be there, so the more family the better."

Peter's touched. "Thank you," he says quietly and gets two big smiles in return. "Has Stiles already given you invitations to ours?"

"Duh," Kira says with a grin. "I'll be right by his side."

Peter smiles at them both. They're a cute couple, obviously in love, and he's glad things have worked out for them, despite the shaky start. He knows not everyone has the kind of luck they do. His gaze wanders across the party, past the happy traditional couples, to a pair of omegas who only have eyes for each other.

He sends a prayer to the universe that they somehow find peace in their lives.

Kira and Allison wander away to dance, and Peter starts walking that way, too. Maybe he'll cut in on the next song and dance with Stiles after all.

After the garden party, Stiles has time to think again.

Stiles tracks his cycle meticulously. If everything continues on a regular schedule, his heat will come a week after his bonding. But he also has to factor in what it will be like to suddenly live with two alphas. His heat might come on earlier and surprise them.

He needs to see a doctor before he bonds, needs to get on birth control as soon as possible. In all the excitement of the season, he'd somehow forgotten that.

He talks to Natalie about it and she gets him in to see someone, though she says she can't vouch for him. The omega midwife she recommended can't see Stiles for another week.

The doctor is a beta, a man, and Stiles takes an immediate disliking to his attitude.

At first, it seems like Dr. Young won't even see Stiles without his alpha, but Natalie kicks up a fuss and explains she's acting as his guardian in this instance. But then when the doctor discovers why Stiles is in to see him, he puts his foot down.

"I don't prescribe birth control to omegas without permission from their alpha," he says.

Stiles boggles. "What does an alpha have to do with it? It's my body!"

Natalie clears her throat. "He's not bonding for another week, so technically he doesn't have an alpha yet."

"Well, I, uh," Dr. Young says. "I suppose I could get permission from his guardian in this instance."

"That would be me," Natalie says. "Unless you want me to call his sheriff father down here to give permission on something which should be Stiles's choice anyway."

Dr. Young sighs. "Fine."
"Great!" Stiles says. "I want one of those implants that last a few years."

After another round of arguments, which Natalie and Stiles win, Dr. Young finally agrees. And then Stiles needs an exam.

"Not by you," Stiles says adamantly. "I want an omega to do it."

The doctor looks like he regrets taking Stiles on as a patient. Stiles is getting close to walking out and just getting his alphas to use condoms. At least until he can see someone else.

Thankfully there's an ARNP on staff, an omega who agrees to give Stiles the pelvic exam. Dr. Young leaves the room and Stiles lets out a big breath.

"What a dick," Stiles whispers.

The nurse practitioner's name is Tracy, and he's efficient and gentle. Stiles is a bit stiff and kind of nervous, but Tracy makes it as easy as possible.

When it's over, he says, "Everything looks great. You're getting an implant?"

Stiles nods.

"Have you read up on them, know all the pros and cons?"

"Yeah, I know they can cause cysts, and that I might spot for the first six months," Stiles says.

"The cysts are rare, but you're right. You'll be protected from pregnancy for up to four years."

"And since I'm not getting it during my period, it won't work right away," Stiles recites, remembering what he read online.

"Right. Wait about a week, or use condoms in the meantime," Tracy says.

"Well, my bonding's in eight days, so that works out perfect," Stiles says, blushing a little.

"Is there a reason you're waiting to have kids?" Tracy asks. "Not that it's any of my business. I'm just curious."

Stiles grins. "I'm going for a degree first."

"Good for you," Tracy says with feeling. "Don't let anyone stop you."

It'd be impossible not to like Tracy after that.

After his appointment, Natalie stops at a diner and lets Stiles have lunch outside of the omega school for the first time in years. He orders a burger and curly fries. He hasn't had curly fries in so long they taste like ambrosia.

Natalie has another surprise for him, and he slides into the booth next to Stiles about five minutes after Stiles starts eating.

"Derek!" Stiles says, well, as best he can with his mouth full.

Derek grins, leaning against him and turning his face into the side of Stiles's head to breathe him in. "Peter had to teach, couldn't get away on short notice."
Stiles looks him over with interest. Derek's wearing a clean shirt, but the rest of him is streaked with paint. There's even a bit of blue in his hair, and Stiles can't stand it, he loves this man so much. He reaches between them and twines their fingers together, then offers Derek one of his curly fries.

When he remembers Natalie is there, he finds her watching them with a smile on her face.

"You're coming to our bonding ceremony, right?" Stiles asks her.

"I wouldn't miss it," she says. "Plus, I was already invited as someone's date."

"They'd better treat you right," Stiles says. He pats the stun baton in his cargo shorts. "Or I'll zap 'em."

Natalie laughs longer and harder than the situation calls for, but it's good to see her happy.

That night, Derek walks outside with his phone and calls Stiles. He needs advice.

"I want to show Peter how much I love him, but I don't know how. I even asked my wolf scouts for ideas, but that was a bust."

Stiles awws over the line and asks, "What were their suggestions?"

"They said I should teach him how to pitch a tent and show him all the best fishing spots, because that's how they know I love them," Derek says. He's glad Stiles isn't there to see how it makes him blush.

This time, Stiles awws much more dramatically. "That's the sweetest thing I've ever heard."

"They're pretty great," Derek says. "But ultimately unhelpful."

"True, I can't see Peter with a fishing rod."

Derek smiles at the thought. "Yeah, me neither. But I can't think of anything. Not that's enough."

"Nothing will ever be enough, will it?" Stiles says. "I mean, I feel the same way when I go over my vows. They're pretty words but they don't... they don't really feel big enough."

Derek murmurs his agreement because he's thought the same.

"I guess we just... we live our lives, and show each other every day how we feel," Stiles says thoughtfully. "Spending the rest of our lives with each other is a pretty big gesture."

"Yeah, it is," Derek says. "And maybe a bunch of small gestures will add up."

"I've got kind of an awkward question," Stiles says.

"I'm sure I can come up with an awkward answer," Derek murmurs.

Stiles snorts a laugh. "Okay. Well, it's about the bonding night? Um... how do you decide who knots me first?"

The question makes Derek's thoughts screech to a halt. "Uh."

"I mean, do you flip a coin? Pick a number?" Stiles asks.

"Who, um. Could you... Do you have a preference?" Derek stutters out.
"Nope," Stiles says cheerfully.

"Then… I mean, you want my input, right?" Derek asks.

"I wouldn't have asked if I didn't."

"Then Peter should," Derek says.

"Is this one of those gestures?" Stiles asks.

Derek huffs a laugh. "No, I just think… I think Peter would be better. He's got more. More experience. Than me."

Stiles makes a soft sound. "Have you ever knotted someone before?"

"Once. Kate," Derek says roughly. It doesn't hurt as much to say as he thought it would. Maybe because it's been so long, or maybe because it's Stiles he's telling and not his therapist.

"I'm so sorry," Stiles murmurs. "But maybe you should be first, so we can override that memory as soon as possible."

"I don't think it works like that," Derek says wistfully.

Stiles is quiet for a moment. Then he says, "I'm gonna make it work like that. I need you both to touch me to… to chase away some bad memories I have myself."

Derek's very glad Peter took care of Ennis. "Okay, baby."

"I love you," Stiles says.

"I love you too. Don't worry, Peter and I will work it out. Maybe I can convince him to wrestle me for it."

Stiles laughs, which is the desired outcome of that joke. "I'd like to see that."

"You would?"

