Stiles is a strong, independent omega!... who is making the adult choice to sell his heats to the highest bidder for a while. After all, he was running out of suppressants anyway, and he and his dad could really use the money, and modern safeguards are pretty good at keeping everything safe, sane, and consensual. Really, there was no reason not to, and a boatload of reason TO.

Course, he hadn't expected to end up playing Goldilocks to the Hale Pack's Three Wolves, but hey... might as well enjoy the ride.
A legal sized manila folder lay on the table, the top flap closed simply yet firmly by its little metal wing clip. It was so ordinary. Innocuous, even. It was so plain, too plain, and downright deceptive.

“Well?” His dad was sitting across the table, on the other side of the surprisingly nondescript folder. “Are you going to open it, or not?”

Stiles glanced up at him only briefly. His gaze kept dropping to the folder as if magnetized. “I’m thinking about it.”

He felt more than saw his dad sitting back with his arms crossed as he leveled an ever-patient-yet-expectant smile at his only child. “Better get it over with, if you ask me.”

Stiles snorted, “I didn’t,”

“Hey, you’re the one who wanted this.”

Stiles winced, “Want isn’t exactly the word I would go with here,”

“Stiles.” His dad only ever said his name so briskly when he was shutting down an argument with something utterly final. Like ‘because-I-said-so-and-I’m-the-legal-adult-here’ kind of final.

Except John Stilinski wasn’t the only adult in the house anymore. Hence, the dreaded manila folder.

“I know,” Stiles said with a resigned sigh. “I know,” the second time was said with less sarcasm and more gravity. He reached for the folder. “Putting it off won’t change anything.”

His dad nodded. “The offers won’t change, just because you wait to look at them for another few days.”

He pulled the folder closer, sliding the material between his fingers with the growing sensation that something large and nasty was working its way up the back of his throat. He rubbed his thumb and forefinger together through the barrier of the folder and its contents. Dear God, but it was thin. What if it was empty?

Stiles thought about the nice clothes they bought so recently, how he’d sacrificed buying parts for his dying jeep just so he could look halfway decent over the next few months. He’d even gotten his hair cut—by a professional for once, rather than just buzzing it in the bathroom—in an effort to make his unremarkable brown hair seem like more than the mess it normally was as it grew out. There was no fixing his lopsided grin, or the dark moles randomly marring his pasty skin, but he’d gone to great (and sometimes inconvenient) lengths to avoid tan lines or any additional blemishes. He’d known he wasn’t ugly, but he wasn’t exactly handsome and he needed every trick advantage possible. Judging from how thin and light the folder was, he thought it possible he’d been too optimistic.

Then he thought about the mortgage that financed this whole thing, from the initial lawyer’s consultation, to the medical certifications, and even the damn photoshoot. That was when the disappointment started to churn and gather into a dark, heavy ball of disgust in the pit of his stomach.

He looked at his dad gravely, “What if… what if it’s empty? What are we gonna do?”

John’s frown wasn’t particularly encouraging, but he said, “Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. Open it and see.”
That was John, ever practical and disinclined to premature hysterics. Stiles wasn’t sure if it was just the man’s personality, or a byproduct of raising him.

“Okay,” he said with resolve and no small bit of bravado. Trying not to talk himself out of it, he tilted the folder up and all but attacked the wing clip at the top. “Okay,” he said again.

The clip released the top flap and he anxiously shoved one thumb inside. He nearly wept at the feel of smooth, crisp paper inside.

His dad laughed, and he couldn’t bother to feel insulted by the distinct relief in the other man’s voice. “Not empty, I take it,”

Stiles gave a tight-lipped grin that was only slightly self-deprecating in response. He angled the folder away as he shuffled the papers out into the light of day. “Nope. Looks like we’re doing this after all,”

John leaned forward and helped Stiles spread the papers out, side-by-side. There were four of them.

“Well,” Stiles was proud of how level-headed he sounded, even if the sarcasm wasn’t avoidable. “Good to know I have options, I guess,”

They shared a sad smile. Short of actually getting zero responses, such a limited pool to choose from was a piss-poor situation indeed. They both knew it.

“Four is better than none,” John shrugged and leaned forward for a closer look.

Stiles grimaced, “That’s one way of looking at it. I mean, Lydia Martin walked away from her first auction with twenty offers,”

John snorted indelicately, “Apples and oranges, kiddo. Lydia speaks to a different demographic.”

“No,” Stiles snipped, “She’s an omega, same as me. She speaks to every demographic. And the auction only forwarded her the twenty best offers; she got loads more. Like, hundreds, probably,”

“You’re being dramatic,”

“I’m being realistic,”

“Speaking of hundreds, look at all those zeros,” John pushed one of the pages toward him, his finger tapping at a line highlighted in yellow. “$600. And they’re in Cali! You could visit home whenever you wanted, I bet.”

Stiles leaned in. Six hundred bucks wasn’t great, but it wasn’t bad, if it meant staying local. Oh.

“Dad, look at the address.”


“Just to throw that $600 on gas and surviving traffic. Sure. Sounds great, just… peachy,” His eyes darted over to the page beside that one, first to its yellow figure, then the following details. “See, now this guy’s offering $400, plus he’ll pay your rent and let me keep anything he buys for me while I’m there. Oh!” Stiles perked up, blinking his eyes impossibly wide in mocking excitement, “I bet if you ask nicely, he’ll even throw in a few cows!”

“Stiles, be serious,”

“Totally serious,” Stiles jabbed his finger at the page, “Mr. Lahey here clearly wants to barter for his
bed partners like it’s the fourteenth century. What a keeper. Course, he’s probably onto something there, what with heat auctions still being a thing and all. Just saying,”

He immediately felt bashful; he was getting tired of hearing his dad sigh so heavily, like he was praying for patience or about to blow of fuse. Maybe both. “You don’t have to do this, Stiles. I told you—”

“It’s my decision!” Stiles finished for him curtly. “And it hasn’t changed. We need the money, and this is the best way for me to get it,”

“I can find other—”

“Ways, yes, I know,” He cut him off again. “But none as quick or as lucrative. And let’s face it, not nearly half as practical,” He slapped his hands down on the table for final emphasis. “I’m doing this. At least for a few months. Just not with Joshua Lahey. Okay?”

“Okay,”

“Eh. You said okay, but it kind of sounded like a negative,”

“I said okay!”

“Okay!”

“Okay,” John swiped the one paper to the side, neither of them blinking when Mr. Lahey’s paper fluttered to the floor. “What about Jennifer Kyles? $600 again.”

“Hm. Not local.”

“No. Definitely not local. But I hear Maine is really beautiful.”

Stiles stared. “Seriously? Maine, as in other-side-of-the-country?”

John nodded, then pointed to the first page again. “That guy then. He’s only a few hours north.”

Stiles sighed and slumped over in his chair. “Local or Timbuktu, it’s still $600.”

John hummed sympathetically.

“I’d have to be gone nearly two years just to get us in the clear with the house and the jeep at that rate. Hardly any profit beside that, even after a year,” The disappointment was heavy, even to his own ears.

When Stiles had first suggested that they sell his heats, his dad had rejected the idea flat out. It had taken weeks of arguing and several mini financial crises before the man would even consider the idea. When they had sat down and crunched the numbers, they had done the smart thing and low-balled their estimated returns. At least, they thought they had at the time.

They figured $1,000 a month would do it. Between that, and Stiles saving all he could from the expected weekly allowance, and he could come home within a few months. By then they would have enough to take care of the house and the jeep at that rate. Hardly any profit beside that, even after a year,” The disappointment was heavy, even to his own ears.

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could be a pittance. If he accepted, he could only count on what was offered in writing beforehand. Which was in front of him now.

“Maybe the best is for last?” His dad said with forced optimism. He slid the fourth and final paper forward.

Stiles groaned and tugged at his hair. “So long as it’s better than six-hund—Woah. Ugh, that’s clearly a typo,”

They bent their heads together and blinked down at the page. Stiles even squinted and rubbed his eyes. The yellow highlighter stubbornly remained on the figure: $3,500.00.

“Someone didn’t proofread this,” Stiles muttered as John snatched the paper up for a closer look. “Dad, put it down. It’s not real. They probably meant $350,”

John stood up, frowning intensely as his eyes skimmed back and forth on the page. “Go get your computer a sec,”

Stiles stiffened, “Dad, no. Don’t go getting excited—it’s not—”

“Just go get it, I want to check something out,”

“Dad—”

“Stiles,” John glared at him pointedly.

“Fine!” He huffed. He marched out of the room and up the stairs with obnoxiously loud and heavy stumps. As he grabbed his lap top, he dug his beat-up cellphone out of his pocket. He had to ignore the shattered screen, and the way the display flickered as he tapped on it, but by the time he was heading back downstairs the auction house’s perky receptionist was greeting him on speaker phone.

“Thank you for calling Nature’s Sanctum, the finest alpha-omega connection in North—”

“Yeah, I’m calling to report an issue with a prospective contract. I found a pretty embarrassing typo. Really, the alpha should probably fire his lawyer,”

“Oh no!” The girl on the line was all simpering sympathy wrapped in bubbly practiced nicety. “I can take a look at that for you. May I have your name and orientation?”

Stiles rolled his eyes as he dropped his computer on the table and flopped into his seat. “Stiles Stilinski. Omega,”

“Oh!” The girl’s superficial excitement was suddenly a lot more believable. “Mr. Stilinski! You’re calling about the Hale offer?”

Stiles frowned as he watched his dad tapping away at the keyboard without barely looking away from the mistaken contract. “Uh. Yeah. I take it you guys already noticed the issue…?”

“Not at all!” The girl giggled. Seriously, her professionalism had somehow disappeared in the last four seconds. “It’s not every day a Pack makes an offer. When they do, we pay it and all interested parties the attention they deserve. I assure you, there’s no error in the contract. The Hales’ lawyer and The Sanctum’s have gone through it with a fine tipped comb. If your own lawyer requires—”

“Woah, slow down a sec,” Stiles sat up straight. He felt a surreal suspicion creeping up his spine. He pulled the phone away from his ear. “Dad? The name on that contract isn’t Hale, is it?”
John was staring back and forth between Stiles’ computer screen and paper in his hand. He didn’t seem to hear the question.

“Dad!”

“One sec—”

“Dad, that contract—?”

John looked at him, wide eyed. “It’s real. I don’t think it’s a typo,”

Stiles glances at the phone. Faintly, he could hear the receptionist calling his name. “… What? Why?”

John waved at the computer screen. “There isn’t a name listed on the contract, because the offer isn’t from an individual.

It’s a Pack. A werewolf pack,”

It wasn’t a typo, that much was becoming painfully obvious.

“I don’t understand,” Stiles murmured as he scrolled through the website. Werewolves had only come out to the public within the past sixty years, once modern science made secrecy a near impossibility, and by now most packs had taken a very transparent approach to coexistence with the rest of the world. This included Pack Sites, which detailed any given werewolf community’s members and affiliates. In the Hales’ case, the site included professional references for the family business. Talia Hale, the head of the family, managed a rather prestigious private security firm.

John whistled appreciatively as he read over Stiles’ shoulder. “Damn. No wonder they’re offering so much,”

Mr. Harris, the lawyer who had been helping them with this silly excursion, actually laughed. Like this was all good and wonderful. One just had to get over the condescension in the sound. “They can certainly afford it. If your son were… well,” he rolled his eyes and grinned sheepishly, “If circumstances were different, I might suggest negotiating for more, actually,”

Stiles glared at the lawyer and reminded himself not to take offense. Harris was only almost-saying what Stiles had already thought before: if only he was prettier, wealthier, less sarcastic or better mannered. Harris was a dynamicist piece of shit, but sadly, he was the only one familiar with Omega Auction Houses in the entire county of Beacon Hills.

“Okaaay,” Stiles said slowly, “but why. They could literally have their pick of omegas with an offer like that. Why me?”

“Good question, but I can think of a better one,” John reached across Harris’s desk and tapped the top line on the contract, “For instance, why is an organization making offers for a Heat Contract. I’m not okay with the idea of more than one alpha having a right to you at your most vulnerable. Not to mention they’re werewolves,”

The lawyer waved his hand and scoffed, “Perish thought, Mr. Stilinski. Alpha wolves are too territorial and aggressive to share bedmates anyway,”

“That you know of,”
It was a valid concern. While werewolves weren’t that common and usually kept to themselves, most people would never even meet one, yet alone go to bed with one. The chances of a human omega even encountering an alpha wolf were astronomically slim, and it was equally rare for wolves to seek partners from outside their own packs. Despite those odds, Stiles, like every other omega he’d ever known, had been well taught about the potential dangers and differences at play if he were ever to garner the attention of an alpha wolf.

It was every omega’s fear that they’d be taken advantage of during an untimely heat, but there were usually methods of recourse after words where humans were concerned. But wolves were more subject to animal instinct, and the law recognized that; if an alpha werewolf raped an omega, all they had to do to avoid punishment was claim the unfortunate soul as mate. And wolves mate for life.

“I don’t like it,” John frowned as he crossed his arms sternly.

Stiles couldn’t readily disagree. “Maybe. I mean… if it isn’t sketchy, why offer so much, and why would they want me,”

Mr. Harris had a look on his face that made it clear he’d thought along similar lines. “Obviously, you appeal to at least someone in the Hale pack. Most of the packs in North America keep a service like Nature’s Sanctum on roster, just in case, but it’s rare that they utilize it. Not enough potential chemistry with most human omegas, I suppose. Alpha Talia Hale, the pack’s matriarch, probably made the offer to give them the chance to meet you in person, which is only to be expected in these situations. As for why you, well, wolves are known to have… let’s just say, unorthodox tastes when it comes to mates,”

“Mates?” Stiles cried, his voice mixing with his dad’s exclamation of: “What the hell!?"

Mr. Harris’s eyes went comically wide as John got in his face, “We agreed to a Heat Contract with an open termination clause. There is no way he’s agreeing to anything permanent. No way!”

The lawyer’s shock gave way to flippancy disturbingly quick. “Oh, calm down, Mr. Stilinski! They’re werewolves, for Christ’s sake, not Hollywood villains. If Stiles doesn’t want to mate, they won’t make him,”

“Are you delusional!?” Stiles asked, genuinely amazed that someone so seemingly intelligent could undermine such a serious concern. “Every omega on the planet knows an alpha werewolf has no reason to abstain and every right to claim a mate. Consent isn’t even a thing to them!”

“That’s it,” John said with finality. “We’re refusing the offer. Stiles, let’s go—”

“Wait!” Harris got to his feet with a lurch. “I think you’re making a fair few assumptions here—”

“Yeah,” John sneered, “I assumed your job was to help us find a safe and temporary way for Stiles to profit from his heats, not get us to sell him off as a sex slave to the highest bidder! Stiles! We’re leaving!”

At this point, Mr. Harris finally seemed angry. “I promise you, Mr. Stilinski, you’re never going to get a better offer!”

“We’ll take our chances,” John ushered Stiles out of the office with a protective hand on his back.

“Auction houses give preference to packs who keep them on retainer, Mr. Stilinski,” Harris said in aggravation, like he couldn’t believe he was explaining this to another adult.

“The hell is that supposed to mean!!”
“Even if—and it’s a big if—your son had dozens of comparable offers, the Auction House will never facilitate them. They will always push for you to take a pack’s offer—”

That made a lot of sense, Stiles thought as his dad started cussing their lawyer out. After all, the only other offers in that folder had been miserable in comparison. Although there was a certain hole in Harris’ logic, seeing as there were only four offers in total. Clearly, there wasn’t much interested competition, even if the other three included with the Hale contract were the poorest of those hypothetical dozens.

Moments later, Stiles was slouching out of the office with his dad gripping his arm just slightly too tight, Harris’s voice followed after them: “As your legal counsel, I’m telling you--!”

“Fuck off!” John barked.

Numb with shock, Stiles slid into the front seat of his dad’s car. His mind was reeling, back and forth between confusion, embarrassment, and a peculiar giddiness.

Despite their concerns, the fact remained that the Hales were offering a small fortune to get in his pants, specifically. For reasons unknown, someone wanted him, like, really, really wanted him.

And he was nearly stupid enough to fall right into their trap; it would be all too easy for them to remove his choice from the equation the moment Stiles was left alone with an alpha wolf. Hell, even omega rights activists wouldn’t argue, since Stiles would have consented to all manner of sexy times, in and out of heat, if he’d been foolish and signed that contract.

But still. Someone wanted him.
Two

Two weeks later, and the three remaining contracts were still hanging off the fridge, waving at him expectantly every time he went to grab the milk. Two weeks closer to suffering through his first unsuppressed heat, all alone. It was going to Suck, capital S. At minimum.

“This is stupid,” Stiles grumbled for the hundredth time as he sat down with his bowl of cereal. “We wasted all that time and money, for nothing."

John put his newspaper down with a heavy, worried sigh, “We can ask the auction house to relist you,”

They shared a look, both knowing that was merely more money spent that they didn’t have.

“Pointless,” Stiles stated bluntly, “Y’know, I’m the only omega in the county who consistently didn’t have a date to school dances? Should have been my first clue this was doomed to failure,” He glared at the fridge as he took an exaggerated angry bite of Frosted Flakes. Talking as he chewed, he continued: “Probably the only one in the COUNTRY, actually. I mean, seriously, there are so few of us to begin with. We have to drive 3 hours—without traffic!—to LA just to find an omega-certified gynecologist. I haven’t even had my first kiss! And no, Lydia Martin doesn’t count; she’s an omega and we were six.”

“Oh, Stiles,” he couldn’t help wincing at the pity in his dad’s voice, “don’t think like that. You’re a great catch,”

“Course I am. According to three people out of hundreds;” Stiles deadpanned, “Oh, and one suspiciously generous wolf pack. Yeah, that makes sense. Real ego boost right there,”

He was getting sick of hearing his dad sigh like that. The sound was a hybrid mix of dejection and exasperation.

Stiles scrapped his teeth on his spoon with another forceful bite that dripped sugary milk down his chin. “Mmm. Yep. Great catch, right here. I can give them ample helpings of spilled milk and sarcasm along with my virginity. Yay for me,”

“Stop it,” John scolded mildly with a disapproving look at the mess.

Stiles dropped his jaw and munch loudly and messily. Milk and cereal might have landed on his t-shirt.

“Now you’re trying to be obnoxious,”

“Another one of my best qualities,” Stiles grinned.

The moment was interrupted by the doorbell.

“Are you expecting company?” Stiles asked as he wiped his chin.

“Not that I know of,” John went to answer the door, his son trailing at his shoulder with cereal in hand.

They opened the door to a pretty young woman with dark brown curls and the most genuine smile Stiles had ever seen on a human being. The short rose-gold chain hugging her neck was beautiful and delicate, one of the more tasteful omega collars he’d seen. If the quality of the collar didn’t make
it obvious, then the ring on her finger made it quite clear that she was mated. And mated well, judging by her smile and rocks on her jewelry.

Standing two steps behind her stood Mr. Harris. His smile was smarmy and totally inappropriate.

John immediately put his arm out to keep Stiles from getting any closer. “What do you want?” He asked defensively, even as his son swatted his arm away.

Harris opened his mouth, but barely made a peep before the young woman was thrusting her hand out to be shaken. “Hello, you must be John Stilinski. I’m Allison McCall,” Her smile was warm like sunlight, and it barely faltered against John’s sullen silence.

Stiles hip-checked his dad and dug into his bowl for more cereal. “Hi, Allison,” He said cheekily right before taking another bite.

Instantly, Allison switched her gaze and her outstretched hand to him, “Hi. You’re Stiles,”

“The one and only,” He replied, careful not to talk with food still in his mouth.

“What do you want?” John asked, “Why’s he here?”

Allison glanced between them, her discomfort only discernable in the way she hesitated before speaking. “We’re here in lieu of Nature’s Sanctum to talk to you about a new Heat Contract. Mr. Harris was the lawyer on your records, so he’s here to look out for your interests, just as I am for my client’s,”

Stiles felt his eyes go wide, and he nearly dropped his bowl in surprise. “You’re a lawyer!?”

Her smile was unbelievably patient. “Of course,”

He blushed. “Right. Of course you are. Just because I’ve never heard of an omega being accepted into law school doesn’t mean it can’t happen.”

“Stiles,” John warned.

“What? It’s just unusual!” He defended, “Good for you though. Not even being a smartass. Seriously, good for you. That’s awesome!”

Meanwhile, he couldn’t get into a community college without proving beforehand that he could manage his heats in coordination with a full year’s curriculum. Part of the application process for omegas required medical documentation as related to his cycle and either receipts covering a year’s supply of suppressants (minimum) or a written plan (i.e. Permission slip) notarized by the omega’s mate.

Stiles was both broke and single, so both options were out.

Allison seemed to take his rambling in stride though, not picking up on his self-dejection. “Thank you, Stiles. Are you interested in law school?”

He snorted. “Not really. I’m more interested in the only slightly unattainable, thanks,”

Cue that god-awful sighing from his dad.

“You should try being more optimistic. Anything’s possible nowadays, even for omegas. I’d love to help you out, actually. Maybe we could take this inside?”
John opened his mouth, and before he could say no Stiles jostled him to the side: “We could!”

His dad’s irritation was a comfortable backdrop to the peculiar tableau that then became their living room. Allison sat herself squarely on the left couch cushion while John slumped unhappily into his recliner. Mr. Harris remained standing awkwardly between them. By the time Stiles flopped onto the couch beside the other omega, she had pulled a pile of papers from her bag and was already removing the clip holding them together.

“Mr. Harris has already reviewed this contract, but one or the both of you might want to make further amendments. I’ve brought several copies, and plenty of red pens, so feel free to mark anything you’re uncomfortable with or would like clarified,”

She was separating the papers as she spoke. Unlike the four they received two weeks ago, this contract seemed to be several pages long.

“My client is extremely invested in working this out, Stiles,” Allison handed him a red pen just as Mr. Harris offered another to his dad, “That’s why I’m here. She’s given me full authority to make any changes necessary not just to reach an agreement, but to make sure you’re as happy and comfortable with all the details. Take it from one omega to another, if you have any questions or are unsure about anything at all, mark it and ask. I’ll answer all your questions and we’ll get it sorted out,”

Finally, she handed one collection of papers to Stiles and immediately turned to give the other to John.

“The same goes for you, Mr. Stilinski. Though I should tell you, I am an omega rights activist, and I at least will be considering your son’s opinion and desires more heavily than your own,”

John huffed a startled laugh as he reached to take it from her. “I thought you were the alpha’s lawyer, not my son’s,”

Allison shrugged and let go, releasing the contract to John. “I am. But in this case, championing your son is in the alpha’s best interest,”

“Wait a second,” Stiles said, running his finger over the new line item detailing ‘Participants’, “When you say ‘she’…”

“Talia Hale,” John said shortly. For the first time, he turned the full force of his glare on Allison, “Is this a joke? We already refused the pack’s offer,”

“Ah, yes!” Mr. Harris leaned toward John with a hopeful grin. “That’s just it though, you rejected that offer. Not this offer. This one’s an entirely different contract,”

Stiles flipped the page, not reading, merely searching for a figure: “Holy shit. Is this real!? Dad! They’re offering $5,000 a month!”

John paled and blinked down at the paper in his hands. Then he shook himself and thrust it away. “No. Absolutely no--”

“And an allowance!” Mr. Harris interrupted, picking up the contract and flipping the page for him. “$200 a week. Contractually guaranteed!”

John was going from pale to an angry red at an alarmingly rate. He stood up and glowered at the other man. “What part of temporary do you not under—”
“It is temporary!” Mr. Harris assured, all idiotic smiles. “I took care of everything! All of your concerns—”

Stiles chortled unflatteringly. “You wouldn’t know our concerns if they shoved their foot up your—”

“Stiles!”

“Just saying!”

“Mr. Stilinski,” Harris went for a more soothing tone now, addressing John, “I assure you, the open termination clause in this contract is more thorough and impressive than anything you’ll ever—”

“Bullshit!” Scoffed Stiles.

At the same time, his dad hissed: “There’s no terminating a werewolf’s claim!”

“Not under human law, Mr. Stilinski,” Allison said calmly. It was perhaps that levelheadedness that put the brakes on the argument and got all three of them to give her their attention. Once she had it, she smiled beautifully, like there was no problem. “That’s why I’m here. I’m not just the Hale Pack’s lawyer. I’m also mated to one of their alphas, and that makes me a full member of the pack,”

They all gaped at her. Even Mr. Harris.

“You’re mated to a werewolf?! And you’re a freaking lawyer!?” Stiles stared at the pretty omega collar with renewed amazement. It was so thin… even a human could break it with their hands. It would be like paper to a wolf, hardly something such an alpha would feel secure about, with their omega wandering around without them. It just didn’t fit.

Allison winked at him. “By my choice. Just as it would be for you, if you ever decided to mate into our pack,”

“No way,” John said sternly. When he crossed his arms, it looked less stern and intimidating and more defensive than anything. “It’s a trap. You can’t go making promises like that.”

“I can,” Allison insisted. “And it’s not a trap. As a pack member with my Head Alpha’s permission, I can absolutely promise with complete certainty that your son will not be forced into a mating with anyone from the Hale Pack. Ever. Forced mattings are severely frowned upon in the global werewolf community; but even if they weren’t, Alpha Talia’s policy for her wolves is zero tolerance. My mate and I have been in the pack for years, and I can attest the fact.”

“What does she do?” Stiles asked. At Allison’s questioning look, he clarified: “Alpha Talia. What does she do to wolves who force their mates?”

“It’s only happened once in the Hale Pack since Talia came into power,” Allison said gravely, “She separated them. The alpha was banished to a remote property up north, still Hale territory though. And the omega stayed with Talia and the main pack until the alpha died a year later. I don’t know the details, but I think he killed himself.”

“What happened to the omega then?” John interjected.

Allison glanced between them. “Well. He went home. Talia and a couple of the older wolves still consider him pack, and I think they still email every now and then, but for the most part he just went back to his old life. I think he mated and married a human alpha, but I’m not sure,”

“You see,” Mr. Harris waved at Allison happily, “There’s nothing nefarious about it, Mr. Stilinski.
Stiles!” He said his name like it just occurred to him. “Stiles, surely you understand your position. Now, I can’t say anything about werewolf laws, but I can say for sure, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. You really can’t hope to get a better offer,”

Stiles barely paid Harris and his greedy commission any attention. He focused on his dad and Allison. “What’s this about then?” He held up the contract, shaking it. “Why me? Why’s Talia so interested in me?”

“She’s not,” Allison said, “Strictly speaking, I mean. Talia’s already mated. But the pack at large is her concern. It’s a matter of potential compatibility, really. We know from scent that you might be compatible with three of our pack’s alpha wolves, and it’s so seldom that wolves even find potential mates that Talia’s willing to expend a lot of resources just to give them a chance. Think of it like… courting. All we’re asking for is for you to keep an open mind while you’re with us, and consider the possibility of mating at some point. Worst case scenario, you don’t like any of them after meeting them, and you come home,”

John grumbled in displeasure. Stiles shot him a placating look, then ignored him. “Uh… backup a second. Scent?”

She nodded, “That’s why packs keep auction houses on retainer. Nature’s Sanctum and a couple others send us scent packets of all the omegas who sign up with them. It’s usually a small plastic bag with a piece of cloth from a towel or maybe hair clippings. Did you use the auction house’s salon at all? It’s not hard to get something with enough scent for a wolf to pick up on,”

Stiles sighed, touching his recently-styled hair subconsciously. “Oh. I thought it was just super convenient. It was cheaper than getting it done out in town, anyway,”

“And now we know why,” John snipped. “That can’t be legal,”

“It is,” Mr. Harris added. “Auction houses send the scent samples with coded labels, so all your info is kept private. All alphas get is a smell attached to an ID number. They don’t get details unless they pursue a contract through the house,”

“Exactly,” Allison agreed. “And at that point, they only have access to the same information any human alpha would be privy to if they were looking at the house’s listings,”

“That makes sense,” Stiles murmured. That meant these wolves knew his name, age, that he was a virgin who’d never experienced an unsuppressed heat, which brand of birth control he used, and that he had no preference when it came to the primary gender of his alpha. Oh. And they knew what he looked like, thanks to the photoshoot the Auction House required. “These names,” he asked, pointing at the ‘Participants’ line item.

“Yes,” Allison explained, “Mr. Harris explained your father had some concerns about who exactly would have rights to you during your heats,”

“Yeah, about that,” John interjected, frowning at his own copy of paperwork. “He can’t have three partners. That’s not happening. He’s 18, for crying out loud, and my son is not a slut,”

“Oh my god,” Stiles whined, his face heating.

Allison giggled, but at least she cut it short and looked apologetic. “Of course not, Mr. Stilinski,”

“I already told you,” Harris added, “werewolves don’t share—”

“Yeah, yeah,” John held up is hand to stop him. “So, explain what all these names are doing on
Allison addressed her response to Stiles. “As I mentioned, it’s all about potential compatibility. Peter, Derek, and Laura responded strongly to your scent, and Talia just wants to see if you’ll get on with any one of them,”

“That doesn’t explain who’s gonna be seeing me through my heats,” Stiles pointed out. It was too late to restart suppressants; one way or another, he was going to go through heat. Soon.

Her head bobbed understandably. “If you look at section 2A, we’ve left that decision entirely up to you. Once you’ve met them and gotten to know them a little, we imagine natural chemistry would make it obvious who you’re most compatible with,”

“You mean who you’ll want him to mate with,” John nearly growled.

Allison’s smile didn’t falter. “Potentially, but I prefer to look at it as who Stiles would want to mate with,”

Stiles cleared his throat. He couldn’t quite believe he was entertaining the idea, but here goes. “And if I don’t like any of them?”

Allison flipped to the second to last page and pointed to a subsection, 12D, under the heading ‘Termination.’ “You can call it quits at any point in time, even before experiencing heat. If you choose to go home before your first heat, the pack will pay for the sedation to get you through it without suppressants or a partner. Though, as an omega, I wouldn’t advise it. It may not be as torturous as going into full heat without any relief, but it’s still pretty bad and recovery can take weeks,”

“Yes, but,” Mr. Harris pipped up, “even if things don’t work out, you won’t walk away empty handed. So long as you at least meet all three of them, you’ll get the full month’s payment, including the allowance for however long you’re there.”

Allison nodded, turning to the right section to point out that exact fact, printed in black and white.

John made a sound of disbelief as he followed along with his copy. Stiles watched him read and his expression gradually shifted from skeptical to grudgingly impressed.

Stiles wasn’t quite so sure he was ready to get his hopes up though. “So, Talia’s the one managing all this, right?”

Allison grinned, clearly happy they seemed to be considering it, “That’s right,”

Stiles scratched the back of his head self-consciously, bounced his left leg and looked around the room aimlessly. Oh, alright, he was fidgeting. “Then… have these guys even seen my listing? Or just Talia?”

Allison’s smile dimmed for a moment as she considered the question. “I don’t know for sure. Maybe. Why? Is that a problem?”

Behind her, Mr. Harris cringed.

Stiles totally understood where the guy was coming from, even if he was still an ass. He felt the excitement he’d been battling up till then shrivel and sink to the pit of his stomach.

“Regardless,” Mr. Harris jumped forward with probably his last-ditch attempt to make a deal. “You
should at least go meet them. Worst case scenario, you get to visit New York for a week and come home with $5,200!"

Allison rolled her eyes but admitted: “That’s one way to look at it.”

Stiles chewed on his lower lip, thinking hard. Maybe that was the worst-case scenario. Or maybe they’d be so disappointed that they told the auction house not to work with him again… No, he couldn’t afford to think like that. He sat up straight and looked Allison in the eye.

“And what if none of them like me?”

She stared at him for a moment with the perfect smile, then she blinked at him and the smile turned confused. “Ah…” She looked at his dad, and unhelpfully at Mr. Harris, and her smile wilted as she returned to him. “You’re serious?”

Mr. Harris snorted.

Stiles just kind of… shrugged. “Yep. So?”

For a moment, she seemed rather off kilter, as if that was the last thing she ever expected him to ask. “I highly doubt— I mean…”

“Humor me, then,” Stiles told himself not to shy away from this particularly uncomfortable path of conversation. He didn’t want to draw it out and only prolong the reminder that he was the world’s one repulsive omega.

She cleared her throat and stared off to the side, thinking. Or maybe just avoiding meeting his eyes. “I suppose the same thing would happen. You’ll come home. With the money,”

“And the sedation,” Stiles murmured, drumming his fingers together as he weighed the likelihood of that happening.

“Well, yes” She said reluctantly, then much faster: “But that’s extremely unlikely,”

“Extremely!” Mr. Harris was quick to parrot, reinforcing it with a vigorous nodding.

Even dad chimed in with a placating: “I’m sure that wouldn’t happen. You’re a great catch!”

Stiles tuned them out and considered the odds. Then he weighed them against the three human offers currently pinned to the fridge. At least with the humans, he knew they wouldn’t turn him away at the last second to suffer his first heat alone. They already knew what he looked like, how skinny and peculiarly tall, with moles blemishing his skin and the most awkward, lopsided smile. He was everything Allison wasn’t; the exact opposite of the perfect omega, in fact.

That was one of the biggest issues with auctioning heats. An omega had to go off the suppressants once they were listed, so they absolutely had to choose from one of the alphas’ offers, or else they’d be in the painful position of going into heat alone. Or worse, bedding some stranger because the shabby locks on his bedroom door weren’t good enough to keep his heat-crazed brain from running off and jumping the first alpha he saw.

Stiles had very nearly lost his virginity at sixteen that way, the one time they couldn’t afford a full month’s dosage of suppressants, so they’d tried stretching the pills by going half-strength. He hadn’t experienced a full heat, thank god, which was probably why his dad and their neighbors were able to get him back inside at all. Fortunately, Mrs. Jensen, their neighbor, was a veterinarian with a sympathetic mind and had a shot of something reasonably strong on hand.
He didn’t need Allison to tell him how awful a sedated heat would be. He’d come close enough, thanks.

Still. The Hale Pack was offering a hell of a lot of money. And they already liked the way he smelled; that had to count for something.

He only had about two weeks left before his first full-fledged heat would hit.

While he’d been thinking, his dad and the lawyers had been yammering over each other, presumably with half-hearted reassurances and dubious advice. He stood up abruptly and they all shut up as he focused on Allison.

“I’ll do it under one condition,” He said, proud of himself for sounding so unaffected.

Allison nodded encouragingly. “Name it,”

“I want confirmation that they want to meet me before I sign anything. I mean, all three of them must be interested, they all need to see my listing on the auction houses’ website. Consent’s a two-way street. I’m all about that. Yep,” Which was true. And if it saved him from being rejected face-to-face, all the better.

Allison hopped to her feet, perky smile restored as she held out her hand. “Deal!”
Three

Chapter Summary

Short chapter this time, but at least I got around to including someone else's perspective. Do keep in mind, this is a Sterek endgame fic, though at the rate/length I've been going, it's might take awhile to get there.

Apparently, Talia Hale hadn’t called a pack meeting after all. This was an actual family meeting. As in, by blood.

Laura was sitting in their mom’s chair, playing absently with the tail end of her long, dark-blond braid. Uncle Peter was leaning casually against the window frame, staring out at the countryside the made up most of Talia’s office decoration. Talia herself was nowhere to be seen.

“Evening, Derek,” Peter said coolly without bothering to look at him. “For once, we’re not waiting on you, it seems,”

Laura snickered, “Ignore him. He’s just pissed he’s as clueless as the rest of us for once,”

Derek quirked a brow in their uncle’s direction. “Yeah? That’s a first,”

“That’s enough, children,” Peter chided without any real feeling, “Respect your elders,”

“Excellent advice, little brother,” Talia glided into the room, somehow making remarkably little noise despite the pronounced high heels. With her dark hair and sleek muscle, she made her late forties look like an extension of her early thirties. “Derek,” she beckoned him to follow as she crossed the room to set a tablet on the desk in front of Laura. “You too, Peter. I need all three of you to take a good look,”

Derek and his uncle loomed over Laura as she sat. It was a sign of how comfortable and trusting they all were with each other that the positioning didn’t make Laura growl. Indeed, she didn’t even twitch, but remained perfectly relaxed as she tilted the tablet up, so they could all see.

Filling most of the screen was a professional photograph of a young man. His hair was plain brown, and Derek could tell at a glance it was too styled to possibly feel nice. The fitted suit suggested he was a little on the thin side, not yet filling out the lanky frame of his body, and his smile was precious in the way it tilted his lips higher on the right. The picture utilized a classic pose, with him facing the camera at an angle and his hands relaxed in his pockets; or rather, Derek supposed that was the intention, but he thought the guy just looked stiff and unsure where to put his hands. But his smile reached his eyes, and his slightly upturned nose was nothing short of cute, especially given the beauty marks on his pale cheek. He was, all in all, an attractive kid.

“What are we looking at here?” Peter asked, and for once he wasn’t being condescending, but curious. “Is he an omega?”

“Course he is,” Laura said it like it was obvious—it wasn’t. While there were certainly traits common to certain dynamics, same as between primary genders, there were no surefire ways to tell. Generally speaking, secondary sex was only obvious between alphas and omegas via pheromones; meaning
unless an omega was collared, as was customary for a mated omega, there was no way to tell that someone was one simply by sight. Behavior, of course, was another matter entirely.

Even a nose-deaf beta could recognize an omega in heat.

“He’s too tall,” Derek countered, doubtful. Omegas were commonly on the small side, for both genders.

Laura nudged him with her shoulder, “But pretty. Definitely omega,”

Derek nodded in agreement. Other than being small, the biggest calling card of an omega was beauty, followed closely by a submissive nature. Obviously, they couldn’t comment on the boy’s personality, but he was certainly a looker, if in an unconventional sort of way. He turned heads when he walked in a room, that’s for sure.

“You’re right,” Talia said with a grin from the other side of the desk. She splayed both palms on the smooth mahogany top and leaned toward them. “You like him?”

Laura shrugged noncommittely, but her eyes roved over the picture appreciatively.

“I’d do him,” Peter admitted candidly.

“Derek?” Talia prompted.

Laura and Peter followed her gaze, and suddenly Derek felt like he had a spotlight shining on him. He shifted his weight between his feet uneasily. “Yes?”

Peter rolled his eyes as Laura chuckled at his expense.

Talia pointed at the tablet. “What do you think of him?”

Derek glanced at the picture again. “Pretty. Like Laura said,”

His mother’s responding smile was practically giddy. “Excellent. He’ll be here next week! Sooner, if Allison can convince him to get a move on,”

And for once, Derek wasn’t the only one who was blindsided. Instantly, the easy-going atmosphere evaporated, along with any semblance of nonchalance from any of them.

“Seriously?!” Laura cried, shocked. It wasn’t every day they invited strangers onto their territory, not to mention a strange human who was being welcomed to the main house, where typically only blood relatives to the pack alpha resided.

Peter made a small but loud sound of uncertainty. “I don’t know, Talia. He’s awfully young. Are you even sure he’s legal?” Even as he said it, he was leaning in for a closer look.

Talia practically ignored their obvious dismay. “Totally serious, and of course he’s legal, Peter. Nature’s Sanctum found him for us,”

Laura squealed excitedly as Derek felt his jaw drop in surprise. “That scent package…” Derek trailed off, pulling the tablet from Laura’s hand with renewed interest.

“It’s him!” Laura finished his thought aloud, all but bouncing in her seat. “Holy shit, it’s him!”

For once, he could understand Laura’s reaction. He remembered the scent. Vividly. He’d jerked off to the memory of it every day since.
It had been something of an anomaly. Every month, like clockwork, Talia passed around a box of the samples to all the unmated alphas currently living in the main territory, in a bid to find them compatible mates. That morning, weeks ago, had been no different. The normal standard if ever one of them caught a sniff of someone particularly alluring usually meant Talia followed up with the auction house to see if there was any real potential. It happened occasionally, but almost never did anything come of it.

They had assumed that particular scent packet had gone the same way. They should have known better. He’d had too strong a reaction for it to be someone he wasn’t perfectly compatible with. He hadn’t popped a boner at the breakfast table so immediately since he’d finished puberty. And he hadn’t been the only one to react that way.

Lo and behold, Peter was scrutinizing the omega’s picture now right alongside him. Might have even licked his lips.

Laura was still wailing, going on about how cute he was and how she could think of a good many things to do with/to an omega like that. Derek tilted his head to the side as he considered the photo, and then he noticed the thumbnails next to it. More photos. Shamelessly, Derek tapped on the next photo.

“Well now,” Peter said appreciatively.

It was a candid shot. The omega was looking off to the side, and he was laughing. It was an honest, open-mouthed laugh, and it was clear the photographer had noticed how much more relaxed his subject was when not posed. With the memory of that scent—the omega’s smell—surfacing in his mind, Derek was unsurprised how easily he could see himself thrusting into that open mouth.

Judging from the current aroma of multiple arousals, he wasn’t the only one.

“Alright! Now that’s settled: ground rules!” Talia called all the attention with a rap of her knuckles on the desk.

“Huh?” Derek asked eloquently, forcing himself to look away from the screen.

Peter snatched it from his hands to scroll through pictures. “I can think of a few,” he said darkly, swiping to the next picture and making a pleasantly surprised expression.

Derek made a grab for the tablet. “Give it back,”

“No,” Peter spun away, selfishly hogging the photos.

“My turn!” Laura hopped into his path and tried to wrestle it from him.

“Patience, children!” Peter scolded, mockingly.

Talia called them all to heel with a sharp cry: “Enough!”

Peter handed her the tablet.

“No. As I was saying, we need to go over some ground rules. First of all, his name is Stiles, he has a name, so use it. Allison tells me he’s pretty skittish and he doesn’t have the best impression of werewolves to begin with. We’ve had to work a ridiculous amount of detail into the heat contract just to get him to consider meeting you,”

Laura gasped and dug her nails into Derek’s arm. “He signed a heat contract!?!”
“Who gets him?” Derek asked, prying her off.

“I’d like to point out my obvious seniority and experience,” Peter said flippantly.

Laura scoffed, “Yeah, because you’re a senior citizen.”

“Practically old enough to be his dad,” Derek agreed.

Peter closed his eye and raised his chin, like he was praying for patience. “Maturity then,”

Laura and Derek both scoffed. Omegas were rare to begin with, practically nonexistent among wolves. Peter had precisely as much experience and knowledge about pleasing one as his niece and nephew. So none.

Talia clapped her hands, again corralling their attention. “I’m not the one you need to convince. We put all three of your names in the contract, with a clarifying clause that states Stiles has full right to accept or refuse each of you, and whoever he chooses to spend his heat with, the other two of you will respect that decision,” She stressed ‘will’ with the extra force of authority as pack leader. It wasn’t a suggestion.

Laura raised a hand as if ready to physically interrupt her. “In the interest of fairness, is his decision after the first heat permanent?”

Derek growled before he could stop himself.

Peter patted him on the back in sympathy. “Meaning, do we have a time limit on convincing him of his better choices,”

“Meaning me,” Laura corrected.

“Not quite,” Peter sneered. “Or is this a more open-ended arrangement?”

Talia gave a long-suffering sigh. “Nothing’s final until Stiles accepts a mating claim. IF,” She emphasized, “he ever does. Until then, you follow his lead. Before each heat starts, he’ll name one of you his accepted partner. If he changes his mind the following month for any reason, that’s his prerogative. I won’t have any of my wolves or my family putting pressure on him or scaring him off,”

“Sounds good, mama,” Laura mock saluted.

“Understood,” Derek acknowledged succinctly.

“Got it,” said Peter.

Talia nodded satisfactorily. “Good. Also, to keep things honest, no one is going to give him money. He’s not a whore, I won’t have you trying to buy his affections like one. I’ll take care of his allowance, so financial clout is off the table where tactics are concerned.”

All three of them may have grumbled sulkily in response.

“What about gifts?” Laura ventured.

“Yes, within reason.”

“Define ‘reason,’” Peter implored, looking dubious.
Talia glared back at him, probably thinking he was being willfully obtuse. Derek doubted he was, since the question had occurred to himself as well. “Nothing with significant retail value. I don’t want you competing to spoil him. I want him to get to know you, and you him. Ideally, I’d like to be welcoming him to the family sometime within the next year.”

Laura smirked. “Ah. You want us to woo him!”

“Don’t look so smug,” Peter admonished, “Your chances are no better than mine,”

“Or mine,” Derek thought he sounded only a little defensive.

They both laughed.

“Derek, do you even know what wooing means?” Laura simpered.

“Dear nephew, I love you enough to be honest: you haven’t a romantic bone in your body,”

“It’s true,” Laura lamented half-heartedly, “Uncle Peter is my only real rival, and I’m pretty sure he’s too old and creepy to be any real threat. I’ve got this in the bag!”

Peter gave her a tight smile, “Your naiveite is showing, dearest. You would be wise not to underestimate me,”

She patted his cheek, the action equal parts fond and insulting. “Don’t worry, uncle. I’ll let you be my best man at our wedding,”

They continued the ribbing out into the hall. Derek would have followed them, except Talia snagged his arm along the way.

“Don’t sell yourself short, Derek. Maybe he likes his alphas quiet and broody,”

She had him there, “Don’t suppose I can throw in the towel now?”

Talia threw her head back and laughed. “Absolutely not. I promised Stiles choices, and I won’t deprive him of the best one,” She cupped his face in her hands lovingly. “Tall, dark, and handsome, just like your dad,”

Derek laughed along with her. Jared Hale had been an omega, small, tawny haired and pretty. Of all their children, only Laura had their dad’s pale coloring. No, by comparison Derek was practically the male version of their mother: well over six feet, ebony hair, striking blue-green eyes, and strong, perfectly proportioned features.

“Just be yourself. Only… maybe try to say more than two words to him,”
Stiles was going to be sick. Like, epically, violently sick. All over the fancy, sparkling clean car he was now sitting in, surely ruining the upholstery that must cost more than his dad’s entire house.

Allison patted his knee reassuringly. “It’s okay to be nervous, but you don’t need to be. They’re going to love you,”

Stiles doubted it. It was shocking enough that apparently all three alpha werewolves found him physically attractive when he had never been called good looking before by anyone not obligated through blood relation. But he knew how little actual information the auction listing included. They didn’t know they were about to have an awkward, overly talkative and opinionated teenager dropped on their doorstep.

He was going to be so, so sick.

“We’re here!” Allison chirped happily as the car rolled to a stop.

Holy shit. He was trembling all over. Sure, they’d seen his picture, but it would be all too obvious that the photographer had used some impressive camera sorcery to make him look that good. After all, it was literally the guy’s job. Not to mention, photos don’t talk. The moment he opened his mouth, they were bound to be disappointed. He’d been told, repeatedly by plenty of people, that he talked way too much. He should have insisted the auction house include a warning label on his listing. “Stiles Stilinski, age 18, guaranteed to annoy.”

This was a terrible idea.

His door opened, and Allison herded him out. He’d seen enough through the darkly tinted windows of the car to know they were somewhere lush and green, well into the New York countryside and far enough away from the city that a wolf pack could roam undisturbed. The ride had put pictures of woodsy cottages or a nice hunting lodge in his mind. It had not prepared him for the essential mansion masquerading as a log cabin.

It was a beautiful structure, standing tall and comfortable among the trees. Two stories and sprawling to both sides, the driveway they’d parked on led directly to a stylish porch that wrapped around most of the front and disappeared along the right side of the home. The front door was unusually large, any larger and they might as well have gone ahead and built double doors, with a simple but smooth face with a single window in the middle. The rest of the house was all dark wood and large windows. It was beautiful and intimidating.

Stiles abruptly realized that $5,000+ a month was a reasonable expense to these people.

He was so in over his head.

That imposingly large door burst open and an attractive young woman came down the front steps toward them. Her brown hair was pulled into a long pony tail, and the intent look on her face was at odds with her bouncing steps. She was wearing a school uniform, clearly a private high school.

“So, you’re the omega?” She said, unimpressed as she came to an abrupt halt not even a foot in front of him. She looked him up and down skeptically.

Stiles felt the blood drain from his face. She must be Laura. It didn’t matter that she couldn’t possibly even be older than himself, or that she was clearly still in high school: she was an alpha, and very
obviously disinterested now that he was here.

Well, he thought desperately, he probably would like the men in her family better anyway. If they liked him better would be great. Regardless, he hadn’t flown clear across the country to call it quits so easily.

“Actually, I prefer Stiles.” He snipped back before considering how bad an idea that was. “Referring to people by their dynamic is pretty outdated, not to mention rude, by the way,”

She sneered. “Whatever,”

“Cora!” Allison scolded, her voice echoing oddly… no, not echoing. The name had been shouted by a second woman.

Following in the young alpha’s footsteps was a second alpha, this one older and clearly more dominant, but no less beautiful. Her dark hair hung in loose waves around her shoulders, which were clad in a sleek, professional dress. She glared hotly at the young woman—Cora, Stiles realized—before turning to meet Stiles’ eyes.

Immediately, her expression turned warm and inviting. “Stiles! Welcome to our home. I’m so glad you accepted our offer!”

Stiles forced a tight smile as she came near, stepping into his space and touching his shoulder all sweet and friendly. “Yeah, turns out it’s exceptionally difficult to say no to stubborn rich folks,” He winced. No filter, whatsoever. Blushing hotly as she stared at him, he tried again: “I mean, I said no at first, but then Alison showed up, and it was this whole weird… well, you would know, you sent her. Anyway, sorry: That came out wrong. I’m glad to be here. Really,”

Beside him, Allison snorted and hid a smile behind her fist.