"Sure. Maybe with you both naked and oiled up. I'd definitely love that."

"We should add it to our bonding ceremony," Derek says.

"You're so funny," Stiles says with another laugh. "Wolf's got jokes. I love it."

"I'm not usually very funny," Derek says honestly. "I just love your laugh."

"I wish you were here right now," Stiles tells him.

"Why?"

"I just want to kiss the breath right out of you."

Derek smiles and walks back to the house. "Well, soon you can do that whenever you want."

"Can't wait."

Neither can Derek.
Chapter 18

Stiles keeps calling the night 'the leaving feast' and now it's stuck in Peter's head. Derek's complained of the same thing, though he goes farther.

"I keep expecting there to be house banners. Where's Dumbledore?" Derek murmurs next to him, making Peter snort. Derek's been doing a lot of that lately — telling jokes and making him laugh. They're dorky jokes, and Derek would never make it as a comedian, but Peter laughs all the same.

Derek beams and Peter wants to kiss him. Then he remembers there's nothing stopping him from doing so, and he does.

"You are unfairly beautiful together," Stiles says when he sits beside them with his food. He sounds happy about it, too.

Peter knows he's anything but beautiful, but Stiles says it like he means it. Like he's forgotten the scars entirely.

Around them, tables of happy couples laugh and eat, and there's a giddy sense of expectation in the air. It's a far cry from the first event of the season when the omegas barely smiled and were on their best behavior. Peter surveys the room and sees that most of them seem genuinely happy tonight. Maybe it's because they're finally escaping the omega school, or maybe it's something much better. Maybe they've found love, the way Stiles has with them.

"What's got you in your thinky face?" Stiles asks, leaning into his space and snagging a piece of shrimp from his plate.

"Are your omega friends happy?" he asks softly. He doesn't know why he wants to know, but suddenly it feels very important.

Stiles looks thoughtful and scans the room. His eyes go from table to table, and he smiles. "Yeah. Not all the omegas chose to mate this season, but the ones who did seem happy. Looking forward to their new lives." He shrugs. "As for staying happy? I can't guess. But for now things are good."

"You're all so young," Peter murmurs.

"I know. It's not really fair for everyone," Stiles says.

"Would you rather have waited to bond?" Derek asks.

Stiles bites his lip. Thinks a moment. Then shakes his head. "I love you. I love you both so much, and I can't wait to bond with you. But…"

Peter holds his breath. Just for a moment. Then Derek puts his hand over his and asks, "But?"

Stiles gives a sad smile. "If the circumstances were different, and I hadn't fallen in love this season? My options would've sucked."

"What's going on with the omegas who decided not to bond this season?" Derek asks.

"I'm not exactly sure what's up with Jackson, but I have an idea. I can't confirm it yet, though, so I'm not saying," Stiles says. He sighs. "As for Theo, he's… in love. With another omega, someone a year younger than us. He's going to stay another year and… I don't know. I just hope it doesn't end badly
for them."

Peter can't imagine a scenario for them where it wouldn't, but maybe he's just being a pessimist.

"So eight out of ten omegas are bonding," Derek says. "And they look happy."

"Yeah, but is it because society tells us this is what we want, or is it real?" Stiles wonders aloud.

"Baby," Derek says, sounding like his heart is breaking.

Stiles gives him a sad smile. "It's something me and Kira have talked about a lot." He shrugs. "Don't take it personally, okay? I love you. Both of you. But being an omega sucks in a lot of ways." His eyes stray to his friend Erica. She's smiling at Deucalion, hanging on his every word. Stiles sighs again. "I'm not somebody who's gonna say it's what we've got so we might as well suck it up and deal. I want better for us. I want better for Theo, and Alicia, and all the omegas who present in the future."

Peter doesn't remember who Alicia is, but he gets the gist. "Did you ever get that information from Briar, about groups working for omega rights in the US?"

Stiles grins. "Yeah. And there's even a group in town who do political outreach for California. I'm going to join as soon as I can."

Derek leans in and kisses Stiles's temple. "Good. You do what you can. Maybe you'll change the world, too."

"I can't do it alone," Stiles says. Then, shyly, "They take alpha members, too. It's not like it's an omega-only organization."

"We're in," Derek says immediately. He looks at Peter. "Right?"

"Of course we are," Peter says, even though he has no idea what it will entail. It's worth it to see both his mates smiling back at him like he just hung the moon.

Ms. Martin walks up to the podium at the front of the room. As soon as she's noticed, a hush falls over the crowd. "Hello, and thank you for coming to our farewell dinner. I hope you're enjoying the food." Someone claps. Peter recognizes them as Greenberg, the omega who saved Stiles on the day of the picnic. Ms. Martin smiles at them. "Thank you, CJ."

Amusement sweeps through the crowd.

"This was my first year here at Beacon Hills Omega School. I came here expecting to find… well, I won't say, exactly. It's a little unflattering to me, because it shows how ignorant I was." She takes a breath. Looks around at the room and smiles. "I presented young, and I was in a school like this for over six years. It was hell for me, and I wanted to make things not so hellacious for you all. And I think I succeeded with that, somewhat. I plan to make more changes in the future, and I want your input on it. So for the next few days, before you all run off to bond and start your futures outside these walls, my office is open, like it always is. I want you to come to me and talk about how things could be different, and how I can help omegas here for years to come."

Some of the alphas in the audience look shocked, but all the omegas look a combination of happy and excited. Some, like Stiles, even look proud.

"I was also surprised at how much I came to care about this class, and I hope you come back and visit me sometimes after you're settled in your new lives. I want to know how you're doing."
Stiles nods, and Peter knows he'll be one of the students coming back to visit.

"Okay, enough about me," Ms. Martin says with a little laugh. "This next part is about you. I want to give back a little, and so I decided a small awards ceremony was in order."

She walks over to a nearby table and takes a sheet off of it, revealing small trophies. Stiles perks up, looking extremely interested. So do other omegas in the room.

"I'm doing this alphabetically, just so you know." Ms. Martin picks up one of the trophies and says, "This award goes to Heather Custer, for being such a good big sister to the younger omegas. And I'm sure Danielle would want me to say she's also a very good best friend. Heather?"

An omega at another table starts clapping and whistling, and Stiles and everyone else joins in. Heather walks up to the podium to get her trophy, and her fair skin shows her blushing quite brightly. "Thank you," she tells Ms. Martin. "I don't have to give a speech, do I?"

Ms. Martin shakes her head no, smiling, and Heather takes the trophy back to her seat.

"The next award is for CJ Greenberg, for courage in the face of great danger," she says, and Stiles shoots to his feet to start applauding. Peter takes his cue and stands as well, as do Derek and almost everyone else in the room. There's a shrill whistle from Greenberg's table, and when they walk up to the podium, Ms. Martin says, "I wasn't finished, actually."

Everyone laughs. Greenberg stands beside her, a shy smile on their face, and she goes on.

"CJ was injured in their first year here, after an unfortunate attack by a beta extremist. But they didn't let it get them down. CJ — or just Greenberg, as everyone here calls them — has worked past their problems to absolutely shine. They're one of our track stars, holding the school record for the 100-metre sprint."

The whistle sounds out again, and Peter gets a better look at the alpha blowing it. He's got crazy hair and a beaming smile, and Peter's a hundred percent sure he's in love with his omega. Peter wishes them the best.

"Thank you, CJ," Ms. Martin says and gets a hug in return. Greenberg returns to their table and she goes on. "Next up is Isaac Lahey, someone who's absolutely bloomed this year."

Peter remembers Isaac. He watches as the omega gets a kiss on the cheek from Briar, and then he walks up to the podium, smiling. Stiles gives him a thumbs up.

"Isaac's award is for excellence in Language Arts. He writes insightful commentary on omega rights, and I hear he's going to take that passion with him around the world with an international organization his alpha works with. Good luck, Isaac." She shakes his hand, and Peter's struck by how much taller Isaac is than Ms. Martin. She looks up at him and smiles. He gives her an impulsive hug.

The next omega to be recognized is Erica Reyes. Ms. Martin praises her tenacity and strength, then says something about her friendship and loyalty that has Stiles nodding along like a bobblehead. Stiles cheers so loud this time that a few alphas frown at him. Not Deuc, though. He looks like he's just won the lottery. When Erica returns to her table, he takes both her hands in his and kisses her cheeks. Erica beams at him and Stiles smells like satisfaction at the sight.

"Next up for an award is Danielle Rhodes," Ms. Martin says. She holds out the trophy to the omega and says, "You've got more confidence and kindness in you than any of us, and you've been an excellent friend. You deserve every good thing you get."
Stiles starts to smell nervous, and when he's called he walks up to the podium slowly. Ms. Martin hugs him before she says anything about his accomplishments. Stiles hugs right back, looking honestly touched.

"Stiles is the top of his class. He gets distracted sometimes, but he's passionate, loving, and driven. He's going to college soon, and I know he'll do well." Ms. Martin lowers her voice, though all the werewolves in the room can hear. "I am so proud of you, Stiles," she says. "You're going to take the world by storm."

"We'll see," Stiles says with a smirk. He holds his trophy up high on his way back to them, and Peter and Derek both give him hugs before he sits down again.

"Brett Talbot," Ms. Martin calls out, and a frankly gorgeous omega walks up to the podium. "Brett's an athlete, too, but his true calling is acting. He's moving to LA with his alpha to pursue a career there, and we all wish him the best. This award is for dreaming big and seeing those dreams realized. He's never compromised on what he wants for his life, and it's paid off."

Once the applause has died down, Ms. Martin smiles fondly.

"Lastly, we have an omega who stands up for what she believes in, even when the odds are against her. Kira Yukimura, get up here," she says, and grins when Kira walks to the podium. "She's masterful with a katana, but she's an even better friend. She stopped an attack here at the school when she was thirteen years old, stepping into danger when she saw a friend in need. And she continues to watch over her class, always keeping tabs on them, always wanting everyone to be safe."

Stiles stands up on his chair, even, and claps and whistles for his best friend. At her table, Allison lets out a loud 'whoop whoop!' When Kira gets back to her, Allison gives her a long kiss that is completely against the rules for a not-yet-bonded omega, but no one in the room has a word to say against it.

"And that's all!" Ms. Martin says loudly. "Thank you for indulging me, and enjoy your dessert."

After the dinner is over and the alphas have gone back to their homes, the omegas congregate in the common room. Someone thought to put down cushions on the floor, and one by one, they all brought out their pillows and blankets so they can camp out together.

"That was nice of Natalie," Erica murmurs. "I sure wasn't expecting a trophy."

Jackson is holding one, just looking at it.

"Hey, where'd you get yours?" Stiles asks him.

"She brought it to me," Jackson says, a 'duh' evident in his tone.

"Did she give you a speech, too?" Kira asks.

Jackson nods and gives a little smile. "Yeah."

Stiles figures that's all they'll get out of him on the subject, so he asks a different question. "So what's the deal with you staying?"

Jackson looks around the room, seeing every eye on him. He shrugs. "Somebody's working their ass off for the next year to prove he can take care of me," he says. "So I'm waiting to see if he can do it."
"Danny?" Kira asks.

Jackson frowns. "How'd you know?"

Stiles snorts. "We all know. Everyone who went to school with you, anyway."

Plus Lydia told Allison, who told Kira, who told Stiles. According to the grapevine, Danny got recruited by the government because of his hacking skills. Whether he'll stick it out or go to a private agency is yet to be determined.

Jackson flushes pink. "Yeah, well. He's gonna try. And we'll see."

Stiles looks around for Theo, but he's not there. Must be in Liam's dorm.

"My bonding's tomorrow," Kira says. Everyone knows this, so they listen to hear what else she has to say. "And I thought... I've been hiding it, but I thought you all should know. Me and Allison are gonna have a baby in January."

It's funny, the way the omegas who don't already know go quiet, silently counting back months.

Danielle looks at Kira and starts cracking up. "You are one lucky bitch."

"It's not luck," Kira says. "I got help. Stiles and Natalie had my back."

"Always," Stiles says, and gives her a hug.

One by one, the other omegas hug Kira, too. It turns into a big cuddle session on the floor, and as the time goes by, they gravitate toward each other even more.

"I've got something to say, too," Greenberg announces, though they sound nervous. "I just... I want to thank everybody for being cool when I came out as nonbinary. And for using my pronouns, and for not thinking I was weird."

"I still think you're weird," Jackson says. "But not for that."

Greenberg laughs. "Thanks, Jax." Then they get hugs, too.

Stiles ends up cuddled between Kira and Erica. His bonding is in two days, and he's looking forward to his future with Peter and Derek, but he's going to miss this.

"You took a wrong turn," Peter says.

Derek looks at him and raises his eyebrows. "I know where I'm going."

"Okay, Mr. Mysterious," Peter says. "Mind telling me what you're doing?"

"Don't worry about it," Derek says, grinning. "I'm courting you."

"It's a little late," Peter says.

He's right. It's almost midnight. Which makes it perfect. "I want to show you something."

"Is it your dick?" Peter asks.

Derek snorts a laugh. "No. Well, maybe. But no."
The drive to the lake isn't long, just a few minutes taking Fish and Wildlife's access roads. When he gets there he parks and turns off the car's headlights.

"Okay. Here we go," Derek says.

"Are we at the lake?" Peter asks. "It's a little late for fishing, isn't it?"

"Stay right there," Derek says and gets out. He walks over to Peter's side and opens the door for him. Like a gentleman.

"Thank you," Peter murmurs, and gets out. He looks at the lake. Derek looks too, taking note of the way the moonlight hits the calm water. It's beautiful.

"This is one of my favorite spots," Derek says, stripping off his shirt.

"Whoa," Peter says, and leers. "So you are showing me your dick?"

Derek laughs, happy and full of love. "No, but we're going swimming."

"Derek Hale! Why I never!" Peter says, but then he's stripping out of his clothes too, and together they run, splashing into the lake and making ripples and waves that catch the moonlight.

Derek dives under the surface, and Peter follows. When they come up for air, it's together, and then they lean in and kiss.

It's a perfect moment. They kiss, and kiss, and then go back to swimming. The lake water is fresh and cool, but not too cold. It still holds a lot of the heat from the day.

Peter's gorgeous in the moonlight. He looks at Derek like he's never seen anything as good, too.

They come together again, tasting each other.

"Thank you for sharing this," Peter murmurs against his lips.

Derek smiles at him. "I want to share everything with you. I love you."

"I love you, too," Peter says. "And in two days, I'm going to pledge my life to you and Stiles, so you'd better be sure." He sounds like he's joking, but Derek knows him well enough to hear the seriousness in his words.

"I've never been so sure of anything," Derek says.

Peter searches his eyes. "You really mean that, huh?"

"Every word."