The woman in front of him sort of blinked away her surprise. She gave a little chuckle, “That’s quite alright. I appreciate the honesty. I’m Talia Hale,”

Stiles shook her hand awkwardly, dropping his gaze submissively. He figured he’d already insulted her enough. “Sorry,” He muttered again.

“You should be” Cora said, though not maliciously. She sounded more… blasé than anything.

“Thanks to you, I can’t catch a moment’s peace and quiet around here,”

“Cora,” Talia said warningly.

The girl huffed and rolled her eyes. “Welcome, Stiles Stilinski, we’re so happy you’ve come,” She said with remarkable lack of enthusiasm, then she smiled almost sweetly and added: “I’ll be happier when you’re gone,”

Talia’s hand jotted out and smacked the back of her daughter’s head.

“Ignore her,” Allison said, seeming embarrassed, as Cora pranced back into the house. “Cora’s a little tense. Her final exams are right around the corner,”

“Yes,” Talia grinned and gestured for him to follow her into the house. “And the recent disturbances haven’t endeared you to her, I’m afraid,”

“That’s funny,” Stiles hitched his bag higher on his shoulder, shoved his hands in his pockets rigidly and followed. “Usually I’m present when I’m disturbing things. This must be new personal record,”
Allison giggled, coming up beside him and linking her arm through his. “Let’s just say, you’ve already had a distinct impact on the household, to put it mildly.”

Stiles frowned, “Meaning…?”

“Peter and Laura,” Talia said over her shoulder, “My brother, and my eldest child. They’ve been bickering and taunting each other over you since the moment I told them you’d be coming.”

Stiles gulped, half convinced the wolves in question had spent the past week trying to hand him and his heat off as someone else’s responsibility. They probably changed their minds after getting a closer look at his photos. Hoping the bravado wasn’t too obvious in his voice, Stiles quipped: “Oh? Well, two out of three ain’t bad, I guess,”

Allison giggled and nudged his shoulder with her own, “Oh-for-three, actually. Derek’s equally interested. Witty repartee just isn’t his style,”

Talia’s laughter was as beautiful as she was. “Don’t misconstrue my son’s silence. He’s a man of few words,”

“And shy besides,” Allison added.

“Uh… son? Derek’s your son, Laura’s your daughter and…”

“Peter’s our uncle,” Cora gritted as she passed them on her way to the stairs with a shiny laptop in her arms. She glared at Stiles as she said: “You’re like freakin’ wolf-nip to this family, I swear,”

Face hot, Stiles glared back at her, “Clearly not, if you’re any way to judge,”

She snorted, her back to him as she ascended to the second floor. “No. I’m evolved beyond my baser instincts, thank god. You smell like forest and sex to me too, though,” She shot a smirk at him over her shoulder. “Wolf bait,”

“Woah. Um,” He floundered, certain his face was melting off. “Okay then. Thanks, I think,”

Allison tugged on his arm, “I told you so,”

Meanwhile, Talia was waiting patiently by another arch way. “This house is the center of our territory, Stiles. My family and I live here full time, and we house other members of the pack on an as-needed bases. Our bedrooms are upstairs, so for now, I’ve set aside one of the den rooms here on the lower level for you,”

“It’s your space for as long as you’re here,” Allison added as she escorted him down a side hall after Talia. “No one is allowed in without your express permission, and it’s fully insulated, sound and scent proof, so you have total privacy,”

Stiles had his doubt how secure it could possibly be against a full-grown alpha werewolf set on claiming an omega mate wo smelled of heat, but he managed to keep the thought to himself. “Neat. Dad and I wondered where I’d be sleeping, since omegas normally just room with the alpha they’re contracted with. Course, normally only one alpha’s named in a contract, so there’s that.”

“It’s true,” Talia agreed, “This isn’t a normal or customary situation. Why would we treat it like one?”

At that point, they stopped before an obviously brand-new door. It wasn’t obvious because it was fancier than the rest of the house, no, but because unlike the wood finish surrounding it, this one was
sturdy, shiny metal. Stiles felt his brow lift, impressed; he recognized the symbols etched onto the door in some dark grey material and they were powerful druid wards.

Talia opened the door into a large room done up in blues and greys. Half the room was floor to ceiling glass, revealing the space was once a sunroom. Sectioned curtains hung at intervals, ready to be let loose over the enormous view of the woods. There were all the comforts of a classic den room, from couch to giant TV, but also the trappings of a rather comfortable bedroom—king size bed with a mountain of pillows, an antique dresser—but not just that, it was like the Hales had transformed the place into a luxury hotel suit. A decent-if-not-full-sized vanity sink took up a section of the far wall, right next to an open doorway that revealed a small but finely crafted bathroom.

Stiles was gob smacked. He’d never stepped foot in a room so luxurious.

“We remodeled the den a few years ago as a backup plan if any omegas new to the pack needed a heat room,” Talia explained, indicating the bathroom and the mini fridge set up halfway between the bed and the couch. “My late husband never needed it, but Allison and her mate Scott had to use it once, when they were first mated. And she’s the only omega in our pack currently. Fortunate, since it meant we had the basic necessities in place, so when you agreed to come, all we had to do was pick a color scheme and go shopping,”

Allison fairly vibrated with excited energy, “It was my idea to make it a heat room, back when Scott was still courting me,”

Stiles nodded, “Makes sense. I didn’t think you would have gone to all the trouble to make a specific werewolf privacy-proof room just for me,”

“We would have,” Talia countered, frowning at him in consideration. “If we hadn’t already had this room constructed, we would have made it for you anyway,”

Allison was nodding vigorously, “And some of it is new, specifically for you. The door, for instance. The runes are written in a special wolfsbane mixture, and they had the pack’s Emissary reinforce the perimeter with mountain ash at my suggestion,”

Stiles stared back at the doorway, “Woah. So when you said they wouldn’t come in without my permission, you actually meant they can’t?”

She nodded, that lovely smile taking up her entire face, “That’s right. Only the humans in the pack could open that door once you invoke it. So just me, my mother in law, our druid, and yourself,”

“And none of them would dare intrude,” Talia assured him, “They are all perfectly well mannered, and they know how to knock,”

“Damn, I mean,” He was pretty much speechless. This was worlds beyond anything he could have expected. He reckoned he didn’t have any choice but to believe they really didn’t mean to trap him. “That’s amazing. This is amazing. This is really… just. Something. Wow….”

The two women only smiled as he stared around at what would probably be his home for the next who-knows-how-long.

“Ready for the best part?” Allison asked, coming to his side. Her smile turned mischievous.

He gaped at her. “There’s more!?”

Talia picked up a tablet from the coffee table and handed it to him. “The paper on the nightstand has all the passwords you’ll need to operate everything, but this,” She swiped the screen and pressed a
few things. “is a pre-set system that will invoke the right sigils on the door the moment the sensors by
the bed pick up your heat pheromones. All you have to do is tell it who you want to grant permission
to, and when your heat hits, the right person will be notified and allowed entry, even if you’re
incapacitated,”

Stiles took the tablet from her with trembling fingers. The screen was simple and almost empty. It
had only three lines, with dealumination buttons next to each: Peter Hale, Laura Hale, and
Derek Hale.

Suddenly, Stiles felt faint. He wasn’t conscious of Talia’s hand guiding him onto the couch, only that
his knees had gone weak and he eyes were stinging. He clutched the tablet so tightly his knuckles
turned white. He was, in a word, overwhelmed.

He held choice in his hands. Every omega’s worst nightmare bubble wrapped by their biggest wish,
and these complete strangers handed him an answer so simply, so matter-of-fact, like it was obvious
to them that he not only could, but should have control over this. It was his choice, and they had
gone to such extreme lengths to make sure he had it.

Stiles looked up from the tablet and stared around the room, at all the freshly hung curtains and the
deep blue and silvery grey bed linens, the way even the rug and couch went together. They had
spent so much money on him. The obscene amount they were paying him in the contract, plus all this
luxury just for him…

“Why?” He croaked, clearing his throat to hide the tears. “I don’t understand. Why would you do all
this?”

Allison was smiling at him, equal parts sad and sweet. She may have mated a werewolf happily and
freely, but she had lived as an omega before that. She understood.

Talia gently removed the tablet from his clutch and set it on the coffee table. “Stiles, I don’t think you
quite realize our situation. Omegas are rarely born as wolves, and they never survive if bitten. It’s so
rare for alpha werewolves to find an omega mate, it’s very nearly the stuff of legend to us. And
you… You’re compatible with three of my alphas. Not one, but three,”

“Four, if we considered Cora,” Allison tacked on flippantly, “though she’s too young and too
wrapped in her own head to be interested,”

“Exactly,” Talia continued, stroking Stiles’ hair with a sort of possessiveness that would have been
creepy if it hadn’t been so… maternal. “Wolves are pack animals. We’re strongest when the bonds
between us are many and deep. Alphas don’t easily make the individual bonds necessary to
strengthen the pack at the core level,”

He frowned, “I don’t understand,”

“When an alpha wolf mates, they become balanced and can be content. Without that balance,
without the center that a mate provides… well, alphas are more difficult to control,”

Stiles gulped, “You mean like… dynamic resonance?”

It didn’t happen all that often, when a group of people sharing one dynamic in common gathered
without enough of another dynamic’s presence to balance out the pheromones. It tended to cause
issues, to differing degrees that depended on the strength and number of the people mixing. Too
many alphas together especially, without enough beta and, ideally, omega, influences… it was the
sort of cocktail that inspired riots and murder in the street.
Jesus. And the Hale family was full of nothing but alphas.

“That’s why most wolf packs are so small,” Allison explained in a stage whisper that made Talia smirk, “The Hale pack is unusually large, because they have the additional bond of being blood brethren, so the alphas get along better than they normally would in a pack of none-relatives. But even with that, Talia’s had to send Peter and Laura away for years at a time just to keep the peace,”

The alpha was nodding along, “Derek’s unusually mild mannered for an alpha, but even he will probably need to leave before too long, for a while at least,” She sighed and the look in her eyes turned mournful, “It was easier when Jared was still alive; his bond to our children was plenty enough influence to keep things calm. Even Peter liked him,”

Her hand had stilled where she’d been petting his shoulder. Instinctively, he put his hand over hers and squeezed, “I’m so sorry he’s gone. My dad was never the same after we lost my mom; no one should ever have to go through that kind of pain,”

Talia gave him a small, appreciative smile.

Allison nodded and hummed in agreement, “I never got to meet him, but I know that having an omega in the family, living here with them day-to-day had a soothing effect on all of them,”

“But that was years ago,” Talia said softly. Her hand slid out from his and raised to pass over his hair, a wistful look on the alpha’s face, “And every year since, it gets harder for us to keep civil with each other without outbursts. Especially during mating season—We haven’t dared risk more than two of us being in rut in the same house in… oh, probably five years,”

Stiles couldn’t stop the humorless laugh that left his mouth. “I can imagine,”

He’d always been jealous of alphas because they only when into rut once a year, as opposed to an omega’s monthly heat cycle. Mating Season, as it was dubbed, occurred around the same time in the winter for all alphas, so it was convenient for schools and businesses to coordinate shut downs. Stiles personally hadn’t missed much school thanks to his medically-suppressed heats, but he’d missed some without ever hearing of an alpha missing a single thing due to rut. No one would dare risk a hormonal alpha anywhere in public. Too high probability of property damage and injuries.

He’d never considered the potential negatives from an alpha’s perspective before. At least when he was in heat, he didn’t have to worry that he and his dad might try to kill each other if they ended up smelling each other.

“And of course,” Allison added helpfully, “every time the pack separates, it weakens us,”

“I get it,” Stiles said slowly. As he fitted the information together, it felt like a weighted mantle was thrown over his shoulders, warm, yes, amazingly warm, but heavy all the same. “I could strengthen your pack, maybe keep you guys from going off the deep end, regardless of who I… Well. If I mate into your family,”

Talia nodded, petting his hair again in that weirdly-possessive-yet-soothing way of hers, “You could keep my family together, safe and healthy. Like we haven’t been since my own mate passed,”

“Right,” Stiles said dazedly, “No pressure,”
Five

No pressure, Stiles. Nope. None.

Stiles lay on his new bed, his thoughts swirling, stampeding, around the fact that the Hales were hoping he would essentially save their family from destroying themselves via wolfish instinct. He kept telling himself he needed to be a lot more careful what he wished for. Yes, for once, he was well and truly wanted, valuable even. Really fucking valuable, actually. And in all the ways an omega ought to be. But this was dangerously close to being needed, and he was barely a year out of high school. Did he really want to settle down? Mate and probably marry the first person he ever had sex with? Hell, maybe even the first person he ever kissed?!

And that said nothing about the responsibility to the pack at large.

Dear god, if they had babies, would they be puppies or babies?!

Oh no. He was definitely NOT ready for kids, that was for sure. Someday, yeah. Not any day soon though. Maybe after college, assuming his alpha agreed to let him go…

Woah now! He was getting way, way, WAY ahead of himself.

Stiles closed his eyes tight and took a deep breath. “I just got to chill,” He coached himself. “I haven’t even met any of them yet. Maybe none of them will like me,”

He wondered if that would stop them though. Would wolves overlook something as mundane as physical attraction in favor of the possibility mating him would strengthen the pack? Would the same apply if they found his personality equally lacking, or even more lacking? In all Talia’s persuasive speech, she never mentioned the need to like him as a person, so long as biological chemistry worked out. Or maybe that was just Stiles reading too much into it.

“Or maybe I won’t like any of them. Maybe they’ll be hideous. Ha!” He clapped a hand over his mouth, startled by his own laughter. It truly was absurd; he’d seen two members of the family already, there was no way anyone closely related to Talia and Cora Hale would be anything less than gorgeous.

Oh yeah, he was in way over his head.

There was a loud, but short knock on his door, followed by Allison’s voice. “Heads up, Stiles. They’re home and unloading groceries as we speak. Dinner should be ready in about an hour,” He could hear the smile in her voice as she finished, “We’ll keep the hounds at bay in the kitchen and dining room. Come out when you’re ready,”

He told his heart to calm the hell down, then lifted his head and shouted, “Thanks! I’ll be out soon,”

“Take your time. There’s no rush,”

And she was gone.

Talia, the genius that she is, had planned everything perfectly. His would-be suitors had cleared out of the house for the afternoon to give him space to acclimate. After an hour’s worth of exploring his room, Talia and Allison had given him a tour of the house at large, without getting too near the bedrooms, to avoid exciting anyone by leaving his scent right outside their doors. The three of them had a late lunch on the porch and spent a few hours going over the rules Talia had established with
her family, so Stiles was aware of what was acceptable behavior from them and how his heats would be handled. After that, they had left him to his own devices, and he had readily retreated to his room and called his dad. John Stilinski was easily as surprised and relieved with the unfolding situation as his son.

His reprieve was over now, though.

“Ok, Stiles,” He told himself, “You can do this,”

He rolled off the bed and stood in front of the mirror, starring at his boring t-shirt and jeans. He had arrived in the one good suit he owned—the one he’d needed for the intake interview and photoshoot at the auction house—and Talia, while appreciative, had suggested changing into something more comfortable. She seemed to think he’d already done all the impressing necessary, and now his job was to relax and consider which of her family members he’d most like to screw when his heat hit (which would be any day now, next week at most). He figured she thought he would be relieved and happy with this plan. Really though, it just reaffirmed his idea that the wolves would overlook how they felt about him personally in favor of simply getting him to mate with them.

He supposed he should try to find it less depressing. He should be thankful they wanted him at all.

Shaking his head viciously as if he could shake off the self-deprecating thoughts, Stiles tugged his shirt straight and ran a hand through his hair. He contemplated trying to fix it, maybe use a little water and the hair product his dad had forced him to pack to make it lay flat. Otherwise, he’d just have to leave it in the messy rat’s nest state it was in now. He gave the front fistful of hair a tug, frowning. At least it was soft and clean, even if it didn’t look particularly nice.

He glanced at the clock and sighed. He was procrastinating. Better to just get it over with.

God. But he hoped at least one of them liked him at least a little.

Derek’s palms were sweaty. Again.

“He didn’t say anything about it?” Laura was whining at Allison as they chopped vegetables for salad. “Are you sure he saw it? Did you tell him it was my idea?”

“Dear God,” Peter groaned. He was sitting at the kitchen island, fiddling with his phone and pointedly ignoring the potatoes Talia had asked him to shuck. “The TV’s half the size of the room, Laura. He’s not blind. Now stop whining,”

Privately, Derek agreed with Peter; Laura was making a big deal needlessly. The TV was both too expensive to be allowed as a gift, per Talia’s rules, and a forgone conclusion, since modernizing and decking out the heat room in any and all creature comforts was Talia’s doing in the first place. Talia had begrudgingly conceded to their alpha instincts to provide by letting them help with the room, but in the end she, on behalf of the pack at large, was the one who paid for it all. Laura had picked out the specific TV model, much like Derek had picked out the exact furniture while Peter had raided the Home Décor section of Target. Laura knew damn well no one was going to point out who had selected what for their guest’s lodging. She was just fussing for the sake of fussing.

But at least she was helping with dinner while she did it.

Derek kicked the leg of Peter’s chair as he walked by with a stack of plates in hand. Peter jerked comically, nearly dropping his phone.
Laura cackled, throwing a cucumber slice at Peter as he glared at Derek.

“Is that how you intend to woo our dear omega, nephew? Petty bullying?”

“At least I won’t be lazy about it,” Derek grinned back at him.

Laura threw another cucumber, “Yeah, might want to leave the petty antics to Peter, Derek.”

Peter leaned forward, a clever insult on the tip of his tongue. Whatever it was couldn’t hold any of their attentions however, not when the scent of an excited, nervous, wonderfully eager omega wafted into the open space of the kitchen/dining area. Immediately, all three of them straightened, lifting their noses and inhaling deep. The smell was every bit as intoxicating and delicious as when Talia had opened the sample packet weeks ago.

He’d know that scent anywhere.

Despite himself, Derek growled, the sound low and hot, much like the primal need tightening his lower body. Laura’s and Peter’s interest was similarly obvious, the scent of it thick and immediate in response to an omega’s presence. And not just any omega; this one hit all the right chords where the wolf was concerned, on a deeper, animalistic level, and unlike the sample they’d received in the mail, the scent now was heady and tinged with a telling musk.

He was approaching heat. Soon.

Derek couldn’t exactly blame either family member for their intense reaction; he too had been stopped in his tracks by it. Growing up in a family, in a pack of wolves as they had, they were long past being embarrassed every time someone got aroused. But the violent urge to howl at his sister and uncle, to snap at them with teeth and claw till they backed up and acknowledged his claim… that was new.

Startled, Derek glanced at Laura and Peter, wondering if either of them was likely to lash out at him, or each other. He needn’t have worried though: both alphas were staring fixedly toward the hall. Pushing the impulse to fight for the right to mate to the back of his mind, Derek carefully returned his attention to setting the table. The whole while he was spreading cutlery across seven place settings at the far end of the enormous pack table, he was painfully aware of the tension in his shoulders, of the unusual stillness of his other family members.

Allison, bless her, had lived among wolves long enough to pick up the details in their body language. She was clearly trying (and largely failing) to hide her grin.

“Behave yourselves,” she teased as she piled all of Laura’s chopped cucumbers into the salad bowl. She was the only one moving freely. Derek, while not still like Laura and Peter, was noticeably stiff as he deliberately set down the last knife.

“Talia shouldn’t have waited so long,” Peter’s voice was serious and full of filthy, dark intent, “He could go into heat at any moment,”

Derek hummed in agreement, not trusting himself to say anything.

Laura didn’t have that problem. “I’m going to fuck him,” She said breathlessly.

“Not if I beat you to him,” Peter countered.

Allison swatted both of them. “Not if he doesn’t want you to,”
They both growled at her.

Derek growled at them, louder.

Laura gaped at him, and for a moment Peter looked torn between laughing and growling back.

“That’s enough,” Allison interrupted any further bickering and/or threats. “You guys keep this up, and you’re going to frighten him!”

Derek blanched. No! He didn’t want that. The idea of that scent turning sour with fear was terrible. Not when it should be thickening and warming, sweetening till he could taste it on the air.

He wasn’t the only one who thought so. Laura gave a wolfish, shamed whine.

“Right this way,” Talia’s voice sounded from the hall. The click of her heels on the floor was unusually loud for a wolf who tended to stealth. She was warning them to get their act together before she brought the omega within human-hearing range.

Derek wiped his palms on his pant legs again, frowning. He wasn’t normally prone to nervous sweating. Why today, of all days. It was literally the one day in recent memory he cared about the impression he made.

“And here we are,” Talia said with forced levity as she entered the room.

Close behind her was the omega. Stiles. One look at him, and Derek felt his mind go blank.

The young man, little more than a boy, really, was clearly the same omega they had been admiring online for the past week, but the suit and fancy sweaters he’d worn in the photos were gone. Instead, his lanky form was decked in a clean but worn green t-shirt and similarly lived-in jeans that conformed to his legs without being restricting. His hair wasn’t styled, just left to fly free around his head in soft, adorably hectic swipes. He was rubbing the knuckles of one hand into his other palm while his eyes darted between them all in a quick and repeated loop. And his eyes… in the photos they had looked brown, but in person… the hazel sheen turned them amber colored, like rich whiskey.

He was so much softer and more comfortable than he’d seemed in the photos. He was… well. Better. He wasn’t at ease—he was fidgeting too much, and clearly nervous from the way he glanced around the room, not to mention the emotional tilt to his scent—but he was comfortable. The clothes suited him.

Derek wanted to sweep him up and nuzzle him. Make sure his hair was as soft as it looked and test the strength of the lean muscle in his arms. Maybe cuddle him just a li--- Woah.

The sudden flood of omega sex in the air short circuited his brain.

There was no way of telling who had just woken the omega’s arousal. Those honey colored eyes were whipping back and forth between all of them too quickly to know who exactly he was responding to. Maybe all three of them.

Ooooh, Derek wanted to fuck him the moment he caught the scent of a fertile, compatible omega in his home, but now… looking at him, smelling him, Derek doubted merely taking him to bed would be enough.

“Uh…” The boy’s arousal dimmed under a wave of anxiety and worry. Not quite fear though, thank God. The omega took a step back, and it was then that Derek realized he’d growled loud enough for
human ears.

At least that’s all he’d done. Peter had jumped to his feet and taken a few hasty steps forward before getting control of himself. Laura was leaning over the kitchen island, her fangs out and eyes glowing bright red.

“Talia?” Allison asked, her eyes wide.

Talia placed a hand on the omega’s shoulder, subtly urging him back, slightly behind her. The omega would likely think she was protecting him—and she sort of was, but really, with her back to him she just guaranteed he wouldn’t see the disappointed and angry glare she leveled at them. Her eyes flashed red, and all three of them dropped their gaze, accepting the admonishment and recognizing the warning.

“My apologies, Stiles,” Talia turned to him with a smile that said nothing was wrong, “I should have anticipated there might be such a strong reaction, so close to your heat,”

Well shit, Derek thought in dismay as he stared at the boy, he blushes. Beautifully. His pale skin looked all the more appealing with the added color, and Derek was glad he’d left his shirt untucked as he imagined sucking bruises onto that pale neck. He wanted to see that blush burn hot across that entire lean, sweet body.

“Right,” Stiles muttered, his eyes dropping to stare at the floor in clear mortification. “That makes sense. Sorry—I mean, not really, I guess that’s kinda the whole reason I’m here. I mean, my heat, that is. Guess I didn’t realize you guys would notice it until it was here, but now that I’m thinking about it, that seems kinda silly. It’s not like heats come out of nowhere, right? Shit—can you guys always tell where an omega’s at in their cycle? That’d be kinda weird. I mean, totally understandable, but—"

The omega’s sweet, sweet scent soured as he babbled. Peter, of all people, made a small sound of distress, so quiet only the wolves heard. They were making the poor boy so nervous, his scent burning with embarrassment even as he kept talking.

Talia’s amused laughter was jarring, distracting him from the imprint on his tongue of the omega’s emotional state, and simultaneously interrupt his rambling.

“It’s alright, Stiles. You don’t need to be so nervous,” Talia reassured.

“Well shit, Derek thought in dismay as he stared at the boy, he blushes. Beautifully. His pale skin looked all the more appealing with the added color, and Derek was glad he’d left his shirt untucked as he imagined sucking bruises onto that pale neck. He wanted to see that blush burn hot across that entire lean, sweet body.

“They’re only intimidating at first glance,” Allison gave the other omega a conspiratorial wink.

Laura was the first of the three of them to pull it together. Her eyes returned to blue and her fangs receded, she stood up tall and tried an apologetic smile. “Sorry about that, Stiles. You just caught us by surprise is all. I’m Laura, by the way,”

Talia lowered the hand that had pulled Stiles back, stepping to the side in a clear signal that he could move freely again. The scent of his sexual interest still lingered—it was unlikely it would dissipate entirely now that he’d interacted with available alphas, at least until after the heat—but now that they’d gotten over the sudden onset, it was easier to deal with. There would be no ignoring it, per say, and Derek knew he wouldn’t be able to be in a room with him without popping a serious hardon, but he was prepared now. He wouldn’t be blindsided by instinct again.

Stiles didn’t raise his eyes, even though he nodded in Laura’s direction. A fresh wave of embarrassment colored his scent. “It’s fine. I’m the one who should be sorry. I have pretty much no brain-to-mouth-filter, and it was seriously thoughtless of me, showing up all… smelly,”
Peter snorted indelicately, “You have nothing to be sorry for, Stiles. Personally, I could stand to smell a lot more of you,”

“Oh my god,” Stiles’ face flooded with color. It was absolutely endearing.

Peter was smirking, like he’d won something. Derek wanted to punch him in the face.

“Classy,” Derek muttered snidely. Irritated, he turned around to snag the glasses from where Allison had perched them on the island, ready to be added to the table.

“I’m Peter, by the way,”

“Hi,” Stiles barely peeked up from beneath his lashes. Derek thought he was still too embarrassed to possibly be playing coy intentionally, but still. He was absolutely precious. After barely a beat of silence, he added, “Uh, yeah. So, this is awkward,”

Laura chuckled fondly, “Not at all. We’re glad you’re here,”

“Elated, actually,” Peter tacked on.

Derek huffed under his breath, annoyed more so than usual by Peter’s eloquence.

Unfortunately, Allison noticed. She slapped her palm loudly on his back as he leaned over the table, reaching to set a glass on the opposite side. “Derek too!” She chirped, “He’s happy you’re here too,”

Derek shot a glare at her over his shoulder.

He turned his attention back to the other, more interesting omega in time to see him smile tightly in his direction, uncertainty coming off him in waves.

“Yeah,” Derek said lamely as he met those amber eyes, “I’m happy to meet you,”

“Go ahead and have a seat,” Peter intruded on Derek’s view as he stepped in front of him to pull a chair out. “We’re almost done prepping dinner,”

Derek gave a short, incredulous laugh, rounding the table to finish placing the glasses, and so he got a better look at the omega without his annoying uncle in the way.

Laura followed his lead, thankfully. “Yes, we are,” she stressed, snatching the salad bowl from Allison’s hands, “Not that someone helped out much,”

Peter winked at the omega, “I was supervising,”

“Oh hu,” Laura said, unconvinced. She set the bowl down strategically, making sure the placement put her squarely between Peter and their guest.

Irritated at both of them from clear across the table, Derek glowered. Curling his hands into fists as he felt his claws peak out, Derek headed for the fridge, intent on grabbing the juice and the water pitcher. He didn’t want to scare the boy by showing how little control he had right now; if he wanted any chance to show up the other two alphas, he needed to have at least as much control over his animal side as they were demonstrating. So for now he played it safe, giving himself distance and demonstrating helpfulness and focus instead of falling to complete and utter distraction.

He would leave it to Laura and Peter to make fools of themselves.

Sure enough, they were practically tripping over each other to get to him. A somewhat discreet
nudge-war was going on behind him as his sister and uncle vied for Stiles’ attention.

“Back it up, old man. It’d be rude to make him sit next to a geriatric,”

“So mature, Laura! Fortunately, I’m here to provide more titillating conversation,”

“Wow,” Laura rolled her eyes, “Cause that was subtle. Way to be a creep, uncle,”

The omega laughed, the sound light and genuine. Derek stopped dead, halfway between the table and the kitchen with a bowl of ice cubes. Damn, he realized with a start, his laughs were just as beautiful as his smile. He was reminded of the photo on the auction listing; of that wide, candid laugh, so much more emotive than the little, embarrassed smile on his face at that moment.

Just like that, Derek’s goal wasn’t just to bed him. He wanted to mate him.

He cleared his throat, unreasonably excited and nervous as those whiskey-honey eyes landed on him. He raised the bowl, “Ice?”

“Me, please!” Laura chirped, quickly followed by just about everyone else. All except one.

Derek moved to start plopping ice cubes into glasses, shooting what he hopped was a friendly smile at Stiles, “What about you, Stiles?”

Was this kid going to blush every time someone talked to him? God, but Derek sort of hoped so.

“Uh, no thanks. Cold liquids make my teeth ache,”

“Too many cavities as a kid?” Laura asked with a teasing, fun smile.

Derek wished she wouldn’t. He couldn’t compete with that smile, and he didn’t know how to tease without coming across as mean.

Stiles chuckled, his shoulders hitched up sort of self-consciously. “As a kid. Maybe more recently. What can I say, I have a major sweet tooth,”

“You’re in good company,” Allison slid into the seat right next to the place setting Derek had left without ice. On the other side of the table from the chair Peter had pulled out. “Scott and I have a whole stash of chocolate here and at our house. I’ll show you where it is before I head home tonight,”

“Ah,” He replied, voice mock-suffering. “Private chocolate stashes, I’m so disappointed. But in the interest of not seeming ungrateful, I guess I won’t make you twist my arm. If you really insist,”

“I do!” Allison assured him.

“Glad that’s settled,” Talia put a hand on Stiles’ back and gently led him to the table. Around it, actually, to the seat next to Allison. “But guest or not, for the time being you’re as much my pack as Allison, so I’m going to have to insist on a balanced meal first,”

Derek’s heart beat barely had the chance to rise in excitement as Stiles took the seat he’d singled out for him: pretty much immediately his mother settled down in Derek’s usual seat, the one besides the omega, wordlessly ensuring Stiles was surrounded on all sides by sexually-unavailable-nor-interested persons.

Peter and Laura rushed for the seat directly across from him, with Peter winning only because he was larger, and Laura was too busy trying to make a good impression to use her claws. Begrudgingly,
she slid into the seat across from Talia, but her cheeky smile was aimed only at Stiles.

Now thinking uncharitably about his mother as much as the rest of the family, Derek took the passive aggressive approach. After a small pause, he bypassed the chair beside Peter and instead dropped heavily into the chair between it and Allison. At the head of the table, where normally only Talia sat.

Allison nearly choked on her water, hiding an impressed grin behind her cough as Stiles smacked her back in alarm. Over his head, literally and figuratively, Talia raised an eyebrow at her son. Her lips were pursed and tight like she was unhappy with his blatant disrespect, but he could see the amusement in her eyes and smell it coming off her in fond, if surprised waves.

Peter and Laura were too busy making eyes at the omega to take any interest in Derek’s uncharacteristic cattiness.

And that was how Cora found them.

She paused, taking in the interesting seating arrangements with a blank expression. She looked at the empty chair across from Allison and gave a genuinely long-suffering sigh.

For a moment, Derek wondered if he should be concerned about letting Cora add herself to the growing pile of irritating family members taking up space between himself and Stiles.

Taking the empty seat, Cora put that concern to rest as she glared at the omega. “Please, put us all out of our misery and pick someone. Preferably before you go into heat at the dinner table,”

Her chair shrieked across the floor towards Derek as Peter kicked at her.

Derek glared at her, “Who raised you,”

“Cora,” Talia didn’t bother hiding her displeasure.

“It’s alright,” Stiles assured her even though his face was visibly burning, his smile more of a grimace of embarrassment. “Ignoring the proverbial elephant in the room never tends to work out for anyone,”

“That’s a very mature way of looking it,” Peter said, leaning forward with his forearms braced on the table’s edge.

He seemed ready to keep talking, but Laura followed his lead, leaning in similarly, her arm smashed up against his. “Yes, but if you need any help making said decision—”

“Shameless,” Derek stared at the both of them in amazement. He was almost embarrassed to call them family. “Seriously?”

Laura didn’t have the decency to look away from Stiles as she waved Derek off flippantly. “Don’t you dare judge me, little bro,”

A soft ding announced the chicken dish was finally done. Derek didn’t bother to wait and see if anyone else was going to put a more respectable foot forward; he popped to his feet to get the food. Even as he hated turning his back on the omega—especially as he laughed at Peter’s and Laura’s antics again—he was somehow glad for the excuse not to watch his family’s absurd flirtations.

And if he took the chance to unobtrusively wipe his sweaty hands on a dish towel before returning to the table, all the better.
He was in so much trouble.

Stiles lay in his new (temporary!) bed that night, nursing a stomach ache from all the food he’d eaten. It had been delicious, as had the apple cobbler served for desert, and even if it hadn’t been so good, he would have had to take second helpings after learning how seriously the alphas had taken the task of providing a more-than-passable meal for him his first night in their home. It was adorable and embarrassing all at the same time.

Especially since Cora was right. Stiles could feel his body reacting from the moment he laid eyes on the Hales. Cora’s age and obvious disinterest had killed any chance he might have responded to her, but her siblings and uncle… Stiles couldn’t have helped it, even if he had wanted to. The moment he’d gotten a good look in the dining room and gotten over the shock of being the center of such heavy and palpable attention, his cock had jumped to attention, closely followed by the telling rush of heat and wet soiling his underwear.

He would have been embarrassed, if it weren’t for the immediate and intense reaction he’d gotten. Talia and Allison had gone to great lengths to assure him everyone would remain in total control of themselves, but for one thrillingterrifyingexciting moment he’d thought for sure they had all overestimated their control.

Either that, or WAY underestimated Stiles’ sex appeal. Would wonders never cease.

More terrifying than that though: for a second, Stiles had gone silly with lust and actually wanted one of them to tackle him. Because again, Cora was right; he was dangerously close to going into heat.

Which meant he really should make a decision. Based on literal first impressions, yes, but at least he’d be sure to have an alpha to care for him when the time came.

With a giddy jumble of nerves dancing in his belly and making his full stomach roll alarmingly, Stiles rolled to the side and swiped the tablet off the side table. It was a fairly intuitive interface, and he was well enough familiar with it, thanks to Talia’s dutiful instruction. It took only a moment to pull up the screen he needed.

Peter, Laura, and Derek. Decisions, decisions.

He had no fucking clue.

He was a virgin—he’d never been kiss, for crying out loud. He was like an uber virgin. How was he supposed to know what would make a good lover?

Did he pick the most experienced? Peter was the oldest, and therefore most likely to know what he was doing. But that was assuming a lot. Omegas were rare enough, yet alone omega werewolves. It was entirely within the realm of possibility that none of them had ever bedded an omega before. Sure, they likely all knew what to do in theory, but as far as learned experience… there was no telling.

And they’d all been so freaking polite at dinner, not-entirely-subtle flirtations aside. Not to mention, there’d been the added factor of the peanut gallery watching. It’s not like any of them had readily
volunteered their sexual history. Not that Stiles had asked. Maybe he should have.

Maybe he should pick the one he found the most attractive. Not that any of them were anything less than gorgeous, but there was no surprise when Stiles had gotten back to his room and immediately jerked off to the image of Derek Hale’s amazingly aquamarine eyes and sharp, chiseled features. And those muscles. God, those muscles.

Too bad Derek was the one he’d already struck out with. It was obvious the guy hadn’t appreciated the sudden onslaught of Stiles’ sexual interest; he’d been the first one to get control of himself after smelling Stiles’ arousal, and the guy had proceeded to stay as far away from him as possible for the rest of the night. If that wasn’t enough, he’d avoided talking to Stiles hardly at all, choosing instead to glare at him from under those dark, brooding eyebrows. To be fair, he didn’t talk to anyone else either. But still.

Laura and Peter were clearly interested. Very interested. Comparatively, Derek was more… inconvenienced, than anything else. Not exactly promising.

Stiles wasn’t going to waste his time trying to figure out what he’d done to get the alpha’s disapproval. He was just relieved that two of them wanted him even after spending an entire evening in his presence. Awkward as it was. Stiles had spent the majority of the night fidgeting, nervous and embarrassed, aroused and leaking, and desperately choking back all the off-the-wall comments he would normally make. Next week, after his heat, he’d relax and be his normal annoyingly-talkative self. That way, if Laura and Peter discovered he was more irritating than captivating, he’d at least have money and time to get a hold of more suppressants.

So. Peter or Laura.

His thumb hovered over the tablet between their names. He needed to just pick one.

He tried to imagine his heat. He pictured himself in this big bed, sweating and aching, waiting impatiently for an alpha to quench the fire burning inside him. He tried to imagine being pinned down, the alpha on top of him, handling him.

He was sure Derek would be able to handle him, alright. If he wanted to.

With a sigh, Stiles shook his head and cleared the image of that scowling, handsome face from his mind. Before he could talk himself out of it, he tapped the screen.

Decision made, at least for this heat, Stiles set the tablet down and rolled over, trying for sleep.

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Laura was making pancakes.

Derek fumed silently as he sniffed the air. He could hear her pattering about the kitchen, muttering about blueberries and chocolate chips as the sweet scent of cooking batter and butter infiltrated the entire house.

Laura made great pancakes.

He supposed it was pointless to hope that Stiles didn’t do breakfast food.

“Damn it,” Peter hissed, stepping into the hall behind Derek. “Pancakes! She’s making fucking pancakes!”
Derek smirked at him, “Jealous?”

Peter didn’t cook. It was possible he didn’t actually know how to.

“No. Irritated, more like. I’ll leave the jealousy to you, nephew,” he patted Derek on the shoulder warmly as he started to pass him.

Derek jabbed his elbow into his side, earning a satisfying grunt and stumble. With Peter breathing angrily down his neck—figuratively and literally—Derek headed downstairs. Maybe he could find something decent to contribute to breakfast that Laura hadn’t gotten to yet.

Laura was apparently taking the over-achiever stance today. When they entered the dining/kitchen area they found the table was already set with an impressive spread. Freshly chopped fruit salad, juice and freaking quiche were all set out, along with four place settings.

Four. Only four.

“Morning,” Laura grinned at them sneakily.

“What did you do?” Peter queried. “Where’s Talia?”

Derek squinted at her suspiciously as he crossed his arms. “Only four plates?”

Her smirk widened as she held up a spatula, “Blueberry or chocolate chip, brother mine?”

He glared at the pancake batter waiting by her other hand. “Wolfsbane?”

It wouldn’t be the first time one of them had poisoned another. They didn’t keep anything lethal in the house, but Talia tended to keep certain herbs in stock for medicinal purposes, the kind that could knock a werewolf out for a couple hours if used in the right dosage. Any other day, it made for an excellent prank. Any other day when there wasn’t a fertile omega in the house.

A couple hours alone with Stiles might be all one of them might need.

They couldn’t touch him without his expressed consent, of course. Per Talia’s rules, not to mention common decency. But there were other ways to get a guy worked up. Maybe, if he was as close as they thought he was, even kickstart a heat.

“What do I do that!” Laura blinked at him, mockingly innocent.

“You better not,” Derek growled.

Peter rolled his eyes, plopping into a seat and stealing a piece of cantaloupe from the fruit salad. “Or what, Derek. We all know Laura’s too fast for you to take her in a fight,”

Derek turned his glare on him, adding a lilt to his voice that said just how wanting he found his uncle’s sense of priority. Also, he might not be wrong. “And what happens if he goes into heat and the one person who has permission to access his rooms is in a coma?”

Peter turned to glare at Laura, serious face on, “He’s right. Don’t you dare,”

“Well, damn,” she agreed, though thankfully she didn’t seem surprised. “Not that I wasn’t going to poison you guys anyway. That’s more your style, uncle dearest,”

“I beg your—”
“Sh!” Derek cut him off needlessly.

Peter had stopped talking at the same moment Laura dropped her spatula. All three of them were focused on what was going on down the hall. Stiles had exited his room, bringing with him a flood of scent. The smell of pancakes and quiche disappeared from their notice as they all focused on the omega. He was still on the other side of the house, but God damn, they could probably have smelled him from clear across the woods.

“Fuck me,” Derek groaned.

“What the hell,” Laura’s eyes glowed as she inhaled deeply, “Did he jerk off and not even wash up before stepping outside,”

It certainly smelled like it. Like omega and sex and need and heat. Heat.

“Shit,” Derek cursed again. “Why didn’t he just stay inside—”

“He doesn’t know, you idiots,” Peter gripped at them even as he unsubtly readjusted himself in his pants, “We can only tell it’s starting because we’re wolves. He’s human. He probably hasn’t noticed much difference yet, assuming he even realizes what it is at all,”

“Preheat,” Laura said, like something obvious had just occurred to her.

Derek frowned, “Seriously? How could he possibly not realize he’s starting…”

Peter shrugged, “He’s never had a real heat. Probably he thinks it’s the same as last night,”

“Sh!” Laura slapped her spatula down on the counter. “He’s coming. Don’t say anything that’ll embarrass him!”

“We have to!” Derek gaped at her. “He needs to choose someone for this heat. Now,”

“Before he’s too far gone to know what he’s doing,” Peter agreed.

Laura winced, “But he was so uncomfortable about the whole thing last night—”

“Less uncomfortable than he’ll be without an alpha in another hour—”

“Maybe,” Derek interjected, “Preheat can last a while, can’t it?”

“Not reliably enough to play chicken with,” Peter responded.

“Fine,” Laura slapped batter into the pan viciously. “We can ask, but don’t go pointing out how he smells, or that we know it’s happening today,”

“I don’t see how it matters,” Derek sighed, “He’ll know soon enough anyway,”

“Don’t be callous,” Laura jabbed at the pancake, frowning, “Just be nice, okay, guys,”

“I’m always nice,” Peter snarked, lying through his teeth.

Derek snorted indelicately. “You’re an asshole,”

They all went silent as they listened to Stiles’ footfalls draw nearer, that intoxicating scent getting heavier and thicker with every step.
Good God, but what if it happened in here, at breakfast. Preheats were known to sometimes give way to full heat at a moment’s notice. And with how strongly Stiles affected the members of their family…

“Good morning,” oh, but Stiles was adorably bashful as he greeted them. There’d be nothing bashful about him before too long, though.

Derek felt his cock twitch at that thought. He’d been hard since Stiles’ door opened, but now he was sure he could cut diamonds. It didn’t help that he missed whatever exchange was going down between Peter and the omega because he was too busy imagining how that embarrassed blush might compare to how flushed the omega would be in a short while from need and want. He bet he’d beg; Derek wouldn’t stop touching and fucking him for a second if he chose him, but he bet there’d be begging, just the same.

“Oh,” Stiles’ voice was soft and uneasy. That, and the sudden anxiousness flavoring his scent grabbed Derek’s attention away from the fantasy more than anything else could.

“It’s alright,” Laura said in a rush to reassure, “She wouldn’t have left if there was any concern you weren’t perfectly safe with us,”

“Exactly,” Peter said, smiling wide, “We’re all in control. We don’t need a chaperone, Stiles,”

“Well, you and I don’t,” Laura added with a cheeky wink, “I can’t necessarily say anything about these two,” she waved her spatula at Derek and Peter.

Derek frowned at her as he caught up with the conversation. Right. Four place settings. Cora was obviously gone to school early. Allison had gone home late last night after getting Stiles settled. Talia must have gone into town, either to the office or to run errands.

Talia didn’t know Stiles was going into heat already.

Peter had risen to his feet and was pulling the chair beside his out. Derek felt his claws prick at his palms, where they were encased in tight fists.

“He’s not a child, Peter,” Laura chimed in helpfully, “Stiles can pick his own seat,”

“Yes,” Derek agreed, giving the omega a significant look, “Please, Stiles. Choose,”

Poor omega. He was utterly petrified, clearly catching onto the weight of the question, to the way all three of them were suddenly braced as if for impact. Those pretty eyes were wide, frantic as they hopped from person to person.

“Um… Are we still talking about seating arrangements?”

And just like that, the line of tension was snapped, releasing all at once. Laura and Peter laughed as Stiles huffed an uncertain little chuckle. Even Derek had to smile.

Peter took a few steps away from his previously claimed seat, motioning for Stiles to take his place instead. “Go ahead and sit. We’ll sort ourselves out, so you don’t have to,”

“On that note,” Laura was still chuckling, “Stiles, would you like blueberries or chocolate chips in your pancakes?”

It was the right response. Stiles relaxed visibly as he took Peter’s abandoned seat. “Both. Definitely both,”
“Good answer,” Laura grinned easily, grabbing a fist full of blueberries.

Peter grabbed a few himself, popping them directly into his mouth. “Just blueberries for me,”

“You’re already eating your share,” Derek reminded him as he joined him at the kitchen counter, smacking his uncle’s hand from the carton of berries. Under his breath and too quiet for Stiles to hear, he continued, “I call dibs on seats,”

Peter flashed his fangs.

“No way, I cooked!” Laura growled, but quietly.

“You two sat closest to him last night,”

“That’s your own damn fault,” Peter was growling too now.

“Is there anything I can help with?” Stiles asked, turned around in his chair and blinking at them curiously.

They all dropped the whispered conversation like a bad habit, so they could smile at him, each replying in the negative.

Oddly enough, their reassurances only seemed to make him more anxious. He literally squirmed in his seat, saying: “I really don’t mind. I’m a pretty decent cook. I mean, I have to be, cause Dad can’t produce something edible to save his life,”

“Don’t worry about it,” Laura said. “Everything’s done but the pancakes,”

“You go head and relax,” Peter was grabbing more blueberries as he spoke, returning to a whisper when Stiles slowly turned back around to settle with his back against the chair. “I already gave up my favorite seat, but I’m willing to settle for second best—”

“No,” Derek and Laura said in unison.

“I have seniority,”

“You keep saying that like it means something,” Derek shook his head at him.

“It does,” Laura smirked, “It means he’s old,”

Peter’s growl was louder this time, enough so that Stiles turned to look at them curiously.

“Are you sure—?”

“We got it!” Laura told the omega brightly. She slid another pancake onto a plate and shoved the stack at Derek, “Make yourself helpful. The top three are for Stiles,”

Derek snatched the plate milliseconds before Peter could get his hands on it. As it was, Peters nails left a red streak on the back of his hand. Derek stuck his tongue out at him, so maturely, before turning around and making a beeline for the table. He claimed the seat next to Stiles, even as he tipped the top three pancakes onto the boy’s plate.

“Thanks, Derek,”

Derek felt a shiver race up his spine at the sound of his name on his omega’s lips. The omega. Maybe his. Eventually.
“Eat up,” he hoped his smile was encouraging, “You’ll need the energy,”

The boy flushed, accompanied by a bright burst of omega slick flavoring the air. Derek couldn’t help the pleased rumbling growl that left him, even though he hated the way it had Stiles looking away and avoiding his gaze.

There was an unhappy grumble from behind them, and Stiles twisted around to shoot a chastised smile at Laura, “Oh, uh, thanks for cooking breakfast, Laura,”

Slightly appeased, Laura winked back at him. She was piling another plate high. “You’re very welcome, Hun,”

Derek bristled at the pet name. Peter bounced a blueberry off her forehead.

“Peter!”

With Laura scowling after him, Peter whistled in a mock-innocent way as he scooped up the remaining berries and carried them off. Stiles giggled at them, and when Peter passed him on his way to the opposite chair, he ran the back of a finger tenderly against the side of the boy’s neck.

Derek opened his mouth to snap at Peter about the no-touching-without-expressed-consent-rule, but then…

Stiles’ breath hitched.

The scent of omega arousal spiked for a hot moment, and Derek had to resist the impulse to break his uncle’s wandering fingers.

Laura all but chased Peter across the room, hurrying him to the other side of the table. Somehow, she managed to push him far enough that she got the seat directly across from Stiles.

As his sister and uncle started bickering, genuine barbs masked in comedy for Stiles’ benefit, Derek pulled the glass platter of quiche over. He studied Stiles out of the corner of his eye as he lifted the lid and grabbed the serving spoon. He wanted to touch him, and if Peter could get away with it he ought to too. And hello excuse—

Spoon in one hand, Derek gently but boldly placed his other hand on the omega’s warm thigh. Not too high to be inappropriate, but not so low that it could be taken innocently. His leg was warm, the muscle firm and slender; it jumped under his touch and then…

Hello, sweet omega heat.

Peter kicked him in the shin under the table. Worth it.

“Quiche?” Derek asked him, confident he had the omega’s entire attention.

He was beautifully flushed. He seemed startled into stillness for a moment, glancing from Derek’s hand, following the line of his arm up to this shoulder, eventually, fitfully meeting Derek’s eyes, then finally he nodded. Vigorously. With an accompanying spike in the sweet, sweet scent. Derek was almost angry at himself for the stupid grin that put on his own face as he served the omega, then himself.

“So, you do all the cooking for you and your dad then?” Laura said, shooting a surreptitious glare at her brother.
Stiles shook himself. Beside him, Derek noticed happily that he was rubbing his leg where Derek’s hand had just been. “Uh. Yeah. Yes. Since I was a kid. It was either that, or we were gonna subsist off of take out, and that’s practically a one-way-ticket to obesity and a whole slew of related health issues. So. Yeah,” The words tumbled out of his mouth in a rush, drying up all too suddenly and awkwardly, like he was cutting himself off.

“What about your mom? Or bearer?” Derek asked, curious.

“Mom,” Stiles clarified, “But she was an omega too, so I guess bearer is still technically correct too,”

Derek tensed, and Peter asked, haltingly, “Was?”