"It's hard to believe," Peter says. "I never get anything this good."

Derek leans in and gives him a gentle kiss. "I'll spend every day of the rest of my life showing you both just how much I mean it."
Chapter 19

The first thing Peter notices about the bride is that Kira's not wearing a veil, and she got her hair cut. It's shorter in the back, then swoops down smoothly to hit her chin in front. It's shorter than Allison's hair, which is pulled back into a loose ponytail, clipped in place with what looks like pearls.

It's not common to see an omega with hair shorter than their alpha. Peter's never really thought about it until now, but knowing Kira (and her best friend), it's all part of some strategy.

Allison is wearing a slim-fit white tuxedo and glitzy heels. There's a lilac rose on her lapel and a beaming smile on her face. Kira herself is wearing a long, beaded dress, but her nod to unconventionality is that it's fitted and does nothing to hide her baby bump.

Peter's sitting close enough to Chris Argent to see his face as his daughter makes vows to her mate. Chris is trying to hide it, but he's really touched, and despite the upheaval in his life is the happiest that Peter's ever seen him.

Standing with the rest of the wedding party is Stiles, right behind Kira, holding a bouquet of purple and white roses. His outfit is simple: a pair of slim gray trousers, a white shirt, and a lilac tie. To Peter, he looks more beautiful than the brides.

Surprisingly, Natalie Martin is officiating the bonding. Peter didn't know she had the credentials, but apparently she does. She keeps her voice strong as she leads Allison and Kira through their vows, though she does look tearful at the end.

Stiles keeps beaming at them, and his genuine happiness makes Peter smile.

And the thing about weddings is that you can't stop thinking about your own. Derek takes Peter's hand in his and turns to smile. Maybe he's thinking the same thing.

Only one more day and the three of them will be bonded.

The ceremony itself is, as always, held at the omega school so the unbonded omegas can attend. It's small, though, and feels intimate, sacred — up until the moment Allison takes Kira into her arms and kisses her. Then the room comes to life, full of cheers and whoops and clapping. Peter joins in, and so does Derek, but Stiles is probably the loudest of them all.

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Stiles paces in his room. It's so weird, now that Kira's gone. Her bed is stripped down and bare, and the closet just looks empty. He's packing, putting his things into boxes. He has acquired more than he thought in the past few years, but it's not a lot, not really.

He sits down on his bed and looks over his vows again. It was his idea to write his own, so he has no one to blame for this travesty except himself.

How do you put love and devotion into words? He should've gone with a poem, maybe. Someone else's poetry.

There's a knock on the door and then Erica peeks her head in. "Hey. Want company?"

Stiles lets out a breath. "Yes, definitely. I'm a mess."

"Yeah, you smell really anxious. What's up?" She comes in and sits beside him.
"I miss Kira, my vows suck, and I'm a little scared about the whole... sex thing." It's not until the words are out that he realizes how much he's been angsting over it.

"Scared?" Erica asks softly.

Stiles swallows and nods. "I think I'm fine. I've been acting fine, right? But what if... what if it reminds me of Ennis, and I freak out?"

"Then you freak out," Erica says. "And worrying about it is gonna make you even more anxious. Have you talked to your alphas about it?"

Stiles sighs. "I mentioned it a little to Derek. I told him I wanted to erase the bad memory, and like, fill that space with something good."

"I don't think it works like that," Erica says, unknowingly echoing his conversation with Derek.

"I just want everything to be perfect, but I keep thinking. Wondering. What if-"

Erica gives him a hard hug, cutting him off. "You need to talk to your alphas about this."

"Sorry," Stiles says thickly.

Erica sighs. "I didn't mean it like you can't tell me, too. Just that you need to let them know you're worried. Maybe they have an idea. Or maybe they just need to be aware of it."

Stiles pulls away and nods. "Yeah, you're right."

"When am I wrong?" Erica asks. "Now, show me the vows."

He holds out the paper he's written and rewritten them on. She reads over the words silently, then smiles.

"These are beautiful."

"Are they enough, though?" Stiles asks. "I really want it to be special, but everything keeps coming out... flat."

"Are you kidding?" Erica hands the paper back and shakes her head. "You've done a great job. If I heard that at my bonding, I'd be floating around on air."

"Really?" Stiles asks, still feeling dubious about it.

Erica lets out a dramatic sigh. "Yes, really. Trust me. They'll love it."

There's another knock on the door, but this time it's Natalie. "Stiles, you have visitors."

Who could be coming to see him the night before his bonding? He follows Natalie to the office, and smiles when he sees Peter and Derek. Unfortunately, Talia is with them.

He's suddenly very conscious of the ratty old things he's wearing. He packed up all his nice clothes and decided to put on something comfortable for his last night at the school. Now he wishes he'd chosen something a little more presentable than a faded t-shirt and thin cut-off sweatpants.

And he's wearing old flip-flops. He feels like the floor should open up and swallow him now. That'd be great.
"Hi," Stiles says, giving a little wave.

Derek and Peter smile, not seeming to mind his outfit at all. Talia is more reserved, but she doesn't look disgusted, at least.

Natalie sits down at her desk. "Ms. Hale, I think you have something to say?"

"Yes," Talia says. "I have some apologies I need to give. Starting with yours, Stiles."

Ah, so that's what this is about.

"Okay, let's hear it," Stiles says.

"I didn't give you a chance before I started hurling accusations at you, calling you names, and that was… that was really wrong of me," Talia says.

"Yeah, it was," Stiles agrees. "But this doesn't mean anything if you don't apologize to Derek and Peter, too."

"That's fair. Derek, I'm sorry I hit you," Talia says. It's probably the easiest thing she can apologize for. "And I'm sorry for thinking you can't make your own decisions. I'm… I'm sorry for trying to control your life."

Derek frowns. "You called my mates some terrible things, and basically acted like they destroyed my life by loving me."

"And I'm… I'm sorry for that," Talia says, looking at Stiles again.

"You should really be telling that to Peter," Stiles says, setting his jaw. "The three of us are a matched set, and the sooner you realize that, the better."

Talia glances at Peter, a sour look on her face. "My brother knows how I feel about him."

"Yes," Peter says. "You've made that abundantly clear. You've hated me for years, Talia. Why should you try to apologize for one incident, when there have been so many?"

"I don't hate you," Talia grits out.

"It's amazing the way you kept your heartbeat steady for that. Been practicing?" Peter asks.

"God, you're so insufferable!" Talia says. "You just pick and pick. You're my brother, my blood. Why is it so hard to believe I care about you?"

"Actions speak louder than words," Derek says.

Peter laughs bitterly. "Her words haven't exactly been sweet, either."

"This doesn't sound at all like an apology," Stiles says.

"I'm sorry, Peter," Talia says lowly. "Okay?"

"For?" Stiles prompts.

Talia huffs angrily. She looks at Peter. "Is this really necessary? I know I've fucked up. A lot. I've blamed you for things that weren't your fault, and I stopped listening to you, and I… I disapproved of how close you and Derek became after… everything that happened. I've been a shitty sister, and a
shitty pack alpha. I'm sorry."

Peter looks absolutely stunned.

"Yeah, we're still gonna make you grovel for awhile," Stiles says lightly. Because a few words of apology don't make up for what she said and did.

Talia nods.

"Paying for our reception was a good start," Stiles tells her.

She looks at him like she's not sure if she respects him or hates him.

He can live with that.

Derek looks over his vows one more time before bed. He's sure he won't be able to sleep, but he should at least rest. At least, this was Peter's advice.