Stiles shrugged, and when he answered there was only a faint, old whiff of sadness accompanying, “She died when I was little,”

“Oh, Stiles, I’m so sorry,” Laura was honest in her dismay.

He might have seemed nonchalant if he weren’t sitting at a table with werewolves. And if he hadn’t taken to stubbornly keeping his eyes on his plate. “Thanks, but it’s not a big deal. I was like… five, so I don’t remember much of her. You can’t really miss someone you can’t remember,”

There was a hard silence in response to that. At least Stiles was too busy slurping up pancake and syrup to notice.

“Interesting perspective,” Peter finally said.

Stiles merely hummed in response, and when there was no further hint of pain or sadness obvious in his scent, the three werewolves resumed preparing their own plates.

He was butchering this. Stiles couldn’t believe he was alone with three alphas, three interested alphas, and the first thing he does is stick his foot in it by talking about his dead mother. He was socially inept, for real.

And holy shit, but they were really into him. Seriously. Even Derek, it seemed. Suddenly Stiles wasn’t so sure about his decision. Clearly, he was totally off the mark as far as his first impressions went yesterday. He probably shouldn’t have selected anyone so quickly. Maybe he could still change… no. No, maybe next time.

Holy shit, but there wouldn’t be a next time if they decided he was too weird to bother with.

Jesus Christ on a pogo stick, but it was getting really warm in here.

He downed some orange juice and glanced around the table. Clearly, these guys weren’t sure how to deal with him now. Great. He wondered if he should say something, maybe threaten them with perpetual blue balls if they dared pity him. Well… no. That wouldn’t necessarily work on Laura, plus it would definitely backfire on him.

Really though, it was getting really, really hot in the room. It had been unseasonably hot all morning, but this was getting concerning. Maybe Laura had left the stove on.

“Stiles?” Derek’s voice was oddly strained.

Pausing with a bite of food halfway to his mouth, Stiles looked back at him, “Huh?”
They were all frowning at him. Oh shit. Too late, he realized; this morning started off with so much promise, and now here he was, awkwardly eating in the middle of a pity party. Fuck. And the stomach ache that had never quite disappeared from last night lurched back to full force.

“Stiles, Hun,” Laura leaned backwards, away from him, and folded her arms over her chest securely. “You’re uh… I don’t want to be rude…”

Peter gave a harsh sigh. Abruptly, he rested his elbows on the table and leaned forwards, staring at Stiles seriously. “Stiles, we rely on all our senses for communication, more so than humans. You’re giving off a lot of confusing signals right now. Can you tell us what you’re feeling and thinking right now?”

Stiles dropped his fork down. “Why. I mean,” Shit. But of course. He was confusing them without even talking. Because Mr. Harris, and all Stiles’ school teachers, so many of his peers, were right about him being the world’s worst omega. “Uh… I wasn’t thinking, well, I was, but… I just…”

Oh no. No, Stiles was not a crier. He was literally the least emotionally typical omega ever. Now was not the time to discover his tear ducts were finally on board with omega sensitivity bullshit.

“Uh, Peter?” Derek was addressing is uncle, but he was staring at Stiles. Suddenly ashamed, uncharacteristically so, Stiles whispered “Fuck,” and rubbed his thumb and forefinger into his eyes in a messy attempt to stem tears.

“Preheat,” Peter murmured, like it was obvious, “It can mess with the head a bit,”

“A bit?” Laura said sarcastically. Then, earnestly: “Stiles, did you key one of us into the wards on your room yet?”

He was going to be sick. Ashamed and embarrassed—about his dead mom, about his confusing signals, about the fucking crying—Stiles couldn’t make himself look up. His chest felt tight, and his face was burning. Not just his face. He could feel sweat collecting between his shoulder blades.

“Stiles,” Derek was saying close by, “Why don’t you go to your room. Activate the wards, select someone to come in after you if you haven’t already,”

“I,” He coughed on his own air, the tears he was fighting back choking him. “I don’t understand. I’m not. I’m not like this,”

“We know, baby,” Laura kept her voice low and soothing, “But you need to do like Derek said,”

“You’re about to go into heat, and it’s messing with your head and emotions,” Peter likewise was keeping his voice even, smooth. He was also pushing away from the table, much like Laura and Derek. “You’ve been using suppressants for a long time, right? This is your first time, you didn’t know it could make you hyper susceptible to mood swings, huh?”

All Stiles could do was nod.

“Is this normal?” Derek asked.

“No idea,” Peter admitted, “But I’ve at least heard of it,” Peter was slowly getting to his feet, his movements measured and strictly controlled. He was backing up.

“I’m gonna call Allison and mom,” Laura said, following his lead and giving herself some more distance. “He’s okay though, right?”
Stiles whined despite himself. No, he was not alright. Clearly. And now the most gorgeous, kindest alphas he’d ever seen thought he was a broken, weepy omega loser!

And now his eyes were leaking. Jesus Christ.

“He will be,” Peter didn’t sound entirely confident, “He’s just… hyper emotional at the moment,”

They were all looking at him like he was a ticking time-bomb.

“We’re sorry, hun,” Laura looked pained, and Stiles knew he must seem disgusting to her in that moment, “We probably didn’t make it any easier for you,”

That broke the dam. Stiles’ breath hitched and finally the crying became audible. He shook his head, woefully, eyes down and squeezing out tears, “No, no, it’s me. It’s my fault.”

Derek sighed heavily, “We’re the ones who brought up your mom,”

“Don’t,” Peter said firmly, “We’re not arguing with him like this. It’d be pointless. Stiles, sweetheart?”

“Stiles,” Laura’s voice turned harder, resonant in a way that sent a sort of shock through Stiles’ body. Stiles looked up, reacting to the voice despite the shame burning his cheeks, the tears, even the aching, ugly heat crawling its way up from his belly.

“Stiles,” Laura repeated, and this time Stiles recognized the tone. It was the first time anyone beside his father had ever used Alpha Authority on him. “Did you key one of us into the wards? Answer me,”

Unable to deny the command, Stiles nodded through heavy tears. “Y-yeah,”

“Good boy. Go to your room. Activate the wards. Go now,”

Derek had never been so viscerally confused in his life. He was hard, painfully so, but somehow sex was the farthest thing from his mind as he responded to the distressed omega. He was an alpha after all, hardwired to protect and care for an omega precisely like the one currently taking over their house needed to be cared for. He just wanted to wipe those tears away and cuddle him till he felt better. Maybe get to the sex after that. Once his scent had gone back to wholly sweet and happy.

“We should call Allison,” Laura said, her tone worried. “This can’t be normal,”

“Already dialing,” Derek said, his phone in hand.

Peter was frowning, watching the hall and clearly listening closely as Stiles fumbled his way back to his room. “I’ve heard of preheat being extreme, but never actually seen it.”

Derek’s phone was on speaker. It barely rang once before Allison picked up. “Derek?” Her tone was bemused and a bit teasing, “Gotta say, I was sure you’d all be too preoccupied to give the rest of the pack the time of day,”

“Stiles is in preheat,” Derek said succinctly. “He’s not… well,”

“Meaning…?”

Peter rounded the table to get closer to Derek’s phone, “He’s emotional. Weepy,”
“He was fine a minute ago,” Laura added, “and he still smells aroused, but it’s not exactly a draw when mixed with anxiety and pain,”

“Pain?” Allison asked, alarmed, “What triggered it?”

Derek winced, “Touchy topic of conversation. His mom died when he was a kid,”

“Might have been nice to know that beforehand,” Laura muttered.

“Allison?” Peter stole the phone from Derek’s hand. “Obviously, you know more about omega cycles than anyone else in the pack. Anything you’d recommend?”

“Is this normal?” Laura added before she could answer. “He’s gonna be ok, right?”

“Of course, Laura,” Allison’s voice was confident even as it was soft and reassuring, “It happens sometimes when an omega’s gone so long without letting nature take its course. It’s totally understandable that the whole thing might be extra intense,”

“Laura had to command him to go to his room. We’re waiting for him to activate the wards now,” Derek explained.

“Good. Given how suddenly it came on, I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s in full heat before noon. You can try calming him down, but don’t expect it to do much good. Likely, he’ll forget all about it when the fever finally takes over. Also, it might be wise to take in extra water and food. If the preheat’s so intense, it’s a good indicator that the rest will be unusually hard on him too,”

“So long as you’re sure we don’t need to worry…?” Peter looked about as convinced as Derek felt, which is to say not very.

“He’s been on suppressants since puberty, Peter. There’s bound to be some backlash from that. Now get off the phone with me so you can check who’s the lucky alpha,”

“Shit!” Laura hissed, patting her pockets frantically for her phone.

“Bye, Allison,” Derek snapped as he stole his phone back, canceling the call and opening his alerts.

Nothing. There was nothing there demanding his attention. Stiles hadn’t picked him.

Feeling like ice water had just doused him, Derek looked up at Laura. She was frowning at her phone, swiping the screen with a scowl. The icy sensation coalesced into an uncomfortable ball of chilly rage as he looked at Peter.

Peter was staring at his phone, expression suspiciously blank. Then he closed his phone and folded his arms sternly. He looked between the two of them, frowning. “Well?”

“No,” Laura said unhappily.

“He said he selected someone,” Derek was confused. Laura had told the omega to activate the wards. Doing so should have sent an alert straight to one of their phones. Laura had used the voice! Omega’s were biologically predisposed to respond to an alpha’s command. Why wouldn’t he activate the wards?

Chapter End Notes
Next Chp is Stiles' first heat! Who do you think he picked? DID he actually pick someone? BTW, I officially have up to chp 18 written, yet the fic STILL isn't done, so be prepared for a lengthy read.
He was going to die from embarrassment. Stiles was sure of it. His entire body was too hot, and he was no longer sure if it was the humiliated blush or the preheat causing it. His face was wet with tears since before he fled the dining room. By the time he’d closed the door to his room and was searching frantically for the tablet, so he could power up the wards, the rest of him was just as wet; sweat was drenching his shirt, and the beginning trickles of slick were making his pants stick to his skin uncomfortably.

He wanted to strip and jump in the shower, desperately. Let the water hide his tears and cool him off, even as it cleaned the sudden excess of bodily fluid from his skin. But he couldn’t. An alpha had given him an order. He had to activate the wards first.


With every second that ticked by without completing the task, Stiles grew more uncomfortable, physically and otherwise. As he threw pillows across the room in his hasty search he panted, growing ever more desperate and hopeless.

One task. One simple order, and he couldn’t even do that. He was such a shit omega, it wasn’t even funny. They probably didn’t even want him. Why would they.

Stiles screamed as he threw the couch cushions to the floor. The tablet wasn’t there.

The wave of misery and self-disgust hit him like a physical blow. Seconds away from hyperventilating, Stiles dropped to the floor amid the wreckage of the room, dropped his face into his hands and sobbed.

Distantly, he thought he heard knocking on the door. It was muffled though, and hardly worth the energy it would take to turn his focus from how wretched he felt, even when the rhythm turned hard and frantic. It was hard to tell. Maybe it was just Stiles losing his damn mind, not that that was all that great a loss.

He was useless, after all. He couldn’t even find a stupid tablet. His heat would come, he decided, and he would stay put, safely enclosed away from the three beautiful alphas who were too good for him. He’d likely go mad, probably even injure himself, but he was well aware that he deserved it. He was even more aware that he didn’t deserve an alpha’s affections.

There was music playing suddenly. It was coming from inside the room, he thought. Somewhere behind him?

It didn’t matter. Stiles had ruined his one chance with the only alphas to show him the time of day by having a mental breakdown. Despite his plain looks, they’d invited him here, only for him to prove himself certifiably crazy, and not even an entertaining crazy. Weepy and pathetic crazy.

There was a loud beep, and the blue tooth speaker clicked on.

“Stiles?” Talia Hale’s voice was loud and undeniable, the authority of an alpha powering her tone. “Stiles, answer me.”
Sobbing, Stiles nodded before realizing she wasn’t actually here. Stupid him. “Y-yes?”

Her voice turned soothing, rather than commanding. “Dear boy, it’s alright. Laura told you to activate the wards, didn’t she?”

The damn crying making him hiccup and his words jumbled. “I, I c-can’t find it,”

“The iPad?”

He sobbed harder, nodding futilely. She was right to point out his failures.

“Shh,” Her voice was calm, the hushing like a gentle breeze. It was sweet, sweeter than he deserved, “It’s ok, Stiles. I know. I know. You’re very overwhelmed right now and you’re not thinking clearly,”

“I’m not,” Stiles was shaking his head side to side in disagreement. “I’m n-not in heat. I’m just—”

“I know sweetie. It’s preheat. You’ve been on suppressants ever since puberty, isn’t that right?”

Stiles nodded, realized how stupid that was and dropped his face back into his folded arms where they perched on his knees. “Yeah!”

Talia’s voice was disapproving, but carefully measured. “You started them too young, sweetie. You’re suffering for it now. But it’s going to be okay. We’ll take care of you,”

“No!” Stiles wailed, too overcome with horror to explain how unworthy he was.

Talia just talked over him. He heard her, but the words were impossible for him to process at the moment: “It’s okay, Stiles. I have remote access to everything in the house, remember? I can see you selected Peter last night, so I’m going to activate the wards for you and send him in,”

“No, no, no, no,” Stiles cried into his arms.

“He’ll help you calm down until your heat starts,” Her voice was no-nonsense, indifferent to his refusal. “Once it does, I promise all the horrible things you’re thinking and feeling will go away. Peter will see you through your heat and we’ll talk more once it’s over and you’re in your right mind again. It’s going to be okay, sweetie,”

There was a whirring sound closely followed by a beep coming from the door. Stiles was too miserable to know what it meant.

“I’m going to call Peter now, then he’ll be right in,”

With that, she disconnected the call.

Derek paced outside Stiles’ door, glaring at it each time he passed. Directly next to the offending barrier, Laura leaned on the wall, chewing on her nail anxiously. Peter was standing beside her, bouncing one leg as the only giveaway that he was likewise bothered.

The runes on the door glowed blue and they all stood up straight.

Peter’s phone rang. He answered it without looking away from the door. “Yes?”

“I activated the wards,” Talia said, her voice heavy with displeasure, “After this heat is over, we’re
all going to have a long conversation about how to deal with an emotional distraught omega. Safely,”

“Is he okay!?” Derek demanded, raising his voice despite knowing she would hear him without it.

Talia gave a low growl, “No, he’s not. He was so worked up by the time he got in there that he couldn’t find the tablet. Do you have any idea what it does to an omega when they can’t follow an order they’ve been compelled to do?”

At that, Laura looked like she was going to be sick. She winced when Derek glared at her murderously. Peter let out a tight, clipped noise that might have been a whimper.

“We’ll address this later. Peter, get your ass in there and make it up to him,”

Stiles never heard the door open. Next thing he knew, he was being lifted off the floor by strong arms and cradled against an equally strong chest.

“—so sorry,” Peter was whispering, lips moving against his temple. One big arm was wrapped around his back while the other hand petted his hair and neck. “It’s okay, Stiles. I’ve got you. You’re gonna be okay. I’m so sorry. Shhh,”

They were rocking side-to-side. Stiles tensed, feeling utterly ashamed for taking advantage of the alpha’s kindness.

“No,” he whined, trying to pull away.

Peter’s arms tightened. It was horrible how good they felt around him; how could he possibly find the will to leave such a comfortable embrace. By remembering he didn’t deserve it.

“No!” he cried louder, pushing against Peter’s chest. “I can’t! I’m no good! You don’t… don’t. Want. Me!” On the last word, he managed to wedge his knee up against Peter’s stomach and pushed hard.

He shot out of his arms so suddenly they both gasped.

“Stiles!” Peter sounded shocked and dismayed as he crawled over to Stiles’ side. He had landed on his back, half on one of the couch cushions on the floor.

He tried to roll away from Peter’s reaching, warmcomfortinggentle hands. “You don’t want me!” he yelled scrambling to try and get to his feet, so he could run away.

He never made it. He’d barely gotten up on his knees and hands when Peter was suddenly there, knocking him sideways into a pile of cushions and pillows. Before he could do more than cry out, Peter pinned him down, on his back, with Peter kneeling over him. Large hands trapped him by a hip and a bicep. Their faces were mere inches apart.

Peter gave him a small smile, concern in his eyes. “That’s enough now, sweetheart. Calm down and stop talking nonsense,”

Stiles sniffled, his breath hitching. “You don’t understand—”

“I do,” Peter dropped his weight, blanketing Stiles with every inch of warm, heavy muscle. His smile widened, “You’re a little crazy at the moment, but it’s not your fault. And pretty soon here we’re both going to enjoy a little more craziness. But for now, how about you settle down?” He let go of
Stiles’ arm so he could pet the side of his face. “Save your energy. I promise, we’ll use every last bit of it later,"

Stiles felt awful. He was a mess of an omega, the most undesirable ever, and Peter was being so damn nice. A fresh wash of tears hit his eyes, bringing with it extra shame.

“Hey now,” Peter soothed. He shifted atop the omega, keeping him pinned with his body so he could use both hands to rub over him in a slow, calming fashion. “It’s alright,”

“It’s not!” Stiles argued, hiding from Peter by rubbing at his leaking eyes, “I’m loud and ugly. You don’t want me!”

Peter made a quiet, angry noise. “No, Stiles. Cry as much as you need to, but don’t talk like that. You’re beautiful,”

“I’m not,” Stiles cried dejectedly. “I’m the worst. ‘The world’s only undesirable omega!’”

“Who ever told you such a thing? Stiles, you’re a perfect omega!”

No one had ever, in all his life, called him perfect. Or beautiful. Peter was more than he could ever hope for, more than he could ever be worthy of. What was he doing, wasting his time on him? Obviously, all the Hales were just too nice to leave him to his heat alone. They were probably drawing straws to see who would have to help the poor, useless omega out. Take one for the team. He couldn’t do this to Peter.

There was no more talking after that. Peter tried, but Stiles was too busy sobbing and fighting, desperate to run away and wallow in the fucked-up tailspin that was his hormones. There was no chance of that, of course; Peter was a solid, undeniable weight. Stiles wouldn’t go anywhere until he let him.

And he didn’t. No matter how hard he tried. How loud he screamed.

Peter changed tactics every now and then, but he never left Stiles alone. Not really. He tried laying him out in bed, cuddling him on the couch, playing a variety of music and turning on the TV. Once, he even let Stiles go, gave him a little distance, but Stiles had made a mad dash toward the bathroom and almost got the door closed before Peter could wrestle him back out and into his arms. He didn’t let him go after that.

That was when Stiles started to lose the depressing self-flagellation and succumbed to uncontrollable, raw fury. Peter was no longer nice and sweet, he was irritating and controlling, and Stiles absolutely despised him. He went from struggling and fighting to get away to aggressively trying to hurt Peter. He even managed to bite him once and ended up pinned face-first on the hardwood floor, his arms pulled back and pinned behind him. Peter sat on him. And the whole while Stiles raged.

Eventually, Peter called Talia.

Stiles didn’t listen to the conversation, even though Talia was back on the blue tooth speaker and they were clearly talking about him. He was too busy trying to buck Peter off him so he could claw the alpha’s eyes out.

And then, Stiles ran out of steam.

All the debilitating anxiety and fiery temper was suddenly nowhere to be seen. He went limp beneath Peter, vaguely aware that the werewolf was gripping the back of his neck tightly and talking close to his ear. Slowly, Stiles began to recognize words, and soon after recognized the tone.
Peter was using the voice on him. Like Laura had.

“Deep breaths, Stiles. Good boy. Calm down,”

Somewhere in the back of his mind, Stiles felt the urge to get angry at Peter for using his omega sensibilities against him. The anger surfaced as Stiles took a deep breath, as instructed, but faded to irritation before he could find the right cutting words to express it. Two more deep breaths, with Peter talking to him, commanding him, and Stiles couldn’t be angry at him if he’d wanted to.

“That’s it,” Peter was saying, finally dropping the Alpha Authority. Now he just sounded pleased, and no little bit relieved. “Good boy. How about a nap, huh?”

Turns out, Peter was something of a genius. Stiles fell into bed and was asleep before Peter could even find him a pillow.

Derek and Laura were wearing identical scowls.

They sat in the living room, Derek’s lap top between them. Laura’s phone was in her hand, held up between them.

“Cora’s staying with us tonight, probably for the rest of the week,” Allison told them from the speaker. They could hear her typing as she spoke. “She doesn’t want to deal with the drama,”

“Hmm,” Derek couldn’t care less about Cora at the moment. His only thoughts right now were for Stiles. The omega his uncle was probably relieving of his virginity as they speak.

“It shouldn’t be dramatic for long though, right?” Laura asked, still staring intently at the document filling the screen. “He should be fine once the heat starts?”

“If it hasn’t already,” Derek snarked.

She glared at him for the reminder. “And he won’t necessarily have such an intense preheat every month, right?”

Allison sighed. They could hear the sadness in her voice. “No idea. It’s possible. Heat affects each of us differently, and the same thing goes for the suppressants. I know they’re not meant to be taken for so long consecutively, but it’s pretty common practice. Stiles isn’t the only omega I’ve met who’s had a doctor encourage him to use them incorrectly;”

“Then it could be like this every time?” Laura sounded incredulous. “Because of the suppressants?”

“Possibly,”

“Fuck that,” Laura growled.

Derek mimicked her, “How is that even legal?”

He could easily imagine Allison shrugging at the phone and rolling her eyes at them. She tended to have little patience for the pack’s general ignorance about the struggles of omegas. “Because the world likes to be reckless and harmful to minorities. Look, for most omegas, the suppressants work long term without drastic side effects. Stiles is just one of the unlucky ones who got more harm than good out of them. Though I have to admit, I’m surprised his parents let him start them so young. Without a medical condition necessitating it, suppressants really shouldn’t be given to omegas until
their heats become overwhelming, at the very least regular,”

“What do you mean?” Derek said, scrolling back toward the top of Stiles’ medical record. “Says here he started them at 13. Is that not normal?”

“No,” Allison said emphatically. “Omegas don’t just start having heats all of a sudden. We go through puberty, just like everyone else. It takes years before a heat is strong enough that it interferes with day-to-day tasks and requires either treatment or a partner. A thirteen-year-old in heat is really just a grumpy teenager,”

Laura gave a frustrated grunt, throwing her head back and glaring at the ceiling. “The only medical condition he’s ever had is a broken arm when he was eight and stitches when he was ten,”

“Yeah,” Allison didn’t sound any happier. “The doctor may have been a dickwad misogynist. It happens sometimes, especially in small towns where there’s only four or five omegas in the entire county. That’s where you find medical professionals encouraging harmful misconceptions, like how omegas are always mindless little deviants when in heat who put themselves and others in danger in pursuit of sex. I’ll have to look into it, but I bet the other omegas treated by him were also started on suppressants before puberty even started,”

“I repeat,” Derek glowered at the phone ineffectively, “how is that legal,”

“Trust me, if I knew, it wouldn’t be. This is the kind of shit that keeps me from getting interviews with non-privatized practices. If Talia and the Miami pack didn’t use me for literally everything, I would need a new career because people keep thinking my heats will keep interrupting my job,”

“That sucks,” Laura said awkwardly.

“Yeah, it does,” Allison agreed. She might as well have said ‘no shit, sherlock.’ “The good news is, that Talia was right. If Stiles mates into the pack, we can press changes for malpractice, child abuse, a whole crap-ton of discrimination suits. Hell, even if he doesn’t, it might be worth it to have a talk with his dad; John’s a good guy, but he’s small-town and probably knows crap-all about omega reproductive development and cycles. I’ll bet if he’d been properly informed, he wouldn’t have started drugging his kid so early, if at all,”

“Thanks, Allison,” Laura said fondly. She ended the call and traded a grave look with her brother.

“Think Peter knows any of this?” Derek waved at the computer.

“Nope,” Laura looked sad, “Hell, I doubt Stiles knows any of it,”

“Well…” Derek leaned back, staring off into space thoughtfully, “You heard Allison. Nothing’s for sure, and stress is a factor,”

Laura fiddled with her phone aimlessly, also deep in thought. “So… that gives us, what… four weeks?” She thought aloud, going slowly. “Four weeks to prove this place—and us—are as safe and stress-free as possible. Make him happy, make sure he’s in a good mood when it’s about time again,”

“Maybe not bring up his dead mom when he’s in preheat,”

Laura pointed at him. “That. Yes,”

“And then?” Derek asked, unconvinced. “Hope and pray it’s enough to offset years’ worth of biochemical damage?”
She shrugged, “We have to at least try,”

Derek replayed the look on Stiles’ face as he broke down and started sobbing at the table. He knew she was right.

Chapter End Notes

Ok, so MAYBE I'm a little bit of a tease, lol. Technically, yeah, this was the beginning of Stiles' heat. Preheat. Whatever. Full Monty next time. I swear! Well, mostly, seeing as you only see the situation from Derek's limited view and Stiles' admittedly mentally compromised perspective. ;)

I'll update the next Chp as soon as it's been edited.
He woke up in heat.

“Ugh!” Stiles gasped, kicking and flailing at the blankets. They were suffocating him. He tugged at his clothes fitfully. Any other day, the sound of tearing cloth would have been alarming; today, it was just background noise. He was hot, unbearable so, and achy, with every muscle wound tight, his stomach and groin and ass cramping spasmodically.

Someone was touching him then. Cool, blessedly cool hands pushed him down till he was on his back, slid under his shirt and across the burning skin of his belly. Not fast enough.

“Off!” he groaned, still pulling at his clothes ineffectively.

“I know, baby,” someone was saying, “I know. Let me help you,”


He was making a mess of himself. Someone—Peter, yes, Peter was in the way, still trying to discard his shirt while Stiles was trying to deal with his jeans. It was unbelievably frustrating. His eyes started to sting with tears.

“Okay, okay,” Peter was saying, earnest and excited, “Here. Let me just. Huh, screw it,”

With a guttural, animalistic growl, Stiles’ shirt finally came free. In pieces.

Stiles whined, the sound needy. He couldn’t get his pants down. Why couldn’t he get his pants down.

“Don’t. You’re going to hurt yourself,” Peter grabbed his wrists, collected them in one hand and used the other to unbutton Stiles’ jeans. “Fuck, Stiles. Hold still. I know, baby. I know it’s hot. Let me—”

Stiles gasped. His body jerked, knees coming up into his chest and knocking Peter’s arm away as he curled onto his side. There was something wrong with him. Pain like nothing he’d ever known rushed through him, lancing through his guts and making him want to puke. It faded, leaving him panting and sweating and needing. And then it came again, and Stiles felt an embarrassing gush of wetness between his legs.

Beside him, Peter groaned, low and dark. The sound made Stiles feel… excited. Wet. Very, very wet. And empty.

He was crying again as Peter pulled his legs straight and all but attacked his pants. His fingers hooked into the waistband of Stiles’ underwear and with another growl, Peter jerked everything off his lower body in one swift move.

“Oh, Stiles,” Peter’s tone was worshipful as he stared down at him.

Stiles couldn’t be bothered to shy away or be embarrassed. He was too hot, and that achiness in his lower body was growing into pain again. He scrambled at the sheets, not knowing what to do, and the next cramp was so focused and alarming, he instinctively reached down between his legs, clamping a hand over his cock and balls, fingertips over his hole. Oh God, but he was wet. Fucking
drenched.

Peter made a strangled noise. And then there was cool, cool, cool skin against his own. All over him. Between his thighs. Pressing kisses along his throat and shoulders. Peter was all hard, smooth muscle and blissfully cool and silky skin. He pried Stiles’ hand away and—yes! Yesyesyesyesyes. Peter ground down against him, rubbing all that soft, heat-relieving skin and sturdy flesh into the hottest places on his body.

“Alpha!” Stiles begged, grabbing at Peter’s shoulders desperately. Peter was so big, pressed so closely, his shoulders were all that he could reach. “Alpha! Hurts! Please!”

Peter lifted Stiles’ thigh, hooking it over his arm and out of the way so he could reach where Stiles needed him.


Something cool and hard jabbed at his hole. He whined and shifted his hips when it didn’t breach him immediately.

“I want it!” Stiles demanded. He sank his blunt human nails into Peter’s back and cried. “Need it, alpha. Alpha!”

“I know, baby,” Peter laughed into his neck. “Be still so I can give it to you,”

Stiles just cried, big tears rolling down the side of his face, getting in his ear. “Can’t. Can’t. I nee— no!”

Peter was pulling back, removing all that cool skin from Stiles’ body as he sat up.

“No! No! Back! Alpha!”

Peter ignored him. He pushed Stiles’ knee up and into his chest, his eyes focused down, between the omega’s legs. Holding Stiles more-or-less still with fingers locked on his shin, Peter’s other hand touched Stiles experimentally. The barest press of fingers against his hole, then they slid away, pressing over his perineum. He gave a broken moan and grabbed Peter’s arm, holding on desperately.

“Ah! Ah! Alpha! Please!”

“Sh,” Peter said, his eyes never leaving where he was touching. “Have you ever played with yourself, baby boy? Ever touched yourself inside?” He rubbed over his entrance again. A little more pressure this time.

Stiles shook his head wildly. “Nonononono. Alpha. No, Alpha,”

“It’s alright,” Peter’s words were soft, but his voice sounded rough, “I’m going to take care of you, sweetheart,” his voice dropped to a heated whisper, Stiles almost didn’t hear it: “Going to open you up and give you all you can take,”

This time, the pressure of his fingers didn’t let up, didn’t slide away or tease. He pressed in. Just one finger, and he was so hot and swollen inside that it felt amazingly cool and large. It didn’t stay that way though. Peter had barely pumped the digit two or three times before Stiles needed more. He squirmed shamelessly.

“More! More, Alpha! Gimmemore!”
Peter laughed in utter amazement, his attention torn between watching Stiles’ facial expressions and watching where his body was opening up with impressive speed. He added a second finger, and a moment later, after only a single thrust, pushed in a third.

There was some pain as he felt himself stretch, but Stiles quickly forgot it as he focused on the fresh coolness of the new fingers and the added depth they allowed Peter. He was ready for more seconds later, whining and begging Peter to go faster.

“Fuck me!” He screamed, trying and failing to work himself harder against Peter’s fingers. “Please!”

“Not yet,” Peter growled, “You’re too tight, baby. I don’t want to hurt you,”

“Are hurting! Hurts so bad. Please!” Stiles tried to sit up, move, anything, but Peter just pressed into the leg he had pinned to Stiles’ chest and kept him mostly immobile. Stiles gave an angry scream.

Peter winced, and Stiles remembered his sensitive werewolf hearing. So he screamed louder: “Fuck me!”

Peter’s eyes flashed red and his fingers stilled. “Keep that up, baby boy, and I will gag you,”

Stiles believed him. He sobbed brokenly, “Please. I’m ready,”

Peter’s smile was sympathetic, but he didn’t change course. He went back to fingering him open, saying: “Not yet, sweetheart. We don’t want you to bleed on me,”

In the back of his mind, Stiles knew he didn’t want that either. At the front however, he was very much devastated by the fact he wasn’t getting what he wanted. What he needed.

It seemed to take forever before Peter added a fourth finger.

It must have been a literal eternity by the time Peter decided he’d stretched and scissored his fingers within Stiles enough. When he finally removed his hand, pulling out with a squelch, Stiles had long since quieted down to whimpers and silent sobbing, gasping and giving exhausted little fits every time a painful cramp hit. His entire body was shaking, needy and desperate and practically in shock.

“That’s my good boy,” Peter had taken to whispering endearments and encouragements after Stiles had gone quiet. He wasn’t stopping now that he’d finished with his fingers. “Such a perfect omega, sweetheart. You’re doing so well,”

Peter guided Stiles’ bent leg down and carefully stretched the limb, leading it in wide circles as he massaged his thigh, hip, and buttock. He’d done similar once or twice, taking care to keep Stiles from any discomfort associated with staying in one position too long. He was being a bit more thorough this time, though.

“Perfect. You’re being so good for me, Stiles,”

Stiles grunted, his tears slowly easing as Peter spread his legs with one hand behind each knee. He tugged him a bit and Stiles felt his ass leave the bed. Peter shuffled forward on his knees, dropped one of his legs, and Stiles couldn’t see what he was doing, but he felt the press against his hole with unhindered excitement.

His breathing quickened, and Stiles found words again, “Yes! Yes, Alpha! Yes!”

Peter had clearly been right to take his time stretching his virgin hole; the cock pressing into him was enormous. For the briefest moment, Stiles was shocked back to clarity enough to regret not paying...
enough attention to look before it was being put inside him. The pain and hotness of his heat was wholly different and separate from the burning of his insides stretching beyond their limits. He gasped, body going tense in pain, but Peter didn’t stop.

“That’s it, baby,” Peter petted his hip, whispering reverently, “God, but you’re perfect. So tight for me,”

He went slow, glacially slow, in fact, but he didn’t stop moving. Stiles didn’t know if that was better or worse. He didn’t know how much was in him yet, but when Peter started to pull back at the same creeping pace, Stiles knew he hadn’t taken the whole length of it. It still hurt though.

He had a flash of panic as he wondered if he’d be the first omega in history to lose an erection during heat. He lifted his head and shoulders enough to gaze down his body and choked on a startled sob.

Well, at least he was still hard. Painfully, frightfully so.

But he wasn’t the only one. Peter’s erection was nothing short of monstrous. Dark and veiny, Stiles obviously couldn’t see the entirety of it, but he was caught somewhere between crippling lust and abject horror as he watched and felt it glide into him.

Peter was still going slow, and by the way he was gnawing on his lip it was costing him. But he was starting to go deeper. Much deeper. Two more agonizingly slow thrusts, and he bottomed out.

“So good for me.” Peter’s voice was strained as he pulled back again. He leaned over and kissed the tears off Stiles’ cheek, “Baby. You feel like…. Like heaven,”

Stiles whimpered as another painful cramp ripped through him. Peter groaned.

“Please,” Stiles begged, not knowing what for. For it to get better. For Peter to stop. For Peter to keep going.

“It’s alright, sweetheart. I’ve got you,”

Peter rocked into him again, this time circling his hips. Stiles felt him, deep inside, hitting places never before touched. Peter repeated the rolling, searching thrust and—

“Alpha!” Stiles screamed. It was electric, a secret, hidden part of him coming alive immediately and vibrantly. It felt so good it almost hurt.

No, it did hurt. The pleasure turned on him like a knife, sharp and serrated as it twisted him up inside and made him gasp. The cramps hit him hard then, and Stiles fell silent in shock, his eyes and mouth open wide as his body tried to make sense of what was happening.

Peter was moving easier now, faster. He was moaning into the hallow of Stiles’ throat, his body shaking over him as he tried to control himself. He was still circling his hips with every thrust, only randomly hitting that amazing pleasure-pain spot. But Peter wasn’t trying to stimulate it yet; he stirred his cock inside him, stretching Stiles’ insides with as much focus and consideration as his fingers had done to his rim.

He may have been inside him, but he wasn’t yet fucking him, not the way the alpha clearly wanted to.

That was when the heat really fell over him and swept him away.

Stiles wasn’t sure what had changed. Probably nothing that Peter did. Suddenly he didn’t care about
the lingering discomfort of his ass stretching. He was absolutely hungry for it. Starving. Peter didn’t necessarily feel good, but he felt right. And Stiles knew, with every fiber of his being, that he needed Peter inside him. All the fiery, cramping pain and burning flush of his skin, it could all be eased so long as his alpha stayed inside.

As Peter’s hips pulled back, drawing his cock out, Stiles went wild. He scrambled, trying to scoot down the bed, keep Peter inside.

Peter gave a surprised gasp, then he was gripping Stiles’ hips tight enough to bruise, pinning him to the bed. “No, sweetheart. Let me control it.”

“More!” Stiles cried, still struggling. “Need it! Back! Give it back!”

Peter adjust his hold, his palms slipping on his sweaty hips. “Not yet, baby,” Peter was breathless, steadily and slowly pushing back in, stirring his hips against Stiles’ ass. “You’re not ready yet. You, ugh. You need to—Oh!” Peter’s arms trembled, his hips pausing as he struggled to rein in his control, following up his words with action.

Stiles cried out as another sharp cramp tore through.

Peter gave a suffering groan, his eyes turning red and maintaining the glow. His fangs descended, his control tested, but he kept his thrusts slow, rolling, and oh-so deep. But too slow. “I’m gonna… ugh! Stiles! Gonna fuck you open,”

“Yes!” Stiles nodded his head frantically, pulling at Peter’s arms in desperate encouragement. “Yes, Alpha! Fuck me! Fuckmefuckmefuckme!”

He repeated the demand till he was hoarse. Peter stubbornly refused to comply, every single thrust kept slow and steady, only randomly skipping across that pleasurable area. The longer it went on, the more Stiles wanted, needed Peter to aim for that one spot. Only to have the alpha ignore his need.

Over and over.

It felt like it took an eternity.

“Yeah,” Peter growled, “You’ve had enough of this, haven’t you, baby,”

He pulled out completely, his clawed hands keeping Stiles from chasing his cock. Stiles screamed, terrified that he’d be empty and incomplete forever. Why. Why would Peter leave him. He hadn’t finished, he needed to finish, Stiles needed him to finish inside him. He was so, so empty.

He was so busy agonizing over the emptiness that he hardly realized Peter was turning him over onto his knees, spreading his legs wide, and—Yes! Stiles shouted happily as Peter entered him from behind in one hard, gloriously quick thrust. He rocked forward with the force of it, his face smashing into the mattress carelessly.

Peter had apparently decided Stiles was as loose and open as he was going to get. The hands that gripped his hips now were not so gentle, pricking Stiles’ skin with sharply tipped claws. Peter was growling continuously now as he pounded into him. He went hard and deep, and any lingering discomfort vanished under a flood of pleasure and heat.

Stiles was flying high, reduced to nothing more than a bundle of raw need and hot desire. He pushed back as hard as he could, screaming into the pillow as the alpha’s cock hammered into him, rubbing all the right places.
Behind him, Peter was giving voice to every vicious animal instinct currently ruling him. His growls and whines were the perfect soundtrack to Stiles’ fevered mind. And when he let loose a beautiful, achingly intense howl Stiles felt a sudden increase in pressure just inside his rim as Peter started to knot. They were moving so frantically that the growing bulge ripped in and out of his rim a few times, and in the farthest reaches of his mind Stiles was aware of the sharp pain it caused. He couldn’t bring himself to care, though. Not when that knot brought with it the first uneven spurts of something wonderfully cool and soothing deep inside him.

And when Peter’s knot had grown too large to keep fucking him with, when it locked them together and released a veritable flood of that cool, perfect essence, Stiles sobbed into his pillow from the relief. It was closely followed by some amazing pressure as the knot crushed that special place deep inside him.

Stiles came explosively, the pleasure and the relief wiping his mind blank, practically breaking him. He knew nothing more.

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Peter and Stiles had been cooped up for more than a day—32 hours and 15 minutes, to be more exact, but who’s counting—when they finally saw Peter again. He found them in the kitchen, wandering in like a zombie for all the mind he paid them. He looked like a zombie too: exhausted, rather absent minded, limping the slightest bit (despite having the healing and stamina of a wolf). His hair was wet and recently washed—very recently—and it did absolutely nothing to hide the downright indecency of his smell.

He smelled like Stiles. Like omega, and sex and pure animal need. They could detect the hint of minty soap, most likely clinging longest to his hair, but it was minor compared to all the omega covering him.

“Jesus,” Laura stared at him unabashedly, her coffee abandoned in the air half way to her mouth. “You smell like you went swimming in omega slick,”

Derek could totally sympathize with the jealous tone of her voice.

Peter snorted indelicately as he pulled open the fridge. He stared into it unseeingly as he said with total lack of inflection: “Didn’t I,”

Derek couldn’t help the erection that started growing the moment Peter had opened Stiles’ door and let a burst of all things omega-heat into the air of the rest of the house. Peter’s response to Laura only made it worse, twisting the knife of desire in his gut with a questionably healthy dose of envy.

“Well,” Laura finally took a sip from her mug. The scent of coffee beans was nothing compared to the arousal coming from her direction, “at least that god-awful preheat didn’t last too long. Allison was telling us it could last days before heat finally set in,”

Peter choked on a humorless laugh as he turned away from the fridge with a bowl of leftover fruit salad. “You have no idea. He nearly wore me out before the heat even hit. I shudder to think what would have happened if he’d accepted a contract with a human alpha with less durability,”

“Maybe you’re just not as capable as you like to think you are,” Laura snarked nastily.

Derek smirked, “Feeling your age there, uncle?”

Rather than responding with his own barbs as per usual, Peter widened his eyes and looked at them earnestly, “Tell me that after you’ve been responsible for his heat,” then, more characteristically: “If
They rolled their eyes and snickered at him, trading skeptical looks with each other as Peter fluttered around the kitchen collecting food and a couple water bottles from the pantry.

“I know omegas usually like to sleep it off,” Laura said when Peter had gathered more snacks than he would possibly eat on his own. “So if you want to bring him lunch in bed, I can make him a proper meal,”

Peter paused on his way out. He turned to look at her with a carefully blank expression. “He’s asleep.”

“When he wakes up then,” Derek amended her offer, “I think we can do better than fruit, yogurt and pretzels,”

“If I thought he could stomach more, I’d bring it.” Clearly, the implication that his food choices for the omega were poor, was an insult Peter wouldn’t ignore.

Derek held his hands up as if to say ‘no offense,’ “You weren’t there when we talked to Allison. She stressed that omegas need a lot of protein post-heat,”

“I know that,” Peter said defensively, striding toward the hall, back towards Stiles.

Laura popped to her feet, “Then pick the stick out of your ass and let us help you—”

“I will!” He snapped over his shoulder. “I’ll let you know when. I need to get back before he wakes up,”

Laura looked like she wanted to snap back at him, but Derek stopped her with a hand on her shoulder.

“Don’t,” He said to her, then raising his voice somewhat so Peter would know he was talking to him, “He’s not done, is he?”

“No,” Peter’s said from down the hall, sounding exhausted but determined, “He’s not done.”

They knew the moment Peter reached Stiles’ door, from the pause in his footsteps to the smell of the runes activating to let him open the door. Then there was a fresh wave of ripe-omega-and-sex for the moment the door was opened, before Peter disappeared back inside.

Derek checked his phone for the millionth time since Stiles’ preheat reared its ugly head. 32 and a half hours and counting.

“How long did Allison say heats normally last?” He asked, unsure if he was remembering correctly.

Laura sighed, heavy and unsure. “She said 24 hours, maybe longer if he’s really unfortunate,”

Derek wondered if he should call Peter and ask him if he’d taken note of the time Stiles went from preheat to the real thing. Then he thought better of it. He didn’t want to disturb the poor omega.
Eight.2- World Building

Just a friendly reminder that this is an ALTERNATE UNIVERSE fic. Heats, particularly Stiles’ that have been messed up due to medical malpractice since childhood, are a medical concern as much as pregnancy can be. I urge you to consider the situation from the perspective/values/morals of the AU world, not real life.

Since several people took issue with Peter disregarding Stiles’ “No” during the heat, I would like to clarify: Stiles is not in his right mind during heat, true, but in this world that means he has needs that must be met in order to ensure his health and wellbeing at a time when he is not mentally or physically capable of taking care of himself without potential for harm. This is the whole reason why alphas here have Alpha Authority. Within the realms of this ALTERNATE UNIVERSE, Stiles fully and completely consented to Peter getting him through the heat in one piece. The entire premise of the final contract that the Stilinskis agreed to was that the Hales were going above and beyond to ensure consent while also ensuring Stiles’ needs would be satisfied.

If you are looking for realistic consent, you should consider reading a different subgenre of fanfic. Don’t be surprised when Stiles’ reaction to the heat (and Peter) is what you would call unrealistic. Stiles is a product of his environment/society as much as anyone else, and that means his values and perspective are more in line with the AU.

I hope this clears up some concerns, or at least makes certain character behaviors understandable. I'm not inclined to change any of that, but if you have a suggestion on any details or elements to add to make this more obvious, I'm always open to constructive feedback.

I will be posting the next chapter sometime tomorrow. Thank you all for the feedback, there are definitely some elements I will be careful to draw more attention to in the future. This clearly will include changing my tags in the short term.

See you all tomorrow!
Heads up: there's a teeny-tiny bit of accidental, yet unavoidable eavesdropping in this chapter before Stiles' Heat ends. So I guess that's dub-con, in a way. If you squint. ;)

Stiles whined unhappily as he was jostled awake. He swatted ineffectively at the hands manhandling him.

“None of that now,” Peter chided as he pulled Stiles into his lap, “Come here. You need to at least drink some more water,”

Stiles just wanted to sleep. Drinking sounded like too much work. Besides, he had a vague recollection of plastic on his lips and liquid cooling his throat, so he was pretty sure he had already done enough drinking.

“Stiles,” Peter’s tone was all stressed patience. Maybe, if Stiles could be bothered to think about it, a bit of concern, “Drink. Come on, sweetheart. Please don’t make me command you,”

Peter’s sigh blew across his temple, and Stiles felt his entire body shudder as the warm breath had washed over all of him, tauntingly. God damn, but it was swelteringly hot in here. And he was growing more and more uncomfortable every second. He squirmed in Peter’s lap, turning his head from the water bottle and feeling a cool splash trickle down his chin and neck.

Peter’s next sigh was frustrated and a little desperate. “Stiles,” he wrapped one burly arm around the omega’s wriggling body, trapping his arms to his sides and the whole of him to Peter’s chest. The alpha took a deep breath, and his next words were imbued with power: “Stop squirming,”

Stiles stilled.

“Good boy,” Peter whispered against his temple. He relaxed his hold so he could use both hands to tilt Stiles’ head back and bring the bottle to his lips. He commanded: “Drink,”

Stiles drank.

Peter continued speaking to him in a mundane, soothing voice as he petted his hair, his back, his hip, “That’s it, baby. Drink it down, go nice and slow. We don’t want you to choke,”

Stiles obeyed, feeling dazed and disoriented. He wanted to squirm and writhe, he wanted to cool down and find a way to get comfortable, but he couldn’t quite remember how. He knew the alpha holding him could help him. Maybe, if he was good, if he obeyed. But obeying was proving harder and harder by the second as heat and a disturbing sort of pain coiled low in his belly. His groin and ass, always achy, started to throb fiercely, demandingly.

Despite the alpha’s lingering command, Stiles wiggled in his lap. Searching.

Peter’s groan had more in common with a sob than a moan of pleasure, “No, sweetheart,”

Stiles went wet between his legs, soaking the fabric of Peter’s bath robe where he sat. He whined,
spilling more water. His cock and his hole were burning with need and he couldn’t, wouldn’t stay still any longer.

Peter pushed him off his lap abruptly, the mostly-empty bottle flying out of his hand. “No, sweet boy,” he repeated, a peculiar combination of stern and tearful, “You need to rest. I know you can’t recognize it right now, but you’re sore, and running on fumes. Now let’s get a little more water and some food in you,”

Stiles whimpered. “But… But I need…”

“I know what you need, sweetheart,” Peter assured him, petting his cheek fondly. “You trusted me to take care of you, remember,”

Peter brought a piece of fruit to his lips and just like that, Stiles started crying again. His alpha wasn’t giving him what he needed. He was just talking at him, but Stiles had no use for words. Not even Alpha words, which he normally could not refute; now the Alpha Authority in Peter’s directions simply stoked the fire destroying his insides, a taunting reminder that Peter had what he really needed but wasn’t sharing. He needed action. Between his legs where he was cramped and hot and wet and so, so empty.

“Shh,” Peter rubbed the fruit on his lower lip, trying to entice. “Eat,”

Stiles wanted it to be his alpha’s cock. If he couldn’t have Peter where he needed him, he would have him inside somehow. With desperate tears streaking his face, Stiles rolled into Peter. The suddenness was the only reason he was able to push the larger male over. He took advantage, scrambling to open the damn robe and get to his alpha’s cock.

“Fuck!” Peter cried, somewhere between amazed and angry.

Stiles had him in his mouth before Peter could sit back up. The taste of alpha musk and spunk beneath the lingering flavor of slick on his tongue had Stiles moaning and flailing to find friction for his own privates. He sucked hard, taking as much into him as he could, till Peter hit the back of his throat and he choked.

A hand fisted in his hair, pulling him up quick. “No!” Peter barked sternly, “Bad omega!”

Stiles trembled, Heat pain and shame washing over him horribly. He cried harder, “I’m sorry! I’m sorry, alpha! Please!”

Peter’s anger didn’t disappear, but it was tempered by concern, “You need to eat, Stiles. Food. You need to eat food, then we can take care of the rest of you,”

Somewhere, as if through a fog, Stiles felt like they’d had a similar conversation before. Years ago, hours. It didn’t matter. All Stiles cared about was now, how his body was hurting and needing, right now, and if he didn’t have his alpha in him, on him, then he would burn up and die.

He wasn’t sure if he was saying any of that aloud, but Peter was hushing and petting him again, saying: “It’s alright. You’re going to be fine. You’re not dying. You’ll be okay,”

Stiles nuzzled into his chest, and as his hole clenched on nothing spastically he cried harder and rushed to get a hand between his legs. He shoved three fingers inside himself, practically crushing his cock and aching balls against his forearm.

It wasn’t enough, not nearly enough, and it hurt.
Peter pulled his hand away with an unforgiving grip on his wrist, “I said no, baby boy. Jesus. This isn’t working. We need to… shit,”

Peter sounded defeated as Stiles wormed out of his hold. Stiles rolled away from him, convinced now that Peter was only there to torture him. If the alpha wouldn’t help him, he needed to help himself.

“Stiles, stop it!” Peter was Commanding him again.

He had no choice but to remove his fist from where he was trying so desperately to jam it inside himself. Stiles sobbed in absolute misery as he fell back, unable to touch himself, left untouched by anyone else, and needing it so very badly.

If he was in his right mind, he would be appalled with himself. He knew he must look hideous, throwing the worst omega tantrum. Knowing that didn’t stop him though.

He screamed and cried as Peter patted him down with cold cloths that did absolutely nothing but keep him from his alpha’s skin. He had no idea how much time passed as Peter fought to cool and calm him enough to get a goddamn slice of apple down his throat.

And even when Peter finally gave in, yielding to the force of Stiles’ need, the poor omega wasn’t really aware enough to fully understand how.

He was just so happy to have his alpha back inside him, he didn’t realize how insufficient it was. Peter’s fingers were better than nothing, so much better than feeling empty. And he didn’t care that Peter’s cock didn’t taste quite right, so long as he got to have it at all. He had no idea how long they spent like that. Peter fingering him gently with copious amounts of some sort of salve while he fed Stiles yogurt off his cock.

Stiles only had the fuzziest memories of being interrupted so Peter could try to force feed him a bit of fruit or piece of bread, the Command to eat only working because he used Alpha Authority combined with the promise that he would fuck him after he ate.

It was only minorly successful.

Eventually, Peter gave up. He made a phone call, abandoned Stiles for one harrowing, devastating eternity, and when he came back, Stiles was eagerly eating peanut butter off his cock.

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48 hours since the preheat began, and Talia came home to find her children in the living room; Laura was sitting on the literal edge of her seat while Derek was pacing the length of the room behind the couch she sat on.

“When’s the last you heard from Peter?”

“About two hours ago,” Derek answered unhappily, “He asked for more healing salve,”

“Is he just super well endowed, or what,” Laura gripped rhetorically. Her agitation was obvious.

Talia set her purse on the coffee table and looked at them sympathetically, “Remember this if and when you get a chance to see Stiles through a heat. I doubt either of you would handle it much differently. And if this is any indication of how his heats will be in the future, I’d swallow my pride if I were you: you may end up asking Peter for pointers,”
They both grumbled in acknowledgment. Begrudging and unhappy, but agreeing. It was a sound advice, for Stiles sake. And Derek was unashamed to use all the advice he could get to ensure he could best satisfy the omega. He imagined Laura felt the same.

While he couldn’t speak for his sister or uncle, he already knew he was aiming to mate. No matter the other details, to make that happen he knew he’d have to be the best lover and Heat partner; even if Stiles couldn’t remember his Heat—and many omegas couldn’t, or so he’d heard—he would doubtless be taking stock of himself and his condition after the fact as evidence of how well he’d been treated.

He just hoped Stiles gave him the opportunity to prove himself.

“How much longer do you think it’ll be?” Laura asked, popping to her feet with nervous energy.

Talia was the only woman Derek had ever met who could make a shrug look elegant. “Who knows. Given how intense it’s going, I don’t expect it’ll be too much longer. Course, there are a lot of variables to consider, so… who knows,”

“Worst case scenario?” Derek grumpily crossed his arms tight.

She shrugged again, “Your father once had a Heat that lasted a full week,”

Derek winced, “God,”

“TMI,” Laura told her, rubbing her eyes as if to get rid of the mental image of their parents fucking for a week straight.

Talia grinned proudly, “Hardest work I ever did, but definitely the most rewarding,”

“No more,” Derek complained,

“Please,” Laura pleaded.

“I’m just saying,” Talia’s grin waned to something a little less cocky and a little more reassuring, “Heats aren’t easy to begin with, and the ones that hit so hard and last long aren’t always fun, but they’re worth it. It’s a rare alpha who doesn’t find serious satisfaction in getting an omega through a tough Heat,”

Laura and Derek shared a look, then said in the same bland and unsurprised tone: “Cora,”

Talia laughed, “Yes, she does seem to be the exception. You should be glad; if she was interested in omegas, you can bet she’d be all over Stiles same as the rest of you. If I wasn’t already mated, I’m certain even I’d want him,”

“Jesus,” Derek groaned, “She was right. He really is like wolf-bait to this family,”

Laura grinned and waggled her eyebrows suggestively, “He can bait me, anytime,”

“Corny,” he warned her, unamused.

“Did Peter say if he managed to get Stiles to eat?” Talia asked as she slipped off her shoes. She was frowning at the clock on the wall.

“Yeah,” Derek answered, “He said he had to get creative, but he ate,”

“He asked for peanut butter,” Laura added, “And before that, he’d stepped out while Stiles was
sleeping and grabbed the rest of the fruit salad, the last of my Greek yogurt, and a bag of pretzels.
Apparently, they already downed all the stuff you stocked the minifridge with.”

“Good,” Talia nodded to herself, but she was still frowning at the clock, “But that supply was only
what Allison and I estimated for a tame 14-hour heat. He’s not eating enough,”

“I already told Peter that,” Derek was sure his frown was a mirror image of his mother’s. They really
were a lot alike. “He said he knows, but it’s next to impossible to get him to eat even as much as he’s
already tried,”

“He just needs to try something new. Laura,” she threw her cell phone to her daughter, “Find John
Stilinski in my contacts, he’s Stiles’ father. Get a list of Stiles’ favorite foods. To be safe, get a list of
anything his mother may have shown a preference for during her heats. Derek, get Peter on speaker,”

Derek did as ordered while Talia grabbed the nearest laptop—Derek’s—and pulled up a search
engine. With Talia’s phone ringing at her ear, Laura plopped down next to her, Derek peering over
their shoulders. Both phones rang, Derek’s louder thanks to being on speaker, as they watched Talia
pull up Google and start typing:

Omega care during heat

“No, be more specific” Laura advised, hitting the back button and erasing the search before it could
populate.

Talia thought for a moment, then typed:

How to feed o —

‘Omega during heat’ auto-filled the moment she typed ‘o.’

“They can’t be serious,” Derek said as he read the displayed quote under the link for the first result
article.

At the same time, the sound of a man answering the phone came from near Laura’s ear. “Hello,
John? My name is Laura Hale, one of the alphas responsible for your son—”

… in extreme cases, omegas with a history of severe heat-related malnutrition may requiring
medical intervention. In such cases, D-class heat suppressants are prescribed for long-term use, with
medically supervised unsuppressed-heats scheduled every two years, in which the afflicted omega is
restrained for the duration to prevent injury, and a gastronomy feeding tube (g tube) inserted...

Derek felt his stomach roll violently at the idea of Stiles institutionalized, tied down with a hose
shoved down his throat. Fortunately, Stiles wasn’t in that desperate of a situation if Peter was able to
get him to eat at all. Thank fuck, Derek thought as visions of a future of extremely clinical and
unfortunate heats swam behind his eyes.

“—anything you can think of might help,” Laura was saying to John, her hand poised with pen and
paper.

“But… why?” John’s muffled voice was still audible to the other wolves in the room. “Is he okay?
What’s wrong with—”

As Laura rushed to reassure John that his son was being cared for, despite some minor difficulties,
Derek’s call went to voicemail. He immediately hung up and called again.
“Here we go,” Talia said hopefully, reading: “‘Eight ways to deal with Heat-related food aversion.’ Perfect.”

Derek leaned on the couch behind her and read along with her as Peter’s cell kept ringing.

“—or not. Promise,” Laura was still reassuring John, the crease between her brows showing how anxious she was about the way the conversation was going.

… There are many reasons an omega may not want to eat during a heat. Even during a perfectly normal, relatively mild cycle, food often falls far down an omega’s priority list...

“If there was a serious concern, Peter would let us know,” Laura sighed into the phone, “For now, we’re just brainstorming different things to see if we can make it easier or more comfort—”

… 2. Among the most effective ways to care for an omega in the throes of a difficult heat, is the liberal use of Alpha Authority. While many might argue the morality of using such biological advantages during an omegas most vulnerable time...

“Derek?” Peter finally picked up the phone.

“Finally,” Derek snipped at him.

Not that it mattered, because Talia started talking the moment Derek had opened his mouth. “Please tell me Stiles has eaten damn near everything that was and has been in that room,”

“Well...” Peter said slowly, trailing off as the sound of rustling sheets and whimpers took his attention.

A long, desperate moan sounded from Derek’s speaker.

Laura paused in her conversation and Derek held the phone tighter as they heard Stiles’ voice drown out their uncle’s words. So far, Peter had been the one to contact them, apparently only when Stiles was resting between waves. The siblings shared a look, and Derek couldn’t help but agree as Laura mouthed at him the words ‘holy fuck, hot’ with a look of unashamed hunger on her face.

“Peter,” Talia called them all to heel sharply.

Their uncle sounded breathless, and an interesting mix of amused and exasperated, “No, sister. That would be a no,”

Talia sighed. Beside her, Laura was returning only half her attention to John. “What has he eaten? And when did his heat actually start? You noted the time, right?”

There was more distracting movement on the line. Stiles’ heavy breathing turned to a moan, Peter giving a muffled admonishment in a tender sort of voice that had all three of them blinking in shock, and then—

“N—nugh! Alpha!”

Fuck. Derek was going to come in his pants. Right here. In the living room. Standing next to his freaking mom and older sister. From listening to Stiles getting pleasured by his uncle.

If that wasn’t going to dampen his arousal, he didn’t think anything ever would.

“Um, John,” Laura said distractedly, “Nothing to worry about, but I’m gonna need to call you back —”
“Please!” Stiles was begging, every bit as sweetly and wantonly as Derek had imagined.

“Sh!” Peter said in a stage whisper, considering he was on the phone with other wolves.

Stiles whined, his voice coming through clear and plaintive. God damn, but if it weren’t for the wards surrounding the entire den-turned-Heat-room, Derek would be rushing to him. Poor boy clearly needed more than Peter was giving him.

Talia sat stiffly on the couch, surrounded by her children and their raging libidos. “Peter?” She said with remarkable patience and downright inhuman composure.

Clearly (understandably) distracted, Peter finally answered, “Yes. I think… it was a quarter till midnight the same day preheat started—”

Shit. That was longer than they had thought. By hours.

“—and he ate nearly everything in the fridge, except the watermelon and maybe half—Stiles, no, stop that—ugh, half the chicken breast, which I ate,”

There was the sound of a struggle, along with a good amount of pitiful, needy whining that had Derek threatening to pop a knot right there on the couch.

“He only took one of the protein bars,” Peter gritted out, like he was speaking while doing something quite physically demanding, “Ah!”

Derek wasn’t sure if Stiles had just punched Peter in the gut, or done something very, very different that his uncle couldn’t possibly ignore despite talking on the phone.

“And—Fuuuck,” Well, Derek realized, that answered that question. If Peter was in pain, it was a kind he’d doubtless sign up for again. He sounded pretty breathless as he said: “And he went through an entire box of cereal,”

“What about everything you grabbed from the kitchen this morning?” Laura asked. By now, she was kneeling on the couch backwards, leaning into Derek’s phone just as eagerly as he was.

Peter was clearly trying—and failing—to control his panting. Stiles was suspiciously quiet. Derek wondered absently if they had just listened to their uncle orgasm and begin to knot.

“Peter?” Talia kindly prompted after too much silence. Somehow, she was smirking in amusement rather than cringing in discomfort.

They heard him take a deep breath, “All the… he ate all the… the yogurt,”

Why was that so hard for him to say, Derek wondered. He glanced at Laura, who was licking her lips, face flushed, and knew she was wondering the same thing. Imagining what Stiles must be like to make Peter of all people respond this way.

“And the peanut butter,”

“All of it?” Talia ventured.

Peter cleared his throat. Stiles moaned softly. Laura licked her lips again.

“Um… nearly. Maybe three quarters of it, maybe more,”

“What about the pretzels?” Talia prompted. “And the fruit?”
Listening like this wasn’t a close blood relative, Derek decided that yes, Peter was knotted. His words were too strained and clipped, very uncharacteristically. He was trying to hide the fact that he was orgasming inside the omega while he was talking with them. Not very successfully.

Derek was amazed it wasn’t infuriating enough to override his painful erection.

“No. No. None of it. The pretzels, I mean. And he had like…” Peter had to pause, taking a deep, tellingly shaky breath, “a grape or two, maybe a bit of apple—Ugh! Stiles! Don’t do that right now!”

Derek and Laura practically harmonized as they jumped to ask: “Do what!”

“Don’t answer that,” Talia said, her arms stretching to slap Laura’s rump and pinch Derek’s arm.

They both pretended to ignore her but didn’t ask Peter anything more.

“Peter,” Talia, thank God, was decidedly more focused on business than any of the other alphas in the house.

Understandably, Derek accepted as his cock twitched in his pants when Stiles gave another broken moan and—good merciful deities above, but he was crying now. Sweet, heartbreakingly seductive tears and jagged breaths. Derek wanted to whisk him away and make it all better, give him his knot till his tears dried and—

Talia smacked him on the cheek, none too gently and exactly hard enough to jar him back to reality. “If we make a few protein shakes, do you think you could get him to down it? Maybe give him a few ounces with some water every half hour?”

Stiles made a strange sort of choked off whimper that made Laura bounce on the couch with uncontained excitement. The sound sent Derek’s own imagination back into overdrive.

Peter, despite himself, gave a strangled moan. It sounded like he was dying and enjoying every minute of it. “Yeah, I... I think I can work with that,”

“We’re gonna call his father too,” Talia said, raising her voice to make sure they all listened and didn’t just hear, because Stiles was making some very pretty, distracting noises. “See if we can find something he’ll like enough to accept during the remainder. I’ll call you once we have the food outside the door,”

Stiles was begging again. They could hear him despite Peter apparently muffling the phone somehow, too distracted at the moment to think of the mute button. Stiles, in true far-gone omega fashion, probably didn’t even know who he was with anymore, simply begging “Alpha! Alpha! Please, Alpha!”

It was so painfully easy for Derek to imagine he was begging for him instead of Peter.

“Peter?”

“Y-yes! Got it, sis. Bye!”

And the call disconnected.

“Da-yum!” Laura collapsed on the couch like her strings had been cut.

Derek needed to leave the room. So he did, shoving his phone in his pocket and practically racing out of the room, Talia’s viciously unconcerned laughter chasing him all the way down the hall.
The scent of omega heat was faint in the rest of the house, enough to be dismissed if you weren’t an alpha werewolf, hell, a human alpha might miss it entirely provided they weren’t in rut. Derek leaned back against his bedroom door and took a deep breath to seek it out as he unzipped his pants and pulled out his cock. Omegas were flexible and resilient, he knew, and no matter how ‘super well endowed’ Peter was or not, by the time Stiles welcomed him to his bed, Derek had no doubt he’d be tight and perfect. Eager. Probably even if they did it before his next heat.

It took an embarrassingly short time before he was coming all over himself. It was the first time since he was sixteen that he’d knotted without a partner.

Stiles’ heat ended just as abruptly as it had started. He and Peter were still tied together.

He was awake—technically, had been for the past long while—but it was eerily like waking up, all the same. His entire body flexed into a full stretch on instinct, same as if he had been sleeping. Behind him, Peter groaned and grabbed his hips hard enough to still him and simultaneously make Stiles aware of the used achiness there. But those were hardly the most important, or the most bruised, of his current pains.

Now that his heat was over, the knot inside him was uncomfortably huge.

Stiles whined unhappily, and before his brain was fully back online and he could realize what a colossally bad idea it was, he tried to jerk away. Every nerve-ending he had lit up in pain, and without the consuming need of Heat, it was too much to bare. He gasped quietly in hurt.

Instantly, Peter’s arm wrapped around his waist and tugged him in tight. Stiles was still stinging from the pain he’d just caused himself, but it immediately faded to a persistent throb instead of sharp and debilitating.

“Sh,” Peter was whispering hotly into his ear. The alpha kept his arm tight around him, ensuring Stiles wouldn’t mindlessly hurt himself again, nuzzled his neck and shoulders. “Sh, relax, Stiles. It’s over now. Just breathe,”

Stiles realized he was panicking. His heart was racing, his breath quickening, nearly hyperventilating if he didn’t get it under control soon. He grabbed at Peter’s forearm where it held him, holding on desperately.

Peter flexed his arm but relaxed his fingers, so he could pin him but still rub soothing circles on his tummy with his fingertips. “It’s alright. Deep breathes. I’ve got you. We just have to wait a little for my knot to go down. Sh. It’s alright. The Heat’s over, so it’ll go down quickly,” a gentle kiss to the side of his neck. When did Peter start kissing him? “Quicker if you relax, Stiles. Come on, breathe with me, sweetheart,”

Sweetheart. Peter was calling him sweetheart now? Didn’t they just meet like… yesterday?

Holy shit, he didn’t know what day it was. How long…

He was definitely panicking.

“Stiles, if you can’t calm down on your own, I’m going to order you,”

No, no. He didn’t want that. He hated when his dad used Alpha Authority, left him no room to refute or disobey, no matter how he felt about it. His dad didn’t do it often, only in extreme situations, like when Stiles had gotten into a fight with a beta and one of them was going to get seriously injured if it
wasn’t stopped. And John knew Stiles would be horrid to live with after the fact; he knew better.

Peter didn’t. He didn’t know anything about him. He might not hesitate to make him do anything. And this wasn’t just any alpha—this was the alpha who took his virginity! Stiles didn’t know if he would be able to fight the compulsion even a little bit. They weren’t mated, true, but still… he was intimately familiar with him now, and his omega instincts knew and accepted it.

The hypothetical threat was doing nothing to stave off the panic attack.

“No! No! I’m fine. I just need to, I need to go, I need to get out,”

“I know, baby, but you can’t yet—”

“You don’t understand, I need to get up. I just… I can’t…”

“Stiles, you’re going to hurt yourself—”

“Let me go! Just let me—”

“Stop, Stiles,”

Stiles’ limbs stilled, but his heart and lungs went straight into overdrive. He was right—Peter’s power was nothing like his dad’s. The latter was well-known and benevolent and highly irritating, but this… This was irrefutable. It was an open-ended command, vaguer than any of his dad’s commands, which should have made it easier to work around, find a loophole, except this wasn’t from his father. This was from his Alpha. His Alpha, who had been inside him, still was, and would breed him and own him more fully than a parent ever could.

“You’re alright. Breathe with me. In and out, In and out,”

And he did, Peter’s voice driving him to obey, his arm locking him in tight and undeniable, as inescapable as the knot still lodged inside him.

“That’s it. Relax. Keep breathing,”

Peter was issuing all the right commands, bringing Stiles down physically even as his mind drove itself in ever tighter and tighter circles of anger and frustration. But it’s impossible to hold onto those emotions when your body won’t follow through with the physiological effects.

Stiles usually rolled his eyes at omega rights activists who likened Alpha Authority to mind control. But he’d never had an alpha affect his emotions with it before.

He was too relaxed to argue, following Peter’s command as he was, but he still managed a small: “Stop.”

Later, he would realize that moment was a precipice in his relationship with the Hale wolves. It was the ultimate turning point, where Stiles was precariously suspended between devastation and hope. Everything hinged on Peter’s response, on his choices and whether he had the mind to recognize the fragile element of trust inherent to the moment, an element Stiles himself hadn’t recognized until hours later when he was settled alone in his room.
Derek glared at the clock while he stabbed at his cereal. They were a full 84 hours from when Stiles had slipped into preheat at the very breakfast table he was eating at now. Over three whole days of full blown heat. And fucking Peter had been in that room with the omega practically the whole time. It pissed Derek off to no end.

“He’s got to be done by now,” Laura said, noticeably agitated as she grabbed fistfuls of strawberries and practically threw them into the blender. He’d never seen someone make a smoothie with so much ferocity.

He didn’t comment. Derek generally didn’t like to waste words where growling and glaring would convey his displeasure just as thoroughly.

“Peter hasn’t called or texted since last night,” Laura continued. She wasn’t staring at the clock like Derek was, but she was checking her phone every five minutes. “That has to mean it’s over, right?”

Derek merely hummed in sympathetic uncertainty. He wouldn’t consider it over until Peter stepped out and went to his own damn bed to catch up on sleep.

“At least we know the protein shakes worked,” She was right. All three of them had been visibly relieved when Peter had texted them last night asking for a few more shakes, specifying the vanilla instead of chocolate or strawberry, though he assured them Stiles had accepted those as well.

Laura was still puttering about the kitchen, angrily adding things to the blender, when Talia showed up, fully dressed in a blazer, blouse, and jeans.

“Going to the office?” Derek asked, still eyeing the clock.

“No one has to be working this week doesn’t mean there’s nothing needing to be done,” Talia was pouring coffee as she spoke.

The moment the Stilinskis had agreed to the Heat Contract, Derek, Laura and Peter had launched a campaign to convince Talia to let them take vacation days during Stiles’ first few weeks at the house, in the interest of ensuring a fair competition for the omega’s affections, of course. Peter had more vacation time stockpiled than either Derek or Laura, and Laura could telecommute too easily for either of the guys to be comfortable with. In the end, Talia had agreed to let them all stay home with the omega for the first week of Stiles’ stay, with the understanding that none of them would be allowed additional time off unless they were attending him during a Heat.

No one had counted on his first Heat coming on so soon. But at least Derek would have a few weekends to squeeze in some uninterrupted wooing to convince Stiles to pick him for next time.

“Peter’s going to text me as soon as his Heat ends, assuming it doesn’t go another day. If it does, Cora might come home, or she might just stop by to grab a change of clothes, I don’t know. She hasn’t really decided what she wants to—Oh!”

Talia’s phone rang, shrieking the Jaws theme song—Peter’s ring tone.
Derek jumped up like his seat was electrified. Laura just barely beat him to Talia’s side, the milk jug still in her hand.

“Patience, children,” Talia smirked at them before accepting the call.

It was eerily quiet on the other end. No moans or pretty omega begging.

“Peter?” Talia ventured while her children held their breath beside her.

“He’s done,” Peter sounded exhausted, and… not quite as happy as they expected.

“Is everything alright?”

There was a long silence before Peter answered in a whisper, “I’m not sure. He came out of it pretty hard. I helped him out of a panic attack but… he still smells off. Distressed,”

“Can I speak with him?”

“He’s showering. He wouldn’t let me help him,”

Derek stared at his mother as she ignored him and Laura in favor of whatever deep thoughts were flying through her head.

“Talia?” Peter asked. He sounded uncharacteristically uncertain.

She sighed into the phone. “Ask Stiles if I can come in, then go ahead and deactivate the wards. I’ll be there in a minute,”

Peter sighed dejectedly before hanging up.

“Laura, eggs and bacon,” Talia pointed to them as she directed, phone still in hand, “Derek, oatmeal, and load it up. I’m going to call Scott and let him know I’ll be late this morning,”

Derek hurried over to the cupboard, frowning deeply as he wondered what might be wrong with the omega.

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By the time Stiles cracked the bathroom door and peeked out, Peter had left, and turned off the wards, apparently, since Talia Hale was sitting on his couch, looking at something on her phone with a stern frown on her face.

She didn’t look up as she said: “Good morning, Stiles. Come sit with me when you’re ready, please. I brought you breakfast,”

As if she’d jarred him into awareness, he was abruptly starving. His stomach grumbled, loudly enough he was sure she would have heard even if she’d been human.

There was a smile in her voice as she said: “Plenty of protein and calories waiting for you over here, dear,”

He took a deep breath and exited the bathroom. The moment he stepped out he made a disgusted noise and wrinkled his nose. The smell of sex and heat was so thick in the room, he was shocked a werewolf could even stand it. And Talia, of all people…. Wasn’t it awkward to sit there, practically soaking in air soiled by her own brother’s musk?
Not from the look of her, apparently.

As he sat down beside her, snagging a plate stacked with bacon and scrambled eggs, he couldn’t help the full body blush that stole over him.

“Morning,” he mumbled, clearing his throat before shoving bacon into his face—he was hoarse, his throat sore from all sorts of screaming and… other, less polite things.

Talia dropped her phone into her lap and turned all her attention on him. “Are you alright?”

His face was going to melt off, he was certain. “Well… I guess so. I mean. I guess I don’t really know how to feel. I expected to get a few days at least to get to know the person I’d be jumping into bed with; instead we went straight into heat during only our second conversation ever,” he was gaining speed with every word. Even aware of the growing anxiety rushing his speech, he couldn’t seem to find the brakes, “And the whole thing was just so… so much. Maybe too much. I had no control—none!—not even of myself. But at the same time, it’s not like it was bad. It was actually pretty good, like really, really good. Except when it wasn’t, and then it was awful and frustrating, and then all of a sudden it’d be great again, or something of both—which is just plain confusing, not to mention impossible—and I’m just so embarrassed about the whole thing and I… I don’t, I don’t remember everything—I know I don’t remember everything—is that normal?”

He looked at her, wide eyed and frantic, and only then he realized he’d been flailing about and looking anywhere but at her.

She stared back at him, her ankles crossed, and hands folded in her lap; only the wide, slow way she blinked at him betrayed her alarm. “Stiles,” she said slowly after a moment, “sweetheart, I know heats can be incredibly intense, and given your history with suppressants, yours probably more so than average. But that’s doesn’t the experience abnormal or wrong, and certainly not your fault,”

And just like that, he was crying again. Just a little, and at least it was silent, but still.

Her hand settled on his knee, squeezing gently. “Your next heats may be just like this one, or they might be completely different. Either way, you won’t be alone. It’s the alpha’s job to make sure you get through it best as possible; you don’t have to be in control of anything, in fact, I’d argue you shouldn’t. Nature made you perfect, and you deserve to be taken care of, your heat just makes that a little more necessary for a time,”

He rubbed at his nose self-consciously. “I know that,” he whispered into his lap, “but I still wish it’d been different,”

She petted his hair, all maternal affection. “Are you talking about your heat, or about sex?”

He snorted indelicately, “Same difference,”

“But not at all,” Talia said, not unkindly, “Heat is a force of nature, you can’t control it or how it affects you. Sex, on the other hand, is like any other activity; it gets better with practice. Even during heat. Promise,”

He looked at her doubtfully.

She smiled wider. “I was mated to an omega for over twenty years, Stiles. I promise you, sex gets better,”

“Still… at least you remember all of it,” he grumbled.
“Oh yes,” Talia nodded emphatically, “I remember every bit of every heat we spent together. The pleasure, the joy, but also the frustration, and feeling powerless and lacking.”

He gaped at her. “Seriously? You felt lacking? You? You’re like… the most alpha-alpha to ever alpha!” He simply couldn’t wrap his mind around the idea of Talia Hale being anything other than perfectly competent.

Her laughter was infectious, chasing away some of the self-pity shrouding him. “Oh, Stiles. You have no idea. I had to learn how to take care of my omega, same as any other alpha. And like every other omega, my Jared wasn’t always… consolable, we’ll say,”

He choked on a disbelieving laugh.

She petted him again, “Alpha nature is more than just the instinct to give an omega our seed; it’s to care and comfort just as much, sometimes even more. And those instincts don’t end for us when the Heat stops like it does for you. We always want our omega content, especially after a Heat,”

Stiles winced, remembering the way he practically ran from Peter the moment his knot went down enough for them to separate without injury. “So Peter…?”

She nodded sagely, smile diming. “Peter walked out of here pretty miserable, but more from confusion and concern than anything else, I think,”

He felt like crying again. God, but when was this weepiness going to stop. Refusing to let more tears fall, he asked: “I guess I should apologize to him, huh?”

Talia shook her head, “No, Stiles. Your emotions are perfectly valid, never apologize for them. But whatever went wrong, whatever was going through your head when the Heat ended, you owe it to both of you to talk about it. Peter can’t learn how to make it better for you in the future if you don’t tell him. And the same would go for Laura and Derek,”

Stiles stared at his lap unseeingly. “I think I get why Heat Contracts usually run for years at a time. And with only one alpha,”

Talia’s smile was warm and audible, “I promise you, Stiles, each of them will jump on any pointers you’re willing to hand out the moment you so much as hint at the topic of intimacy. I wouldn’t be surprised if they bug Peter for advice, actually,”

“Oh god,” Stiles buried his face in his hands in mortification. Would Peter really tell them about Stiles’ Heat? Waking nightmares of the alphas gossiping about how needy and brainless and overall unattractive he was flashed through his mind.

Talia laughed again, this time full-bellied and loud. Despite how unsympathetic it was, it somehow made Stiles feel better.

“Wolves are more open about these things than most humans,” she explained, still laughing, “I promise, they won’t judge you harshly at all. Hell, they’d probably welcome you to participate in that conversation. Though I wouldn’t necessarily advise it,”

Curious, Stiles lifted his head, “Why not?”

She gave him a look that suggested she thought he was smarter than the question suggested. “Because I have no intention of sitting in on that talk, and I doubt you’ll want to handle three enamored alphas talking about sexual topics all on your own,”
Stiles blinked slowly, processing the implications. “I thought they couldn’t touch me without expressed consent,” he challenged.

She smirked, seeing said challenge and raising her own, “True. But that won’t keep them from flirting, and omegas in general are hardly asexual outside of heat,”

It took him a minute to catch on, but when he did—“Oh!”

He felt his eyes go wide and his face heat up anew. As Talia giggled at him, he thought he ought to resign himself to permanently blushing while living in this house. Hunching his shoulders and shoving his hands between his knees, he fumed silently at her teasing.

They let Peter sleep until afternoon, but when Stiles didn’t venture out from his room by one o’clock, Laura marched upstairs and pestered him awake while Derek threw a lunch together and delivered it to Stiles’ door. The regular wards remained on the door, and the omega virtually ignored him when he knocked, so he had no choice but to leave the plate stacked with sandwich, fruit, and peach pie on the floor just outside.

When Derek returned to the kitchen to prepare something for himself, he found Laura glaring at Peter while their uncle studiously ignored her as he prepared coffee, his movements obnoxiously slow.

Laura was tapping her foot, arms crossed and clenching her biceps too tightly. Her glare could have burned a lesser man, but merely made Peter smirk and start humming leisurely.

Derek smacked his hand down on the island counter between them. Peter paused as they watched his coffee mug tremor slightly. “Spill,” Derek demanded.

Peter sneered, “Patience is a virtue, nephew,”

He gave a short, humorless laugh, “I used up all my patience over the last 84 hours,”

“And you used up all your virtue,” Laura snarked at Peter.

Peter rolled his eyes as he dropped sugar into his cup. “I see what you’re trying to get at, Laura, but I find your attempt at wit shockingly lacking today. And I’m the one who’s sleep deprived,”

Derek tapped his claws on the counter pointedly.

“Spill, Peter,” Laura reiterated. “Stop taunting us,”

Tilting his head to the side as he considered his uncle, Derek narrowed his eyes, “Mom said to leave him be after she spent an hour in there talking to him. What did you do?”

“Wrong,” Laura added with a vindictive smirk, “What did you do wrong?”

Peter glared at her but turned that glare on his coffee as he said through clenched teeth: “I don’t know,”

Derek raised a brow disbelievingly while Laura scoffed: “You don’t know?”

He nodded shortly. “He came out of it too quick, I think. He was in shock or something and I guess he started panicking. I had to use Authority to calm him down and… he didn’t like it,”
Derek frowned, “That’s it? That’s all that happened?”

“I don’t get it,” Laura leaned her elbows on the counter, “What’d you do that caused him to panic?”


“It can’t be too bad,” Derek contemplated aloud, feeling bad for Peter despite the little voice in his mind celebrating the possibility of this increasing his odds. “Maybe it’s a normal reaction; I imagine coming out of that sort of experience for the first time would be pretty jarring for anyone,”

“And Stiles was lost to the Heat for longer than average,” Laura admitted.

“Yes,” Peter sipped with a frown wrinkling his forehead, “I think… Maybe I made a mistake commanding him to calm down,”

“Oh,” Laura sighed sympathetically.

Stiles was clearly far from a traditional omega, Derek could imagine him being more affronted than appreciative of that gesture. In fact, Derek couldn’t readily imagine himself using the Voice on him outside of the potentially dangerous situations heat sometimes presented. He would have thought Peter would have come to a similar decision. Not to mention:

“Isn’t it healthier to let omegas process emotion naturally,” he said aloud, in case Peter somehow forgot.

The physiological advantage Alpha Authority gave an alpha was something never to be exploited if one could help it; it could directly influence their emotions, possible the omega’s thinking, and that sort of manipulation could be devastating for some. That sort of behavior, when it became the go-to method of handling emotional omegas, was tantamount to abuse to most wolf packs, and while it was still legal amongst humans, the social stigma was severe.

Peter grimaced as he raised his cup to his lips, “Well… yes. But…,”

“But?” Laura prompted while Peter delayed via coffee consumption.

He lowered the mug only slightly and briefly to admit: “We were still tied together,”

“What?” Derek stared.

Laura, ever the non-sympathetic one, gaped openly, “You’re kidding,”

Obviously, he wasn’t. Peter actually winced between sips as he shrugged, “I didn’t know what else to do. He came out of it so suddenly. If he didn’t calm down, he was going to hurt himself,”

Derek shared a startled look with his sister. In that situation… he wasn’t sure he could honestly say he wouldn’t have done the same thing.

“I didn’t know that was a thing that could even happen,” Peter parroted Derek’s thought, sounding wounded, “he should have still been heat-high until the last knot went down. I panicked. First, he was panicking, and he wouldn’t stay still, and it was going to be a while yet, so… Look, he responded right, he calmed down and stopped fighting me, and I didn’t realize what that might have seemed like to him till he started crying and telling me to stop talking,”

All hints of teasing were nowhere to be seen on Laura’s face as she refilled his mug. “Shit, Peter,”

“You really couldn’t tell he was getting close to the end?” Derek asked, equally sympathetic.
“Obviously,” Peter glared at him, affronted, “if I had, I wouldn’t have knotted him again. It ended just as quickly as it started. Quicker, actually, considering he was asleep when at the beginning.”

Hand over his mouth, Derek kept his dismay to himself. What if Stiles wanted to go home now? What if Peter had scared him off? “Tell me you at least dropped the Voice as soon as he asked you to,”

Peter looked appalled, “Of course I did!”

Laura’s head hit the counter as she let out a relieved sigh.

“And then what?” Derek asked calmly.

“We stayed quiet till he could get up, then he disappeared to the bathro—”

“Not that,” Derek snipped, “What he did isn’t as important as how. How did he seem?”

“I think the point, Der” Laura nudged him grumpily, “is that he wasn’t particularly open to communicating,”

Derek stared at both of them in insulting amazement. “Maybe not with a human, but he’s a wolf. Peter, what did he smell like? Was he scared? Angry? Is he hiding in that room right now because you scared him off and he’s waiting till Allison shows up to play chaperon because now he thinks that’s necessary?”

He realized it was the most long-winded he’d been with either of them recently, but he still felt irritated as they stared at him like they were surprised. Eventually, Laura turned her gaping face back to Peter.

“Well?” she asked impatiently.

Peter cleared his throat, “No, not particularly scared. Maybe a little angry, but more like… just generally discontent? He didn’t smell of anything specific. At least not an emotion I would have readily recognized. Then again… he may have still been affected from when I’d ordered him calm,”

Derek took a deep breath. He hoped Peter was right, and Stiles wasn’t scared. He could work with angry, but he hated the idea of Stiles fearing him. Of him or his family.

Stiles laughed into the phone as he rolled around on the freshly made bed.

“Seriously,” Allison was laughing just as hard in his ear. “He was like a kicked puppy. I couldn’t have stayed mad if I’d tried,”

Stiles practically cackled, “And I thought my first heat was bad!”

She made a noncommittal sound. He imagined her shrugging as if to say ‘shit happens.’

“Thanks for that,” Stiles said as he wiped tears of laughter and relief from under his eyes. He’d called his dad shortly after Talia left, only to have the conversation devolve into a pity party thanks to his dad’s awkwardness and limited ability to relate. Talking to Allison was like a breath of fresh air in comparison.

“Any time,” she said, sounding genuine as ever, “I’m glad you called. I realized when Talia called me the other day about your record that you probably hadn’t had much opportunity to talk to other
“Eh,” he wiggled on the bed, trying to get comfortable and stop squirming around. “I used to go on a lot of chatrooms, but they were usually nothing but drama. It’s nice to talk to someone more personable, though,”

“Of course,” he got the feeling she knew exactly what he meant. “I mean it, Stiles. Any time you need me, just call. I’m at most only fifteen minutes away,”

He knew now that Allison and her mate lived on the far edge of the Hale pack’s country territory. She worked from home and was legitimately only a short drive away. When he’d first called her up, fighting back tears, he’d had to fight to convince her not to rush over and harass Peter on his behalf. Instead, he’d asked her to talk him through the hormonal upset lingering from his Heat, and with her happy chatter and empathetic ear, he cleaned up; he’d changed the bedclothes, disposed of the few food wrappers Peter hadn’t quite managed to get into the trash, straightened up the couch cushions and thrown a disturbing array of towels, washcloths, and bedding into a sealed hamper specifically labeled for professional post-heat cleaning.

And then he’d flopped onto the bed with the control tablet, Allison giggling in his ear, and set the AC unit to circulate in a way specially designed to disperse the heavy scent of sex to something more livable.

“I still don’t know what to say to Peter,” Stiles admitted, “I feel bad that he feels bad,”

“Allison’s laugh burst forth with just a hint of hysteria, “You poor little country bumpkin,”

Well, at least she didn’t sound worried, exactly.

“Allison’s laugh burst forth with just a hint of hysteria, “You poor little country bumpkin,”

Well, at least she didn’t sound worried, exactly.
“Stiles, hun,” She sounded a little hesitant, “I am a little concerned though,”

Aaaaand he was back to holding his breath, “… About?”

“It’s just… you seem to have been exposed only to the worst rumors and old wives’ tales about your secondary gender. You don’t… you’re surprised by a lot of common elements regarding Heat and knotting, and honestly, you don’t really seem to consider yourself favorably as an omega,”

It was like being doused in ice water. All the bubbly happiness Allison had encouraged during their conversation washed away as he was reminded how life back in Beacon Hills had been.

“Stiles? What was that?”

He’d mumbled something that he’d probably meant to stay in his head. Clearing his throat, he committed to sharing it, since it wanted to slip out anyway: “I’ve never been on a date,”

“What? You mean… like a date-date? Like, romantically?”

He tried to keep the dejected sigh to himself, really. “Yeah. Back home, I have something of a reputation. I mean, I would, obviously. Omega in a small, middle-of-nowhere town. But it’s just… you’d think the alphas in the area would be lining up, but instead… in high school, there was only one other omega at school. Lydia Martin, and she was like… If Talia is the ultimate alpha, Lydia’s it for omegas. The total gold standard. She was pretty much perfect; I’m not gay or anything, but even I thought she was like… God incarnate. Goddess incarnate? Whatever. Her boyfriend was kind of a douche, I’m talking total knot-head. And he started going around saying how I was the only omega in the world who couldn’t attract an alpha if I tried…,”

“Jesus, Stiles. That’s horrible,”

“Yes,” he popped the ‘p,’ in a sad attempt at levity, “And it’s not like anyone ever flirted with me. So, I didn’t. Try, I mean. I just didn’t try,”

“Stiles!” Allison barked, earnest, “Stiles, you’re a beautiful, perfect omega. That guy was way out of line. You’re every bit as perfect as I am, or this Martin girl. Don’t believe there’s such thing as an unattractive omega, just small-minded, backwoods knotheads who don’t have half-way decent taste or personality! Psh! Seriously though, if you weren’t wanted, you wouldn’t be here, would you? The Hales are practically falling all over you!”

He snorted indelicately—oh yes, he was a classy omega, all right, “Harris said the pack had ‘unorthodox tastes when it comes to mates,’”

“That piece of shit!” Allison sounded genuinely offended. He supposed she should, she was an omega mated into the Hale pack, after all. “That misogynistic dick-wad couldn’t impress an omega with half the US treasury in his back pocket,”

He laughed, mentally storing the insult to throw in Harris’ face some day.

“Seriously though, screw him,” Allison said fiercely. “Any alpha would be lucky to have you, not the other way around. Throw a stone and it’ll land on someone with a knot in their pants, but we’re like precious gems! You’re worth millions of him, Stiles. Why do you think Peter, Derek and Laura have been having a pissing contest ever since Talia showed them your picture? Not that it was necessary—they all remembered your scent from the samples. Quite vividly, mind you,”

Stiles still found that hard to believe. It wasn’t like he’d had more than one evening with them before he was in preheat, and first impressions didn’t suggest they were all frantic to get in his pants.
**Chapter End Notes**

I really loved this chp, especially Talia. I feel like Stiles went his entire life without hearing that it was okay to embrace his dynamic’s nature/instincts, and having such a maternal figure validate that would be powerful for him.

I know some people were looking for Stiles to have a stronger, potentially negative response to Peter, but Peter is really just a stepping stone in this story—I wanted the focus of his first Heat to be about Stiles’ journey to accepting and enjoying himself as he is, not about romance or personal connection (which is precisely why I didn’t want Derek to be his partner).

Hope you enjoyed this chp as much as I liked writing it!
He was going to die in this house. He was going to spontaneously combust or melt into a literal puddle. This damn family was going to turn him into nothing but a pulverized lump of embarrassed redness and confused hormones.

“So… yeah,” he rocked unsteadily on his heels, hands shoved deep into his pockets and face burning as he looked around, anywhere but at anyone’s face, “my bad,”

He wasn’t looking at them, so he couldn’t tell for sure who growled low and deep, like they wanted to argue. He thought it was Derek.

“Oh, no,” Peter said, his voice all but dripping with dark promises, “You are many things, I’m sure, but definitely not bad,”

Aaaaand he was melting. Just dissolving into a pool of omega humiliation and hormonal excitement in response to all the sexiness Peter seemed to pack into that one last word.

Laura popped right into his field of vision, her big eyes sparkling where she was leaning down to get only inches away from his face. He couldn’t avoid her, but like Talia and Allison had promised: she wasn’t touching.

She was smiling in vivid relief though.

“We’re just glad you’re not running for the hills. Thank you for giving us a chance to get to know each other better,” the second sentence, he could tell, was referring to him and her. He may not be well versed, but even he couldn’t miss the flirtatious rumble in her voice.

Feeling like a mouse standing in a cat’s open maw, Stiles felt his mouth go dry. He licked his lips subconsciously, suspiciously wet and twitchy action taking place in his pants, “Welcome,”

Someone was growling again, the sound irritated. It grew louder as Laura leaned closer, her grinning lips suddenly a breath from his. Until they weren’t. Laura disappeared, yanked back by her brother’s fist in her blouse. It made the fabric pull taught across her chest. Stiles noticed.

Peter chuckled, taking a single step forward. “You are really too sweet. After all we went through this past week, I was sure sex would fall to the bottom of your to-do list,”

Derek punched him lightly in the shoulder.

Passing through the living room with her laptop, Cora sneered at them all: “Gag me. Get a room,” Peter perked up, “Quite the suggestion—"

Stiles rubbed his hands over his face, mortified. “Ugh! No! I mean… I don’t know what I mean,"

“It’s okay, baby,” Laura purred, wrestling herself out of Derek’s hold. “A healthy appetite is good. I’m available for more than just your Heat, you know,"

“We all are,” Derek said, though he didn’t look particularly happy about it, Stiles thought with a frown.

“Alright, that’s enough,” Talia pipped up, finally putting her phone down and standing. At Allison’s suggestion, the matriarch had been present for Stiles’ entire ‘apology-explanation,’ but only just
barely. She had followed him into the living room, then promptly sat down and started playing
solitaire on her phone. “Tease and flirt all you want, kids, but no sex for at least three days. Your
body needs the rest, Stiles,”

He sputtered, “I wasn’t even... I’m not…!”

There was a chorus of friendly laughs. Even Derek’s lips quirked in a small smile.


“We’re all just a bunch of assholes around here,” Derek agreed, finally gracing the omega with a
small smile.

Slightly mollified, Stiles grinned sheepishly. “Good to know, I guess,”

Holy mother of god, but Laura looked like she was thinking about eating him alive as she said:
“Good indeed,”

Things mellowed out after that. Somewhat.

All three of his alphas went back to work. Talia had taken to working from home in a bid to offer
him some company, but after breakfast she was usually holed up in her office most of the day and he
didn’t want to disturb her. As a result, Stiles tended to have most of the day to himself.

He also had the whole damn house to himself. And not just the house, but the property.

The pack’s property was expansive, taking up nearly half of the woody preserve between Cold
Spring and NYC. Much of his first week, he whiled away most of the mornings exploring the
woods. By Friday afternoon, he’d settled on a favorite spot: a small bridge crossing one of the
picturesque streams that ran parallel to the western border of the territory. It was uneven and
charmingly inconsistent in a way that made it clearly home-made rather than professionally
constructed. There were a series of paw prints scattered up and down the beginning posts on either
end: animalistic signatures of probably every wolf in the pack over the past decade. It was lovely,
and apparently a relic, constructed from the remains of the old pack house, which had gone down in
flames several years ago, in an attack by illegal werewolf hunters.

It was the fire that killed Jared Hale, Talia’s dear omega and Laura’s, Derek’s and Cora’s bearer.

The bridge was a beautiful homage to their old home, but more importantly, it was a monument to
the omega that had been their heart for decades. Stiles found it heartbreakingly beautiful.

The Hale property was either large or removed enough (perhaps both) that none of the noise of
modern civilization could reach him at the bridge. At first, he had expected to feel uncomfortable,
antsy and bored even. Instead, it was… nice. Enjoyable even. And sitting on the bridge, his toes in
the stream and sun heating his back, was nothing short of peaceful.

He was always careful to be back at the house by five though, so he could get started on dinner
before any of his alphas made it back from the city. He didn’t trust himself in a kitchen with that sort
of alpha-shaped distraction around.

After the world’s most awkward dinner when he’d cooked for them for the first time, Stiles found
himself surprisingly willing to spend more time in the kitchen. He wasn’t a stereotypical omega,
happy to play homemaker the rest of his days, but he couldn’t deny a degree of satisfaction in doing
something for the Hales. Preparing a meal now and again was a small thing compared to all they’d given him, from the opportunity to see New York, to the luxurious accommodations, not to mention the monthly stipend and allowance. And then there were the gifts.

Oh, the gifts.

Peter and Laura seemed set on spoiling him. All Stiles had to do was mention liking something, and they delivered. Before long, Stiles had stacks of books and DVDs piling up in his room, more consoles and games than he was likely to get around to playing, and a chocolate stash of his own that soon overflowed the bedside table’s drawer.

Laura spared no expense, happily showing Stiles the delivery receipt for the 60 inch HD TV she’d had delivered to his dad’s house—because apparently Talia had no silly rules about spending too much money on his father.

Peter was sneaky about circumventing Talia’s expense rules too. He had gradually replaced nearly all of Stiles’ wardrobe with brand-names, and a jacket that was suspiciously well-fitted. The ritzier stuff especially came with a bag of individual receipts, one for each item, which the alpha proudly presented to Talia when asked. Stiles had a hard time imagining himself wearing some of it, but they were more comfortable than he’d ever suspected clothing could be.

And then there was Derek.

He gave far fewer gifts, but before long Stiles realized they stood out more, seemed more valuable as a result. Two days out of his Heat, and the alpha had covered the upgrade fee for Stiles to replace his phone after noticing the screen had long been shattered, including a shatter- and water-proofed case; Stiles hadn’t even thought to ask for a new phone, even though it was one of the things needing repair or replacing that drove him to sell his Heats in the first place.

Along with probably half the inner workings of his jeep. Talia’s rules may have prevented them from buying him a car, but Derek had already replaced his engine and mentioned plans to get the brakes done. Supposedly, this was deemed an acceptable, if significant expense in Talia’s eyes since Derek convinced her it was a safety concern. Stiles hadn’t been looking for anything when he mentioned Roscoe was held together with duct tape and hope, but he had to admit he was looking forward to getting home to drive his newly improved baby.

So yeah, maybe Stiles found he didn’t mind cooking for the Hales as a sort of non-contractually-obligated thank-you. Maybe he even liked it.

He was surprised how much he liked the domesticity of it, really. He expected to be bored by now, spending so much of the day alone, but his evenings were so inundated by Hales that the solitude was almost a relief, and it wasn’t like there wasn’t plenty to do to entertain himself. The pack house and grounds were captivating on their own; maybe next week he’d actually get around to exploring more of NYC.

Maybe one of the Hales would be his tour guide. Buy him lunch. Sight see. Make a date of it. Or something.

He certainly didn’t want to wander around a major city all alone, that was for sure. Omegas were only second to elementary schoolers for kidnapping victims.

Speaking of omegas… As Stiles returned to the house from his daily romp in the woods on Friday afternoon, he was just in time to spot Allison climbing out of her car.
“Stiles!” she waved at him excitedly as she opened her passenger’s door and pulled out a large black canvas bag hanging from a hanger.

“Hey,” he jogged over and met her at the front steps. “I didn’t know you’d be here today! I just went for a walk. This place is huge! Did you know the Hales have their own bridge? Of course you do, you’re pack! What’s this?”

He fumbled with the clothing bag as she shoved it into his arms, “That’s your suit,”

“Huh? Mine…? I mean, my… what?”

He followed her through the house, holding out the bag uncertainly. It was shiny and sleek, with the material of the bag alone already making a more striking impression than anything Peter had added to his closet. It was also deceptively heavy, making it suddenly seem fragile. Expensive.

“They’re allowed to give you gifts, remember,” Allison reminded him matter-of-factly.

“Right, but… suits? I mean, not that I mind, but I’m kind of more of a jeans-and-graphic-tees sort of guy,”

“I imagine it’s for tonight,”

He picked at the zipper tab, noting the hefty black and chrome tag with the name of a fancy tailor’s shop scrawled in finely decorative cursive. He was pretty sure that tag was worth more than his jeep. Unsure, he hazarded: “Tonight…?”