And lying in bed with Peter, cuddled close, is no hardship.

There's something niggling at his thoughts, though.

"What's on your mind?" Peter asks. He yawns but turns the bedside lamp on and sits up. "Is it just the bonding ceremony? Or something else?"

"Something else," Derek says. "My wolf."

Peter frowns. "You've seemed more in control lately. Is that changing? Do we need to talk to Deaton again?"

Derek shakes his head and smiles. "No, I think the residual magic is wearing off. I feel more balanced."

Kate did a horrible thing to him when she tried to make him go feral, and even after it was over, it was never really gone. The magic stuck around, making Derek's control tenuous. But for the past few weeks, Derek's been a lot calmer. More in control. The only time he felt like he was losing it was when Stiles was hurt, but even then it just felt like a normal reaction. He was rightfully upset.

"Or maybe…" Peter says thoughtfully.

"Hmm?" Derek asks.

Peter smiles. "Maybe having this relationship with Stiles and me has helped."

"I can't wait to pledge my life to you two," Derek says.

"You're so sappy," Peter murmurs, and kisses him.

"I think we both are," Derek says against his lips and smiles. He wonders if Stiles is sleeping, or if he's just as wakeful as they are. "I'm tempted to text our omega."

Peter squints at him. "What time is it?"

"It's a little after midnight, but he's probably still awake, right?" Derek says.

Peter huffs a laugh. "Go ahead and try."
Derek picks up his phone and sends a quick, *Are you awake?* Almost immediately, Stiles's ringtone sounds out and Derek swipes to accept the call. "So that's a yes?"

"Don't laugh," Stiles says, though he sounds amused as well. "Apparently you can't sleep either."

"Both of us are up," Derek says. "We can't wait until tomorrow."

"If you hadn't texted, I would have," Stiles says. "I've been staring at the phone for about half an hour."

"You can always text us. Or call," Peter says, getting close to Derek's head so he can talk into the phone. "We're here for you always."

"Well, after tomorrow if I can't sleep you'll be right there," Stiles says cheerfully.

"Can't wait," Derek says again. He feels like he keeps repeating that, but he can't seem to help it. He's excited.

"So, um. Since we're all up, I have something to talk about," Stiles sounds, suddenly sounding serious.

"We're listening, sweetheart," Peter says.

They hear Stiles draw a deep breath and let it out. Whatever he has to talk about is making him nervous. Derek wishes they could be there with him to hold his hands or cuddle him.

"After the bonding ceremony and the reception and everything, once we get home..." Stiles trails off and then takes another deep breath. "I think I'm gonna need you to go slow."

Derek looks at Peter, his worry suddenly spiking. Stiles has been open with his sexuality in the past. He's not shy or hesitant or...

Oh. "Baby, whatever time you need is okay with us," Derek says. "We don't even have to have sex tomorrow, or tomorrow night, or anytime at all until you're ready."

"We'll go as slow as you need," Peter adds. "And we'll work out what you like and what you need to stay away from."

The words seem inadequate.

"I want to be good for you," Stiles says in a small voice.

"You are," Derek says helplessly, echoed by Peter.

"I want to have sex," Stiles clarifies. "I think about you both and I'm so turned on. I mean, really. But then I wonder if maybe I have some... some trauma I don't know about yet, and I worry. And I just think if we go slow, I'll be okay. That's all. I didn't mean to make a big deal about it."

"You feeling safe and loved is what we want, and that's a 'big deal' to us," Peter says.

"We don't want you doing anything you're not ready for," Derek says. "We'll take all the time you need."

"And it's okay? You promise?" Stiles asks.

Derek's heart is breaking. "Of course it is, baby."
"He didn't even really touch me," Stiles says. "It didn't even get that far. But I was so scared. I don't want to feel like that ever again."

"We will do everything we can to... to make sure..." Derek doesn't know how to go on. They can't promise him he won't react badly. They have no way of knowing. He looks at Peter for guidance.

"Sweetheart," Peter says. "We love you. And we'll be there for you no matter what. It's okay if you feel anxious about this. We'll just have to work out a way to make you feel more secure."

"How?" Stiles asks. Derek keeps looking at Peter, not knowing the answer, either.

Peter nods to himself. "We'll give you a safeword. Or rather, we'll use the stoplight system."

"Um. Isn't that for kinky stuff?" Stiles asks.

"I think it'll work for this just fine," Peter says. "If you need us to slow down, or if you're not sure about something, you tell us 'yellow'. And if something is wrong or feels bad, you tell us to stop immediately with 'red'."

"Yeah, okay," Stiles says, and lets out a long breath. "Having a plan makes me feel better. Safer."

"Which is what we want," Derek tells him. He looks at Peter gratefully.

"I love you both," Stiles says. "So much."

Derek and Peter both echo him, and then Peter says, "Do you think you can rest now?"

"Well, that's a big load off my mind," Stiles says. "So I can try, yeah. And so should you two."

They say goodnight and get off the phone. Derek puts it back on the charger. Peter turns off the lamp and they settle back into bed together.

Tomorrow is going to be a long day, and it's natural to worry. But it'll be worth it when they join their lives together. They have so much to look forward to.

"The first day of the rest of our lives," Derek murmurs.

Peter squeezes him. "Get some sleep or you'll be too tired to enjoy it."

"It's going to be good, though," Derek says around a yawn.

Peter kisses his head and hums. "It's going to be perfect."
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Here you go, this is it. I hope you have enjoyed this story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Stiles is wearing flowers in his hair. Everything else is immaterial next to that fact. Peter wants to pull him close and nuzzle his cheek, then strip him bare and scent him all over.

Beside him, Derek whines high and soft. Peter almost does the same.

Stiles is walking toward them, his hand tucked in the crook of his father's arm, and Peter's never felt so full and happy in his life.

He barely takes note of the tuxedo jacket and trousers Stiles has paired with a thin lace shirt, though he's sure Derek can't look away. Derek loves lace. But Peter is stuck on the flowers, and the smile in Stiles's honey-brown eyes. He looks as happy as Peter feels, as happy as Derek smells.

Derek and Peter hold out their hands to him when he gets close, and John gives Stiles a kiss on the forehead before letting him go. Stiles wipes his hands on his pants before taking theirs, making an apologetic face. Peter doesn't mind. Stiles's slightly clammy hand in his makes this even more real to him.

He looks from Stiles to Derek and realizes he can't stop smiling. His vows come to him in a rush, and he knows he chose the right words. Now he just has to get through this to share them.

Alan Deaton clears his throat, and Peter reluctantly pays attention to him, even though he'd much rather focus entirely on his mates.

"Friends and family, thank you for gathering together today to share an important moment in the lives of Derek, Peter, and Stiles," Deaton says. "These three have found a great love in each other, a profound depth of feeling, and after careful consideration have decided to bind themselves together as mates."

With those words, they know it's time to exchange vows. Peter is up first. He pats his pocket and takes out the carefully written words. He doesn't need to look at them, but it's good to have them just in case he stumbles.

He clears his throat and looks at his mates. "Because of both of you, I smile and mean it. Because of you, my laugh isn't bitter anymore. And because of you, I've learned to dream again and to work to see those dreams realized. I'm not just a pessimistic asshole now, because you've taught me there are good things left in the world. You've done this for me, shown me true happiness, and I want to spend the rest of my life sharing that happiness with you." His voice breaks on this for some reason, and he has to clear his throat to go on. "I vow to be there by your sides to care for you, and to nurture your dreams and talents. I vow to be your shelter, your lover, and your friend, no matter what our lives
"...have in store."