Allison was giggling at him as she started pulling containers from the fridge. Apparently, she was staying for lunch. “For your first ever date, Stiles!”

He blinked at her slowly, uncomprehending her cheeky grin. “My first… date?”

“Not to worry,” she assured him as she pulled plates from a cupboard. He watched her start assembling salads as he tried to follow what she was saying. “I didn’t share anything you and I talked about—they don’t need to know omega business anyway—but I couldn’t stop thinking about what you said, it was seriously sad. So this morning I sent the Hales a text, a group message so it was perfectly fair, but Laura was the first one to respond, so—”

“Woah, woah, wait,” Stiles folded the clothing bag over a chair and held up a hand to stop her. “I’m no stranger to fast talking and rambling, but Allison, you lost me. What are you talking about?”

She looked unreasonably proud of herself, “I simply suggested that omegas generally appreciate being shown a good time. Along with a gentle reminder that you’ve never been to New York before,”

He was embarrassingly slow to put it together. After a long pause spent staring at the canvas covering his new suit, Stiles felt his eyes go wide, “I’m… we’re… Where? What are we doing? Wait! Who?”

“Laura!” she squealed, “She was the first person to respond to the group text. First-come-first-serve sort of thing. And before you ask again, she didn’t tell me anything, just asked that I pick up the suit for you AND—” she drew out the word, loud and sing-song-y, as she pulled a card out of her purse and waved it at him, “to give you this when I delivered it,”

Stiles snatched it, feeling his heart pound as he felt the thick, finely scented cardstock. The embossed logo on the corner proved it was from the tailor’s shop. He fitted his fingers inside and slid the card
out before it occurred to him that it might be better to read in private. He paused and gave Allison a
tight smile.

“I’m just going to—y’know,” he made a vague motion as he backed away, only to awkwardly abort
the motion so he could lung forward to hastily collect the suit.

She laughed and nodded, “Go ahead. Read your little love note and hurry back. You got ten minutes
till dinner’s ready, then I imagine you’ll need time to primp!”

He was already half way down the hall. With an unfamiliar giddiness, he practically tumbled into his
room and blundered around to find an appropriate spot to hang the bag. He ended up laying it across
the couch’s back, then flopped onto the bed to finally read his card.

Strong yet feminine penmanship crossed the page, and Stiles imagined Laura’s teasing smirk as she
wrote to him.

My Dear Stiles,

I hope I’m not too forward in assuming you would like to spend the evening out on the town with
me. We really should get to know each other, just the two of us, and I know the perfect place. It’s a
surprise, but I’ve made sure you’ll be dressed appropriately.

I have to work late tonight, but I’ll be home to pick you up at seven o’clock.

Thank you for being so forthcoming with your measurements on your Nature’s Sanctum profile, by
the way. Every man should have a decent suit—consider it a gift from all of us.

I’m sure it will fit perfectly and look great on you, but I’ll still look forward to the possibility of
helping you out of it.

Love,

Laura

Stiles let out a harsh breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding as he read. Holding the card to his
chest, Stiles kicked his feet in the air and cackled. It was a fit of unusually typical omega excitability,
but he didn’t care.

He was going on a date. With Laura freaking Hale!

^^^^^^^^^^

Derek and Peter hadn’t needed to work late. Neither one of them were particularly happy about it,
though. They were so grumpy that Laura had called dibs on his first weekend evening that it almost
made Stiles sorry. Almost, but not really.

Besides, their general irritation made their reactions at seeing Stiles all dressed up that much sweeter.

“Delicious,” Peter murmured as he looked Stiles up and down, “You look absolutely delectable,”

While Peter certainly looked interested, he wasn’t actually the one Stiles thought he should worry
about. Derek was growling so low that Stiles felt it more than anything. He heard it most clearly
when Derek was out of sight—the alpha walked around him, assessing him with those green-blue
eyes suspiciously dark and downright hungry. Stiles’ buttocks clenched involuntarily when he felt
the wolf’s hot breath on his neck.
Any doubts he’d had about Derek being attracted to him vanished. What the man lacked in eloquence, he certainly made up for in raw animal magnetism. Or something like that.

“I could just…” suddenly Peter was right in front of him, humming and licking his lips, “eat you up,”

Moving behind him, Derek’s growl sounded a lot like agreement. They were good, obedient wolves, not touching him at all, but they were so close he could feel their body heat, scorching him, surrounding him. Stiles’ dick had been half hard since the moment he slipped into the silk briefs Laura had personally added to his suit order, the cheeky girl, and now it throbbed.

Peter closed his eyes and made a show of inhaling his scent, “Oh, sweetheart,”

Derek came into his peripheral view, so close that Stiles could still feel him at his back. His voice, when he finally spoke, was rough and dangerously quiet, “Can I touch you?”

Peter tensed and Stiles saw his mouth tighten in displeasure, “Stiles—”

Whatever he might say died off as the scent of Stiles’ slick reached all three of them at the same time.

“Fuuuuck,” Peter whined. The displeasure, perhaps even the memory, of Derek’s request vanished, overruled by desire.

 Desire Stiles was certain was mirrored in his own features. He could feel it pooling in his fancy new underwear.

Derek shifted his weight between the balls of his feet. He was breathing fast and shallow. “Please,” he whispered, “Let me touch you,”

He looked between the two alphas and thought the family resemblance was never stronger than right at that moment, with near identical looks of raw lust in their eyes. Oh yes, he wanted Derek to touch him, alright. He wanted to feel his dark stumble on the sensitive skin of his thighs. But just as he was opening his mouth to says so, he was distracted by Peter’s fangs peaking out and the thought of them rasping along his throat, tugging harmlessly on his ear.

Either one of them could pin him down. Either one of them would. But he was standing here in the foyer all gussied up in clothes he couldn’t ever afford and they were in jeans and sneakers. The reason why was tugging at the corners of his brain…

Stiles didn’t know what to do.

The door opened. Over Peter’s shoulder he saw Laura, her hair in stylish curls and her curves encased in deep blue that made her eyes glow.

No. It wasn’t an effect of her dress. It was her wolf side. Her eyes flashed red and he could see her fangs from across the room as her jaw dropped in surprise when his scent reached her. Looking at her, Stiles was mesmerized by the feminine plush of her breasts, on display just as much as her smooth, well-muscled arms. He bet she would be able and willing to pin him down too.

Oh, but he didn’t know what to do.

Her tongue flicked over the tip of one fang as she sauntered over. Her heels clicked loudly on the floor and she smirked devilishly, “We don’t have to go out, Stiles… if you’d prefer to stay in,”

Peter was the one to growl this time. Derek whined, so soft and quiet, like he was in pain but trying not to let it show.
Stiles faltered, feeling like he was wading through a sea thick with alpha pheromones. Their date… that’s right, he was supposed to be going on a date. With Laura. His first ever date.

“No!” he hurried, feeling himself snap out of a lusty trance, “I want to go. We should go. I’ve been looking forward to it. We should definitely go!”

He didn’t actually run out of the house. Not exactly. So what if he sped up a little—it was all he could do to keep a step ahead of the three hungry growls chasing after him
Chapter Notes

I'm cringing as I post this one-- I did NOT think the whole Alpha-Laura thing through when I started this. Lol. Be kind!

That's the bad news, but good news is: PLOT!! (And a bit of porn, but really only for plot's sake. Ironically)

Enjoy!

By the time they got off the highway, Stiles felt almost normal. Well, he was embarrassed, but excited, happy even, and greatly relieved that Laura had decided to ignore the awkwardness—even if she couldn’t wipe the eager, telling smirk off her lips—and soon they were filling the car with music, closely followed by a bitch fest about Justin Bieber that they both enjoyed.

It helped break the tension. A welcome distraction from the lingering fragrance of slick in the car.

They pulled up to the valet station of a building that was totally foreign and practically sparkling.

“Where are we?” Stiles asked, linking his arm with hers when she offered it after handing the valet her keys.

Laura was grinning, visibly relieved and pleased that he accepted her touch. “It’s an art show. One of our betas is a contributing artist, and this is the exhibit’s opening night!”

Stiles stared around the lobby with wide eyes, taking in all the ladies in their fine dresses and gentlemen in legitimately spit-shined shoes and freaking cravats. Tuxedoed servers were mingling with trays of bubbling champagne.

With the hand not joined with his, Laura ran the back of her finger along his cheek. “You are so adorable,” she murmured earnestly, without the teasing lilt of her typical flirtation, “Maybe one day this won’t seem so jaw-droppingly impressive to you,”

Stiles gave a shrug that probably looked plebian in his swanky clothes, “I don’t know. I’d like to think I would always appreciate the glamour. It’s not like I’ll ever forget where I came from, you know,” he blanched, realizing how it must sound, then hurried to backtrack: “Not that that means anything. I haven’t made any decisions or, whatever—it’s not a forgone conclusion that I’ll mate into the pack, is all,”

She nodded thoughtfully even as she smirked at his verbal fumbling. He could feel her watching him, her attention focused much like his was on their surroundings. “Maybe so. We’ll just have to wait and see. And I wouldn’t know, honestly; I grew up with all this glamour, as you call it. But I think it would be a sad day to see you lose that amazed spark in your eye,”

And just like that, he couldn’t keep meeting her eyes, “Y-yeah? Cocktail dresses by day, running through the woods in fur by night?”

Oh yeah. He was smooth. Not.
Her laugh was full and genuine, “You’re not far off. Sometimes I think Mom and Peter would have been more than happy to see us raise as uncivilized heathens, but Dad was human and he had a healthy love for fine art and socialite culture,”

“He was an omega, too, wasn’t he?”

She nodded, a fond smile on her face. Her arm squeezed his warmly. “Yes. He brought me to my first art show, actually,”

It was good to know the Hales had a standing history of not cloistering their omegas like precious jewels, the way many alphas still liked to, humans and otherwise. Speaking of…

“Is it normal for a single pack to have so many omegas? I mean, your dad and Allison, and now me. Maybe. Someday, maybe. I know omegas are pretty rare, is all, and I’ve always heard it’s even rarer to find them among wolves,”

Laura frowned as she thought carefully. “It’s true, to an extent. Most humans wouldn’t even consider marrying a wolf—it comes with too much commitment, not just to the alpha, but to the pack. And of course, wolf alphas are even more aggressive and territorial than human alphas. That and most humans are afraid of us; they think because we’re closer to our animal instincts that makes us more dangerous. It’s not true, though!”

She halted, stopping him with a jolt. She looked at him so seriously, maybe a little desperate.

“Oh!” he blinked owlishly at her, comprehension dawning, “I don’t think you’re dangerous! I mean…no more so than any other alpha. Probably less than most, actually. At least I can trust you. And by you I mean the pack. The whole—” he waved his fingers in a giant circle, “collective you,”

There was distinct relief in her smile, and no small bit of hope. “I’m glad to hear it,”

And with that, Laura ushered him forward into the main hall. Her palm on the small of his back was hot, and by the time they stood before the first enormous painting Stiles could feel his lower body stirring in response to the contact. With a pleased hum, Laura massaged him briefly, her fingers moving slow and deep. And just like that, he was wet again.

Her palm slid around his waist so she could pin him to her side. She whispered hotly in his ear, “Easy, sweetheart. Keep that up and I won’t have any choice but to take you out of here,”

He swallowed the lump in his throat and kept his eyes straight ahead. He was staring straight at a canvas with a ticket price greater than the value of his dad’s house, but he saw nothing of it, too focused on the press of her breast against his arm.

“Maybe…” he whispered, so only her wolf ears could hear, “we shouldn’t have come,”

She chuckled. It made her breast heave against him. Her lips grazed his ear as she spoke, “What kind of alpha do you take me for, Stiles? I’m not going to keep you locked up in an ivory tower when there’s an entire new city for you to explore,”

She licked him, making him gasp and his hole gush. Holy shit, but was she even capable of knotting him?

“I aim to keep you, and—”

The hand on his waist squeezed. Merciful god, but he was desperate to find out.
“—you said you trusted me, didn’t you?”

He nodded as she nuzzled him. He clapped his hands in front of him, wishing his trousers weren’t quite so form-fitting.

“Good boy. I’m going to go get us something to drink, and you’re going to calm down so we can enjoy the evening. And if you’re good—Sh! There, there, now—”

He was whimpering, subconsciously trying to squeeze himself tighter. Shit, they were in public. When the hell had he become such a slut...

Laura didn’t seem to mind. She was grinning, he could hear it in her voice, feel it where her cheek met his throat, “—I know. I know. Of course you’ll be good. I can’t imagine you’d ever be anything else,”

“Laura!” he hissed softly in alarm, turning to her with wide, desperate eyes, “That’s not fair. Please!”

She giggled and released him. She stepped back and gave him a fond look, “Alright. Calm down and let’s make it through at least this room, and I promise I won’t leave you unsatisfied, Stiles,”

Without another word, she walked away, making a slow and steady bee-line for the open bar across the way.

It took him an absurdly long time to stop contemplating how a female alpha might satisfy an omega —the vast majority of alphas were male, and Stiles attended public school, so the topic wasn’t even mentioned in sex ed. But with Laura’s promise in mind, he was eventually able to shove those thoughts to the back of his mind.

When he could focus on his surroundings again, he was standing in front of a giant blue monstrosity of congealed paint blobs. It was funny looking, to say the least. Probably not the reaction the artist had aimed for, though. The title on the placard beside it read: *The Sludge That Is Sorrow*.

Just like that, he found it easy to ignore the mess of lingering arousal trapped in his pants.

“Hideous, isn’t it?”

He jumped, startled by the gravely voice speaking too close to his ear. He turned to see a slender blond woman staring at *The Sludge That Is Sorrow* with a bland expression on her face as she took a gulp of champagne. Her eyes flashed red for a second as she looked from the painting to him.

Ah. Alpha. And human. Even without her flashing her eyes, she was giving off enough pheromones that it might have made him dizzy if he hadn’t gotten used to being surrounded by multiple, extremely dominant alphas lately.

It was a relief to realize he wasn’t attracted to her. He hadn’t realized until just then that there had been a growing unease ever since his Heat ended. There was a concern that, now that his body knew what it felt like to be used in the way an omega could be used, maybe he was doomed to become a knot-hungry slut, like Mr. Harris and his ilk tended to think all omegas were. That sort of catastrophic fallout could actually happen to some omegas, or so he’d heard.

And no one knew what might happen with him. Allison had warned him about how it was no surprise his hormones were all messed up, given his medical history. And tonight had certainly strengthened that concern, with the way he kept responding so strongly to the Hales.

But not this woman. Maybe he was just alpha-wolf-sexual. Hale-sexual?
“Well?” she challenged with a smirk, jutting her chin at the painting’s placard, “Think it’s worth a quarter million?”

Stiles did a doubletake at the placard, specifically the price listed. He gave an astonished laugh. “No way,”

She snorted in amusement, “Yeah, fucking artists always overshoot. Then again, it’s not about the art, but about the grandstanding. The bigger and shittier, the more expensive and sought after,” she downed the rest of her champagne and let the empty glass hang carelessly between two fingers as she stepped closer to him, “You, on the other hand, I could see myself paying that much for, easily,”

Stiles took a not-so-discreet step back. The way she was looking him up and down was actually killing whatever remained of his arousal. “Thanks, but I’m not for sale,”

Her eyes narrowed shrewdly as she licked her lips, “Sure about that? Where’s your alpha?”

“Right over there,” he was already stepping around her, his eyes seeking out Laura’s figure at the bar. “It wasn’t nice talking to you,”

He wasn’t going to embarrass Laura by running, but one or two people might have jumped out of his way, just the same.

“What’s wrong?” Laura asked as he buried his face in her neck, his arms tight around her waist where he held himself against her back. Her dress was low cut in the back, and he greedily soaked up the feel of her skin and the reassurance of her scent. Alpha. Safety.

“Flighty little thing you got there, Hale,”

Shit. She had followed him.

Stiles didn’t lift his head or unlatch himself from Laura’s back. He couldn’t make himself let go. He just tiptoed around with her as she turned to face the threatening blond. Once he was firmly aware of the bar against his back, Laura’s at his front, he breathed a little easier and lifted his eyes just enough to see over Laura’s shoulder.

The creepy alpha was smirking like she’d just won the fucking lottery.

“Piss off, Argent,” Woah. He didn’t know Laura could sound so cold. He gripped her tighter and she responded with a hand squeezing his wrist. She didn’t push him away, but held him fast.

The woman, Argent, gave a humorless laugh, “Down, girl. I’m just admiring the view,” she stood on her toes and mimed looking around Laura and leering at Stiles.

Laura growled.

“Everything alright, ladies?”

A black-suited gentlemen strolled up to them, a human alpha if there ever was one, rocking the Men In Black getup. Behind him stood a tiny Asian woman who nevertheless looked fierce as she glared at Argent with werewolf gold eyes, her arms crossed defensively over her chest.

He was surprised to hear Laura snarl through her teeth, her eyes never leaving Argent’s: “I have a restraining order,”

“Miss Argent wasn’t invited,” the Asian woman huffed to the security guard, “I want her out,”
Argent rolled her eyes, like it was no big deal, “So dramatic, you dogs. Tell your little pet he can stop wetting himself, I was on my way out anyway.”

Stiles froze, literally shocked still by her words. He was no stranger to sexism, no omega was, but still—

“I never realized a human alpha could be such a bitch,”

The words were out before he even had time to think them.

Argent turned a furious red, her mouth opened to shut him down, but she never got the chance. The security guard and Laura stood shoulder-to-shoulder, blocking him from view. Only when he heard a young woman’s voice shouting in self-righteous Japanese did his mind catch up with his body enough to realize Laura had extracted herself from his grip and placed herself ahead of him, keeping the threat well at bay.

“Apologies, Ms. Hale. I’ll make sure the rest of the team knows to look out for her, ”

“You do that,” Laura told Mr. MIB as she faced Stiles with a snap of her heel. She directed herself to the beta wolf: “I need to borrow one your offices,”

There was no arguing with her. Laura practically oozed authority and a fury that proved capable of keeping people out of her way. Stiles was no exception, instinctively dropping his eyes as she passed him. He let out a decidedly un-manly squeak when instead of flying by him, she snagged his arm and pulled him along with her.

They passed through two showrooms, too fast for him to catch more than a glimpse at any of the artwork even if he could have been bothered to raise his eyes from the ground. Then he was in a dim, sparsely furnished office room. He had the distinct impression the room was going unused before he became immediately preoccupied with the mouth cutting off his air supply.

By mouth, meaning not his own.

They stumbled into the desk, Laura’s fingers tight on his jaw as she practically mauled him. They parted only because Stiles slipped and fell with his back hitting the desk’s top.

Laura’s eyes were glowing red steadily with alpha power, “I’m sorry. You came to me—you touched me—and you needed me, like really needed me. And you came to me! You were in trouble, and you came to me! Me! Stiles, you have no idea what that does to an alpha! I had to kiss you. I wasn’t thinking, it was just instinct,”

“It’s okay…” Stiles murmured once she finally stopped for a breath.

She gasped like he’d slapped her, “Oh, god! Please don’t tell my mom!”

Stiles gaped, “That… you kissed me?”

“Without your permission!”

“Oh,” he had to run through the past few minutes a couple times to figure out what was wrong with the scenario. He was still shaking from the nervous wreck of having an alpha’s anger directed toward him, not to mention the sickening memory of Argent’s lusty gaze; and then there was Laura, all firm muscle and soft curves, and she’d been furious, even though it hadn’t been directed at him—the last thing he’d expected was a kiss. It was some major emotional whiplash to work through, but eventually he got there.
“Oh! Right! Talia ordered you guys not to touch me without expressed consent. Yeah. No. I mean, totally, I’ve got you. I mean, I consent. You so have my consent, like not even joking—umph!”

Somehow, he hadn’t expected her to jump him the moment he said that. It was a pleasant surprise to find her on top of him, one of her fists in his hair and the other pulling at the silk tie he had needed Allison’s help with tying. And for the next however-long all he knew was hot, wet mouths meeting, and teeth nibbling, and tongues and hands and—

“Alpha!” he shouted as she rubbed his cock through his pants. He was hard, so, so hard. And wet. They were going to have to miss the art show, because there was no way he wasn’t leaking through every last layer.

“That’s it, baby,” she bit his ear and tugged at it hard enough to twinge a little. “Give alpha your load. C’mon. Show alpha how good you are,”

He whimpered, fingers digging into her arms, powerless to do anything else but hold on. He was so close. Already. From just this, “I—I’m—”

She purred as she rubbed him just a little faster, a little harder. “Come for me, Stiles. Let me here you,”

Oh, she was definitely hearing him. He couldn’t stop the moans and gasps even if he’d tried, and he really wasn’t trying. At the moment every last bit of him was working towards orgasm. His cock was straining, his hole was clenching, his entire body was pulled taut. He was so, so damn close. Laura’s hand was like heaven, dragging sinfully soft fabric over his dick, and he was going to come, he really was.

Any moment now. Really.

“Pleasepleaseplease!” he repeated the word over and over, a broken litany of begging. He needed more. Something. Anything.

“It’s okay, baby,” Laura’s hand slowed, her fingers uncurling so she could bring the flat of her palm down the length of him in slow, forceful swipes, “Tell me what you need,”

He whined and arched into her hand. She undid his belt with her other hand as he squirmed for her. He didn’t know anymore, wasn’t sure he ever did know, but he needed something. He was close, painfully close.

“I’ve got you, Stiles,” she whispered heatedly as she tugged at his pants. “That’s right, baby. Show me. Present for alpha. There you go!” she broke off with an appreciative moan as Stiles shifted around so he could push himself up off the desk. Somehow, his pants and underwear were half way down his thighs, and then Laura’s hands were on his hips, pulling and pushing at him till his feet were on the floor, his chest on the desk.

Then he felt her breath, cool and amazing against his soaked hole.

“Laura!?” he cried out, lifting his head to try and look back at her and ask what she was planning. And then he knew. A split second before it happened, he knew.

His forehead bounced on the desk as he lost his ever-loving mind at the feeling of her mouth on him. She made out with his ass just like she had his mouth: wild and hungry and wonderful. He tried to spread his legs for her, but his pants were only half unzipped and wouldn’t budge. So he did the next best thing and pushed back with a needy whine, offering himself like a good omega. This was it. This was exactly what he needed. He was racing towards that orgasm again, and it was going to be
spectacular. His cock was wagging in the air, totally ignored, and it didn’t matter. Laura was eating him alive, and it was the best thing ever.

Until she gave him her fingers. Three of them. All at once.

“Come for me, omega,”

Stiles howled, as if he were the wolf in this scenario, and came all over the desk’s front.

Nearly an hour later, Stiles was back in the front seat of Laura’s car as it rolled up in front of the pack house. He was trying not to fidget, not only not to annoy, but because he was uncomfortable no matter what. He was sitting in a gooey, slow-drying mess of his own fluids—only his own fluids—and on top of that, the silence was so awkward and needlessly heavy. His anxiety was having a field day with convincing him something had gone wrong. He’d pleased his alpha, he’d done only what she’d admitted to liking, from turning to her for protection to presenting and coming at her command.

But she hadn’t come. Laura hadn’t said much since she’d pulled his pants back on and told him to clean up in the bathroom. She’d waited him outside the restroom entrance with a warm, sweet smile, only to sling her arm over his shoulders and steer him straight out of building. The valet already had the car waiting for them, and during the long, near silent ride Stiles’ postcoital glow had faded, leaving him with a distinctly unhappy impression that he couldn’t make sense of.

And now they were back home. Her home.

“…Laura?”

“Hm?” She gave him the smallest smile as she parked the car. Maybe he was imagining it, but it looked a little sad.

“Did I do something wrong?”

Her eyes went wide as she stiffened, “Oh, God no! Stiles, you’re wonderful. What could you have possibly done wrong?”

He thought it might have been a rhetorical question, but he shrugged anyway, even as he avoided eye contact, “I don’t know. I could’ve… reciprocated. Or something,”

She petted his cheek with the back of her finger. This time, he knew her smile was sad. “No, Stiles. I don’t think that would have been right,”

“Why not?”

She sighed and folded her hands in her lap, “Because you and I are never going to be mated. Knowing that now, further intimacy would be like… taking advantage of you.”

Stiles floundered for something to say to that, but all he could think was: Why? Was there something wrong with him after all? Was he not good enough for her? Did he not present the way she wanted?

“It’s not your fault, Stiles,” she patted his leg gently, “This is why my mother wanted the Heat Contract, instead of just marrying one of us off. There was never any guarantee we’d be compatible,”

“I don’t understand,” Stiles gave in to the impulse to squirm. His fingers toyed with the end of his tie
absently. Disappointment and a bitter lump that felt like rejection clogged his throat. He swallowed convulsively to try to clear it and hoped he didn’t cry in front of her, “I thought… I mean, we seemed pretty compatible to me,”

It was true. When she had stood between him and Argent, no hesitating, he’d had an epiphany about the kind of mate she would be. He’d felt downright blessed that she’d seemed to have chosen him.

She was shaking her head slowly in a way that made it seem she was unaware she was doing it, “You were so riled up by the time I’d realized it, I wasn’t going to leave you like that. You needed relief,”

“But…”

“Stiles,” She cut him off not unkindly, but firmly and patiently. “Not all male omegas need anal stimulation. You do. See what I’m saying?”

He paused, considering. Then, awkwardly: “… I did wonder how heats worked with female alphas,”

She chuckled, “Yeah, I’ve heard that before. I have a knot, it just works differently. Mine’s inside,” She made a vulgar motion with her hands that made Stiles blush, “Locks you in me, or,” she quirked her head and made a sort of shrug, “if I were with a female omega, I’d protrude enough to lock against her. Look, during heat, it’s not orgasm you crave, it’s the alpha’s seed. I could impregnate any omega that way, but I don’t think you’d enjoy it. It would be like… work. To you, I mean. Your heat would feel like work, but not pleasure. You remember pleasure when you were with Peter, right?”

Stiles couldn’t believe he was having this discussion, with a woman in the process of dumping him, talking about him having sex with her uncle.

Too busy wrapping his head around it, he nodded.

She mimicked him, her head bobbing as she gave him an endlessly understanding smile. “I thought so. That’s how I knew you and I would never work. We were in that office for a while. Eventually, I just had to accept that I didn’t have the right equipment to satisfy you. Not long-term, anyway,”

She said it like it was just a fact. And really, he supposed it was.
Thirteen

Chapter Notes

SPOILERS: in case there's anyone who has NOT yet seen The Antman. You have been warned.
Also, you might want to brace yourselves for a SJW-Melissa, coming soon ;)

When Talia had banished them to their rooms last night instead of letting them wait anxiously at the door for Laura to bring the omega home, Derek certainly hadn’t imagined he’d be waking up to a summons. Bewildered, and still rather irritated at being sent to bed early as if he were a pup, he nevertheless showed up on time in Talia’s office.

He wasn’t the first one there though.

“Morning, nephew,” Peter’s tone was bland. He didn’t even look at Derek, his attention focused on Laura.

She was half-sitting-half-leaning on Talia’s desk. Her skirt was pressed and her blouse freshly ironed. She’d even bothered to do her hair and makeup. She looked pretty good, but not the glowing sort of good one might expect from an alpha who just spent a night in the company of a mouthwatering omega.

“Peter,” Derek responded in kind as he stopped at his uncle’s side. He crossed his arms over his chest and studied Laura skeptically. When he greeted her, there was a slightly suspicious tone: “Laura,”

She smiled a secretive little smile. Like she knew something they didn’t.

“Oh good,” Talia sounded unsurprised as she breezed into the room. She was already dressed, though not quite as put-together as her daughter, still barefoot and while her hair had been brushed it wasn’t in the usual updo she favored for the office. “You’re all here. Let’s get this over with,”

Derek huffed, still staring at his sister even as he watched Talia round her desk and take a seat. “What is this?”

“Yes,” Peter griped, rubbing his stomach pointedly, “And why couldn’t this be handled later? Or over breakfast, at least?”

Talia retrieved a couple papers from her desk. As she spoke, she separated them into two thin piles and reviewed them quickly. “Stiles is making cinnamon rolls for breakfast and I love cinnamon rolls. I don’t want either of you distracting him. Besides, I figured you’d both want to know as soon as possible,” she put both paper stacks down and slid them away from her. “Consider yourselves officially informed of the change to the Heat Contract.”

They were both werewolves, but it was still impressive how quickly each man snatched up the papers.

It looked like a basic legal addendum, only three pages thick, so a very simplified one. Nevertheless, it took them both a long minute to figure out what it meant—probably because Derek was dreading
reading news that Stiles had agreed to mate his sister. But no.

“Is this true?” Peter said hopefully, looking at Laura for confirmation.

She gave a wistful sigh, “Unfortunately,”

Derek forced down the urge to cheer. It was too early to celebrate, way too early, “Why?”

“Yes, do tell,” Peter leaned in as if proximity might endear her to him, “Your call, or his?”

Laura narrowed her eyes at him, “Mine, not that it’s any of your business;”

“Anything concerning Stiles is my business,”

“He’s not yours,” Derek grumbled, hip checking him as he stepped closer to Laura. She liked him better than Peter.

“Yet,” Peter said cheekily.

“I thought you liked him?” Derek placated, giving his sister’s arm a friendly squeeze.

Peter wasn’t sensitive enough to notice the disappointment in her face as she shrugged and looked away. Derek had no problem seeing it, and it made him that much more anxious to know what had happened.

“I do,” Laura’s head bobbed in a noncommittal sort of nod, “But that’s why I have to withdraw, guess you could say… I’ll always like him way more than he likes me,”

Peter snorted. Derek kicked him without tearing his attention from Laura. The wistful sadness in her voice reminded him that he wasn’t just an infatuated alpha, but a brother and pack. Against his instinct to capitalize on this development, he said awkwardly: “That could change in time,”

She laughed humorlessly, “Not this time, little brother;”

“Laura,” Peter said seriously. “You didn’t… do anything to him, did you?”

She smirked, and for a moment something bright lit her eyes, “Nothing he didn’t ask me to,”

The answer didn’t make Derek feel better, and he doubted it did any different to their uncle.

“Laura,” Talia scolded, “Stop teasing them,”

“Yeah, Laura,” Peter mimicked, “Stop teasing us,”

Derek wanted to beat him sometimes. He really did. But he was also right.

Rolling her shoulders back in forced nonchalance, Laura considered them for a moment. Then she shrugged and said wishfully: “He’s perfect. Really. I’m just not his type,”

Derek blinked at her, “Wow. That was the least helpful thing you’ve ever said,”

She rolled her eyes, grinning, “You don’t need my help, little bro. Trust me,”

“Meaning what, exactly?” Peter pressed, frowning, “That I might?”

“I wish,” she stuck her tongue out at him, “Not that I’d give it, but it’d be nice to have something I could hold over you,”
As Peter prepared to stomp off in a fit, Talia got to her feet and stopped him, “If you’re quite done, we have another matter to address.”

Both men reacted immediately to the sternness in her voice. Beside him, Derek noticed Laura looking unhappy, but not surprised.

“Kate Argent was at Kira’s art show last night,” Laura’s voice was deadly cold.

And just like that, the warm optimism of Laura’s withdrawal from the Heat Contract vanished under a blast of icy dread.

Stiles wasn’t sure what to expect after Laura withdrew from the contract, but the sudden and immediate, almost militant, change to his daily schedule was not it.

It was a good thing he’d appreciated the solitude his first week with the Hales, because suddenly he had none.

Talia was working full time from home now, and apparently that required an assistant. Stiles got to know a lot of pack over the next week, since one of them was always hanging at the house at any given moment, and more often than not whoever it was ended up having lunch with him. At the very least.

In the case of Erica, she’d been bored enough by coffee-duty that she’d simply followed Stiles around all day when he’d decided to return to exploring the grounds. The second time she did it, at least she’d been considerate enough to bring them a packed lunch.

Isaac finally got Stiles to break out his shiny new PS4. How he got away with spending hours losing to Stiles at whatever-game-of-the-day instead of helping Talia, who knew.

And then there was the fact he was spending far less time on the property, thanks to Allison and her husband taking him sight seeing every chance they could get. Scott, who was apparently taking some long-overdue vacation time, was quickly becoming Stiles’ favorite romantically-unavailable pack member. There was only so much nerd culture and high school lacrosse stories two people could share before inevitably becoming bros.

And then there was Peter and Derek.

If they weren’t working, they were practically glued to his sides. It was bizarre, in an endearingly confusing sort of way. The rest of the weekend after his eventful first date was apparently busy, requiring a significant amount of overtime from both of them (and Laura too), but that only made them more determined to make up for their absences in the evenings.

Even if the rest of the family was absent, Stiles was always sure his two suitors would be at the dinner table with him each night. Whatever remained of the evenings were spent putting the billiards table to use, because of COURSE the Hales had their own pool table (Peter was annoyingly good at it, but Stiles wasn’t half bad either) or lounging on the living room’s giant sectional couch to watch movies (which proved Derek had more than half-decent tastes in entertainment, at least by Stiles’ opinion).

Said lounging was only an inch away from cuddling at the best of times and the close proximity had a tendency to send Stiles’ nerves racing. Practically the moment Laura was out of the equation, both men seemed determined to drown Stiles in suggestive pheromones and (at least in Peter’s case) inuendo. They stubbornly behaved themselves, never touching Stiles before he asked for it, but it
was often a very near thing, constantly right on the line of inappropriate. Not that Stiles minded or anything.

He’d never been so blatantly flirted with. It was… exhilarating.

Ugh, Flirting. He was terrible at it, he was sure, but neither Derek or Peter seemed inclined to complain. He was working up his nerve toward kissing, but after seeing where that sort of intimacy got him with Laura… well, to put it mildly, he was pretty anxious.

And Derek and Peter were doing jack-all to get him over that. Speak of the devils.

“The Antman, really?” Peter shot him an unimpressed look from his corner of the couch, even as he spread his arm over the back and angled himself invitingly.

“Don’t judge me,” Stiles grinned, totally unashamed as he plopped down with a bounce. He was next to Peter, sure, but not actually touching. Not yet anyway. He squirmed in his seat, “It’s a good one! Marvel’s cinematic universe was long overdue for a good quirky heist movie!”

“The ‘good’ part is debatable,” Peter practically breathed the words in his ear, making him twitch. He didn’t miss the alpha’s satisfied smirk.

“Antman’s good,” Derek said as he rounded the couch with a giant bowl of popcorn, “The Wasp is better, though,”

“I can’t actually argue against that,” Stiles chirped, his voice a little higher than necessary as Derek slid gracefully onto the couch cushion on his other side. So close.

It was a very large couch. They were good wolves, respectfully not touching him, but they left him only an inch’s worth of wiggle room on either side. It was becoming standard behavior for them, crowding him in on both sides until he inevitably succumbed to temptation and practically went belly up for all the affection he could stand while everybody’s pants were still on. He didn’t think it would ever get old though. He could feel the warmth of Peter’s arm at his shoulders and the firm heat of Derek’s thigh along his own.

With the click of the unnecessarily convoluted multi-purpose remote, Peter dimmed the lights and started the movie.

Staying in and watching a movie tonight had been Stiles’ idea. It was Friday night, two weeks post-heat, and Stiles wasn’t feeling up to anything more than a fun movie after spending all day running around Time Square with Allison and Scott. He was pleasantly tired, and now with the comforting, alarmingly familiar heat of their bodies on either side of him, Stiles belated realized the corner—or cushion—he’d backed himself into.

He really hoped he didn’t fall asleep on them, like some little kid. He couldn’t imagine that being anything but immature and embarrassingly lame.

“Nerds,” Peter rolled his eyes at them, only a little derisively, maybe a tiny bit fondly.

The movie started then. They’d barely reached the Ben and Jerry’s scene before Stiles was finding it impossible to pay any attention whatsoever.

Every time he relaxed much he ended up touching someone. And both alphas were more than receptive to cuddling. He’d make contact, and they would lean in. He’d jump back and end up touching the other one. Who would similarly encourage the touching, simultaneously making him feel so tense and awkward and not wanting to play favorites that he’d sit up straight again. Until the
next time he relaxed a fraction.

It was ridiculous. And he was becoming a fidgety mess.

Which only made him more and more tired.

Just as Mr. Pym’s safe was freezing over, Derek made an aggrieved huff. He took the popcorn bowl out of Stiles’ lap and set it on the table, only to turn to him so seriously that his dark brows practically met.

“If you don’t want to be touched, say so,” he said gruffly. He stared at Stiles for a long, silent moment, during which the omega did nothing but gap back at him.

Stiles gave a small ‘meep’ sound as Derek grabbed him. Peter chuckled amusedly, apparently more pleased than not as his nephew manhandled the omega. And just like that, Stiles was comfy-cozy, with his head on Peter’s knee and his legs thrown over Derek’s lap. Then Peter was gently petting his hair and Derek’s broad palms were rubbing his calves and… gaaaugh!

He was dangerously close to becoming a limp pile of totally content omega.

It had only been a week since Laura bounced, and this sort of soft, non-sexual touching was still rare and surprising. It took him more than half the movie to fully relax into it, he was so anxious about fielding any advances and not screw it up.

Antman and Yellow Jacket were fighting on the train set all of a sudden. Stiles realized he’d fallen asleep. And he’d woken up to find no one was watching the movie.

“…someday,” Derek was saying, so softly Stiles was surprised he could hear it.

Peter was similarly quiet, his fingers still playing in the omega’s hair gently, “I could see it. He’d be beautiful, all swelled up with pups,”

“If he even wants them,” Derek murmured. Stiles thought he sounded hopeful.

Peter gave a wistful sigh and his petting stalled briefly, “Yes. If he and his alpha so choose,”

The silence between them felt heavy, even to Stiles’ sleep-mused mind. Rather than wake up enough to worry about the implications of what he’d overheard, Stiles let himself slip back into dreamland.

Even Marvel wasn’t worth facing that conversation just yet.

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The following day was Saturday and the first full, work-free weekend since Peter and Derek had been playing mano-a-mano-tug-of-war with Stiles’ attention. Peter had proudly (and loudly) claimed his evening, which prompted Derek to glower and mumble something about Sunday being his. Stiles had thought that meant Friday’s movie was a shared date and he’d have Saturday morning and early afternoon to himself. He had thought wrong, apparently.

Allison woke him up. His room was werewolf- and alpha-proof, with the exception of Talia during emergencies, but Allison, of course, was neither.

“Rise and shine, sleepy head!”

He grumbled at her as he rolled away into his pillows.
She hit him with one, “Get up! We’re going to an event! And brunch!”

He lifted his head to glare at her, “I’m not an early morning person. And it’s Saturday.”

She hit him again, “Up! Trust me, you’re not going to want to miss this!”

Allison had already selected clothes for him, and she somehow ushered him into the shower and afterwards into the clothing she’d pulled from his closet. Stiles was too sleepy to even mind being naked in front of her during the rush. In fact, it wasn’t until they were already on the road, him strapped into her passenger’s seat with a thermos full of coffee and sugar, that he felt awake enough to start tracking anything.

“Mmh!” he moaned around another inhalation of coffee. Derek had made it for him, perfectly, “Where are we going?”

Allison drummed her fingers on her steering wheel and bounced in excitement, “My favorite café in NYC. It’s called O.R. Gasm,”

Stiles stared at her, “I’m sure I heard that wrong,”

Scott groaned from the backseat, “You didn’t. It’s a truly bad pun, I know, but the owner has a particular brand of humor,”

“She’s a pretty major activist here in the city, actually,” Allison said smartly, shooting him a reproachful look over via rearview mirror.


“Drink more coffee, Stiles,” she giggled at him, “And yes. She had to be, in order to get the business up and running. She’s one of the few omega business owners I know of, and the only one in such a major city,”

“Yep,” Scott said, sounding suspiciously proud, “She’s been mentioned in Forbe’s Magazine,”

“Impressive,” Stiles said honestly, once he stopped sputtering. He was downplaying the shock of the revelation. Where he was from, an omega could barely even get a full-time job (he knew, he’d tried), yet alone become a successful entrepreneur.

“I know!” she blushed, “her name’s Melissa,”

“Wait,” Stiles said, feeling like he’d heard that name mentioned recently, “As in…”

“My mom,” Scott rolled his eyes, at odds with the puppy grin on his face.

“You’ll love her,” Allison assured him.

“Yeah,” Scott agreed readily, “Just… don’t let her bully you about the Hales,”

“Huh?” Stiles frowned, “Why? Dude, you can’t just say something like that and not provide context.”

Scott sighed, and when Stiles turned to him he thought this time the eye roll was genuine, “She’s not a fan of heat contracts, thinks they’re barely better than sanctioned prostitution, but she won’t judge you for it. Just the alphas,”
Stiles tried to wrap his head around that. Someone who judged an alpha but not an omega? Over a heat contract? Unheard of, “Double standard, much?”

Scott gave an apologetic wince, “Yeah, but she really is a great person. And no matter how judgy she might get, she is actually pretty fond of the Hales. I mean, she’s practically pack!”

Allison scoffed, “Don’t let her hear that. Melissa’s entirely human and officially unaffiliated with any pack—she has to be, for the sake of O.R. Gasm,”

Scott nodded along, “A lot of people would boycott if they thought their money was in any way supporting a wolf pack, and considering how much social work she does for omegas out of there… it could be bad,”

“Not sure if I should be excited or terrified,” Stiles slouched in his seat, “So you coming around isn’t a problem, is it?”

“No,” Allison said firmly, smile turning secretive, “He normally works the register on the weekends as a volunteer, but not during special events. No alphas allowed in today,”

No alphas allowed. Stiles had never even imagined those words in that sequence before.

“Wait a minute!” Stiles lowered his thermos without drinking, eyes narrowed in suspicion, “You’re not even allowed in the building today? What are you tagging along for then?”

Scott sputtered, brown eyes impossibly wide as he avoided Stiles’ gaze, “Well… y’know… just enjoying the company?”

Stiles snorted, opening his mouth to question further.

“Scott has errands to run in town for Talia!” Allison rushed to get the words out, “Carpooling was convenient,”

“Saves on gas!” Scott added helpfully, just a little too cheerful.

Stiles twisted around in his seat, glaring as he considered Scott’s squeamish attitude, “I may not be a wolf, but pretty sure I smell a liar,”

Scott shook his head adamantly, “Nope. You can’t prove it,”

“What errands could you possibly have to do in New York City—more than an hour’s commute!—that you couldn’t do closer to home?”

“Top secret stuff,” Scott fired back, crossing his arms over his chest.

“For work?” Stiles asked, blinking his wide eyes innocently. Then when Scott nodded: “Aha! But you’re on vacation!”

“That—these… they’re not billable hours!”

“Liar!”

From there, the rest of the ride into the city revolved around Stiles picking at Scott’s nonexistent defenses and Scott repeatedly backing himself into a corner of pure stubborn refusal to tell Stiles what he was up to. Allison cackled joyfully at them whenever she wasn’t scowling at other drivers. It was actually a pretty fun time.
By the time they parked, Stiles wasn’t even sure if Scott really did have some sneaky ulterior motive for following them to the city, or if he was just genuinely that absent-minded and entertained/distracted by the two omegas.

Then Stiles saw O.R. Gasm, and he promptly forgot all about it.
Scott could groan and blush at his mother’s eccentric name choices for her business, but it was a good name. Appropriate, even.

O.R. Gasm was clearly designed to please omegas. Stiles might even go so far as to call it an omega’s dream; the café was warm and soothing, somehow incorporating plenty of vibrant color without being overwhelming, with plenty of plush seating and fabric draping across the high ceiling to give the air an intimate feel while still being spacious and open. There was a small stage area in one corner, washed in warm yellow light and pale wood, with a full-service juice and coffee bar at the far opposite end. It was lovely, cozy, and above all relaxing.

Possibly because every single person in the giant, open floorplan was omega. The place wasn’t packed, far from, but there also wasn’t a single totally empty table to be seen. Stiles had never seen so many omegas before, yet alone all together. There had to have been over thirty of them. The smell was… well, overwhelming, but also sort of the exact opposite. It made him feel safe and calm in a way he’d never felt before. It took his breath away.

It was beautiful, in a way only emotions and totally invisible things could be. And it was so far beyond anything he’d ever felt, it was pretty disconcerting.

Allison linked her arm with his and leaned into him. “It’s not them,”

“…Huh?”

“The omegas. It’s not them throwing you off. It’s the absence of any alpha or beta influences. Melissa does this deep, pheromone-neutralizing cleaning before and after these events,”

That was it, Stiles realized with a dawning awe. For the first time ever, he was smelling only the sweet scent of happy omegas. Concentrated.

“For most of us,” Allison’s voice had a hint of emotion too strong to define, “coming here during an event is the only chance we’ll ever get to experience dynamic resonance,”

“I didn’t even know that was possible for us,” Stiles whispered reverently. Everywhere he looked, he saw people like him, men and women, smiling and content in a total care-free way he didn’t think was normal for any of them. How could it be.

He wouldn’t have recognized it if Allison hadn’t told him. Resonance happened to other dynamics fairly often; whenever a group of alphas or betas gathered and their pheromones mixed without interference from other dynamics. It created a sort of feedback loop of the most basic instincts of the dynamic as a whole, amplifying emotion and heightening senses.

Stiles took a deep breath, realized he could pick out the exact spices in the bowl at a table ten feet away, and… giggled.

Allison joined him, and when he turned to look at her he realized she was practically glowing.

“See!” she said earnestly, “This is what it means to be an omega, Stiles! Isn’t it beautiful?”
It was. It really, really was. As he and Allison moseyed along, mingling and laughing, he knew this was something life-changing. It was feeling fully comfortable, in his skin, in his surroundings, in the company, with a unique certainty that he was safe and fully understood. It was unhindered happiness. It was relief he never knew he’d desperately needed since the moment he presented at eleven years old. It was like being high but with no possibility of a crash.

And none of it was artificial. It was true. He had the sense he was feeding into and off of the emotion and energy of everyone else, and everyone else was like him. Omega. And omegas were, at their core, so far from violent as it was possible to be.

“Betas and alphas can’t do this,” he said in giddy wonder as he and Allison eventually settled at a table. “It’d be impossible for them,”

“I know, right!?” Allison petted his shoulder. Or he thought she did. It might have been someone else in passing. They couldn’t seem to stop touching each other.

“They’d tear each other apart,” an older woman agreed as she sidled up to them.

She sat down beside him and dark curls fell over her shoulder as she leaned in, half her weight on the arm she rested on the table, half on the arm she placed around Stiles’ shoulders. Stiles felt too light and comfortable to be bothered by a stranger behaving so familiarly; it just felt… right.

“Betas are too competitive and pessimistic, when they resonate it only ends in drama and arguments. And alphas, oh boy,” the woman chuckled conspiratorially. Stiles found himself leaning into her in kind, till their cheeks touched, “They get it the worst. All that aggression and pride,”

All three of them erupted into giggles. It wasn’t that funny, but the fact that they knew they could talk like that and get away with it without consequence—that was heady.

“I know alphas,” Stiles agreed, nodding slightly with his face still pressed to hers. “There was a fight between like… half the lacrosse team in my high school. Three of them ended up in the hospital, and from then on they weren’t allowed to hold practices unless the entire team was present, betas and alphas alike,”

Omegas weren’t allowed on the team. Stiles would know. He’d wanted desperately to be on the lacrosse team his sophomore and junior years.

“Lucky no one died,” Allison cuddled into his other side, “That tends to happen when alphas don’t have other dynamic’s around to focus on,”

“It’s when they focus on each other instead,” the cuddly stranger agreed, “that it all goes to shit. They only see challenge and threat from their own dynamic in that case,”

Stiles sort of frowned, except the effect was ruined by the urge to sigh and snuggle closer, “But that doesn’t happen with the Hales. And they’re all alphas,”

The woman snorted, promptly sending them all into peals of laughter, “The Hales are pack. Most of them are immediate blood relatives who grew up together. It’s hard to see threat when you grew up in diapers together and remember each other’s best and worst moments alike,”

“So they’re the exception to the rule?” he said hopefully.

He and Allison rocked forward as the woman pulled back so she could get a better look at him. She laid her palm on his face and gave him an assessing look.
“So far,” she teased, “Maybe not for much longer,”

Allison chortled.

And then it clicked: her eyes were awfully familiar looking. “Melissa?” Stiles ventured.

“The one and only,” she smiled widely as she wrapped her arms around him and Allison, “Welcome to the pack, Stiles,” then she tacked on with a wink: “Unofficially, of course;”

He giggled and shook his head, “I’m not pack yet,”

“Yet,” the women said together. He could feel their contentment, their hopefulness.

Resonance was a weird thing. It amplified things, certainly, but it clouded nothing. His mind was still sharp, he was fully aware of himself and what was going on. He readily recognized that this assumption that his becoming pack was inevitable did irritate him and would eventually consume his thoughts for a while. But here, in this place with these people, the anxiety couldn’t touch him, and he was thankful for the reprieve, for a chance to just talk and choose to enjoy instead of worry. There would be plenty of time to over analyze and fret latter.

“Why do you say that?” Stiles wondered aloud.

“Why do you?” Melissa countered.