Peter looks at his paper, making sure he didn't miss anything, and then he folds it and puts it back in his pocket. When he picks his head up again, Derek and Stiles are looking at him with their hearts in their eyes. He gives them a soft smile and waits for Derek to go.

"Right," Derek says. Then, "I don't know how you expect me to follow that, but I'll try. I think I left my paper in the car. But let's see if I can remember my vows."

Peter huffs a laugh and Stiles snorts. Derek beams at them.

"That. Um, that's what I want to do for the rest of my life. I want to see you both laugh. I want to see you be happy. I want to make you happy, because now that I have you, I think that's my job. My calling." He clears his throat. "And I want to make you both feel safe. I want to be your port in a storm, I want to be the anchor that holds you when the world feels out of control. And I vow... I vow to always treasure you, and to treat you well, and to love you as long as the moon keeps shining."

It's not time to kiss yet, but Peter wants to kiss him so badly. He mouths 'I love you' at him, then turns to Stiles.

"My turn!" Stiles says, and grins nervously. He pulls folded paper out of his inside pocket, but he doesn't look at it. He looks at Peter and Derek, instead. "Traditional vows go something like... I promise to love, honor, and obey, but I'm not very traditional. Obviously. Our courtship, like our relationship, was highly unusual, wildly unconventional, and the best idea we ever had. But the vows... it's hard to come up with them, you know? To put all your feelings into words is... it's damn near impossible. Nothing is ever going to be enough to say what I mean or how much I love you both." He smiles then and goes on with, "But both of you did a really good job and I don't know if I can come close to saying it that good, but I'm gonna try. So these are my vows: I will be honest with you, even when it's hard. I'll listen when you need to talk, and always have a hug for you when you need one. There's going to be ups and downs, but I'll be with you through all of it. I'm going to love you both, and accept your love as the gift it is. Because Deaton's right and we're stronger together, and we're going to stay strong. Because you, Derek, and you, Peter — you're my forever."

It's the most Stiles-ish speech Peter could ever have imagined, and he's smiling so hard by the end that his cheeks hurt. He doesn't care.

They aren't exchanging rings, but they do say some words after Deaton, and then he says, "I pronounce you bonded. You may kiss each other," and they do.

On the way to the reception across town, they stop off at city hall and get the legalities out of the way. On paper, Derek and Stiles are alpha and omega, legally bonded to one another. It took some time to decide who it should be, but the one thing that cinched it was the wording of Derek's grandparents' wills. Derek doesn't get his trust fund until and unless he legally bonds with an omega. In the end, it was just practical. Peter signs as Derek's witness, and John signs as Stiles's.

As soon as they leave city hall, they put it out of their minds. A piece of paper doesn't mean a damn thing when it comes to their feelings. They're a triad now and from this day forward.

They leave the reception early. They stick around long enough for a few dances, and for Stiles's dad to give a speech. Stiles is a little shocked to see Natalie's date is actually his father, but he gets over it quickly. He vehemently wants his father to find love again, to be as happy as he is, and he loves Natalie enough to want the same for her.
But all three of them are eager to get home. Stiles doesn't think he's the only one who's nervous, either.

They get to the house. It's not the first time Stiles has seen it, but it's the first time he's come home. If he stops to think about it too much, he's going to cry. His emotions are already right at the surface. He grabs his bag and follows them to the front door.

As he's about to walk in, he says, "We need a welcome mat. Maybe one that says 'wipe your paws'." He turns back and smiles. "Okay, one of you carry me over the threshold," he says, but doesn't wait for them. He jumps on Peter for a piggy-back ride and lets out a whoop.

Peter carries him in. "Straight upstairs?"

Stiles wiggles to get down. "Wait, no. You two wait a minute, I'm gonna… I gotta change really quick." He feels his face heat. He hopes they like what he's chosen for his bonding night.

"Call us when you're ready," Derek says. His eyes are doing something Stiles can only classify as 'smoldering with desire'. It makes his heart speed up.

Stiles holds his bag close and runs up the stairs to the master suite. He takes his phone out and sets up the Bluetooth for his little Bose speaker, and sets the speaker on top of the dresser. He pulls up the playlist he and Kira made for the occasion, and the first strains of Etta James come out — much too loud.

"Shit, shit," he whispers, then turns it down to the right volume. Not too loud, but not so quiet he can't hear it. Mood music.

Then he takes out the light, lacy pieces of clothing he spent weeks choosing. It's not what he was going to pick at first, but once he found it online, he fell in love. His first choice had been a short, flirty chemise nightgown, with thin straps and an edge of lace. But then he found this. He unfolds the lace and lays it on the bed, taking a moment to admire the embroidery. Then he strips down. It takes a little longer to get out of his tux than he'd like because his fingers fumble and tremble. He swallows and walks across the room to his closet, then takes out hangers for his tuxedo and shirt. He's stalling, he knows. This is just such a big deal, for all three of them. Besides, he reasons, building up the tension a little won't hurt.

After he hangs his clothes up, he gets out of his briefs and socks, then looks at the lace on the bed. The panties are just a scrap, really, but once he puts them on and looks in the mirror, he can see how they'll appeal. The ivory lace stretches, but not too much. His ass looks perfectly round, and the way the lace stretches across his front leaves little to the imagination.

He figures they won't last long, but they're not the star of the show.

The embroidered lace gown goes on next. It's more of a robe than a gown, really, since the only thing keeping it on is the satin tie in the front. Everything about the gown is long: the sleeves reach his wrists with a flourish of fine scalloped lace, and the length of it falls around his legs all the way to the floor. When he walks back to the mirror, the material swirls around his smooth skin.

He looks… good. He turns this way and that, enjoying the way the lace feels against his body, and noticing how very much the sheer lace shows off of his body. It's a beautiful tease, which is exactly as he'd hoped. His dad's words from the beginning of the season come back to him: You're gonna drive those alphas crazy. He smiles at his reflection, hoping it's true.

"Okay," he says to himself, and dims the lights. In the background, the music is syrupy slow, a
proper torch song. Stiles opens the bedroom door to call down to his mates. "Okay, you can come up
now!"

They don't come running, but it's very close. Stiles stands in the middle of the room, his heart
pounding when they come into view.

Peter's lost his tie and jacket, and his shirt is unbuttoned. Derek's missing his shirt entirely. When
they see him, their eyes flash and they both growl, sounding extremely appreciative. But they seem
to be frozen in place.

Stiles licks his lips nervously. "I hope you're not just gonna stand and look at me all night."

That gets them moving, and soon he has one mate on each side of him. Peter kisses his shoulder
through the lace. "You look exquisite."

Derek looks like he's not sure if he's allowed to touch. "Stiles. Can I… I want to paint you."

Peter huffs a laugh. He dips his head to kiss Stiles's hair. "Now is not the time, pup."

Even in the dim light, Stiles can see Derek's blush. "Not now. But some other time," he says. His
hand grips Stiles's hip, and he smooths his thumb over lace. "You're so beautiful."

He's grateful they're going slow, he really is. But do they have to go this slow? It's killing him. He's
about to complain when Peter pulls him close and kisses him.

Stiles feels hot, and the hands roaming over his body make him even hotter.

"You smell delicious," Peter says when he pulls away. "Do you remember your safewords?"

Stiles blinks at him, then it clicks into place. They're waiting to make sure he's comfortable, that he
feels safe. They don't want to rush him. Otherwise, they'd both be all over him already.

He nods. "Red for stop, yellow for slow down." He presses against Derek's side and pulls Peter in
close. "But I'm saying green for go. I'll let you know if you do something I don't like."

Peter gives him a pleased smile. "Good."

"I've never seen anything as beautiful as you are right now," Derek says, reaching out to trace a
nipple through the lace. Stiles's lips part on a soft gasp, feeling oversensitized. Every touch sends him
spiraling higher. Derek notices and reaches out with another hand to thumb over his other nipple,
while Peter walks around to stand behind him and kiss his neck.

Stiles reaches behind him and threads a hand through Peter's hair, holding him close. Their
pheromones are starting to hit him, arousing him even more and making him slightly dizzy. It's not a
bad thing, though, not when they're there to hold him up if and when his knees start to buckle.

He reaches out with his free hand to pull Derek in closer, and to keep his balance. He's never gotten
to touch Derek like this before, and he's a little amazed by the muscle definition he's showing now
that he's lost his shirt.

"You're not so bad yourself," Stiles says, a little belatedly.

Peter presses against him and Stiles can feel how hard he is. His cock feels massive through their
clothes, and Stiles is caught between feeling anxious about the size and anticipatory because yes, he
wants that inside him.
"Pinch his nipples," Peter says, and Derek does, light at first and then rolling them harder between his fingers.

Stiles nearly comes apart at that, and his knees really do buckle. But Peter's there to make sure he doesn't fall, holding him securely with an arm around his waist.

"Okay?" Peter asks, and Stiles nods.

"It's just so good," Stiles says, and then watches with wide eyes as Derek bows his head to suckle him through the ivory lace. It feels exquisite, sending a jolt of pleasure right between his legs. He can feel himself getting wetter, and knows they can smell it, too.

Derek takes a deep breath and backs off. He keeps his eyes on Stiles like he can't look away, and then he starts to strip out of the rest of his clothes. His shoes are already gone, left downstairs, maybe. Stiles is struck by the beauty of his body, the easy strength his muscles imply. Stiles likes the dark hair on his body, too, and the way his cock juts out proudly, hard and mouth-watering.

And when Derek presses against him again, totally nude, Stiles is fully aware of their contrasts. Stiles is lithe and smooth and small, in certain areas, while Derek is just the opposite.

"You're gorgeous, sweet boy," Peter says, clearly speaking to Derek. "I think you've rendered our mate speechless."

Stiles huffs a laugh and nods, then squeezes the nape of Peter's neck. "You too."

"I think you'll find I'm not quite up to Derek's standard of beauty," Peter says, but Stiles can hear the movements, the rasp of material as he unbuttons and shrugs out of his shirt.

"Don't do that," Derek says, and Stiles agrees. "You're beautiful."

Stiles turns to face Peter, to get a good look at his other alpha for the first time, and he's anything but disappointed. His muscles are thicker, broader, than Derek's. His neck and shoulders especially make Stiles feel weak. He's vaguely aware of the scars that run down to the top of Peter's ribs, but they're just character, more of Peter to explore if he'll allow it. Stiles reaches out to touch, fingertips trailing over the cords of Peter's neck. "I want to bite you," he says, then blushes at the audacity.

But Peter's eyes flash and he moves closer. "I give you standing permission to bite me, darling," he says. "You and Derek both."

Stiles smirks. "Good to know." He places his palms on Peter's pecs, then slowly moves down, his fingertips trailing all the way to Peter's belt. "Let me do this," he says, suddenly wanting to undress Peter the rest of the way, to unwrap him like a present, to see.

Behind him, Derek slides his gown from one shoulder, then sucks and bites and kisses the revealed skin. It's going to leave a mark, a bruise no one will mistake for anything else, and Stiles finds he doesn't mind. Plus he knows it won't be the only one.

He unbuckles Peter's belt, though it takes longer than it should. He's so excited and full of anticipation that his fingers tremble and make it difficult to do what he wants.

But Peter's patient and doesn't call him out on it. Stiles smiles when he gets Peter unbuckled and unzipped. He pushes Peter's pants off his hips and sucks in air. Peter's big, too.

"None of my toys are as big as you two," Stiles says, hoping he doesn't sound as nervous as he suddenly is.
"We'll go slow, stretch you out just right for us," Derek whispers against his neck.

Stiles is suddenly reminded of Peter's perfectly thick fingers, and how he knows exactly what to do with them. He made him come over and over with his just fingers and tongue that night, and Stiles's body goes fever-hot at the memory and the desire for a repeat performance.

He wraps his hand around Peter's thick cock. Slides it down to the base and listens to Peter's indrawn breath. It's big enough like this, he can't imagine how much larger his knot will be when it swells.

"Your heart is racing," Derek says. "Are you okay, baby?"

"Mmm," Stiles says, nodding. "Just… thinking."

Peter smiles. "And what has you smelling so delicious, darling?"

"I… I was thinking about your knot," Stiles says, and his voice is raspy-low all of a sudden.

Peter's eyes flash. "Is that so?"

"What about it, baby?" Derek asks, clearly leading him into talking more. He presses against his back harder, his cock lining up right up with the cleft of his ass.

"You're just both so big," Stiles says, and while he knows that should make him anxious, he's actually swaying back and forth between them in pure anticipation. He's wet between his legs, as wet as he's ever been while in heat, and they've barely started. Will it always be this way with them? Will they always make him want so much?

"I think you like that," Peter says, and wraps his hand around Stiles's, squeezing his cock with Stiles's hand.

"I do," Stiles moans. "I want you both so much."

"But you have us at a disadvantage now, darling," Peter says, reaching out to touch the satin bow holding Stiles's gown together.

Stiles suddenly wants to be naked with them. He wants to roll all over them, taste them and be tasted in return. He wants everything, and now this stupid gown is getting in the way.

"Take it off me?" Stiles asks, trying to keep the demand out of his voice. But god, he does want to demand, until they give him what he so desperately needs.

Peter smiles as though he can read his mind. He twirls one of the loose ends of the satin string around his finger and then tugs sharply.

Behind him, Derek reaches up and pulls the robe off Stiles's shoulders until the lace swishes to the floor all at once. Stiles is just wearing the panties now, the rest of him bare.

"I do love how smooth you are after you wax," Peter murmurs, his eyes trailing up and down Stiles's body. Stiles feels as though he's about to be devoured.

Derek puts a hand on his hip and thumbs the top of Stiles's panties. "Are you smooth everywhere?" he asks, then moves his hands to cup his hard dick and balls through the lace. "Everywhere?"

Stiles nods quickly, bucking into the sensation, and Derek growls low in his throat. Stiles's knees go weak at the sound.
"Let's take this to the bed," Peter suggests and pulls Stiles along. He can do nothing but follow.

They don't manhandle him, not yet at least. They lower him gently, climbing on the bed with him, and then Derek somehow ends up between his legs. Stiles licks his lips nervously.

"How're you doing?" Derek asks.


Derek and Peter both smile. Peter lowers his head to kiss Stiles's nipples, then starts slowly licking and nibbling at them. It feels so good he nearly misses it when Derek lowers his head. But then there's the hot rasp of his tongue through the lace of his panties, right over his dick.

Stiles cries out, though he's not sure whose mouth feels better. They're both exquisite pleasure, slowly building and stoking the fire inside him.