He blushed and shrugged, maybe grinned a little. “I guess…I don’t know. I like them. The Hales, Allison, Scott even,”

Allison squeezed him, grinning into his shoulder, “Don’t lie. You think Derek and Peter are sexy,”

He didn’t bother denying it, just rolled his eyes and said, “Who doesn’t think Derek and Peter are sexy. That’s like saying I think the sky is blue. It doesn’t mean all that much, as far as thoughts go, if it’s also a universal fact,”

Melissa laughed, rubbing her palm up and down his back fondly. “You’ll do nicely,”

Allison poked his side, making him squeal; he wasn’t normally ticklish, but he also wasn’t normally so relaxed, his body not bothering to firm up and protect against the harmless jab, “You’re evading. It’s alright, you can admit that you have doubts that you’ll ever find an alpha better than either of them,”

At Melissa’s sympathetic whine, Stiles rushed to explain. High on omega feedback or not, he didn’t want anyone’s pity:

“I’m not being self-deprecating. I just know what life will go back to being like in Beacon Hills. The only eligible alphas within a hundred mile radius will be either old enough to be my grandpa, or too mean and-or conservative to bother with. And yeah, I don’t have to be a genius to know the Hales are the wealthiest, hottest prospect I’ll ever have, by far,”

“Makes sense,” Melissa stated considerately, “You made the best decision you could in that case,”

“Yeah!” Stiles chirped, unbelievably relieved to know that they understood, “I mean, c’mon. No church or official office will ever sign off on an omega marrying anyone other than an alpha, and no one wants to be alone forever,”

“Not in this century, at least,” Allison would have sounded aggrieved if it weren’t for the serenity of
Melissa was similarly affected as she preached: “I get it. Clearly, the thing to do is to jump on the most expensive heat contract that comes with a half-decent knot attached. I don’t blame you, Stiles; I and nearly every other omega in this place has been there. But I hope you realize just because things are this way, doesn’t mean they should.”

He could feel Allison nodded along with him as they listened to her every word. She was right. It was unfair. And it wasn’t going to stop him from very, very seriously considering Peter or Derek as a permanent solution to a life-long problem.

“Fact is, you probably won’t find anyone better than a Hale alpha,” Allison nuzzled him, “And you’re not the only one. Scott and I moved across the country to join this pack specifically because they were the best we could find—the pack back in San Francisco would have expected him to share me, like I was property instead of his spouse,”

Stiles winced, “Yeah, the San Diego pack operated like that. Me and Lydia—she was the only other omega in my school district—were pulled out of class once when they were reportedly scouting the area for mates. Course, we never saw them, I doubt they were ever within a day’s drive of Beacon Hills,”

“Good. It’s a disgustingly common story,” Melissa sighed, “Even if most of the werewolf community frowns upon omega abuse publicly. It’s why I followed Scott and Ally here after my mate passed. Widowed is as good as single to a lot of alphas, and Cali is nowhere as progressive as New York when it comes to omega autonomy,”

“You think I should do it then,” Stiles said, propping his chin on his fist as he and Allison leaned more on each other, enjoying the excess comfort, “Mate into the pack, I mean. It sure sounds like you’re trying to sell me on it,”

Melissa gave a loose shrug, as if it didn’t matter, “It’s what I would do,” she said it easily, but a sneaky glint hit her eye and she gave a lop-sided smirk as she added: “But also, I’d make damn sure the alpha regrets it,” she held up her hand with the tips of her pointer finger and thumb close together, “Just a little. Just enough,”

Allison dissolved into mad snickers, burying her face in his arm.

Stiles tilted his head, staring at Melissa’s displayed fingers uncomprehendingly, “Nope. You lost me. Explain?”

Melissa echoed some of Allison’s ridiculous laughter but managed to tone it down enough to speak, “The key to a happy mating, Stiles—I tell every omega who wanders through— the key is in the—”

She pointed her finger at Allison cheekily and together they both said: “Sex!”

Well, Melissa said it, Allison sort of shouted it giddily.

Behind them, a table of omegas burst into bubbly laughter and echoing shouts of “Sex! Sex! Yeah!”

Stiles grinned at them and returned their waves before focusing on Melissa as if there had been no interruption.

“That’s right. Sex,” Melissa turned a lovely pink that really pronounced the fine, pretty features that were the hallmark of an omega, “That’s where the ultimate power is,”
Stiles considered her words, giggling the whole while despite his confusion, “I still don’t get it. You can’t possibly be talking about me overpowering one of them. I mean… Peter’s arm is as thick as my waist, and I’m pretty sure Derek’s abs are literally carved from stone. No way that’s happening, by anyone’s vantage point,”

Both women howled in amusement, “Oh, Stiles!” Allison gasped as she petted his hair like he was a precious, naive child.

“Wrong kind of power, hun,” Melissa tapped him on the nose all affectionate instead of condescending, “Now listen up, I’m gonna teach you a thing or two about omegas—”

Later that night, Stiles was flabbergasted by the realization that the McCall women were actually right. Sitting across from Peter at a fancy-schmancy Italian place, he couldn’t believe how obvious the signs were. He’d known Peter was into him, sure, but he only now realized how much power that gave him. Until now, he’d passively accepted the effect the Hales had on him; every interaction seemed doomed to set him floundering, flustered and aroused and seconds away from spreading his legs and baring his throat. Because of course, OF COURSE, the alphas would overwhelm him with the force of their attentions; that’s what alphas did, they dominated.

But tonight, Stiles found himself focusing on the effect he had on the alpha instead. And it was amazing.

Had he been blind before or what?

It was impressive how often he noticed Peter’s control had slipped and his eyes flashed red. It was obvious once Stiles stopped avoiding eye contact because he was embarrassed by his own arousal.

And how had he never noticed the immediate and devastating effect he had on the alpha every time he licked his lips!

He hadn’t been showing off when he first bit into the cannoli desert with a fullhearted moan, but then Peter had growled low and sinfully, pupils dilated around red irises.

“Careful there, sweetheart,” Peter spoke with a tone that was decidedly gravely and maybe just the slightest bit strained, “You should save sounds like that for the privacy of your bedroom. Or, if you prefer: mine,”

Stiles couldn’t help the giggle that comment inspired anymore than the damp and twitchy reaction in his underwear. He found it was way easier to handle his arousal when he was distracted by glorying in Peter’s.

Because Stiles Stilinski was sexy. And he hadn’t even known!

That night, Derek waited anxiously for Peter and Stiles to return from the stifling confines of his bedroom. His door was cracked open—it was a small, insufficient loophole in Talia’s order that he leave Peter alone with Stiles and not lie in wait for them in the foyer. Just as she had forced him and Peter to give Laura ample space to woo the omega, so he must do for Peter.

He hoped the “favor” would be returned. His uncle was a sneaky bastard when he wanted to be.

He had paced a pretty distinct groove into his carpet by the time he finally heard Peter’s car pull up.
He was leaning against his door frame, debating pushing his door fully open instead of leaving it cracked, when the front door swung open. He was immediately assaulted by the sound of Stiles’ sweet laughter, achingly genuine and perfect. Peter’s voice was an inconsequential murmur in the background.

Seconds later, the scent hit him, making Derek lick his lips. Omega. Hopeful happiness. Arousal.

The arousal wasn’t just on Stiles’ end either. In fact, Stiles smelled wet, but not soaked or even remotely desperate, certainly not lush and sated like he had been when he came back with Laura. No, he reassured himself, Stiles’ arousal was only obvious to him because he was hyper attuned to the omega. Peter’s, on the other hand—

Derek braced himself against the door, his hand grabbing the knob with white knuckles. Peter’s arousal was thick and thorough. Getting closer and closer to desperate with every second, already tinged with frustration.

He wasn’t sure how long he stood there, listening and scenting for the slightest hint that Peter was going to get to taste the omega yet again, before Derek had earned himself so much as a cuddle. Eventually, though, Stiles’ sweet scent, so bubbly with excitement and curiosity and inexplicable hope, cut off with the closing of his warded door.

He heard Peter sigh longingly as he headed up stairs. Derek closed his door firmly before his uncle passed him by.

Chapter End Notes

Aaaah! SO excited to share this one with you guys-- it's one of my favorite chapters so far, even if it's on the short side. But it's so important for Stiles' development and the world building. It was super fun to right, and I hope you guys enjoyed it half as much as I did.
Fifteen

Chapter Notes

So, I have never actually experienced this activity (though I would LOVE to). This chapter is written entirely from cursory research (at best), and if anyone has more accurate details that might be relevant that I should maybe consider adding, please let me know. Otherwise, I'm going to assume this activity more or less goes this way ;)

“Seriously?” Laura asked, yet again, with just as much amused befuddlement as the last three times.

Peter threw his hands up in a careless gesture that was at odds with the smirk on his face. Derek was amazed the man could look so amused about being so epically cockblocked. Nevertheless…

“So why do you look so pleased?” Derek glowered, suspicious that his uncle seemed so cheery, dare he say happy, despite the strike out.

The older alpha actually shook his head, as if to say he didn’t know, “He was just so… adorable. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a person so excited. And over a damn brunch, of all things,”

“Pretty hard to believe,” Laura admitted, sipping whatever caffeinated concoction she’d made. All Derek could smell was sugar.

Peter was shaking his head again, his eyes widening in agreement, and yet—“I know. But It makes sense, doesn’t it? If anyone even suggested an alphas-only event, they’d probably get added to some sort of terrorist watch list or something. Nothing good would come of it. But omegas… “

When he trailed off, at a loss for words for once in his life, Derek tried filling in: “They’re nothing but sweet and good.”

Laura gave a soft, wistful sigh, “What I wouldn’t give to know what that kind of resonance must be like,”

Peter chuckled, “The way Stiles tells it… It’s like being on cloud nine. The ultimate, totally organic high, but without losing control of your faculties,”

Derek frowned. Allison was pack, Melissa nearly as good as. Why hadn’t they told them about the events at the café?

“I warn you though, nephew,” Peter nudged him seriously, “If you want any chance of getting in his pants tonight, you might not want to ask him about it,”

“Maybe,” he responded distractedly. He was already preoccupied with changing his strategy.

Because of course Peter thought this was a distraction, pulling the omega’s attention away from them. And it was, at the moment any way. But Peter always had been more of a live-in-the-present sort when it came to romance. That was his one major flaw, as far as Derek was concerned.

Derek was an extremely picky monogamous, though. And he was thinking long-term.
And if that meant putting off sex even longer in exchange for more of Stiles’ hyper talk and beautiful laughter? For the chance to get Stiles invested not only in Derek, but in the pack and in New York? So be it.

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Stiles woke up late the next day. After the hours spent at O.R. Gasm and all night dining and dancing with Peter, Stiles had been too keyed up to sleep easily, even though they got home well before midnight. By the time he’d showered and dressed, the Hales had already eaten breakfast hours earlier.

Derek had been waiting for him in the kitchen. He simply told him to eat something light for now, and to meet him out front at 12:30. Then the alpha treated him to a spectacular view as he walked away, his basketball shorts and tank top leaving just the right amount to Stiles’ imagination.

It was the first time he’d seen Derek show off so much skin. All he could do was stammer an agreement to do as Derek told him to, then promptly run back to his room instead of eating so he could hyperventilate and lose his mind over all that muscle. And maybe so he could account for a little Stiles Sexy Time in his preparations for their date.

Before long, he was ogling Derek in his striking leather jacket and jeans as he followed him out to a sleek black Camaro. He suddenly wasn’t so confident that he’d taken any of the pressure off after all.

“Sure you’ll be warm enough?” Derek asked as he watched Stiles buckle himself in, “We’ll be out after sun down,”

Stiles tugged pointedly at his new red sweatshirt, the only clothing gift Derek had given him, and grinned, “I’m good,”

Derek stared at him, face unreadable behind dark sunglasses. He looked like a freaking movie star, and Stiles wasn’t sure he could handle it, even with his newfound sexiness. Stiles-sexy and Derek-sexy were like… worlds apart. Galaxies maybe.

“So…” he said slowly, drawing out the word awkwardly as Derek kept staring, “Where are we going?”

He’d dressed casually, jeans, t-shirt, red hoodie. Just like Derek had told him to.

He was beginning to doubt if the alpha would ever say anything else to him, “Derek?” he prompted, squirming in his seat.

“Can I touch you?”

Stiles stared back, his jaw unhinged in surprise. He gaped, closed his mouth, gaped again. Maybe on repeat. With Derek just… staring.

“Yeah,” he heard himself say, “You totally can,”

He wasn’t sure what he was expecting—a kiss? A grope?—but it wasn’t for Derek to reach over so achingly slowly and just barely brush the shell of his ear. Stiles felt said appendage warm, and it was still tingling as they drove off.

They hit the highway before Derek ever-so-casually dropped his palm on Stiles’ thigh, just above his knee. He didn’t press or squeeze or teasingly rub patterns against his leg. He just… rested there, his palm big and warm and delightfully heavy.
Derek wasn’t anymore talkative now that they were alone. Stiles hadn’t necessarily expected him to be but they needed to get to know each other, assuming they wanted to spend a heat together. And yes, he realized as he found himself focusing on where they touched, oh yes, he wanted to spend a heat with Derek. At least once. Maybe more than once. Probably.

Definitely.

“You still haven’t told me where we’re going,” he said conversationally.

Derek gave a soft grunt, “You’ll see,”

Stiles huffed, “Do you want me to guess?”

The alpha shrugged.

Stiles frowned. “You know, if I didn’t know any better, I’d think you didn’t care,”

Derek’s expressive brows furrowed, but his eyes remained on the road, “About you guessing?”

Stiles rolled his eyes, “About me,” he began to slump in his seat and froze when the action made Derek’s palm slide up his thigh.

Derek’s head tilted to the side and his brows dipped further behind his sunglasses, “That’s ridiculous,”

Stiles was still staring at the hand on his thigh, wishfully hoping it’d slide the extra two or three inches to land on his groin, but he grumbled over Derek’s response just the same, “Oh yeah, so silly of me to worry about the alpha I’m on a date with giving a shit about me. That’s sarcasm, by the way. In case you were wondering,”

The corner of Derek’s mouth twitched. It was too brief and too small for Stiles to call it a smile. “I know what sarcasm is,”

“How is that the part you choose to respond to? I mean, really—”

“Stiles,” Derek said his name so firmly, his voice just so… so dominant, that Stiles couldn’t help but fall silent and turn to him in expectation.

Stiles swallowed, his mouth suddenly dry, “Hm?”

“You shouldn’t worry that I don’t care about you,” Derek spoke firmly, if quietly. The hand on his leg moved just enough so Derek’s fingers could press against the sensitive inside of his thigh. Very, very close to Stile’s crotch. Finally, he gave Stiles a squeeze, and growled: “Ever,”

The rush of slick and precum in his pants was so quick and thick, even Stiles’ human nose caught it.

“Oh, uh… thanks,” he chirped, voice too high. He’d promised himself to be cool today, but there weren’t many ways to achieve that when the alpha he was dating had a superhuman nose, “Y’know, I was totally hoping I’d get to sit in sexual secretions for the full duration of the day. Really. So comfy,”

He didn’t sound like the sarcasm he’d been aiming for. He sounded breathless. Needy.

Where was all that omega-badass-confidence he’d been rocking last night!?

At least he could definitely make out the smirk on Derek’s face now. The alpha squeezed his thigh
again, letting the pressure linger this time, “You can clean up when we get there. Maybe I’ll even help.”

He didn’t though. Forty minutes later and they were at Newton Park, and Derek got a little grumpy at the relatively crowded situation outside the restrooms. Stiles cleaned up on his own, blushing all the while, especially when the alpha ahead of him in line lifted his nose and sniffed at him only to have Derek meet his eyes with a withering glare.

Once Stiles smelled a little less ripe and inviting, he’d stepped out of the restroom straight into a burly chest. Derek pulled him under his arm and steered him the rest of the way till they ended up in yet another, lengthier line. For a food truck.

“Boss Brothers’ Burgers,” Stiles read aloud, sticking his hands in his pockets and gleefully tiptoeing further into Derek’s personal space. It was fairly early afternoon yet, but surprisingly chilly already. “Not that I don’t enjoy a good burger, but please tell me we didn’t just drive for over an hour to eat at a food truck?”

Derek shook his head, tightening the arm he had slung around the omega’s shoulders and bringing the other hand up to start rubbing Stiles’ other arm, the one not cozily snug between their bodies, “This is just a fringe benefit on our way,”

Stiles grumbled, “You’re still not telling me where we’re going, then?”

“No,”

Stiles pouted. On the one hand, the not-knowing was wreaking havoc on his nerves, but on the other… the anxiety was flavored with just the right edge of hopeful anticipation. And it was easy to get riled up about it when he kept sensing how Derek enjoyed seeing him try to weasel and plead for information. It was kinda fun. Maybe a little flirty.

It was hard to tell, since Derek was generally so sour-faced, but the little smirks and elusive peak of those bunny teeth reassured Stiles that he had the right read on the situation.

Oh hey, look at him go, being all attractive and totally legit with his flirtations.

When they got to the front of the line, Derek ordered for them. Cheekily, Stiles fussed, “What if I wanted something different?”

“Tell me that after you try it,”

Stiles huffed. He was growing increasingly frustrated by Derek’s effortless coolness, and alarmingly invested in the idea of ruffling it. Derek found a picnic table for them and released his arm so they could sit opposite each other; instead, on a whim Stiles hurried around the alpha and settled next to him. Close. Practically in his lap, actually.

Derek looked at him challengingly, one brow arched.

Stiles fumed silently and snuggled into his side, “Maybe I should have brought a thicker jacket, after all,”

He wasn’t really that cold—not yet, anyway—and they both knew it. Not ten feet away he could see grade schoolers were running around in t shirts. Stiles swore he spotted someone in shorts.

Derek put his arm around him again and tugged at his hood gently, “If only someone had warned you,”
Stiles scoffed, “Y’know, another alpha might give me their jacket,”

Derek didn’t rise to the bait, “Another alpha isn’t sitting here with you,”

“True,” Stiles feigned disinterest, “You did buy me lunch, after all. Though I am half starved because you told me not to eat much earlier. My God!” He leaned back with all the false affront he could muster, “You planned this! You orchestrated my ultimate discomfort, hungry and cold, just so you could swoop in for the rescue! You’re more devious than you let on, sourwolf,” he let his voice drop lower as he mock growled, “I’m onto you though.”

“Yeah?” Derek snorted, amused.

“Yes,” Stiles nodded his head once with finality, “Don’t think it’s going to be that easy. I’m not that kind of omega. It’ll take more than a little food and superhuman body heat to sway me,”

Five minutes later, and Stiles was biting into the juiciest, tastiest burger he’d ever had grace his tongue. He moaned and Derek paused with his own burger half way to his mouth; the alpha was staring at his mouth.

Score!

“Good?” the alpha asked, his voice a little strained. Stiles might not have caught on if he hadn’t been listening for the slightest fluctuation in Derek’s stubbornly cool tone.

Stiles took another bite and let out another appreciate noise, “I lied, turns out I am totally that kind of omega,”

Derek cleared his throat and abruptly turned his attention to his own food.

Stiles was almost too enthralled with the burger to notice. Almost. He managed to keep his mental cheer safely inside his own mind.

He’d finally found a chink in that cool armor, and he couldn’t wait to exploit it. A not insignificant portion of brunch at O.R. Gasm had included suggestions. Melissa and Allison, along with a good smattering of random omegas as they passed their table, were convinced Stiles wouldn’t have a problem seducing himself into the pack (not that he needed, or necessarily wanted to- or so he told himself).

The trick, they had assured him, was to make sure he was the one doing the seducing, not being seduced. They hadn’t seemed concerned with the fact that Stiles’ experience with sensuality was limited to a couple weak practice heats when he was thirteen and thought duck-face was cute and alluring.

The omegas said he just had to get the alpha’s attention, and whatever worked for that should be worked over and over. Put on a show, they’d said, but don’t be too quick to carry it through.


Well, if the way Derek was letting his burger fall apart in his hands as he stared at Stiles was any indicator, he was pretty sure he had the alpha’s attention.

This was nothing like going out with Peter. The older alpha looked at him with a hungry patience borne from knowledge, knowledge that meant he didn’t have to imagine what Stiles tasted like because he already knew. Yesterday, Stiles had still been high on life throughout their date, and so worked up over the amazingness that was the existence of other omegas, he hadn’t felt the need or
inclination to chase after the attraction. Now though. Well. *Now though.*

“God, that’s good,” Stiles moaned, sucking his finger into his mouth and slurping up the grease and sauce that had leaked all over his hand.

Derek visibly shook himself.

“Setting the bar pretty high for yourself there, big guy,” he licked another finger as he blinked at Derek innocently, “I could definitely call this worth the drive. Sure you can top this?”

Derek was trying not to look at him. And failing, for the most part. “We have a reservation,”

Stiles leaned in and nudged him with his elbow, “Where at? Obviously, it’s not for food,”

“No, it’s not,” Derek finished his meal in a few quick bites.

Stiles finished licking his fingers clean with an indecent slurp. Derek’s ears turned pink and Stiles inwardly cheered.

“It’s a little further into the city,” Derek said as he started collecting their trash, “We might hit traffic,”

And they did. Sadly, the road forced Derek’s attention away enough that Stiles felt he lost ground in the flirtation/seduction department. It wasn’t a big loss though, since Derek kept him pretty well entertained by letting him talk about O.R. Gasm and his newfound appreciation for his dynamic.

“You’ve really never been around other omegas before?” Derek asked, his frown deep as he listened with his eyes trained on the road.

Stiles was practically bouncing in his seat, “Not really. There was one other omega at school, but Lydia was so far beyond my social sphere, it wasn’t even funny. Seriously. She wouldn’t have talked to me even if someone paid her,”

Derek huffed, “Her loss,”

Stiles grinned, pinking, “Thanks. I doubt she’s ever experienced any kind of feedback, yet alone real resonance. Hell, for all I know, she’s never really talked to another omega, and resonance requires at least three people. That’s what Allison said, anyway,”

“What else did you guys talk about?” Derek wondered, sounding genuinely interested, “Alphas tend to rely on posturing and thinly veiled insults when we get together. Even in our pack, and we’re unusually comfortable with each other. Somehow, I don’t see that happening with you,”

It was a funny mental image—collectively and individually, omegas were distinctly NOT dominant—and Stiles couldn’t stop chortling, not that he tried all that hard, “You have no idea! It was fantastic, we talked about EVERYTHING. Omega-owned business— did you know they’re fairly common, relatively speaking, I mean, consider how few of us there are compared to betas and alphas, and then there’s the social stigma—and Melissa told me all about the cafe and the food. Oh! And I had a great debate with this one guy about Marvel trumping DC, which I totally won, by the way; I never win anything, but Melissa thinks that’s probably because I’ve always been disadvantaged against more aggressive dynamics. And really, she’s probably right. I mean—”

There was not stopping him. Stiles had no filter to begin with, and excitement only made it worse. Fortunately, Derek didn’t seem to mind. The alpha nodded along and snuck glances at him, even humming in agreement or acknowledgment occasionally and only ever interrupting to ask a pointed question or make a brief comment.
Somewhere along the way, Stiles had the thought that Peter had been more of a talker, but not so much a great conversationalist since he was significantly less of a listener. Derek though… Derek listened.

Even Stiles’ Dad didn’t follow his ramblings so well. It was nice. Flattering, even.

So Stiles kept talking. He went into detail about the most minor interactions, steering clear of the one topic of conversation that had been most prevalent throughout the event, and certainly the most informative: Sex. He didn’t think telling Derek about all the tips and tales he’d heard about alphas and sex would be all that helpful at the moment. Besides, most of the omegas seemed to think alphas had no business knowing what naughty tricks an omega could have up their sleeve.

So yes, he kept talking, with heavily edited segments where sex had inevitably made its way into conversation.

“—know what I mean. It’s just that—wait, are we here?”

Derek’s face split into a grin that momentarily distracted him. “Yes, think you can put the story on pause long enough to enjoy yourself? And breathe?”

They were parking in a tall parking structure, and Stiles had been talking so emphatically that he’d completely missed any clue as to where they were. As he jumped out of the Camaro and met Derek at its front, he fidgeted and asked:

“Seriously though, where are we?”

Derek draped an arm over his shoulders and spoke casually: “It’s a rec center. We’ll be up on the third floor,”

Never one for athleticism, Stiles let Derek steer him inside with a growing sense of confusion and anxiousness. If Derek was expecting Stiles to wow him through sport, he was going to be disappointed and Stiles was going to be humiliated. Somehow, he didn’t think Derek would be that cruelly thoughtless.

He barely had a chance to badger the alpha for specifics before he realized exactly what was on the upper floors. He hadn’t quite narrowed it down until they were heading straight for the doors and it was obvious.

“Sky diving!?” Stiles all but squealed, grabbing Derek’s arm in mindless excitement, “We’re going to do indoor skydiving!? For real?!”

He had always wanted to do it, but his dad could never have afforded it. He would have loved to do it for real too, but most pilots had a no-omegas policy. Apparently, the insurance wasn’t worth risking such ‘precious cargo.’ Or some variation on that bullshit.

“How did you know?!” He was practically hanging off Derek’s arm like a hyper preschooler, “Oh my god, this is going to be so cool! How did you even know! I definitely didn’t say anything about it! I’ve only been here a couple weeks, I definitely would’ve remembered. How? Is mind reading a wolf thing?”

Derek ended his incessant chirping with a finger on his mouth, “Hush,” Derek smirked, applying only the slightest pressure to the omega’s lips, “You mentioned it on your profile,”

That’s right. The advisor at Nature’s Sanctum had suggested including ‘hopes and dreams’ when he’d complained about not having anything to write for the About Me section. He’d thought ‘stay
single till I completed at least one degree’ wouldn’t go over well, so a couple fun and mostly insignificant dreams had gone on the website instead.

Derek was caressing his lower lip, making it tingle not unlike how he’d done to his ear in the car, “I pay attention where it matters. Told you I care, didn’t I,” It wasn’t a question.

Still, Stiles thought the alpha deserved an answer. Unbidden, he remembered Melissa and Allison giggling at him yesterday as they delivered some not-so-ancient omega wisdom. Falling back on the remembered ease and confidence from the previous afternoon, Stiles stared deeply into Derek’s eyes and miraculously managed to hold off on the blushing and manic grinning.

At least until just after he’d wiped the smirk of the alpha’s face.

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He licked him.

The omega fucking licked him. Right on his finger. Tongue to skin. In public. Just the slightest peak of pink, pink tongue, a momentary brush of warmth and wet, before the taunting muscle disappeared again. Derek felt his own grin fade as all the blood in his body rushed south. And then Stiles was grinning at him, and even the bright blush couldn’t hide the pure mischievousness of those dimples and the light in his amber eyes.

Derek was struck dumb. Literally. By the time he’d managed to blink the shock away, Stiles had darted forward and slipped through the doors ahead of him.

His darling omega was dangerously close to running from him. It was a small miracle that Derek managed to hold the wolf at bay and not pounce on him. His eyes dropped to the omega’s pert, jean-clad ass, and his control had never been so tenuous.

And it only got worse.

The skydiving gear was form-fitting, and there was nothing more alluring than an excited, lithe omega bouncing on the balls of his feet, raring to go. He was turning heads, and Derek was certain Stiles had no idea the affect he was having. Even the beta instructing them how to dive kept looking, addressing the omega more than anyone else.

Stiles was blissfully oblivious as everyone around salivated after him.

Derek was no exception. He ended up sitting on the sidelines, entranced along with everyone else when the omega got his shot in the chamber. He’d taken one look at the body suit the attendant held out to him and shook his head—there was no way he’d fit in it without getting cited for public indecency. No alpha would if they were even the slightest bit aroused. No way it was happening with Stiles around.

Sure enough, one of the other prospective flyers, an alpha, handed back his suit as he turned around to watch Stiles walk by. Derek found he couldn’t really blame him, not without being hypocritical.

When Stiles dropped into his first free-fall, Derek, the other alpha and the two betas watching with them from the sidelines were braced for a scream—especially the alphas, who’s instincts would play havoc with them when it happened.

It didn’t.

Stiles laughed. The sound was nothing but pure joy and exhilaration, not the slightest bit of fear.
“Well I’ll be damned,” the other alpha said in a thick western accent. He looked pleasantly surprised, a little pink creeping up his neck.

Derek didn’t bother to voicing his agreement. He watched and listened, every last fiber of his being attuned to the omega. Stiles was hooting with laughter as he managed a summersault with the instructor’s careful assistance. The beta woman was still holding his hand, and she looked half-smitten as she laughed along and urged him into another roll.

Back on the ground, Derek could relate.

Just then, watching as Stiles had the time of his life being air-borne, Derek knew he was in deep trouble if Stiles decided anything other than to mate with him. He was half in love with him already.
Sixteen

Stiles woke up in the front seat of the Camaro just as Derek was leaning over him to unbuckle his seat belt.

“Hmm,” he squirmed in a contained stretch, and said with a sleepy grin: “Hey,”

Derek’s breath was warm on his face as he whispered, “Hey, we’re home,”

“ Noticed,” Stiles mumbled. He was still lethargic, and Derek’s car was more comfortable than his couch back in Beacon Hills. He didn’t want to move.

Derek stroked his cheek tenderly, “Come on, you should go to bed. It’s been a busy weekend for you,”

And it had been. The attendant at the Skydiving arena had given Stiles Derek’s abandoned flights, putting their departure for dinner and home a good hour later than expected. He remembered Derek saying it would be past midnight by the time they got home. A glance at the calm night surrounding them led him to think that prediction had been spot on.

It was late and he was exhausted and comfortable. He yawned. Maybe Derek would let him sleep in the car. It was nice. Smelled nice. Comfortable and safe.

Derek petted his face again, “Stiles,”

He whined, eyes already closed again, “Nope. I’m comfy,”

Derek huffed a little laugh, “Come on, omega. You deserve a real bed,”

“Says you,”

“Stiles,” Derek’s tone was somewhere between amused and determined.

“Can’t. I’m asleep. You’ll have to carry me,”

He had been aiming for a few moments more of teasing banter. Instead, he was hoisted up and held against that amazingly developed chest, Derek’s equally defined arms holding him securely. Stiles was large for an omega—almost as tall as Derek, actually; the ease with which the alpha carried and maneuvered him was impressive.

“Huh,” Stiles said, dumbstruck.

“Hmm?” Derek asked with his eyebrows as much as his voice, a cocky little curve to his lips.

“I didn’t actually think you’d do it. I half expected you to dump my lazy butt on the ground,”

“Never,” Derek reassured him shortly, tone casually certain, “Get the door,”

Deciding to just go with, Stiles lounged in the bridal-hold as he opened the front door. It was locked, naturally, but Derek merely wiggled his fingers so his keys jingled so Stiles could find them. Door unlocked, they stepped inside and Derek nudged it closed behind them with his foot. A minute later they repeated the performance, more-or-less, with Stiles’ bedroom door, Derek safely allowed entrance with the omega’s body in his arms.
Stiles was wide awake, and in the time it took them to get from the car to his bed, a slow burning arousal had lit deep in his belly. It was still at a low smolder, but eagerly ready to burn hotter at a moment’s notice. Stiles was perfectly ready and willing for Derek to lay him down and get on top of him.

He wasn’t so ready to be tossed, though.

He squealed in surprised exhilaration as he hit the bed with a bounce that had him pulling the bedspread off kilter. When he looked up, Derek was standing by the bed with his arms crossed over his chest and a satisfied smirk on his handsome face.

“Oh-ho! I see how it is—just go throwing the omega around ‘cause you can, with your—” he flailed a hand in Derek’s direction as he wiggled around gracelessly, trying to right himself, “muscles and scowly face. See if you get anywhere near this tonight, buddy!”

It was meant to be a goofy taunt, as he swatted his own backside.

The intense look on Derek’s face all but chased the levity from the room.

“Is that so,” the alpha’s words were a low rumble that sent shivers down Stiles’ spine.

Stiles may not have been prepared for the jolt of arousal that look and tone zapped him with. He fell back on his elbows like his strings had been cut, the air puffing out of him. From there, he gave the alpha an assessing look; if he paused as his gaze grazed over the alpha’s crotch, no one could blame him.

Licking his suddenly dry lips, he asked haltingly: “So, uh… how badly, exactly, do you need a full night’s sleep before work?”

The smirk on Derek’s face did nothing to ease the intensity of his expression, “Not badly,” Stiles spread his legs slightly, watching Derek’s eyes snap to the space instantly. He placed one foot on the bed, knee bent and swayed it from side-to-side like he saw an omega do in a movie once. He felt a little silly doing it, but only until he saw it worked. Then he just felt… sexy.


Ignoring his own blush, he said hotly, “I haven’t had actual, full-Monty sex yet. Not that I can remember anyway,”

He had it on good authority that Heat sex didn’t count. And by that, he meant like… thirty different omegas’ authority, actually.

Derek hadn’t laughed at his rom-com seduction yet, so Stiles kept it going. He bit his lip and gave a bashful grin and said clearly, “I’m thinking I should fix that, if you’re game,”

He must have said the magic words, because suddenly Derek was on him. Literally. He bounced on the mattress again as Derek landed above him, the alpha’s hands boxing him in by his ears while his knees bracketed Stiles’ hips. Derek’s face was inches from his own, his eyes glowing red and a deep, vibrating rumbling coming from his throat.

Oh god, Stiles could smell him. He was all spice and musk and sex and literally everything Stiles could ever want in a bedmate, in a, dare he say, lover.

Derek’s eyes were impossibly red and sinfully dark as he growled, “Are you sure?”
Stiles gulped, “Pretty sure,”

He was pretty sure this was going to be intense, and the anticipation was eerily similar to anxiousness in the way it settled, a hot coil deep in his belly. Only instead of inspiring nausea, this inspired nothing but desire.

Derek gave another rumbling growl and pinned him with his stare as he breathed hotly on the omega’s face, “Stiles. Be sure. Once I touch you, I’m not going to stop,”

Stiles was hypnotized by those red, smoldering eyes. His own eyes impossibly wide and his whole body burning hot, he practically whimpered the words, “Why’s that?”

He saw a flash of fang, so quick before Derek reined himself in and was biting out through blunt human teeth, “You’ve had me on knife’s edge all damn day. No wolf’s control is that foolproof,”

Stiles would have cheered if his brain wasn’t so busy getting deep fried by the need scorching through him. His face felt so hot that for a moment he had the inane thought that he was going into Heat again. Which was insane, since he’d only just finished one two weeks ago.

“Stiles,” Derek demanded hungrily, “If you’re not completely sure, I need to leave right now. Yes or no,”

There was nothing more to it. Stiles breathed, “Yes,”

What followed didn’t even have a name. It wasn’t a kiss, it wasn’t even making out. He supposed it was something like foreplay, but the term felt woefully insufficient. All he knew was that Derek was practically devouring him in a flurry of mouths and tongue and wandering hands and heavy, sleek muscle. And then there was skin, and Stiles stopped thinking, stopped even trying to think.

He just gave up and let Derek overwhelm him in the best way possible.

He didn’t have the presence of mind to figure out removing his clothes, yet alone Derek’s. Fortunately, the alpha was well ahead of him; maybe later, Stiles would mourn the new sweater and jeans, and he’d probably be a little concerned that a set of claws had come so close to his vulnerable… well, everything. But in the moment, he couldn’t care less. He just laughed, husky and bright and totally foreign, as Derek tore through every bit of clothing keeping their bodies apart.

“Ah!” Stiles threw his head back and cried out as Derek’s powerful, gloriously naked body dropped between his legs and his mouth closed over his left nipple. Derek gave the nub a harsh nip and Stiles gave a shocked cry, “Ah-hu! Derek!”

The alpha’s groan was muffled by his mouthful of flesh. He had the whole of the omega’s areola and a decent bit of meat beyond it, and he sucked hard.

Stiles screamed, his knees locked in tight against Derek’s sides, and an orgasmic shudder wracked his body. Except… not quite.

Oh, there was wetness, plenty of it, dribbling from his cock a little and absolutely gushing from his hole. But his insides didn’t quite contract right, and while his cock strained and wept a little extra, there was no flood of watery omega spunk.

Eyes staring wide up at the ceiling, Stiles felt a confusing jumble of amorous and cheated. He canted his hips up, thrusting against Derek’s washboard abs and gave an aggravated whine. Derek’s hands held him firmly, pinning him to the bed even as they followed the line of his body downward.
Stiles snarled, fighting the pressure of Derek’s hips, futilely, “Touch me, touch me!”

And Derek heard him. Boy, did he hear him.

Derek pulled back, startled by the sudden aggravation in the omega’s demanding tone. Stiles gave a frustrated whine as Derek’s hips lifted back. He meant to get a little distance so he could figure out why his omega was suddenly peeved, but then…

Well, he was totally distracted by the view.

Stiles was all gloriously pale flesh delightfully painted with beauty marks. He was slender and lithe, his torso perfectly defined with the slight hint of lean muscle typical of his dynamic. But there were certain omega aspects Derek hadn’t had the chance to admire before, and his cock twitched as he took in those details: Stiles’ nipples were dark pink and plump in a way that spoke specifically of omega arousal and fertility (the right one was noticeably flushed, it and the surrounding flesh bruised from Derek’s mouth), and lower down… well. Lower down was the stuff of Derek’s wet dreams.

His cock was like the rest of him: large for an omega, maybe 4 inches at most and perfectly dwarfed next to an alpha. It was slender and deeply reddened, though not as dark as the winking hole bellow his tight, small balls. The furled opening was dark red, purpling at its center, and shiny with slick. The omega was lying in a puddle of the stuff, his inner thighs drenched, and as Derek watched more gushed out.

“Oh, Stiles,” he whispered, awed.

The omega in question wiggled his hips pointedly and made a half-groan-half-hiss, like an irritated cat. Because he was watching, Derek saw Stiles’ hole clench desperately at the same time his cock lurched.

As Stiles let out more discontent and increasingly frustrated noises, Derek almost couldn’t believe what he was about to do. Hand trembling, Derek reached out and brushed two fingers over Stiles’ hole.

“Naaaaa-uuuugh!” Stiles arched, his voice going high and needy.

Derek growled darkly in response and petted him there again. His fingertips were soaked, and the third pass was firmer. A thrill ran down his back as he felt the omega’s flesh give easily, soft and hot and needing. It wouldn’t take much at all to get inside.

“You…” Derek swallowed, not sure if he’d ever been so excited in his life, “You are so… so ready,”

Stiles nodded his head frantically, canting his hips up, “Yes! Yes! Please! Derek!”

He said his name like a plea, and Derek was powerless to refuse him. Not like he wanted to.

“Like this, baby?” Oh, sweet god, his finger slide in effortlessly, immediately surrounded by wet heat and perfection.

Stiles was nodding and squirming, “Yeah! Yeah! There! More!”

Derek barely fitted his second finger inside before Stiles was reaching down and grabbing his wrist with both hands. The omega was just acting on instinct as he manipulated Derek’s fingers and then
“Fuck,” Derek moaned softly as Stiles plunged his hand down and forced all but Derek’s thumb inside him.

“That! Yes, we should—ah!—do that!” Stiles agreed, his hips and thighs already working himself over Derek’s fingers. Stiles’ grip on his wrist vanished as the omega fisted his hands in the bed, using the added leverage to rock himself back and forth.

Shaking himself out of his amazed stupor, Derek got with the program, before the omega could use his hand like a damn dildo to get himself off. He pinned Stiles down with one hand on his hip, and his other hand got to work, fingers no longer placid but determined and quick. He pumped in and out, spreading the digits and watching as Stiles’ rim stretched readily, releasing a flood of slick between his fingers.

God, but this omega was incredible.

“Yes, yes, please, Derek. Derek, please!”

“Don’t come, omega,” Derek growled, squeezing his hip warningly.

Stiles gaped, breathing harsh and those amber eyes wide and frantic, “But… But! Ugh, Fine!” he whined.

He leaned forward, met Stiles’ eyes as his own flashed red, let him see a little fang, “You’ll come on my cock, or not at all, understand?”

Stiles whimpered. His cheeks flushed bright red, his wriggling going still as he looked up at Derek through his lashes and bit his lip even as he grinned. He nodded, “O-Okay,”

“Good omega,” Derek purred, sitting back and giving a particularly deep, hard push inside.

Stiles mewed. So he did it again. And again. It was surprisingly easy to ignore his own painfully engorged member when he was so focused on Stiles’ trembling, dripping body.

And then Stiles, the sweet, precious thing, began to cry. His eyes watered and he released a fistful of sheet to reach for Derek, “Please, Derek! I’m ready. I’m so ready. Please!”

“I know, baby, sh,” and he did: Stiles’ body was still tight, like the perfect omega he was, but so open and wet it was impossible to get any better. The only thing to do was to finish it. “I’ve got what you need.”

Stiles dropped his legs to the sides and accepted Derek between them like a dream. Derek’s hand came away dripping and he barely had to aim to get his cock where it wanted to go. Stiles met him half way, and the slick slide as they joined was nothing short of magical.

It stole the breath from his lungs, and he froze so he could fight back the urge to blow his load immediately. He had only a split second to regain his control, because when he didn’t immediately start thrusting Stiles took matters into his own hands. Stile undulated desperately, and while the rest of him worked on achieving friction his hole convulsed around Derek like a hungry, greedy maw.

“Ah! Ah! Aaaah! Derek! I’m… I can’t…”

The sound Derek made was animalistic, even to his own ears. He thrust forward hard enough to push the omega up the bed by inches. Stiles’ hole grabbed at him with every withdraw, his legs
clamping on the alpha’s waist with surprising strength, and he dug blunt nails into Derek’s biceps in a delectable sting that made the alpha moan.

“Nugh!” Stiles cried, twisting and pulling and straining underneath him, ever more desperate with each new thrust. “Derek—I… I’m… Der—ah! Alpha!”

Derek hunched over, his back tensed impossibly tight, his cock fucking throbbed. Groaning, he bit out in a broken voice, “Come for me, Stiles,”

That was all it took. The omega fell apart under him, spasming around him, and Derek just stared down in wonder as that perfect, slender omega cock spurted watery spunk all over the omega’s heaving belly and chest, completely untouched. The hot, slippery muscle surrounding his cock spasmed beautifully.

Derek didn’t need to keep fucking after that. He straightened his arms to keep his weight off his gasping omega and let the orgasm take over.

“Knot me,” Stiles murmured softly, his hands and legs pulling at Derek’s body to get him closer, deeper. “Knot me, Derek. Knot me. Please, alpha. I want it,”

The verbal order wasn’t necessary, but Derek appreciated the reassurance that Stiles wanted it anyway. His knot had already started forming, and he’d started rocking forward in an instinctive attempt to get it fully inside the moment he started to come. He was just barely able to force it through before it was too engorged to pass without harming the omega. Stiles gave a sharp gasp and his breathing stalled as he popped inside.

“Breathe, Stiles,” Derek grunted out, his lower back tightening as he started to fill the body beneath him.

Stiles released a long, low groan as his limps relaxed. He flopped back on the bed as if deflated. Derek continued coming to the beautiful sight of a totally satisfied omega.

It ended up being the longest knot he’d ever popped.

“How is that even possible,” Stile whispered to the ceiling nearly an hour later as they relaxed, side by side in the bed.

Derek chuckled, not bothering to open his eyes or lift his head from the pillow.

“It’s not possible,” Stiles continued, sounding suddenly convinced, “It can’t be,”

Derek hummed, smiling despite himself. He said flatly: “It is,”

“Bullshit,” Stiles was similarly matter-of-fact. “I’m still so full, and I already dropped like a gallon of semen between the sheets and the toilet. There’s no way I could fit more,”

An absurd burst of pride filled his chest at the thought that his omega was still holding his seed inside. He rolled onto his side and reached out to gently rubbed his palm over Stiles’ flat belly. He closed is eyes to savor the moment, “You could. You did. During Heat, you absorb more and burn it more. ‘Omega biology is hostile like that,’ right? Or something,”

“Yeah,” Stiles giggled at hearing Derek quote Melissa.

His long fingers danced over the back of Derek’s hand on his stomach and he felt Stiles turn his head to look at him. The alpha opened his eyes and grinned when he found Stiles’ bambi eyes up close
and glowing.

“Yes?” he asked, not resisting the urge to lean forward and kiss that sweet, upturned nose.

Stiles’ smile was gorgeous. And then he punched Derek in the gut with his next words, “I think I like this whole sex thing. But I should probably try it a few more times, just to be sure. What are alpha refractory periods like?”

The answer was apparently far shorter than Derek previously knew.
Seventeen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Monday morning saw Stiles fast asleep when Derek had to leave to get ready for work. While he’d hated showering and washing away the scent of a thoroughly pleased omega from his skin, Derek hadn’t let it sour his mood. In fact, despite (or because of?) the precious little sleep he’d gotten, Derek found he was having a particularly great day.

Splendid, one might even say. And it just got better.

“You are a nuisance,” Peter scoffed from his perch on the corner of Derek’s desk. His arms were folded over his chest defensively and he was glaring down his nose at Derek, not unlike how he used to when he found him and Laura trying to break into his wolvesbane liquor stash when they were kids.

Derek wasn’t usually one for smiling in public, but this was a worthwhile exception. He simply leaned even further back in his chair and let the grin take over his whole face.

“One night doesn’t mean anything,” Peter reminded him, narrowing his eyes, “I spent an entire Heat with him,”

“Yes,” Derek agreed amicably, “And I spent three rounds with him while he was totally sober instead of desperate and surrounded by strangers,”

“One night,” Peter spat.

Holding up three fingers, Derek wiggled the digits and said brightly, “Three rounds. And one knot. Outside of Heat,”

Peter huffed in aggravation. The set of his shoulders and pained expression proved him begrudgingly impressed.

Derek leaned forward toward his computer, body language screaming dismissal even as he said: “He’s mine,”

The ‘you might as well give up now’ went unsaid.

It was the truth. Derek knew it with every fiber of his being, now that he knew what it was like to have the omega dependent on him, under him, even if only for one day and night. What had started as mutual attraction similar to what his sister and uncle probably felt had quickly evolved into a near obsessive desire by the time he’d gotten some one-on-one time with the omega. And now that he knew Stiles reciprocated at least in part… there was no way in hell Derek was letting him go.

He just had to make everyone else understand that.

“Does he know that?” Peter asked pointedly as he sashayed out the office.

Including Stiles. First and foremost, Stiles. Always.

For now, Derek settled with growling at his uncle.

Peter laughed, “Eloquent as always, dear nephew. It’s a wonder you managed to make any
impression at all, what with only saying three words to him the entire day,”

Derek huffed, refusing to admit that his poor aptitude with language was a hurdle he was worried about, “I listen,” he refuted blandly.

Peter rolled his eyes from the doorway, “Yes, and that will help you get him through a Heat how, exactly?”

“Omegas are more than just their Heats, Peter,”

Stiles was more. Unbidden, the memory of the boy’s carefree laugh as he flew yesterday surfaced in Derek’s mind. So much more.

“Of course,” Peter agreed rather offhandedly, “but no matter how pleasant it is outside of Heat, one bad Heat is all it takes to ruin your chances. Watch yourself, nephew,”

Derek’s growl followed his conniving uncle down the hall.

Peter, for all his manipulative cleverness, wasn’t going to win Derek’s omega. He was sure of it. That didn’t mean the bastard might not have a point, though. Feeling an irritating tightness in his shoulders, Derek rolled his neck and pulled up a search engine on his computer.

Stiles was going to pick him for his next Heat. Derek was sure of it; the chemistry was there, and so was the passion and, at least for Derek, the not-so-faint beginnings of emotion. Stiles would choose him. And when he did, Derek would be ready.

Without shame, he typed: how to satisfy male omega heat.

By the time Stiles woke on Monday, it was nearly noon. He had a brief pang of disappointment that Derek hadn’t woken him, but it vanished moments later when he spotted the note from Derek on his pillow, which told him the alpha was happy to survive off caffeine instead of REM for the day since they’d stayed up clear through the night making love. Making love.

Stiles couldn’t stop grinning every time he read those words.

He read them often, sneaking peaks at the note from the pocket of his sweatshirt throughout the day.

“You and Derek had fun last night, I take it?” Talia grinned at him over the kitchen counter as he helped her chop vegetables for lunch’s stir fry.

It was nearly 2, and Talia had requested he and Erica cut their walk through the woods short so he could eat with her. At first he thought she merely wanted to spend some quality time with him, but now that he was alone in a room with her for the first time since immediately after his heat, he could help feeling that he should be wary. The fact she’d insisted on making his favorite meal was something of red flag too.

Her tone as she alluded to last night certainly had his defenses flaring up, near nonexistent as they may be. He really couldn’t wait for the day he stopped blushing around this family. He was starting to think he might stick around long enough for it to happen, too.

Haltingly, he answered, “Yeah, you could say that,”

She grinned and reached out to rub his cheek. The touchy-feely way the Hales naturally operated
was starting to feel less peculiar and more comforting with every day. It was a wolf thing, all about comfort and reassurance and family, but more importantly pack; Laura had explained it to him the first time she’d hugged and scented him after taking herself out of the Heat Contract.

“I’m glad,” Talia’s smile lost its teasing edge and turned uncommonly soft.

Feeling like he was missing something, Stiles tilted his head to the side and asked: “What’s that supposed to mean?”

She shrugged, still smiling. “Derek’s quiet, but he’s plenty dominant and not easily…” she paused, seeming to search for the right word, “entertained,” not liking the sound of the word, she shook her head and reworded, “Or satisfied, in a way. Of all the alphas in my pack, Derek’s the one I worry is most likely to go off on his own and never come back,”

Frowning, Stiles considered it, “Wouldn’t that be a good thing, though? Like, maybe it’s time to leave the nest, er… den. Something like that?”

She chuckled humorlessly, “Of course, if he were a human alpha. But he’s not. Derek’s a wolf, and wolves need their pack. Our bonds are more than biological, they’re magic and integral to our health and sanity,”

“Then why would Derek want to leave?” Stiles wondered aloud.