"Please," he manages to whimper.

"What do you need, sweetheart?" Peter asks him.

Stiles shakes his head. "You. Both of you. And… more. I need so much more." He reaches down and pushes his panties down his hips. Derek helps him get them off the rest of the way. Stiles spreads his legs.

His hole clenches around nothing and he groans, needing it filled. He's slick enough that when he reaches back he can easily press two fingers inside himself.

It's a temporary relief. First, because it's a tease and he needs so much more. And second, because Peter pulls his hand away, a loose grip on his wrist.

"Wha?" Stiles asks, frustrated and confused. Peter smiles and sucks Stiles's wet fingers into his mouth.

"Let us do that, baby," Derek says, and substitutes with his own fingers. They aren't as thick as Peter's but he gives him two, deep and twisting, and for the moment that's just what Stiles needs.

But no, he needs so much more. Moment over. He needs to be filled for real and tries to say that. The words come out a little backwards, but Derek seems to understand.

"Not until we prep you, baby," he says.

Peter gives him a hungry kiss, probably to distract him. It works. Peter's tongue is slick in his mouth, demanding, and Stiles gives himself up to it. He moans into it, and Peter's hands return to his body, touching him in places he never knew were erogenous.

And Derek adds another finger, stretching him out, but it's still not enough. Stiles is starting to suspect he won't be satisfied without a knot. Which leads him to a question.

"Who's knotting me first?"

Derek looks at him, eyes glowing. "Me." Then he ducks his head again and takes Stiles's dick into his mouth, engulfing it completely with wet heat and sucking. Derek is merciless, and Stiles knows he's going to come soon. He tries to say something, to warn him, but Derek keeps on until Stiles's body goes stiff and he is spurting into Derek's waiting mouth.

"He likes that," Peter whispers, and Stiles can't think, his brain is broken.
Derek pulls off, licking the corner of his mouth. "You taste good everywhere, baby."

"Nngh," Stiles replies.

They give him a few seconds to get his breath back, and then Peter is helping him roll over.

"On your knees, sweetheart," Peter directs. "It'll be easier for both of you like this."

Stiles gets on his knees but rests his head on Peter's thigh. It puts his ass up in the air, and Derek seems to like that if his satisfied alpha growl is any indication.

Derek teases him a little, rubbing the blunt head of his cock against Stiles's wet, waiting hole. Stiles's rim is sensitive now, and he knows it'll only get worse. Or better.

"Inside me," he whines. "Derek, please."

And Derek does. He gives a few shallow thrusts and then he's in, deep and filling Stiles up just like he wants. He stops for a moment, to get Stiles used to it. Stiles mouths at Peter's thigh, then his balls. Peter lets out a low, satisfied noise.

Stiles's body feels hot, like it does at the beginning of his heat. Hot and needy, and all he can think of is how he can get more of this, more heat, more fullness.

"Derek, please, fuck me," he says, pushing his ass back on Derek's cock. God, it feels so thick, and yet it's still not enough.

In front of him is Peter's cock, and he wants that, too. He's only ever given head to omegas, but he figures it's the same mechanics, just on a larger scale. He sucks the head of Peter's cock into his mouth, a gentle tease that has the alpha moaning loudly.

Derek fucks him, deep, and then harder when Stiles demands that, too. Peter soothes him, pets his hair, and that helps a little. Not as much as the pacifying effect of Peter's thick cock in his mouth, though.

It's almost perfect, he thinks. It's getting there. When he accidentally takes too much and chokes, it's even closer.

And when Derek's knot starts to swell, Stiles feels like a raging inferno of pleasure. Derek pulls out and Stiles whines around Peter's dick, and then Derek is pushing that thick, juicy knot back in him, his rim stretching impossibly around it, and Stiles comes.

Derek grinds the knot inside, and Stiles is so full. He's full in his mouth, in his throat, and he's even more full when Derek starts to pump his come inside him. It goes on, and on, and on, and Stiles squeezes around his knot as well as he can, which isn't much.

He chokes again and Peter apologizes, pulls out, but Stiles whines loudly.

"God you're so greedy, sweetheart," Peter tells him, but feeds his cock right back in as a reward.

Stiles swallows around it and then Peter makes a sound like he's choking. He floods Stiles's mouth with come, then pulls out so that some spurts over Stiles's face. Marking him.

"Wasn't expecting that," Derek grunts. He helps Stiles roll to his side with him behind, spooning him close. Peter settles on his other side and licks the come from his face.

"Mm," Peter says thoughtfully, looking into Stiles's eyes. "He's going into heat."
"I am?" Stiles asks weakly.

Derek lays a gentle hand on Stiles's forehead. "He's got a fever."

"It's a week early," Stiles mumbles.

"Don't worry, sweetheart," Peter says. "We'll take care of you."

For three days, Stiles becomes a creature of hot, aching need, and Peter and Derek do their best to make sure he's comfortable and well-fucked. It doesn't matter anymore who goes 'first', it's more a matter of who can get it up again, because Stiles is always whining for more and he's insatiable.

Afterward, all three of them are exhausted. They take a shower together and change the sheets on the bed, then collapse back into it to sleep.

The day after his heat breaks, Stiles stretches out and leaves the bed before Derek can pull him closer to scent him again. He already smells so much like them, but Derek's wolf is still grumbling for more.

He watches as Stiles walks to stand in front of the mirror. Derek hopes he sees all the bruises and love bites as evidence of a loving claim and doesn't mind. From the smile on Stiles's face, it's okay.

Peter rolls out of bed and comes to stand behind him. "Okay?"

Derek sits up and stretches. He feels good. Sated. Proud of how well they took care of their omega. He joins Peter behind Stiles and looks at the picture they make in the mirror.

Stiles smiles at them both and presses on a bruise that's formed on his neck, an oval of teeth marks. Derek has a sudden vivid memory of putting it there, of biting in with his blunt teeth as he knotted him for the third or fourth time.

"I'm better than okay," Stiles says, but he winces a little. "How do you two feel?"

"Grateful for werewolf healing," Derek says honestly, and trails a hand down Stiles's back, pulling pain from his muscles as he does.

Stiles sighs and leans his head forward. "Mmm, that feels good."

"Anywhere else, sweetheart?" Peter asks, the glint in his eye showing he knows exactly where Stiles is sore.

Stiles lifts his head and gives a mock glare.

They pull the aches and discomfort from him until he sways back into their arms.

"Hmm, maybe too much," Peter says.

"Absolutely the right amount," Stiles says, high on endorphins. He smiles and Derek smiles back helplessly.

Peter leans in and kisses them both, one after the other. "Do we want breakfast?"

"I'm starving," Stiles tells him. "I could eat a whole cow."

"I'll take care of that," Peter says, and Derek kisses him again.
"You're too good to us," he murmurs.

Stiles agrees, leaning in to kiss and suck on Peter's lower lip. He smells happy and satisfied, and so does Peter. Derek couldn't ask for a better way to wake up.

Then he remembers: they're bonded. They're going to wake up together every day for the rest of their lives.

He ducks his head and smiles to himself, profoundly happy.

Chapter End Notes

That's all! Thank you to everyone who commented, kudos'd, bookmarked, cheered, DMed me, whatever. Thank you so much.

End Notes

me on tumblr
EDIT: tumblr is fuckin around and I may not be there much longer. You can find me on Dreamwidth, too. /EDIT
And scream at Harry about how amazingly talented he is!

(this story is complete and I'll update frequently)
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