She sighed, and for a moment the sizzle of the hot pan was all the noise he could hear. “Derek’s not much of a people-person to begin with, if you haven’t noticed. And he’s, well, he’s had a rough time. His bonds to the pack are somewhat less than the rest of us,” she paused in stirring the pan, and when Stiles glanced over, he saw a strained, unreadable look on her face.

“Talia?” he prompted softly.

She blinked and seemed to rally her thoughts, “Sorry, it’s just… there was an incident, years ago, and well… Derek blames himself for the way it affected our family. Over time, I guess it just… it just helped him to cope to put up walls, even with the pack. Sometimes when he gets aggravated or stressed, I worry that he thinks he’d be fine on his own. Or worse, that we’ll be better off if he left,” she snuck a look at him over her shoulder, “That’s why I’m glad you’re here, Stiles,”

A strange jumble of nerves rolled through him at the gravity in her stare. Feeling increasingly awkward, Stiles rounded the counter and dumped the bowl of chopped bell peppers into the pan, “… I haven’t decided anything,”

Even he thought his mumbling was half-hearted and more than hinting at a lie.

The way she quirked her brow was so like Derek, it was scary, “Haven’t you?”

Stiles knew his shrug was far from believable, his tone probably too defensive, “Just because we might spend my second Heat together, doesn’t mean anyone’s ready to get mated,”

He truly believed that, too. Genuine frustration leaked into his voice, and he knew he was in the right to remind her that he was free to not mate into her pack if he so chose. It didn’t stop an annoyingly sure, if small, voice in the back of his head reminding him how strong and deceptively sweet Derek had proved himself the other night.

For Christ’s sake, it was one date!

Talia’s smile had faded, but the sweetness lingered in her expression as she surveyed him. “True, but
that hasn’t stopped you from having an affect on this family. And as a mother, I’m glad to see my
son so captivated by someone. And as pack leader, I’m confident I can recognize pack when I see
them,” finally, a hint of that patented Hale humor colored her tone, “And Stiles?”

“Hm?” he said, licking Szechuan sauce off his pinky in an awkwardly blatant attempt to avoid her
gaze.

“The only way I accept omegas in this pack is through mating,” she gave the stir fry a hard stir and
carried on matter-of-factly, “And between you and I, I’d much prefer grandkids to nieces and
nephews,”

Stiles choked, damn nearly spitting out his mouthful of saliva and sauce.

The bubble of cocky joy Derek had been enjoying all day on Monday unfortunately popped when
he came home to find Scott and Laura on the front lawn, glaring up at the house at large.

Neither of them looked happy. More importantly, they both smelled anxious and angry.

He headed straight to them, barely pausing to ensure the Camaro’s door closed fully, “What
happened?”

“Three of the cameras malfunctioned,” Laura redirected her scowl from the second story to her
phone, swiping furiously, “Two near the south-west border, one less than a mile from the house;”

Derek growled. Three cameras, when they hadn’t had so much as a glitch in months. And Kate
Argent was still being sighted around NYC. No way that was a coincidence. And the west-ward
border was near where the old house used to be. Where Kate would be most familiar.

Fuck.

“What can I do?” he gritted through his teeth.

“Erica and Talia are already checking the perimeter,” Scott informed him, “Laura and I are
rearranging surveillance on—”

As Scott gave him the rundown, a terrible thought occurred to him: Stiles was prone to wander the
woods when he got bored. And the omega didn’t know there was an active threat, per Talia’s orders.

“Stiles!” he interrupted Scott, clapping a clawed hand on the other alpha’s shoulder.

Scott’s eyes flashed red in reaction, even his generally-chill personality not tolerating that kind of
aggression from another alpha.

“Where’s Stiles?” Derek demanded, even as he snatched his hand back.

Scott shook it off, rolling his shoulders as his eyes returned to brown. “Uh… I think—”

“You think?” Derek snarked, “Or you know?”

“Calm down, Derek,” Laura snapped, “Isaac’s on omega detail today. I called him as soon as I
cought the possible breach; they were already inside, but Isaac promised he’d keep him contained till
Talia gives him the all-clear;”

“I think they’re playing Mario Kart,” Scott added helpfully.
Derek took a deep, calming breath as the cold knot in his chest released. Thank God, Stiles hadn’t been anywhere near that area of the woods. The fact that Kate was back in town was bad enough and learning that she’d had her psychotic eyes on his omega, had threatened him even, had sent the whole family into a protective rage. If Stiles had come across her today, intruding on their land… Derek couldn’t stomach the thought.

Kate Argent won’t get anywhere near his omega. He’d kill her if she so much as tried.

“Allison and her Dad still haven’t heard from her,” Scott continued, his own unhappy scowl in place. “I told Allison if she’s gonna go out alone, she should carry the taser Chris gave her, even if she hates it,”

Laura shook her head, “Kate won’t waste her time contacting Allison. It’s not like she’s targeting the pack,”

“No,” Derek agreed, “Just the family,”

Scott hissed, “Same difference!”

_Not to Kate_, Derek thought sullenly as Laura ruffled Scott’s hair with an affectionate grin.

“I’m gonna check in the Stiles,” Derek informed them as he turned to head inside, “Then I’ll do my own perimeter run,”

He knew Talia and Erica already had it covered. He knew the cameras and motion sensors were already being reconfigured. He knew every defense they had was being double and trouble checked.

But this was Kate, and she’d always felt like his problem.

Neither Laura or Scott tried to suggest otherwise.

Chapter End Notes

You guys are A-freakin-mazing.
Seriously, I live for comments and you never disappoint.
There was only so much of Talia’s teasing Stiles could handle. By Thursday he found himself wishing she would go back to work in the city office, but no. She was stubbornly working exclusively from home, and apparently bringing more and more of the pack with her. He was fairly certain he’d now met most, if not all of the pack. And every last one of them seemed just so super keen on hanging out with him.

He wanted to go to the grocery store? How convenient, Isaac loved grocery stores!

He fancied a walk in the woods? Erica and Boyd were all over that shit.

Allison invited him out to lunch? Oh, yeah, Scott invited himself along too. Because of course.

He was bored and felt like window shopping at a local craft fair? Suddenly Laura had a newfound interest in hand-made pottery and just had to come along.

The only member of the pack who didn’t go out of the way to hang with him seemed to be Cora, and even she deigned to follow him to the mall one day when they were both numb with boredom. They’d ended up in a Barnes and Noble diligently pretending the other didn’t exist despite constantly being less than five feet apart. He suspected she was vetting him, in case he ended up mated into the family.

It was all very strange. Half the time, he didn’t think Isaac or Boyd particularly liked him either. So before long, he started to suspect they were all hanging out with him under Talia’s orders.

Because Talia was absolutely playing him, and not even bothering to disguise it.

After dropping the grandkids comment on him over lunch on Monday, Talia hadn’t let up an inch about him and Derek. Or him and babies. Or just babies in general. Clearly, now that she’d decided him becoming pack was a forgone conclusion, she wanted to make sure he got along with the rest of the pack. Naturally.

She insisted on having lunch all together, like a big happy family. It was a bit startling to realize how nice that was, actually; Stiles was an old hand at cooking for himself and his dad, but it was another thing entirely feeding anywhere from five to twelve people. Suddenly, the kitchen was a social hub, and cooking was part of the entertainment rather than a chore. And the satisfaction of having a tableful of people singing their appreciation and praise?

Yeah, alright, maybe it was better than nice.

Stiles was beginning to think the smiling omegas in KitchenAid ads might be more genuine than he’d previously suspected.

And then Peter just had to go and ruin it.

“No feeding the hungry hordes today?”

Stiles squeaked and jumped as Peter’s voice broke the quiet in the kitchen. In fact, he jumped right into the alpha’s sturdy chest, where the wolf had magically appeared directly behind him.

“Nope,” he said with a bashful smile, “I was just throwing together a couple omelets for me and Isaac,”
“I heard,” Peter leaned against the counter beside the stove as Stiles went to dump the last of the shredded cheese in the pan, “I ran into Isaac in the hall, he was on his way up to Talia’s study. Hope you don’t mind me as a substitute?”

“Oof,” Stiles shot him a doubtful glance, “I don’t know, Isaac really earned this omelet by letting me kick his butt at Smash Bros,”

Peter leaned close enough that Stiles could feel his breath on his cheek as he murmured: “Oh? I’m sure we can think of something appropriate for me to earn it, don’t you? Unless you’d prefer something inappropriate, hm?”

Biting his lip to avoid the urge to giggle, Stiles slid away to grab a plate from the cupboard. After a moment’s pause to get control of himself, he asked, “What did you have in mind?”

Peter shrugged, the smirk falling from his face as he nonchalantly answered: “How about a sexual favor of your choosing?”

Stiles fumbled with the spatula and caught only most of the omelet on the plate. “P-Peter!” he cried, only partially faking scandalized. No matter how frequently it happened, he still found the Hales’ undeniable confidence and Peter’s particular forwardness shocking.

Looking pleased with himself, Peter chuckled as he brought Stiles a second plate, “I just thought I’d offer,”

Feeling like his face was as hot as the stovetop, Stiles stubbornly turned his back to him, “What if I had burned myself!?” he teased, part petulant and part impressed, “You—you can’t just say things like that, out of nowhere!”

Peter made a noncommittal hum and let his fingers drag over the expanse of Stiles’ shoulders, the touch just barely felt through the layers of his shirts, “I wouldn’t say it’s out of nowhere, sweetheart. You look downright edible yourself standing there in my kitchen,”

Rolling his eyes, Stiles plated the second omelet and opened his mouth to retort, but then:

“It makes it so easy to imagine you, my picturesque little omega: barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen —”

Just like that, any sexy thoughts Peter had inspired in Stiles’ head were doused with ice water.

Unfortunately, things didn’t really look up from there the rest of the day. Preoccupied with Peter’s blunt admission that he was already thinking about having babies with him—someday or tomorrow, it didn’t really make much difference to Stiles at the moment—and Talia’s relevant taunting, Stiles hid the rest of the day in his room. Later, when Scott came by to take over the second remote control from Isaac, he’d barely managed to get over the mortification from lunch.

Hours later still, in a spur of the moment decision to rip the proverbial band aid all the way off, Stiles braced himself. He mustered up all the bravado in him and dropped the idea of babies on Derek while cuddling on his couch and watching Star Trek. Derek, true to form, hadn’t responded verbally, but it was almost worse: the heat in his eyes and the low, eager rumble in the alpha’s chest told him exactly how much Derek liked the idea. One massive hand rubbed over Stiles’ stomach possessively the rest of the night.

It was all rather panic-inducing.

Stiles wasn’t ready to have babies. He wasn’t even ready to consider having babies. He practically
“What did you do?”

“I’m going to need a little more to go on, nephew,”

“Bullshit. What did you do?”

“Context would be nice,”

“Peter,” Derek growled, bracing his fists on Peter’s desk and loomed over him.

The older alpha paused his staring at the computer screen, deigning to turn his eyes to Derek even if the rest of him remained still and directed at his work, “Derek,” he mocked, “What do you want? Remember to use your words, now,”

Glowering at him, Derek said shortly: “Stiles,”

Finally abandoning his work, Peter leaned back in his chair, “What makes you think I—”

Derek flashed his alpha eyes and growled louder. Peter’s face registered a moment of alarm; it wasn’t exactly appropriate workplace decorum, and Peter could probably count on one hand the number of times Derek had ever challenged him, even minorly.

Eyes flaring himself, Peter jerked forward and hissed: “I didn’t do a damn thing!” then he stood up, stepped back and seemed to collect himself. He wouldn’t look Derek in the eye, “I noticed he was a little… standoffish this morning though,”

Derek snorted. Relatively speaking, the omega had been nearly frigid toward them this morning before they’d left for work. He’d been suspiciously uptight and disinclined towards much intimacy this past weekend, but Stiles was hardly the only one; with Kate still at large, the entire pack was on a hair trigger, they’d all figured the omega was simply picking up on the tension.

But Stiles didn’t know about Kate. Then this morning, Stiles had avoided meeting his eyes, and he saw him shy away from Peter more than once. He’d scampered off to the kitchen to clean up from breakfast rather than hug either of them goodbye, as he had become accustomed to.

Peter’s sigh was the slightest bit petulant, “It wasn’t anything I did, I swear!”

“You said something to him,” Derek declared angrily.

“Not to the best of my knowledge—”

“Pet—oh! Derek, you’re here!” Scott McCall interrupted as he skidded around the corner. He looked between the two of them with wide eyes, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” they both answered.

Scott looked less than impressed, “Really? Because it’s apparently important enough that neither of you have been answering your phones,”

Immediately, both Hale men went patting their pockets. Peter retrieved his phone and frowned down at it as Derek grunted in even greater aggravation.
“Must have left it in my car,” he said to Scott with an expression too pissed to pass for apologetic.

“Mine was on silent,” Peter likewise didn’t bother with meaningless apologies, he was already raising the phone to his ear, “Laura called three times,”

“Yeah,” Scott scoffed, “That’s why she called me. Someone disabled the alarms along the north-east border of the pack territory,”

“Dammit,” Peter growled as he up and ran out the door.

He was hot on Derek’s heels.

Stiles’ third weekend in NY had been uncomfortable, to say the least. As quickly as he’d acknowledged where he was on the babies issue, he’d just as quickly made a few other realizations. It was a weekend full of epiphanies.

Firstly, he was already at home in the Hale house. He knew where everything was in that kitchen, had left his own skid marks on the driveway, even rearranged things in some of the cabinets because he could. This place didn’t just feel like it, it was home.

Secondly, he totally understood Talia’s preference for him to mate with her son over her brother. Besides wanted to climb him like a tree every chance he got, Stiles was becoming increasingly aware of just how considerate and sweet the younger alpha was. He could flirt and probably fuck with Peter all day and enjoy himself, but that was it; with Derek there was the potential for more.

And thirdly. He desperately needed a little breathing room to process all these thoughts and more.

By Monday morning, he was just about jumping out of his skin. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d spent more than an hour alone. It was past time for this omega to have some Me Time. And not the naughty kind. The mental health and wellbeing kind.

So after a game of pool with Laura, Stiles dashed to the kitchen. Instead of waiting for her and Talia to join him in a couple hours, he made himself a sandwich and left a note on the counter, letting them know he’d be out for a walk and planned to have lunch at his favorite spot.

He wasn’t surprised to find what a relief it was to get out of the house on his own for a bit.

The reminder of kids had really thrown him, and while he’d always wanted children someday, it’d always been a far-off hypothetical hinging on the idea that he’d somehow find a compatible alpha. Well, now that looked like a distinct reality. It was a little bit terrifying.

He came here to earn some easy cash to help get his dad on his feet and himself into school. He didn’t come here to settle down.

As he followed the familiar, unmarked path through the trees, he couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty. Most omegas would kill to be where he was, how he was. Hell, Stiles had to admit he wasn’t ready to give it up any time soon, if he was perfectly, uncomfortably honest with himself. And he did want kids. Eventually. All this anxiety was just sort of… silly.

And it didn’t help that the whole kids-thing turned out to have such an interesting effect on Stiles’ libido. Mainly, it efficiently doused it like nothing had since he’d first presented when he was a freaking tween. Neither Derek nor Peter seemed to have noticed or cared about the unusually low degree of his arousal, nor the way it had taken to stuttering out to a halt during normally charged
moments. Then again… it had only been… what, a day? Alright, maybe three, since he’d been blindsided by repeated baby sentiments.

So why was he so worked up over this still?

Maybe he really did just need to clear his head. Get a little peace and quiet, commune with nature or something.

That wasn’t all pretense either. The Hale’s land was spectacular. Peter, Laura, and Scott liked to talk at length about the land that was their healthy and expansive pack territory. Even Derek seemed inexorably proud whenever Stiles brought it up. Every time Stiles wondered through, he was awed and humbled by its beauty, which hadn’t been exaggerated. Especially most recently, as summer slowly began to fade. The bizarre mesh of various tree species and the encroaching Fall gave the area a burst of color and variety that they promised him wouldn’t peak for a few months yet. It was every bit as gorgeous and natural as the house and the wolves who inhabited it. It was majestic and wild and just the right amount of spooky.

Except for Jared’s Bridge (as Stiles had taken to calling it; it didn’t have an official title or anything). There was nothing spooky here, Stiles acknowledged as he sat down at the apex of the bridge and pulled his sandwich from his jacket pocket. Here it was all calm, quiet woods and the soothing trickle of water.

Despite the occasional rustle of woodland critters trying to spook him.

Stiles froze with his sandwich halfway to his mouth and listened for a moment. It was a near miss, but he was getting better at not jumping every time a squirrel—

“And who let you out, pet?”

Stiles dropped his lunch and twisted around. The woman from the art gallery was leaning against a tree, her lanky figure clad in jeans and leather instead of a cocktail dress. Her eyes were just as cold and leering as before.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded harshly as the hair on his neck stood up. He got to his feet with a wobbly sort of hop and took a couple steps back, away from her.

“Oh, you know,” she said nonchalantly as she looked him up and down, “Felt like a walk,”

“This is Hale land,” Stiles clenched his fists, remembering how Laura had reacted to this woman, “You shouldn’t be here,”

She shrugged as she stepped closer and fluttered her fingers over the first bridge rail. Stiles backed further, not liking the amused smirk on her face as she studied the paw prints nearest her.

“You sure, omega? Think I read somewhere that the preserve is public domain,”

He stumbled as his back heel came down wrong on the last board of wood. “I, uh, think you mean public property,”

Her eyebrows went up as she smiled, mockingly impressed, “That’s right! You’re the wolf-bait with the smart mouth! I was hoping I’d get to see you again,”

She was advancing on him. She’d made it across most of the bridge when he’d only managed a couple backwards stumbles. She looked him up and down, licking her lips.
Nervous, he swallowed despite a too-dry mouth, “I uh… feel like I should say I’m flattered,” he jerked backward as his ankle rolled, passing over a loose stick, “But I’d be lying.”

She laughed, the sound shockingly loud and genuinely amused. It made Stiles feel sick.

“Huh, funny thing, actually,” he wiped sweat out of his eye, still backing towards the house, “I grew up reading message boards with omegas who’d been cornered, or caught, or… or chased by alphas. I never really understood why these guys kept talking about themselves like prey animals—sort of felt like reinforcing stereotypes, y’know—”

“I know,”

Now, with the hair on his arms standing up straight, he finally got it. God, but he was shaking, literally trembling. “Yeah. Yeah, I totally get it now,”

She gave a vague little hum, still advancing.

Stiles back peddled, fighting the urge to turn and run. He didn’t like the idea of having her at his back, “You uh… you have a problem with the Hales. I get that. I totally appreciate that. But I have nothing to do with whatever’s going on here, you know. Of course, you know. I’m just, just saying… I’m. Fuck,” he blew the air in his lungs and threw up his hands. This was fucking useless, “You’ll chase me if I run. Won’t you?”

She winced exaggeratedly, letting it morph into a sinister grin, “Well, yeah. Like a prey animal,”

“Fuck,” Stiles choked, “What—what the hell am I supposed to do with that!”

“Run,”
WARNING: if you have problems reading about sexual assault, I suggest skipping the first scene. Stiles is NOT raped in this fic, but Kate definitely crosses well beyond the bad-touch line. You have been warned.

He ran.

Or rather, he meant to run. He meant to turn and get as far away from this creep as quick as his skinny legs could carry him. And he wouldn’t stop until he was safely locking the front door behind him, preferably with a pack of werewolves between him and her.

That’s what he intended anyway.

Instead, just as he started to twist on his back heel, he had a good view of the alpha coming at him fast. He flailed as she lunged at him, ending up flat on his butt with her cackling over him.

“Haha!” she bent over laughing, and Stiles noticed the gun sticking out of her waistband, “Oh, you are just too precious! Where did they find you, sweet thing,”

“Get the fuck away from me!” Stiles barked, scrambling to his feet and making a run for the house.

His knees hit the ground a second before he was face-first in the leaves, her weight on him. She sat on his backside, plastering her front along his back as she grabbed his hair and jerked his head up.

He felt her smirk against his ear, “Now, now, omega. Be a good boy, and maybe I won’t punish you for that disrespect,”

He swatted at her, felt two of his nails scrape against her skin, and she shoved his face into the dirt. She held him there, suffocating him with leaves as she grinded down against his ass.

“I heard a little rumor,” she said conversationally as she held him down with all her alpha strength, “That the puppies had a new toy. And sure enough,” she tugged at the back of his shirt, exposing his neck, “No mating bite. You’re not Laura’s after all. Not Peter’s, or Talia’s. Definitely not Derek’s. Guess that means you’re not anyone’s. You are ripe though. I could make good use of a pretty thing like you,”

Stiles stopped trying to dislodge her in favor of struggling for breath. At these words, he gulped as deep a lung-full as he could and screamed for the first person he thought of who might, hopefully, hear:

“TALIA!”

Immediately, a slender fist dug into his hair and pressed his nose into the dirt. He’d used up his breath in his scream and immediately jerked, desperate for air and with none left over to fuel the fight.
The alpha rocked her hips against him harder, and her laugh was sickeningly cruel and aroused, “Yeah, I’m gonna have so much fun with you.”

The Camaro screeched to a halt in front of the house. He, Peter, and Scott barely got the car doors closed when Talia was making her way down the porch steps.

“Boyd just called from the northeast border markers. Several sensors had been compromised, clearly tampered with, but no sign of Argent,”

“No sign?” Peter said incredulously, “What about scent?”


The whole pack would recognize Kate’s scent if they caught it. Derek had made certain of that himself the day after the bitch showed up at the gallery. Not that it would do much good at recognizing any lackies she may have bought or connived into working with her.

“Did he pick up the scent anywhere else?” Scott ventured, “Maybe tracked them down somewhere on the property?”

“That’s just it,” Derek recognized the sternly aggravated look on her face, he saw it often enough in the mirror, “Apparently the scent leads away from the territory,”

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Scott muttered.

Peter rubbed his temples, his frustrated growl nearly subvocal, “It does if it’s a distraction. Tell me you had Laura check the opposite border,”

Talia frowned, “None of those alarms were triggered,”

“Because those are the alarms closest to the old house!” Peter cried, “Don’t you think it’s well within the realm of possibility that Kate fucking Argent would be familiar enough with that area to locate and avoid any new security measures?”

“It’s what I’d expect her to do,” Derek crossed his arms over his chest as if he could hold himself together. He was eerily reminded of the last time Kate had attacked them, even though last time they’d had no warning and had been taken for fools. Derek especially.

Talia huffed and threw her hands up, “Give me some slack, guys. Boyd and Laura were the only people I had readily available, and I figured keeping a guard on Stiles was a better use of Laura’s time than double checking an unmolested perimeter!”

“Where is he now?” Derek demanded, feeling his heart lurch into his throat.

Talia waved her hand in nonconcern, “Don’t worry about him, he’s in the house. Last I heard, he was going to make pasta for lunch—”

“That’s what he told me!” Laura said, sounding irritated as she stomped out the front door, “Apparently he changed his mind,”

“No pasta then?” Scott asked, looking a little disappointed.

She snorted, “No nothing. He made himself a lunch to go and went for a walk,” she shoved a piece of paper into Talia’s hand, griping: “I was really looking forward to some chicken alfredo too, now I
have to go track down this kid on an empty stomach. Don’t worry though, he didn’t go anywhere near the breach—”

“He went in the exact opposite direction,” Talia said haltingly, her face paling as she looked up from the note, “The bridge from the old house,”

Derek felt his blood run cold, immediately followed up by red hot rage and terror too powerful to be contained. It was like a sickening force broiling beneath his skin.

Stiles was most likely heading right towards Kate.

Stiles, sweet omega, might be in spitting distance of a psychotic, murderous alpha.

His Stiles. HIS mate.

Consumed by protective rage and disgustingly afraid, Derek was no match for the rush of instinct that took him over. The last thing he heard was his own raw howl.

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She was playing with him.

And knowing it did fuck-all to help him.

The alpha let him go again. No matter how quick he was to scurry to his feet, he never moved more than a foot. This time, she grabbed the back of his jeans; the yank didn’t pull his hips back, but laid him out flat, because they were already caught around his knees. The latest yank just tangled the pants lower, around his ankles, caught by his shoes.

“Fu—ugh!” Her foot came down hard on his back, forcing him back into the dirt, the air out of his lungs.

“I thought you were going to run, omega,” she taunted as she caught his ankle when he tried to kick her, her fingers tapping light heartedly on his sneaker, “Might be easier with out these, hm?”

“Fuck off!” he cried, angry and terrified as she stole his shoes along with the final pull on his jeans. He hoped the anger was the predominant emotion, but he doubted it.

She flung his pants over her shoulder carelessly. Her smile was disturbingly normal looking, considering the circumstance.

He scooted backwards on his elbows and screamed: “Talia! Laura!”

The alpha chuckled. Like this was fun.

“HELP!”

She rolled her eyes, smile still in place.

“No!” he was crying now, tears and snot making his face a mess as she crouched over him, “Fuck off! Get away from me!”

He struggled ineffectively as she pulled him up.

“Be still,” her voice was blasé even as it rang with Alpha Authority.
He stopped fighting. He was still crying, his body shaking as he sat there on the ground in his underwear and let her rip the t-shirt off his back—she’d long since rid him of his plaid overshift, and it was disgustingly easy for her to finish exposing his upper body to the chilly autumn air.

“Much better,” she whispered sweetly in his ear as her fingers slid down his tummy.

Her fingertips dug under the front band of his briefs and Stiles gagged.

Her other hand rubbed his neck in a mockery of a massage, “Maybe I’ll mate you, all nice and proper, huh?”

He couldn’t move, but it’s not like his fists were ever his strongest asset to begin with, “You can’t. You don’t—” he sniffed to clear the tearful gunk from his throat, maybe catch a breath, “You don’t have the protections the wolves do, and my father’s in law enforcement; if you—”

She laughed over him, pulled the elastic of his briefs and released it to snap against him. “Oh-ho, omega! What makes you think anyone will ever know?”

He stared at her, uncomprehending. Or maybe denying.

She was still giving him that sickeningly normal, nice-seeming smile, “Maybe I’ll just keep you nice and safe at home. Chained to your alpha’s bed, where you belong,”

Fear like nothing he’d ever felt before had his throat constricting and the tremble in his frozen limbs intensified. His throat was dry as he realized what the look on her face meant: she wasn’t lying. She was telling him exactly what she meant to do to him. And she was totally confident she’d get away with it…

A howl tore through the woods.

The woman’s eyes widened, her shock registering in Stiles’ petrified brain faster than his own. She looked away, towards the howl.

Stiles reacted without thought and screamed: “DEREK!!!”

“Damn it!” she stood up fast, reaching back for her gun as she went.

Stiles squeezed his eyes shut, wishing desperately that he could throw off her command. He was suddenly certain she was going to shoot him. If he was going to be murdered, he didn’t want her to get away with it. He began to scream again.

“Der—!”

He fell over, stunned stupid from the blow. She’d hit him. Hard. Or with something hard. Bile rose up his throat. Stiles groaned as his vision went a little wonky. There was noise, the woman saying something in a harsh voice, and then… nothing.

When his head stopped spinning, Stiles found himself alone.

He was alone. Naked, save for his underwear. Alone.

It took an unknowable amount of time for him to realize that his biology was no longer holding him to that alpha’s order. It might have been about as long as it took for his head to stop ringing. He spat out a mouthful of leaves and dirt, looking around frantically.

She was gone. She was really gone.
Another howl sounded.

The noise shook him out of his frantic head-turning. Too worked up to do anything else, Stiles jumped to his feet and ran toward the noise. He had no idea if he was headed toward the house, no sense of placement or direction. All he knew was the need for safety, for comfort, for family. Pack. His frightened, instinctive omega brain latched onto that idea and ran with it. Literally.

And that howl. That howl meant *all* of that.

There was no telling how long he ran. How far. Which way. He didn’t know. It could have been hours, miles. It could have been seconds, only a couple yards, for all he was aware. All he knew was that the next howl wasn’t just a howl; it was a chorus. A symphony of animal voices filled the air, calling to him.

It was such a relief to hear, he started crying again.

His vision blurred from tears, Stiles was unprepared for the large black mass that magically appeared in his path. He skidded to a messy halt, landing on his bare knees and hands. He blinked rapidly to clear his eyes and froze.

A giant black wolf stood before him, eyes burning alpha-red. On all fours of his own, Stiles’ head was well below the beast’s, his eyes about level with its shoulder. The wolf’s muzzle wrinkled as it panted, red tongue hanging out. It let out a rumbling groan as it stepped closer to him.

Stiles whined, crouching lower and baring his neck instinctively. He had to be a good omega. Submissive. He couldn’t handle another alpha going off on him now.

“Derek, wait—Oh my God, Stiles! Mom! Mom, it’s Stiles!”

It was Cora. She slid into Stiles’ view, halting abruptly as the black wolf turned to bare his teeth at her. The girl was still wearing her school uniform, though her shirt was untucked and her knee-high socks had scrunched down to her ankles, probably due to her running through the woods.

She kept her eyes on the wolf, her own bleeding red in response. She held a hand up, as if to placate him. “Look at him, Der,” she said calmly, belying the intensity in her tone, the red in her eyes, “Look at Stiles. He needs help, not an alpha wolf scaring the shit out of him,”

“Cora?”

Stiles turned his head and promptly flailed in the opposite direction in fright. Laura was there, but so was another giant wolf. She was dark grey and black, eyes brilliantly, familiarly blue. She was also enormous.

“Jesus, Stiles!”

And then Peter was there. The wide-eyed look on the man’s face was concerned and earnest. He took a few quick steps in Stiles’ direction—

The black wolf lunged between them, snapping his jaws at Peter.

“Derek!” Cora and Laura cried.

Peter’s eyes shifted red and angry, the ridge of his brow and nose inhumanly pronounced as he sprouted fur and fangs. He roared at Derek, claws unsheathed.
Stiles tore his eyes away from the spectacle as Cora seized his arm and dragged him to his feet. She pushed him behind her as the rest of her family devolved into a flurry of movement and cacophony of furious animal noises took.

“Enough!” Laura was shouting at the guys, even as she stayed mostly on the sidelines.

Talia—because of course, who else—somehow inserted herself between her brother and son before Stiles could register more than a couple wounded yips hidden among the aggressive yowls. She kept turning her head to stare each of them down.

Peter’s chest heaved like he’d been sprinting the last leg of a great race. He was still mostly man, his features distorted and eyes still more animal than conscious human. Still, he was the first of them to pull it together.

“Stiles?” he asked through a mouthful of fangs.

Cora nudged him gently. Stiles could only stare, distantly horrified and impressed by the wolves in equal measure. Here he was, face to face with real life monsters. Which shouldn’t have been news, he’d already known they were werewolves. And it’s not like they were really all that scarier than that woman.

And yet… Holy shit, they were wolves!

Cora jammed her elbow into his side.

“I’m okay,” he murmured. At least, he thought he spoke. Everything just felt sort of… vague.

At the sound of his voice, Derek started to turn his head toward him.

Talia nipped at him, growling a demand Stiles couldn’t begin to understand.

Derek’s answering snarl was low and rolling. With a final snap of his teeth, the black wolf turned tail and loped off into the trees. Talia stared at Peter next, until he huffed unhappily and took off after his nephew.

“We’ll get him home,” Laura told her mother as the last wolf nudged her hip with her big, furry head. “You guys focus on tracking down Argent,”

“She can’t have gotten far,” Cora looked grave and determined as she pushed Stiles toward her sister, “We were driving with the windows open; I recognized her scent before I even reached our territory,” she addressed Laura, “I’ll show mom, you get the omega to the house. Allison and Scott should be waiting for you,”

Laura wrapped him in a hug that aught to have made him feel better than it did. Then she was steering him away, in the opposite direction that Cora and Talia were disappearing.

It wasn’t until Allison was running across the lawn toward him that he realized his fists were white-knuckle tight where they clenched Laura’s blouse.

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Derek came back to himself with blood on his hands.

“Well,” Peter folded his arms and looked down his nose at where Derek was kneeling, breathless from changing form. He didn’t look impressed, “At least you got her. Technically,”
“What happened?”

Peter snorted, “Oh? You don’t remember?”

Derek glared at him pointedly.

The older man looked off down the dirt road, avoiding his gaze, “She made it to her car,”

Derek snarled. He couldn’t believe it. Kate had trespassed on their territory and terrorized their omega. Again. She’d gotten away. Again!

“At least you got a good hit in,” Peter admitted begrudgingly, glancing at Derek’s hands.

“I had her!” he roared, clenching his fists and feeling his claws pop out into his palms.

“No,” Peter scowled, “She had you, you idiot. You only got that close because she was trying to get a wolvesbane bullet in you. If I hadn’t tackled you, she would have!”

Derek snapped at him with fangs bared. It was a near thing that he didn’t throw a punch.

“You’re welcome!” Peter barked back, “I should have let her shoot you, after you traumatized Stiles the way you did!”

He froze, “… What?”

“You really don’t remember,” Peter sneered, insultingly amazed, “You practically steamrolled him as a wolf. Poor thing was running through the woods half-naked and there you go: practically pouncing on him,”

No, he couldn’t have, wouldn’t have done that to Stiles. No matter how feral he’d gone, there was no way his wolf would let them harm the omega. His omega.

“We’ll be lucky if he’s not packing his bags already,” Peter spat, “You and Kate have cost this pack one omega already; I won’t let you do it again!”

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Allison got him in and out of the shower, then Laura held his hand and drained his pain as Scott medicated and bandaged his various wounds. He’d had to take tweezers to the twig splinters in his feet. Apparently, human skin tends to tear easily when racing through undergrowth.

Fortunately, Scott had a gentle hand, well trained to handle skittish creatures thanks to his day-job as a vet. Stiles absently realized that the guy’s lost puppy demeanor was as far from intimidating as a werewolf could get, so that probably helped too.

When the rest of the Hales wandered into the dining area, he was holding a mug of hot chocolate between his hands with no memory of how it got there.

“Stiles?”

He looked up into Talia’s frowning face, “Hi,”

“He’s still a little… shocky,” Allison grimaced from where she was snuggled up against him. He vaguely recalled her telling Laura to back off, something about omega magic. Omega… pheromones? He wasn’t sure.
“Stiles!” Peter said earnestly, pulling out the chair across from Allison. He ducked his head till he caught Stiles’ eye, giving him a small, subdued smile, “You’re alright, sweetheart?”

Stiles nodded.

“Stiles,”

Another look around the kitchen and he saw Derek leaning on the table, across from him and a little ways down the table from Peter. The expression on the alpha’s face was grim and concerned, Stiles thought he maybe saw guilt in his face, but that didn’t make any sense.

“I’m sorry,” Derek whispered, lowering his gaze, “You’re safe now. I… we won’t let her anywhere near you—”

“Who was she?” Stiles asked. He hadn’t thought about it until suddenly the question was leaving his lips, but once uttered, it felt important.

Allison was rubbing circles across his back. The way it wrinkled his shirt felt weird. Oh, probably because he was wrapped in a blanket, he belated realized.

“She, um… she talked like she knew you guys pretty well,” he fiddled with the mug, passing it back and forth between his hands as he remembered the woman listing the Hales’ names.

Guess that means you’re not anyone’s.

The wolves were looking back and forth between themselves. Avoiding his eyes, maybe?

Allison sighed heavily. He felt her hand fall away, then her body heat left him as she sat up straight to look at him directly, “She’s my aunt. Kate Argent,”

Stiles frowned, “You’re… you…?”

Allison seemed to steel herself. She nodded stiffly and admitted, “I have a few, let’s just call them estranged family members. My aunt Kate was a speciesist,” her mouth set in a thin, angry line, “An extremist, really,”

“A hunter,” Scott provided helpfully, sounding peeved. Stiles hadn’t known the guy could even be peeved, “A werewolf hunter,”

Stiles blinked slowly, trying to process and make sense of it all. No dice.

His lack of response was apparently not sitting well. Derek made a soft, injured sound and rushed to say, “It was my fault. Kate wouldn’t—”

“Derek—” Talia sounded heartbroken as she reached for her son.

“You’re not to blame—” Laura said at the same time.

Peter crossed his arms tightly, leaning back in his seat and withdrawing from the table; he looked like he was biting back some choice words. Cora growled, a complicated mix of negative emotions in the sound.

“I don’t understand,” Stiles murmured.

They all fell quiet. Derek opened and closed his mouth a couple times, looking lost.
Allison cleared her throat, “Kate was the one who set fire to the old pack house. I grew up knowing she and my dad had a falling out, but it wasn’t until I married Scott and joined the pack that I learned she was a criminal…”

Feeling like his brain was running a marathon through mud, Stiles tried to piece it all together, “Wait… the fire, and… the bridge?” His eyes widened, a disconcerting disgust breaking through the fog around his head. He looked up, and his eyes met Talia’s, “The fire that killed…”

Talia’s eyes were shimmering wet and all the more beautiful, “We chased her and her accomplices down. It wasn’t until,” she sniffled, “until long after that we learned Jared was still in the house—”

“That bitch found him,” Cora hissed, “She couldn’t handle any of us on her best day, one-on-one, but she found him and ordered him to stay put. The door was wide open, and he just sat there…”

Cora was speaking bitterly through her tears, but she wasn’t the only one crying. Stiles discovered his own leaking eyes when he went to rub his face. He swallowed thickly as he remembered the shame and disgust of having to follow Kate’s order.

Be still.

For a brief moment he thought he was going to puke. His stomach heaved, he choked on it, and then… he laughed. He couldn’t help it. It just sort of…burst out of his mouth. Because why not. The sun was shining, it was a beautiful day, and Allison’s aunt was a psychotic alpha douchebag with a love for hate crimes, who’d nearly raped him.

He waved Laura away when she tried to hug him as he stood up. He stepped around her, needing a little distance.

At least he was conveniently in front of the kitchen sink when he threw up.
Twenty

Talia gave him two days. He spent most of it cooped up in his room, Allison coming and going at regular intervals. Curling up with another omega on the couch was probably the most comforting thing he’d ever experienced. By Thursday morning, he thought he’d processed everything well enough to face the world again.

He took a deep breath and opened his door. Right into Derek Hale’s face.

“Hi,” Derek said softly after a tense, silent moment of staring.

Stiles just kept staring. Derek was, well, there was no other word for it: adorable. His handsome face with those dark brows furrowed in a concern frown, and that powerful body slumped in a subconscious sulk; he was like a kicked hound, too dejected and heartbreaking woeful to even realize he was the biggest, baddest thing in the room. The floral tea tray so carefully balanced between his hands didn’t help either.

It was hard to believe this was the same… person? Wolf? The very same creature who’d been staring him down as an enormous, fanged beast.

Stiles expected to be scared of the Hales. It really hadn’t been the ideal way to show him their shifted forms. But surprisingly enough, he found he wasn’t scared. Not in the slightest.

None of the wolves were Kate. She was the one he was afraid of.

As the silence stretched between them, Derek shifted his weight from leg to leg, his green-blue eyes running over Stiles’ body on a nervous loop. Then his jaw clenched in determination and he held out the tray.

“I brought you breakfast,”

Stiles glanced down at the oatmeal and danish on the tray, quickly retraining his sight on the alpha, “I can see that,”

They went back to staring at each other.

Awkward. So awkward.

Slowly, his body language screaming uncertainty, Derek lowered the tray. His frown deepened.

“What did you mean?” Stiles asked gently, “About… about it being your fault. The other day,”

The muscle in the alpha’s jaw twitched. He avoided Stiles’ eye as he seemed to search for words.

It was painful to watch. Stiles blew out a loud breath and rubbed his hands up through his hair indelicately. “Never- nevermind. It doesn’t matter—”

“Stiles…”

“You heard me, Derek!” Stiles said earnestly, if a little loudly. “You didn’t hurt me, you defended me. I was screaming plenty, but you were the one who heard me—”

Derek shook his head, eyes downcast, “I was just the fastest—”
“Bullshit, you howled first! It was you!” he spat, almost accusing in his sudden conviction, “You’re the one who howled! You called to me first, and you found me first. If you hadn’t… if it weren’t for you she would have…”

Derek looked heartbroken. Why did he look so goddam heartbroken?

“Oh Stiles, you shouldn’t—"

The tray rattled as Stiles threw his hands out and pushed at Derek’s hefty chest. “You saved me, you idiot!”

The alpha took a step back, more from shock than the force of Stiles’ palms on his chest. “I… You’re welcome?”

Stiles laughed incredulously.

At least Derek didn’t look like someone died anymore. Now he just looked confused. Befuddled, even.

Stiles felt dangerously close to tears again. He was sick of crying; he’d shed more tears in the three-or-so-weeks he’d been here than in the past three years. Shaking off the inclination, he stepped forward and grabbed Derek’s wrist to get him to lower the damn tray.

“I’m going to kiss you now, sourwolf,”

And he did.

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Hours later, and Derek was still reeling from that kiss.

“Hell-oh! Earth to Derek!” Laura pestered him.

She was waving her hand in front of his face and interrupting his perusal of the lunch menu. The café in their building was locally owned and they regularly switched things up. He couldn’t even find the energy to be irritated with her like normal. He was too… preoccupied.

“Come on, baby bro,” she nudged him playfully, “I already threw in the towel, the least you could do is acknowledge me! And share a meal. Your treat,”

He glared up at the café’s menu, jaw tight, “You gave up on a hopeless cause. That doesn’t mean your motives now are totally pure,”

She rolled her eyes, “Obviously. Knowing we’re not compatible doesn’t mean that omega won’t star in my dreams for years, even if it does have the unfortunate inclusion of reminding me he’s fucking my brother. I’m not one to hold grudges,”

She absolutely was, though. Her wink was not reassuring. Derek should probably be more wary than he was.

“No thanks,” he said, shuffling forward in line, “For the sake of my sanity and ease of our relationship, Laura, I will not be discussing Stiles with you. Ever,”

She pouted. The expression did nothing on her strong, alpha features, “I only want you to be happy, Der,”
He eyed her dubiously, “No,”

She dropped the pout and shrugged her shoulders back, all self-assured, “Fine. But you are seriously underestimating my investment in screwing Peter out of the things he wants,”

He finally turned to her, his eyes flashing red, “Stiles isn’t a thing,”

She rolled her eyes, “Of course not, but he might as well be to Peter. A pretty little trophy to warm his bed,”

Derek growled. He wasn’t feeling particularly hungry all of a sudden.

“My question is,” she looped her arm through his and looked up, for all the world seeming to read the menu, “Why is Peter waltzing around like he’s already won said trophy,”

Derek snorted.

He felt her shrug, “Oh, I don’t know; he seems pretty confident. And he does already have one Heat under his belt,”

He paused, considering. Then he thought back to that morning. That kiss. Stiles had said it didn’t matter.

“I heard him tell mom he might permanently move into the downtown apartment for ‘The Honey Moon Phase,’” she mockingly swooned and used finger quotations as she said those last words.

Derek frowned, “…Did he talk to Stiles this morning?”

She paused, turning her head to consider him shrewdly, “Noooo,” she drew the word out obnoxiously, “Stiles was still holed up when we left the house. Why? Did you?”

He bit his tongue and jerked his arm out of her grip so he could step up to place his order.

“Derek Hale!” she cried excitedly after him.

“No,”

“Tell me!” she fussed the moment he turned toward the tables with his food in hand.

“No,”

“Derek, did Stiles tell you something? Maybe about the Heat that’s due to hit any day now?”

He glared at her.

Her grin was cheeky, like she knew some scandalous secret, “Oooh! He did! Well?”

Without another word, Derek turned on his heel and breezed past her. He might as well take lunch at his desk.

Perhaps his time would be better spent continuing his research on male omega Heats.

“I’m so sorry, Stiles,”

“You should have told me,”
“Of course. Obviously, my silence on the matter only resulted in your harm, but I really thought I was protecting you—”

Stiles rolled his eyes, “Really? I mean, really? You’re the CEO of a company specializing in private security, do you ever suggest leaving your clients ignorant, ‘cause I find that highly unlikely. Like, super, uber unlikely—”

“Well, yes—”

“—and if I’m being perfectly honest, which psh, yeah, course I am. I feel like you were more concerned with keeping your family’s baggage under wraps than my safety. I mean, come on, Talia. If I was that kind of superficial omega who’d hold that against you, I probably never would have made it through the front door!”

“That’s not entirely fair, Stiles,”

“Oh yeah?”

“Oh, yeah! You balk at the slightest suggestion that you might stay with us long-term, and I just… I didn’t want current, short-term threats to unduly influence—”

“Unduly!?” Stiles sputtered, “Talia, we’re not talking about an ex-girlfriend someone had a bad breakup with! We’re talking about a psychotic murderer with a die-hard grudge! Hell yeah, that might—fuck, it should influence—”

“No, Stiles!”

Up till then, she’d been so careful not to touch him, giving him space. She hurried forward and gripped his shoulder, her expression sorrowful and a little desperate.

“You lied to me, Talia! You all lied! How am I supposed to trust you?”

“It was my decision, Stiles. All mine, Derek and Peter only kept quiet because I decided it would be best—”

“—Right! Because what, the poor little omega couldn’t possibly handle it—”

“That’s not true!”

“It is! You know what I think, I think you don’t trust me any more than I trust you!”

They fell silent, staring at each other from opposite ends of the living room. Stiles had retreated the full length of the couch when she’d touched him, and it was only then that he realized his eyes were stinging. He wouldn’t let the tears fall though.

He was so done with the crying.

Talia didn’t have that problem. Her cheeks were mostly dry, but her lashes gleamed even as they stuck together. “That’s not how it was,” she whispered.

Not for the first time, Stiles was struck by how similar her son looked to her. Beautiful even when they were devastated.

Stiles sniffed angrily and looked away, “That’s not fair. You’re not supposed to look all… attractive when your cry. It’s like an unwritten rule. It makes it hard to stay mad at you. Stop it,”
She gave a small smile that did nothing to stem the water works, “I just don’t want you to throw away a beautiful future with our pack because of my mistake,” she choked on extra tears, “If you want to go home—”

“I can’t,” Stiles cut her off, crossing his arms and hugging himself tight self-consciously, “My Heat’s in less than a week, could be any day now, even. Even if I wanted to go home, I couldn’t. There’s no time to get me on suppressants. Not and have them be effective, anyway,“

He was well aware of the shitty position Talia and Kate had put him in. Allison had helped him brainstorm options during the past two days, thankfully encouraging him to think instead of just react, because his first, panicked move had been to start packing bags.

Talia winced, “Sedation—”

“Yeah,” Stiles said smoothly, looking up at the ceiling as if in deep thought, “Because essentially poisoning myself is a better option than spending a few days fucking your son. Way to insult my intelligence. Or any omega’s, for that matter. You can’t be serious,”

She chuckled. Stiles was both relieved and irritated to see her tears already drying up, “So that means you’re staying? We haven’t completely alienated you?”

Stiles shrugged. He was still hugging himself, so the nonchalance might have been lost in translation, “I guess. But you owe me,”

“Absolutely,”

“Chocolate. Tons. And I don’t mean Hershey’s, I want the good the stuff,”

“Of course,”

“And if I’m going to have a werewolf bodyguard, I want to pick who,”

“That’s… doable,”

“… Okay,”

“Okay,”

…

Talia bit her lip, then raised her hand to cover her mouth. She was hiding a smile.

Stiles narrowed his eyes. No, he really didn’t trust her. Much, “…What?”

“Your upcoming Heat,” she grinned despite the lingering moisture around her eyes, “You picked Derek?”

Shit. It was suddenly impossible to meet her eye while his face was melting off. He couldn’t believe he just told Talia he was actively planning to have wild, literal-mind blowing sex with her SON.

“… your point?”

Her smiled dimmed, “He thought… we all thought you were afraid of us. Derek especially, he wasn’t…” she seemed to struggle to find the right words, “He was wild. He gave into the wolf more than is normally wise. That wasn’t the way you should have seen him, the first time,”
“He didn’t hurt me,” Stiles admitted, his blush forgotten as he turned somber and thoughtful, “He never even tried to touch me. Yeah, it was pretty shocking—it’s not every day you end up inches away from a full-fledged wolf, right-minded or otherwise—and yeah, I think if I hadn’t just ran into Kate, the whole thing would have terrified me. But the thing is… none of you stick in my mind as particularly dangerous. Or threatening. Kate though…. She does,”

He tried to fight off the shiver that worked through him as he remembered the way she’d touched him, the way she’d controlled him so effortlessly. She’d enjoyed terrorizing him, ate up his fear like it was a delicacy and she got to savor every bite with each rip of his clothing.

Talia saw it though, “We won’t let her get that close to you again,”

Stiles wished he believed it.

That evening was supposed to be about getting back to business as usual. Well. Plus his newly-acknowledged babysitter. But just as Stiles was putting Scott to work chopping vegetables for an epic lasagna, Peter came home several hours early.

“Scram, pup,” Peter told Scott, stealing a square of bell pepper from the cutting board, “I’ll keep my eyes on him,”

Scott shot Stiles a questioning look, “You good?”

Stiles looked between the two wolves, wondering what Peter was even doing here, “Depends. Who’s going to finish chopping those carrots?”

Peter helpfully picked up the chopping board, sliding the piles of cut peppers and onions onto the counter, and shoved it and the bag of carrots into Scott’s arms, “Go on then,”

Stiles had never seen Scott glare at someone. It was way scarier than he’d previously imagined the guy capable, “Yell if you need me, Stiles,”

“Sure thing,”

As Scott’s footfalls faded into the hallway, Peter rounded the counter and leaned in close, “I’ve missed you the past couple days, sweetheart,”

Stiles smiled, looking down into the sauce pan, “Is that so?”

Peter hummed appreciatively, “Very much so. I half expected to come home today to find you’d run back to California,”

Stiles’ chuckle was only a little sardonic, “Nope, not me. I’m made of sterner stuff than that,”

“Course you are,” Peter agreed, though Stiles wasn’t so sure if his tone wasn’t patronizing or not. He was still trying to decide when the alpha whispered in his ear: “I’d love to kiss you right now,”

He looked up, gasping to find Peter’s face so close, “Oh um…” his gaze dropped. Peter’s lips certainly did look quite kissable. Before he had time to think, he found himself slowly saying: “Oh… kay…”

He caught the pleased grin on the alpha’s face a second before he was distracted by the guy’s lips on his own. It wasn’t their first kiss, by any means; Peter had asked for and been granted a decent
variety of relatively chaste affection since Stiles’ first Heat ended. Somehow though, Stiles just hadn’t felt ready to take things further, not like he had with Derek, or even with Laura the one and only time he’d been with her romantically.

When Peter licked at his lower lip in a bid to deepen the kiss, Stiles found something had changed in that regard after all. He pulled back with a discontent hum.

He gave Peter a tight, sad smile, “In the interest of full disclosure—”

“You’re going with Derek this time around,” Peter stated, not the least bit surprised.

Even so, Stiles could see the disappointment in the firm set of the alpha’s face as he leaned back against the cabinet. No hurt though, just disappointment. Stiles wasn’t sure what to make of it.

“Yeah,” Stiles admitted, turning back to the stove top. The meaty sauce for the lasagna seemed a much more comfortable, if not safer, place to look. “Not that I didn’t like last time, but Derek’s just… we really have chemistry, you know, and—”

Peter held up a hand, wincing as if hearing Stiles talk about his relationship with Derek was painful. Stiles was about 89.25% sure it was more pretense than anything else.

“That’s alright, Stiles. You don’t owe me an explanation,” Peter assured him.

“Yeah,” Stiles agreed, because yeah, obviously. He still found himself swallowing an inappropriate apology though, “You’re right. I mean, this was sort of the whole point of the Heat Contract anyway, right?”

Peter made a rather noncommittal hum, “I’m just glad you’re still here with us, Stiles. Though I do ask that you reconsider me afterwards. Derek means well, but who’s to say he’ll be able to satisfy your Heat as well as you need,”

Stiles couldn’t help the indelicate snort that inspired, “I highly doubt Derek will have any problems satisfying anything. Trust me,” he gave an appreciative whistle, “as the one of us who’s actually been in bed with—”

“Didn’t you say you needed Scott’s help with dinner?” Peter said in total seriousness as he pushed off the counter and hurried away, “I’ll go get him for you, shall I?”

Stiles’ laughter chased him down the hall.

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If Derek were the kind of man to walk around with a smile on his face, he was certain he’d look like a besotted fool. Still, his standard glower wasn’t to be trusted, if Laura’s awakened interest was anything to judge by. So he planned to spend the rest of the afternoon planted in his office, dividing his attention between researching Heats and keeping abreast of the hunt for Kate Argent.

They were really the only priorities he could be bothered with today.

He was just pulling the lid off his turkey club when his phone lit up with a group message from Cora, directed at himself and Peter:

this omega REEKS goin 2 ericas 4 now

Then moments later:
Derek couldn’t keep the grin off his face after that. Stiles must be hours away from Heat, maybe already in preheat, if he was scaring Cora away already. It was hardly surprising, given all the poor omega had been through so recently. Stress was known to speed up cycles and trigger early Heats.

What WAS surprising was Peter’s reply to the group text only an hour and a half later:

_That’s on you, Derek. He just broke the news to me._

Maybe looking like a besotted fool wasn’t so bad after all.

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The afternoon flew by like an unprecedented, happy whirlwind. After letting Peter down gently and coming out of it not feeling like a heartbreaking-monster, Stiles couldn’t deny the giddy excitement bubbling under his skin. He finished putting the lasagna together and moved onto homemade brownies with an absentminded smile and a bounce in his steps; he was practically dancing around the kitchen, oblivious to Scott’s bemused chuckling.

He was too busy daydreaming to care. He couldn’t wait for Derek to come home, so he could tell him about his decision for the upcoming Heat. He already knew what it felt like to have the younger alpha on top of him, inside him, but it felt somehow… _more_. Important in an undefinable, cosmic way that he and Derek be together in a way only an alpha and omega could.

It was like all the drama and terror of the past week had evaporated in his excitement. Stiles didn’t question it, just enjoyed the optimistic rush while it lasted.

And enjoy it, he did. Right up until abruptly ended.

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Derek left work fifteen minutes early so he could make a stop on his way out of the city towards home. It was a last-minute decision, and he was lucky there was an omega specialty store only four blocks from the Firm’s building.

He might have spent longer than was strictly necessary comparing products, but he was only ten minutes past the time he would have been home from work when his phone buzzed with another text from Peter:

_You better be on your way home._

He handed his credit card to the omega behind the counter even as he began a reply. Laura’s text came through, stopping him from hitting send:

_Were the hell are you?_

Derek checked his watch, frowning. Probably twice a week he wasn’t even home by this time. What was the big—

Another text from Peter came through:

_Seriously. If you’re not walking through that door in the next ten minutes…_

He never even got to open the text to read it fully. His phone started ringing, flashing his mother’s name up at him.
“Good luck!” the sales girl said as she handed him a bag full of omega-approved goods.

Frowning at her choice of farewell wording, Derek accepted the bag and headed for the exit as he raised the phone to his ear.

With mounting concern, he answered the call.

“Where are you?” Talia asked faster than he could get a word out. Her tone was suspiciously light and breathless.

His frown shifted from one of concern to one of confusion, “Are you… laughing?”

“Never mind that,” she said flippantly and, yes, with a hint of humor, “Are you close?”

“No really,”

“Naturally,” she said, unconcerned but in a tone that suggested she was rolling her eyes, “Whatever you’re up to, you should hurry up. Stiles is in full-blown preheat and it could turn at any moment,”

“I’m on my way,” he slid into the driver’s seat and started the car.

“Good. Oh!”

He paused only a moment before pulling out of the parking lot. That sounded like something heavy just broke, closely followed by… was that a... a war cry?

“Haha!” Talia chortled, her voice aimed away from her phone’s receptors as she yelled: “Oh, good, good omega!”

The call disconnected before Derek could ask.

Derek made the drive home in record time.

Apparently, it wasn’t fast enough, at least if he was judging based on the way Scott and Laura were sitting on the porch steps in wait. His sister was sitting with her arms around her knees, her expression fuming as she glared at the Camaro as it came up the drive. She was soaked, hair plastered over her head and sweater positively drenched. Beside her, Scott was more-or-less dry, but there were some interesting dark spots staining his t-shirt and jeans. As Derek climbed out of the car, he realized the younger alpha’s hair was peculiarly spiked on one side of his head.

“What—” he began, only to stall as he registered the sounds of yelling and chaos from inside the house.

“Your damn omega made lasagna,” Laura glowered, “And you weren’t here to eat it when he expected you,”

Scott grimaced sympathetically as he scratched his messed hair, “He was fine for most of the afternoon, but when everybody else was ready to eat and you still weren’t home…I don’t know, dude. Allison never had mood swings like this,”

“He threw that ugly ass vase at me,” Laura grumbled,

Derek paused, “The one Kira made?”

There was a bang from inside, and Derek could make out Stiles’ voice shouting expletives.
Scott gave a hopeful smile, “Yeah! The eye soar’s gone! That’s good news at least, right!?”

Kira was a talented painter, but not much of a potter; her one and only fully completed exercise in the medium had quickly been pawned off on Talia. Derek couldn’t truthfully say it was a loss. Laura, however, took exception to Scott’s silver-lining attitude and glared at him until the guy took several cautious steps back from her.

“I don’t understand,” Derek said, looking between the two of them for answers.

Just then, the foyer window exploded outward in a shower of shattered glass, a heavy cookbook landing on the porch. Talia’s shocked laughter filled the air.

All three of the jumped. Only Derek looked surprised.

“He was weepy about it at first,” Scott explained, “I think he just missed you and was disappointed you weren’t home on time,”

“And then Peter had to go and try to comfort him,” Laura was well beyond pissed, hands on her hips as she clenched her jaw tellingly, her voice grew louder with every word, “Don’t know what he said, but it pissed Stiles off, and the next thing I know, he’s throwing shit! And not just at Peter! Noooo! He decided to get mad at everyone!”

Scott tapped him on the shoulder a little hesitantly, “Pretty sure he’s most mad at you, but you weren’t here to present a target,”

“No,” Laura snapped, smacking Derek’s chest with her soaked sleeve, “You weren’t. Do you have any idea how impossible it is to manage a rampaging omega?”

“Hell hath no fury,” Scott murmured wisely.

“Not helping!” Laura smacked him in turn.

Derek squinted at Scott, “Is that a mushroom in your hair?”

“Oh, hey! Yeah, I guess it is,”

“There may have been a food fight,” Laura admitted, still glaring at him.

Scott grinned, “Stiles was the only one adequately armed, though,“

There was an enraged scream from inside the house, shortly followed by the sharp yip of a wounded wolf and Talia’s cheers.

Still floundering between alarm and confusion, Derek asked, “And no one’s ordered him to stop because…?”

“Mom thinks it’s hilarious,” Laura said through gritted teeth.

Scott gave an unconcerned shrug, “We’re werewolves. It’s not like he’s really hurting anyone,”

“Fair enough,” Derek supposed there wasn’t really a justification for using Alpha Authority so long as Stiles wasn’t presenting a real threat to himself or serious damage to the house. Well, irreparable damage, anyway.

“… Does it sound quiet in there to anyone else, or is it just me?”
Scott wasn’t wrong. Almost too suddenly to be comfortable, there was no screaming, no ruckus laughter, or woeful whines. Straining his ears, Derek could pick up the sound of three pounding heartbeats, heavy breathing, and casual movement. Nothing so worrisome as the commotion he’d first come home to though.

Laura leaned toward the house, her expression suspicious.

They all heard it at the same time. The low, wobbly wail of a distraught omega.

Derek cleared the stairs in two hurried lunges, behind him Scott made a sympathetic “Aw!” of the kind normally reserved for adorable babies and kittens. He nearly barreled into Peter in the foyer, barely recognizing his uncle’s frustrated and bereaved expression before he passed into the living room, where he found Stiles and Talia.

Stiles was standing in the middle of the room, his head bent and his face in his hands as he cried.

Talia was sitting on the coffee table, pose relaxed as she fought off the amusement she had so recently reveled in. She spotted Derek and rolled her eyes good naturedly, speaking softly enough that the omega’s human ears wouldn’t notice: “He’s fine, it’s just preheat. He could use a good cuddle right about now,”

Derek didn’t need to be told twice. Hiking the retail bag over his shoulder, Derek went for the omega, speaking softly, “Hey, Stiles?”

It was impressive how quickly the boy moved; one moment there was the better part of the room between them, the next Derek had his arms full of a clingy, sobbing omega. The dear boy buried his face in Derek’s chest and whimpered through his tears:

“You’re here! You came back! I thought you were mad at me, or you changed your mind and you didn’t want me—”

“Sh,” Derek petted his boy’s back and rocked them gently, “I’m here now,”

Behind him, Peter made a disgusted grumble as he stomped away. Derek caught him muttering under his breath, something about hormonal omegas and life being unfair.

Derek just held Stiles tighter and grinned into his omega’s hair. Obviously, nothing was decided, and it wouldn’t be fair to make a big deal of anything Stiles did or said during the onset of a Heat, but still…

It sure felt like he’d won the omega’s heart just the same.
Stiles hated alphas. They were pushy, entitled, inconsiderate knotheads. He told Derek so. Repeatedly.

Like, every time the asshole manhandled him. Such as right now.

Derek merely hummed at him, totally unconvinced as he repositioned Stiles on the plush couch in his room. Stiles considered struggling but settled for snuggling tighter into Derek’s side, the two of them laying across the full length of it. He did snag a pillow and smack the alpha with it though. Just to make sure he got the message.

“You should’ve been home on time,” Stiles pouted.

“I know,”

“You’re infuriating,” Stiles continued unhappily, “You don’t argue, you just lie there, all irritating and nice smelling. I hate it,”

“Okay,”

Stiles wanted to scream. To yell abuses and push him out of his room. He was getting sick of looking at that calm, devastatingly handsome face. He tried to sit up to do just that, but Derek’s arm was like a steel brace around him, trapping him. God, but he just wanted to smack the stupidly relaxed expression on the stupid alpha’s stupid face.

He didn’t have the energy to do any of that at the moment though. Maybe latter. So he flopped back on top of Derek, letting the alpha caress his face. He nuzzled into it, enjoying the feeling of that big, warm palm.

He bit into it. Hard.

With a hiss, Derek yanked his hand way.

“No,” Derek said firmly as he watched the thoughts cross Stiles’ face, “No, Stiles,”

Stiles paused to consider the other two times he’d bitten Derek since they alpha carried him to his room. Hmm. Neither of those had inspired a threat.

“Stop biting me,” Derek ordered, voice deep and strong with power.

Stiles shivered as Derek’s Alpha Authority swept over him. It was like nothing he’d ever felt, like a blissfully cool touch breezing over the scorching inside of him, soothing imagined woes and tempering any violent impulses. It was nice. Sexy, even.
Stiles went wet between his legs. Very, very wet. And hot like burning.

“Fuck,” Derek groaned like the sound had been punched out of him. Stiles felt his nose brush his hair, heard him breath in deep.

The Heat came on all at once, making Stiles go from irritated and mildly uncomfortable to burning up and aching in a split second. He gasped with the force of it, his shirt and jeans suddenly stifling as sweat broke out on his brow. Low, between his hips, he was woefully sore and empty. Lower still, his hole flexed in need, reacting even faster than the stingingly quick-rising erection at his front.

Stiles whined and tried to lift his hips. If he could just get his knees under him…

“Okay, okay,” Derek whispered distractedly.

The world spun and suddenly he was off the ground and flung over the alpha’s shoulder. Stiles finally found the energy to cry out in anger—this was definitely a move in the wrong direction. Just a moment ago, he could have sworn Derek was about to mount him. The disappointment was only as terrible as it was infuriating.

His back hit the bed, and Stiles kicked out.

Derek caught his ankle and threw it aside. Before Stiles could collect his wits, Derek had slotted himself between his legs and his fingers went straight for the fly of Stiles’ pants. They fumbled in their eagerness, but Stiles only saw it as further delay.

“Oh!” Stiles screamed, not making it any easier by flailing about and trying to shimmy out of his shirt. “Get it off!”

A low, harsh growl precipitated an even harsher ripping sound, and just like that, Stiles’ pants were gone. Stiles gave a loud guffaw of shocked laughter. The sound dissolved into a long moan as Derek’s hands rushed up his shirt, over his torso and freed him of the stifling garment entirely.

“Fuck me!” he panted, pawing continuously at Derek’s shoulders, his thick arms, his heaving chest, “Oh! Fuckmefuckmefuckme!”

His hands were fisted in the alpha’s shirt, his right knee up by his ear as he was held open. He felt the first press of Derek’s cock with a thrilling happiness. When his alpha slid home in one beautiful thrust, Stiles was too overcome with excitement to notice the cold press of Derek’s zipper.

Derek could stay fully clothed for all he cared, so long as he kept pushing that wonderful cock into him.

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Stiles went into Heat at exactly nine o’clock on Friday evening with a suddenness that was, quite frankly, alarming. Poor boy had exhausted himself before Derek even got home, making matters worse with his refusal to rest quietly once they’d retreated to the omega’s room.

Then he’d gone from spitting mad to slick soaking through his seat in a split second.

“Knot!” Stiles demanded fiercely, pulling at Derek’s shirt, “Knot me!”

There was none of the pretty begging Derek had looked forward to—not yet, at least. Only demands.

“Do it!” Stiles dug his nails into Derek’s shoulders and clenched his legs around his waist, pulling
incessantly.

Derek huffed a little laugh, keeping his thrusts even and hard. “Almost there,” he promised.

“Now!”

Shaking his head gently, Derek sped up just a little. It wouldn’t be long at all. Not with Stiles writhing and desperate beneath him like this.

“Give it!”

“Soon,” he groaned.

“Knot me, damn it!”

Derek gasped as pain lit up his right arm. Stiles had raked him from shoulder to elbow, finally forcing the material of his shirt to rend in his frustration.

“Now! Want it now!”

_Thank God for werewolf healing_, he thought as the pain quickly faded and allowed him to focus his attention on the omega, specifically the part of him greedily gripping his dick like a vise. Stiles was every bit as tight and hot as he remembered. No, even better. Heat made it different; he was swollen and feverishly hot inside, squeezing Derek in a way that was... simply indescribable.

“Nownownow!”

Derek grabbed a fistful of Stiles’ hair, using the hold to keep the boy from biting him again and forcing him to bear his neck. Derek buried his face there, closing his eyes and breathing deep so he could drown himself in the sweet scent of his omega in Heat.

It worked. Two more deep jerks of his hips and he felt his knot start to grow.

Stiles crowed in victory.

He slowed down, fucking his burgeoning knot in and out of Stiles in a stuttering glide. It felt amazing every time the ball of his knot popped back inside, sending a fresh shock of pleasure up his spine. He didn’t get to continue that way for long though because soon he was too large to retreat. Then he was locked inside and orgasming like he hadn’t come in a year.

^^^^^^^^^^

Pain woke him up. Deep and low and fiery. It tore up his guts and sent tendrils of terrible, piercing need throughout his body. He curled up in a ball, gasping with his hands clasped tight over the empty, aching space between his hip bones.

God, but he was so, so empty.

“Sh, baby,”

Stiles blinked his eyes open to see Derek sitting on the bed next to him. With a desperate whine, Stiles scurried over and climbed into the alpha’s lap. Derek was gloriously naked by now, and it should have been easy to get his cock inside. But Stiles wasn’t the most coordinated person on his best days, and the pain pulsing behind his hole and reverberating through his groin made him particularly graceless.
“I got you,” Derek murmured as he laid Stiles out and made to part his legs.

A devastating cramp ripped through him. Stiles cried out and curled up on his side in an instinctive attempt to hide from the pain, turning his back to Derek. He was still crying when Derek fitted his hand under his leg and repositioned the limb so he could get inside. The alpha was kneeling on the bed, but he left Stiles on his side so when his cock pushed in, the angle was new and the first couple thrusts a little awkward.

Derek recovered his rhythm quickly and as the alpha fucked into him Stiles wished he could enjoy it. He whined as his guts churned and convulsed. His fingers clenched in fists filled with sheets. His body rocked with each push of the alpha above him and through it all Stiles whimpered and cried.

The movement slowed. Stopped. Stiles sobbed.

“Easy, love,” Derek spoke softly as he pulled out.

Stiles shook his head, though it lacked the energy to be more than rubbing the side of his face into the bed. He couldn’t do easy. Nothing about this was easy.

He felt Derek’s chest settle against his back. A muscular arm slid beneath his head, cushioning him even as the elbow bent and the hand pushed his hair off his forehead. He held him there, Stiles’ head pressed to Derek’s shoulder. Stiles mewled plaintively as he was penetrated from behind even as his insides burned with agony.

He felt Derek shift, then a kiss landed on the side of his head, “I know, love,”

He rocked forward and back as Derek started fucking him again. Derek kept a tender hold on his head while his other hand reached around for his cock. Stiles tensed, expecting the pressure on his cock to be too much, but the grip was nice and loose, the alpha’s palm wonderfully cool against his heated flesh.

Stiles’ hips jerked into the grip, wiggled back for the cock waiting for him. He wanted both.

“That’s it, baby,” Derek encouraged, shifting to keep them tighter together. His thrusts turned short and hard, the grip on Stiles’ cock going feather-light in a way that would have been horribly teasing outside of Heat but was perfect just then.

Stiles cried out a broken plea: “A-a-alpha!”

Derek kissed his neck, nuzzling him as he circled his hips, “Good, baby. Come for me,”

A nice, deep thrust and Stiles felt the knot inflate. His body let go, immediately exploding with pleasure as if he’d been waiting on a knife’s edge for that damn knot.

In his ear, Derek moaned in helpless relief.

Stiles could feel the alpha coming, flooding him with exactly the soothing balm he so desperately needed, right where he needed it. He went limp, completely and utterly loose as the cramps in his innards melted into satisfaction.

He lifted his hand and weakly flopped it over his shoulder to pat Derek’s cheek. He slurred: “Good alpha,”

Derek’s quiet laughter, breathless and broken from knotting, was the last thing Stiles heard as he fell back to sleep.
They were just passing the 16th-hour mark when Stiles resorted to all the pretty begging Derek could ever want.

“P-please, Alpha!”

Derek bit his lip to stop from smiling. He knew it wasn’t appropriate, and if Stiles were in his right mind he’d be furious that Derek was thinking it, but the omega truly was adorably needy for someone so hell-bent on sex.

“Nugh!” Stiles kicked and writhed, throwing his head from side to side and doing his damnedest to stop Derek from bringing the smoothie back to his lips. It was the third time Derek had tried to make him eat, with varying degrees of success.

“Alphaaaa!” Stiles sang, “Alpha, need you! Neeeed—”

“In a bit,” Derek promised, “After you finish this,”

Stiles turned his head again with a disgruntled whine. His back went rigid and he jutted his hips up in a wild attempt to throw Derek’s grasp. The maneuver almost worked the first time he’d done it, but by this point in the Heat, Derek was prepared. He moved with Stiles, keeping their bodies close and maintaining overall control of the omega. He had to drop the smoothie to secure the boy’s wrists, but he’d already learned the hard way that it was far easier to keep him pinned than to recapture him.

Stiles was wild in these moments, and he could get particularly grabby, for lack of a better word, when he thought he had half a chance at getting at Derek’s cock. Like Peter had alluded: it was a damn good thing Stiles had a wolf tending to him; after the last hasty grab when the omega had nearly gouged a highly, uh… sensitive area with his nails, his quick healing may very well be the only reason he could continue during this Heat.

“Settle down,” Derek wrapped his legs around Stiles and locked his ankles. He carefully measured the strength of his grip on Stiles’ wrists with one hand while he retrieved the lidded cup from the floor.

“Fuck meeee!” Stiles whined. He strained ineffectively against Derek’s hold.

Derek didn’t bother to respond. Reassurances were pointless, promises would only go unheard. The next time Stiles opened his mouth to speak, Derek fitted the straw between his lips and let Alpha Authority fill his words:

“Drink, omega,”

Stiles drank.

As amusing and cute as Stiles was like this, Derek was still relieved to see him obeying. Peter had warned him that the Voice didn’t always work during Heat, and Allison had supplemented the warning with her own research that suggested hormonal imbalances could interfere with its effectiveness. But Derek had found that wasn’t quite the case with Stiles; there was a brief window of time between bouts of intense Heat when Stiles was susceptible to Alpha Authority.

If they were lucky, Derek would be able to recognize and use those windows to make sure Stiles ate and cleaned up.

It was easier said than done. Stiles was temperamental in regard to just about every aspect of his heat,
and it made it extraordinarily difficult to anticipate every turn. Derek was glad he’d done as much research as he had, because he was going to need every bit of it.

The gurgling sound of the smoothie drying up was like music to his ears.

“Good, omega. Let go of the straw now,”

Stiles let go with a pop and a gasp.

It was another useful research tip that had panned out well: reinforcing his Authority with the title ‘omega.’ The deeper Stiles was into Heat, the easier he seemed to respond to his status rather than his name.

Derek set the empty cup aside and relaxed his hold. The cup barely left his fingers when he felt Stiles gearing to fight again. He let the omega push him till he was on his back on the bed. His head only just sank into the mattress when the omega was already settling on his hips, impaling himself.

“Yeah…” Stiles sighed as he braced his hands on Derek’s belly and started rocking. He set up a jerky rhythm, repeatedly jabbing his hips rather than rising and falling in the steady glide Derek had expected. Stiles worked himself roughly on Derek’s cock, crying out and wordlessly begging as he went.

Derek placed his hands on Stiles’ thighs. He just rested them there, not gripping or pressing, just feeling the flex of the slender muscles as Stiles rode him. Stiles didn’t always have enough energy to do more than give a few seconds of fight-or-fuck at a time, but Derek was more than happy to take advantage when he did. So he let his instincts to dominate fall to the recesses of his mind.

He lay passively and let the omega use him. And it was glorious.

Stiles was beautiful. His lean body was perfectly displayed above him, the very picture of Heat-drunk omega. His eyes were glassy from frustrated tears, a bit dazed; his normally pale cheeks were flushed bright and the color trailed down over his shoulders and heaving chest. His nipples were swollen and bruised—not from Derek’s abuse, sadly, but from the way Heat made them almost unbearably sensitive. His sweet, slender omega cock was in a similar state: painfully flushed and engorged. It waved at Derek temptingly as Stiles rode him.

Derek kept his hands where they were though. He let Stiles chase his orgasm on his own, let the sex entertain the omega while they waited for Derek’s knot to be ready for another appearance.

“Alpha, alpha, alpha,” Stiles whispered in a soft, mindless litany. His movement changed, his hips rolling abruptly.

Derek gave a surprised moan as he felt the omega clench and swivel on him. It was almost violent, even as the motion went slow. Stiles repeated the move. Slower.

“Alpha!” the omega gasped, forcing his hips in a circle for a third time. The look on his face was blissful as he grinded down.

Derek rubbed his open palms over his thighs encouragingly, “That’s my omega. Take what you need,”

Stiles gasped in rhythm with his movements, “Knot, alpha. Please, please!”

Derek braced his feet on the bed and lifted just a little, murmuring: “Keep going, love,”
Stiles’ tears were lost in his sweat. It was dripping down his whole body as he worked harder, “Please, alpha. PLEASE, alpha!”

Derek slid his hands up the omega’s legs, caressing his hips, curving along his ass, and up his sides. He bit his lip in concentration as he watched—felt—Stiles’ movements, then he gripped the omega around the waist and took over.

“ALPHA!” Stiles screamed happily.

Derek continued the rough rocking Stiles had established, but he put the strength Stiles lacked behind it.

Stiles bounced on his cock, his mouth wide open and gasping. Seconds later, and Derek was treated to the lovely sight of his omega painting them both with watery spunk.

His poor little cock was still torturously red and hard, of course, but Stiles sagged and his hole went loose and soft around Derek. The omega was reasonably satisfied for the moment, and if Derek was quick about it he could keep him there, without the painful cramps and hot flashes that could make Heat so wretched.

He just needed to knot him.

Stiles was furious again. He was furious and hurting, and it was all Derek’s fault.

“Stiles—”

“Fuck you!”

“Calm down,”

Stiles didn’t want to calm down. He wanted to fuck.

“Calm. Down,” the alpha Commanded.

Stiles huffed and still managed to flail, his need to be filled more powerful by far than the need to obey.

Derek grabbed his ankles and dragged him to the side of the bed. He picked him up, ignoring Stiles’ fit, and they were moving. Stiles was too busy, too consumed with the devastation of the alpha’s refusal coupled with his latest ignored demands. He couldn’t track what was happening or where they were going. He had no concept of time, or place, or consequence. He was lost in the Heat.

He didn’t recognize his surroundings as they entered a new room.

He didn’t particularly respond to the cool porcelain under his feet.

He wasn’t aware he was screaming in unhappy surprise when Derek turned on the shower over his head and immediately drenched him. The water was cold, so cold, but it did next to nothing to temper the heat raging through him, condensing in his groin and making his hole drip thick globs of slick as it grabbed for a knot that wasn’t there.

He didn’t care that Derek couldn’t quite control him, even with the Voice; so to keep them from slipping and injuring themselves through Stiles’ struggles, the alpha sat in the shower and pulled Stiles into his lap again. He didn’t care that Derek was whispering soothing, sweet words as he
washed the sweat, slick and semen off of them. He didn’t care that his hole was sore as the alpha fingered him with something gelatinous and gross.

He only cared that his alpha was denying him. He needed his knot, and the bastard kept it to himself.

In all the ‘ooohing’ and ‘awing’ alphas liked to do regarding omega Heats, somehow they all generally forgot to talk about how much work it could be. So, so, so much work.

36 hours and counting, and despite the advantages of being a werewolf, Stiles was taking his toll. Derek had mistakenly fallen asleep beside him while they were tied together a while back, and had woken to Stiles riding him frantically; while the nap have been necessary and the wake-up hardly unpleasant, it somehow managed to throw Derek off track, totally disrupting the carful routine he’d gotten Stiles to follow. Ever since, the omega had been fussy, practically impervious to Alpha Authority, and increasingly agitated whenever he wasn’t knotted.

Even when they were actively fucking.

“Aaaaargh!” the omega screamed as Derek pulled himself out.

Stiles jumped to try and chase after him, but Derek tossed him back on the bed hard enough to make him bounce and roll. While the omega was disoriented, Derek did a little scrambling of his own. He fished the retail bag out from a pile of discarded blankets and managed to pull out the emergency Heat Aid the store clerk had recommended.

Then Stiles was on him.

The omega tackled him from the side, sending them both tumbling to the floor. With a huff, Derek snagged Stiles’ arm and manhandled him till he had the omega pinned belly-down on the floor.


Derek laid flat out on top of him, buying himself time by teasingly rubbing himself between the boy’s cheeks. Predictably, Stiles hitched his hips and tried to catch him where it mattered. Derek let him try while he tore the cap off the container in his hand.

The dildo was floating in a medicated fluid, ready for immediate use. It was cold and slimy to his touch, but the sales girl had sworn it felt good to an omega high on Heat hormones. Not as good as a knot, but good nonetheless. When he’d expressed doubt and hinted that his omega’s Heats were long and tough, she’d handed him two more.

It was a one-time use sort of deal.

Derek didn’t mind the expense, especially if it worked. He couldn’t possibly knot again any time soon. His cock ached. He desperately needed a break.

“No!” Stiles roared furiously when Derek lifted up and positioned the toy.

“It’s alright, Stiles,” he tried to keep the strain out of his voice as he somehow managed to keep the boy pinned with one hand and aim with the other, “This’ll help,”

Stiles pounded his fists on the floor fitfully, tossing his head to try and glare at the alpha. Derek noticed he was crying again, those bambi eyes red rimmed and frustrated. The Heat Aid slid home and Stiles deflated, the fight going out of him so suddenly that Derek lost his balance when he no
longer found himself being opposed.

Stiles sobbed openly, the sound sorrowful and pathetic. There was no hint of the anger that Derek had come to expect.

“Easy, love,” he soothed, petting Stiles’ back as he worked the dildo in and out in short, gentle thrusts, “you’re doing so well,”

“No!” Stiles whined, devastated, “No! Want you!”

“I know, baby,” Derek reassured, “You’ll have me in a bit,”

“Now!”

“No, Stiles,” Derek kept his voice solid but sweet.

Stiles sobbed into the floor, his hips wiggling half-heartedly. Derek helped him turn onto his back while keeping the toy mostly inside. Stiles flopped over with a sad whimper, and by god, his lip literally trembled. The boy kept pouting even as he started to squirm onto the toy.

“That’s it, good omega. God, you are… gorgeous,”

He wasn’t so sure he could afford to be distracted, but it would have been a shame not to take a moment to appreciate the omega for the wild, beautiful creature he was. Stiles’ legs were spread wide, one knee resting carelessly over Derek’s thigh; it gave him an excellent view, from the omega’s sniffling face all the way down to his hungry hole.

Derek didn’t think he’d ever tire of the sight of his omega’s hole. He must have knotted him at least a dozen times in the past day, but it was still so tight, all things considered. That wasn’t to say their vigorous activities hadn’t had an affect though: even to Derek’s untrained eye, Stiles looked bruised and swollen, the skin dark and puffy and every tug of the dildo brought a flash of bright red flesh and squirts of slick as he clung to the toy.

Derek’s cocked stirred as he watched, but he did nothing about it. Despite his arousal, he was sore and exhausted. He’d be no good to Stiles if he used himself to the point of injury.

He had to pace them, make sure they could both last until the Heat was over.
Twenty-Two

It wasn’t like last time. Stiles didn’t just blink his eyes and suddenly realize his Heat was over. He wasn’t trapped on an alpha’s knot. He was being thoroughly and wonderfully fucked though.

“Di-different,” Stiles managed to get the word out, but it was a struggle. His mind still felt a little foggy and Heat-addled. It was like being tipsy—he was definitely inebriated, but well and fully aware of it.

Derek paused above him, stilling his cock by extension. Oh, no, that… that was not allowed. Stiles couldn’t have that.

He lifted his hips, squeezing down pointedly, and whimpered softly: “Alpha?”

Derek’s perma-frown melted into a beatific smile. He leaned down and placed a sweet kiss on Stiles’ forehead, “You coming out of it, baby?”

Stiles whined a little, “I don’t…. I’m… Ugh!” he gave a small, frustrated cry and gave up trying to answer. He planted his feet and thrust hard, pouting: “please?”

Derek grinned and finally got back to thrusting. Stiles sighed happily and responded with a weak smile of his own.

“Good omega,” Derek praised and Stiles felt his heart skip in giddy omega pleasure that had nothing to do with the sex. His alpha caressed his cheek and let Stiles nuzzle the palm as his strong voice continued whispering sweetly to him, “That’s right, just relax, I’ll take care of you.”

Stiles already knew that, though. Derek hadn’t ordered him to relax, but Stiles liked to imagine he had. He liked this alpha’s Voice a lot, the way it stroked his mind as perfectly as those hands and cock stroked his body. It made him wet, and Stiles liked being wet for his alpha.

Still. It would have been nice if his alpha had Commanded him, but it was awfully sweet of him not to.

He let himself go liquid, sinking into the bed further and further with every thrust. His legs fell open, wide and inviting, and he had the errant thought that maybe he could convince Derek to stay between them a bit longer. Maybe the alpha was thinking something similar.

There was no urgency to Derek’s movements. His thrusts were long and slow, lazy despite the depth. It was like he was gently rubbing away the last of the Heat. Stiles liked it a lot. Like a lot, a lot.

Derek groaned, he dropped his forehead onto Stiles’ collar bone. Stiles tilted his head to the side instinctively.

Without lifting, Derek shook his head in the negative and gave a frustrated grunt.

Stiles whined. He brought his hands up to touch, one in his alpha’s hair and the other rubbing over that massive back. He kept his touch light, but close enough for him to feel every flex and roll of the muscles. He hummed appreciatively; his alpha was wonderful. Well built. Powerful. Heavy and perfect on top of him.

Derek lifted his head and Stiles stared into his intense, glowing-red eyes.
“Don’t tempt me, Stiles,” Derek growled.

Stiles wasn’t scared though. Not even when he saw the hint of fang in the guy’s mouth. He was his alpha. Every instinct so boldly revealed by his Heat told him so. And his alpha would never hurt him.

Derek closed his eyes tightly, his hefty brow creased in a pained frown. When his lids lifted, his eyes were a gorgeous green-blue again.

“No, love,” he gave Stiles a regretful smile, petted his cheek again.

Stiles mewled and gave the alpha’s hair a little tug, “Want you. Alpha,”

“You have me,”

Stiles tugged at the big shoulders above him, liking the sleek skin and thick muscle under his fingers. “Knot me?” he asked sweetly.

Derek laughed and the sound sent a warm, mushy rush through Stiles’ chest.

But he didn’t refuse him. Of course not. His alpha was sweet and kind to him, he would never deny him his knot. Because this was his alpha. And his alpha loved him. When Derek was firmly locked inside him again, Stiles felt the conviction resound in his head and his heart alike.

It lingered, even after the Heat finally finished with him.

Derek wasn’t entirely sure when the Heat ended, exactly. He could still pick up traces of it in the boy’s scent, see it in his eyes, when his knot finally went down, but by the time he’d finished rinsing them both down and changed the bedding, Stiles was yawning and looking adorably confused as he took in the mess they’d made of his room.

A few minutes of post-Heat cuddling, and they both passed out.

When Derek woke some time later, the omega was splayed out across the bed (and himself), snoring away with his mouth open and a puddle of drool collecting between Derek’s shoulder and the pillow.

It was a serious strain on his heartstrings, leaving the omega alone like that. But as tempting as it was to just roll over and go back to sleep, Derek wasn’t about to rest on his laurels. No matter how successful the Heat was, he needed Stiles to recognize him as his alpha during the harsh light of a normal day too.

He soon learned that Stiles could sleep like the dead.

He cleaned the bathroom first, clearing up the water they’d spilled in their exhausted climb out of the tub earlier that morning and setting out new towels and toilet paper. The large pile of soiled bed sheets he’d been steadily adding to over the past few days got carted into the appropriate laundry bags. He switched on the AC with its flow-directed fans, discarded the variety of trash and gathered the handful of non-disposable dishes.

Stiles slept through it all. He never even twitched.

By the time he was satisfied with the state of the room, it was well passed noon on Monday. Stiles’
Heat had been significantly shorter this time around, just under 48 hours all together. At least, that was the closest estimate Derek could figure. It was still intense and difficult, but a far cry better than his first.

Derek liked to think he had something to do with that.

“Well don’t you look proud of yourself,”

Talia found him in the kitchen. He’d barely finished putting the dishes they’d used in the washer and hadn’t even had a chance to wonder why the house seemed so empty.

He shot her a grin over his shoulder, “I did alright,”

“That’s good to hear,”

He hesitated, debating if he should really mention it, and if his mother was really the person to mention anything about the Heat to. Derek wasn’t normally a big sharer, but… there was this pressing need to tell someone. Maybe it was pride, maybe it was a twinge of his own buried anxiety.

He turned to Talia, and with his thoughts still swirling around behind his eyes, he said: “He tried to get me to claim him,”

As comfortable as he and Stiles had gotten in the past three weeks, he hadn’t been expecting such a blatant appeal for, well, for more. Deeper intimacy. Permanency. Not during their first ever Heat together. The more he thought on it, the more amazing it seemed.

So Talia’s complete lack of reaction was understandably disappointing.

But Derek wasn’t a super sentimental person. The disappointment fled, only to make room for concern. The merest suggestion that an omega might be thinking about mating into the pack should have all of them jumping for joy.

“… Mom?”

Her expression didn’t change, but Talia’s back straightened, and she took a deep breath. Like she was preparing herself for a difficult discussion. There was only one thing he could think of that could be weighing on her so badly. One person.

Why was the house so empty?

Derek braced his clenched fists on the counter, already feeling a subvocal growl rumbling in his chest.

“I think…” her chest lifted with a heavy sigh, “Derek, I think we need to send Stiles home,”

Derek couldn’t stop the possessive snarl that idea inspired.

Talia nodded at him, like his reaction confirmed something, “It’s the safest thing for him,”

He wanted to refuse, like he had the right to defy his pack leader. He wanted to argue. Fight. He’d barely had a chance to prove himself to Stiles. Kate had taken so much from him; his innocence, his childhood home, his father. He refused to let her take any more from him, directly or otherwise. She would NOT cost him his mate. He wanted to yell all of this at Talia, make her understand just how much the omega meant to him.

Instead, he just grunted: “No,”
“It’s not up for discussion,”

He felt his lip curl, knew his eyes must be furiously red, “No,”

“She set a wolvesbane gas bomb off at our office yesterday,”

Derek slammed his fist on the counter, his head dropping as he tried to control the impulse to shift and hunt down the one threatening everything he had. Again.

“You can’t tell me you want Stiles in the middle of this,”

No. He didn’t. God damn it, she was right. But the thought of letting Stiles disappear back to California made his chest hurt.

“Then it seems you have a choice to make,”

Derek looked up to see her studying him with her arms crossed over her chest. She was all business as she waited for his undivided attention.

“What are you talking about?”

“You will stay here and help us hunt down Argent, and Stiles will go home,” she said in that no-nonsense tone he’d hated as a child, “Or,” she said the word slowly, pausing before she continued in that direct, level manner, “You will accompany Stiles back to Beacon Hills for the duration of this hunt.”

Derek froze. He couldn’t have heard that right. And if he did, he wasn’t at all sure how he was supposed to feel about it.

Talia arched a brow at him, “It’s your choice, Derek: Stiles or Kate,”

“That isn’t fair,”

“Oh, it’s more than fair,”

“She’s—!” he stopped himself the instant he realized he’d begun shouting. Reigning it in, he tried again: “After everything she’s done to me…”

“Exactly,” she nodded, and he knew she understood perfectly, “You’re too close to the situation. It’d be safer for all of us if you backed off and let us take care of it. Probably easier too, if I’m being honest,”

Derek made a disgusted grumble, throwing his hands up as he turned from her and began pacing. The self-satisfied and hopeful feeling he’d walked out of the Heat room with was nothing but a memory. At the moment, all he wanted was to howl and run, bite and hurt. He wanted to hunt, and he wanted it bloody.

But a wolf knew when it was being backed into a corner.

It was never a good thing, but especially worse for an alpha. Wonderful as it would be to have unlimited one-on-one time with his omega, leaving Kate to anyone else went against every protective instinct and bloodthirsty desire he had.

Besides, sending him with Stiles for an indefinite period of time had to be a breach of the Heat Contract.
He didn’t stop pacing, didn’t even glance at her as he threw his only half-hearted argument at her: “Peter?”

“He can be reasoned with,” Talia reassured him perhaps a little too easily.

That gave him pause, “Meaning?”

Her smile was tight; it was hard to say if it was with displeasure or with reluctance to show him how pleased she actually was, “We’ve spoken about it,”

“And?”

She shrugged, unconcerned and giving him no hints, “He’s willing to withdraw from the Heat Contract if you’re willing to withdraw from the Hunt,”

“Bullshit,”

“It’s true,”

“I don’t buy it,” he shook his head. He couldn’t see Peter giving up the chance to be with Stiles just to kick Derek off Kate’s case.

Talia’s sigh was long-suffering and mildly annoyed, “You’ve always misunderstood Peter’s priorities. Ultimately, he wants Stiles in the pack and he wants Argent dead,” she spoke as if it was obvious: “This solution increases the chances of both of those happening,”

Derek physically recoiled, appalled by the implication, “You think I’d… what? Interfere with the hunt?”

“Of course not,” her tone suggested she thought he was being an idiot, “but your history with Kate makes you emotional and that makes you a liability. And as far as Stiles is concerned… no matter how attracted he is, Peter’s not stupid enough to think he’s the one with that omega’s favor,”

Derek didn’t know how to respond to that.

After a long, tense silence filled only with the sound of his continued pacing, Talia continued:

“You should go pack. And if you’re smart about it, by the time I call you home, maybe you’ll have a collar on his neck,”

“Could get used to this,”

Stiles woke up to a perfectly clean, only faintly funky-smelling room, and a tray stacked high with chicken alfredo and garlic bread sitting neatly on his bedside table. Oh, and his body was washed and lounging in fresh sheets already, which was a neat trick.

He vaguely remembered the Heat ending with exhaustion and shower cuddles, but he had half expected it to be dream. Happily not, clearly.

Stiles scooted over to the edge of the bed, groaning at the deep ache in his muscles from good, hard use. It was distinctly different from his last Heat: he was arguably more achy than last time, but it was a good pain, not too much as to be debilitating, but enough that he’d be sore for a good day or two. As he settled at the edge of the bed to eat, his hole pulsed with a deeper, telling pain. It made him blush, even though no one was around to see it.
He turned his attention to the food and just as he was moaning around a mouthful of pasta, a chiming ring filtered through the overhead speakers.

Around the fork still in his mouth, he mumbled, “‘ello?”

A click, then Allison’s voice sounded practically in his ear, “Derek looks way too well rested,” Stiles choked. Spluttering with a laugh, he eventually cleared his throat and asked, “Are you here?”

“Right outside your door,”

“Oh!”

She disconnected the call as Stiles jumped up to grab some clothes. He pulled on some jeans and was tugging a batman t-shirt down over his tummy when he answered the door.

Allison swept past him with a gust of fresh air—literally. It was only once he was standing in the open door that he realized how much his room still smelled like Heat sex.

Like him and Derek, specifically.

“Ugh, maybe we should talk outside? I know you’re used to living with animals and all, but it stinks in here,” he tried to keep the embarrassment out of his face, really, but no matter how much he told himself it was natural and Allison of all people definitely would not judge him, the fragrant reminder of just what he’d been up to—and with who—felt a little too private. He wasn’t sure he wanted anyone beside Derek privy to this particular musk.

He’d had no such reservations about the Heat he’d shared with Peter. He deliberately chose not to dwell on that realization.

Allison’s nose wrinkled as she grimaced, “Yeah, you’re right. We can do this just as easily in any other room,”

“Let me just—” he made a hasty grab at the food tray. He wasn’t about to let all that tastiness go to waste.

Allison was already back out the door. He caught up to her in the hall and followed her into the kitchen. As he settled down with his lunch at the dining table, he finally took notice of the thick black folder tucked under her arm. She sat next to him and undid the very professional cord-clasp holding it shut.

Stiles’ brows lifted in question as he slurped up more pasta, “What’s this?”

“A proposition,” Allison’s grin was at odds with the curt tone of her words. She leafed through the papers and separated a few, explaining as she went: “As you may have noticed, the pack’s been under a bit of a threat recently,”

A shiver of remembered fear made its way down his back, “You mean Kate?”

Her mouth straitened into a tight, unhappy line, “Yeah. What she did to you was unforgivable and it never should have happened. She targeted you for the same reasons she targeted Jared: to her, omegas are the weak link in a pack’s defenses,”

Stiles felt his appetite leave him. Twirling his fork in the noodles unnecessarily, he argued, “But I’m not a link in anyone’s defenses! Hell, I’m not even a member of the pack. Last I checked, I’m getting
paid to be here,”

She nodded grimly, “I know, but Kate doesn’t see it that way,”

“Well fuck her,”

Allison pushed a pile of papers at him, “Talia wants to terminate the current Heat Contract, Stiles—”

“What!?” he blanched, “But—!”

She hushed him with a finger over his lips, smiling that perfect, kind smile she always seemed to have, “She asked me to draw up replacements. New options for you to consider that will take into account the present safety concerns,”

Like she’d stolen the wind from his sails, Stiles slumped forward and stared at her, “Replacements?... what?”

This time, she picked up the paper pile and handed it to him. Feeling numb with confused shock, he took them from her wordlessly.

It was a new Heat Contract. The first page looked almost exactly the same as the last contract he’d held in his hand. Except two things: the names listed under ‘Participants’ included only his own, Peter’s and Derek’s; and under ‘Location’ his hometown had been added alongside New York, with a bolded annotation beside it with the words ‘on hiatus.’

“‘On hiatus’?” he practically spat the word out as his confusion compounded, “What does this mean?”

Allison reached over and flipped the page for him. She pointed to a specific section and Stiles only half-heartedly followed along with his eyes as he listened to her explain:

“Just like the last agreement, this one states that the Hales have legal rights to your Heats until such a time as you choose to terminate the contract. This subsection specifies that if the pack’s circumstances should threaten any negative impact to you, then Talia has the right to send you home with pack protection for however long the situation lasts. You’ll still be under the contract and getting paid, even if no one’s actually there for your Heats—”

“I don’t understand,” Stiles cut her off angrily, “I can’t go into Heat without an alpha, Allison!”

“I know,” she placed a hand on his arm and rubbed comfortingly, “You’ll go back on suppressants,” she flipped a few pages and tapped at a highlighted section, “The pack will pay for a medical exam with a trusted omega-specialist OBGYN—and really, with how tough things have been, you should do that anyway—and they’ll cover the expense of whichever medication is deemed appropriate to prescribe you. You won’t go into Heat until you come back to us,”

“Let me get this straight,” Stiles rubbed his eyes, his head spinning with the implications laid out in front of him, “Talia’s just going to send me home, keep paying me a frankly obscene amount of money so I don’t have sex with anyone else—”

“—Heat sex, specifically—” Allison interjected.

He waved her comment aside, continuing: “—and while you guys are fighting off a psychopathic murderer I’m just supposed to go back my life like nothing happened. Do I have that right?”

She mulled that over for a moment, bobbing her head in thought, “More or less,”
“What. The. Hell. You can’t be serious? Never mind, of course you’re serious, you wrote up a freakin’ contract,” he tossed the papers on the table, “And if I don’t want to go back on suppressants?”

“Well, since Talia’s effectively terminating the current contract, I suppose you’re welcome to ask Nature’s Sanctum to relist you on their website,” she said it in the nonchalant tone that made it clear she knew that wasn’t acceptable to him and wanted him to know she knew.

He glared at her, “Or…?”

She flopped a second stack of papers in front of him, “Or you can sign this one,”

He barely glanced at the page. It looked exactly like the other one, including Beacon Hills under the ‘Location’ section. He flicked it away without looking further.

“I don’t want to leave—”

“Too bad,” she held the latest contract up in front of him, her finger tapping along the top of it.

Stiles opened his mouth to argue with her, but it snapped shut as he noticed the line her finger was tapping against. There was an immediate difference in this contract after all. There were only two names listed under ‘Participants.’

He met Allison’s eyes with wide-eyed suspicion, “Me and Derek?”

She nodded, looking supremely proud for some unknowable reason, “You’ll still have to leave New York until Talia says it’s safe for you to come back, but Derek will go with you. He’ll be acting both as your protector and the only alpha allowed to partner you during Heat moving forward,” she wagged her eyebrows sneakily, “That’s regardless of which state you’re in. Until you terminate the contract, of course,”

Stiles glanced down at the ‘location’ section. Yep. There was no mention of any hiatus bullshit.

Allison shook the paper in front of him unsubtly as she dropped her professional attitude and teased in a sing-song-y voice: “You know you want to!”

Stiles started to raise his hand, subconsciously reaching for the contract. He paused as a thought occurred to him and licked his lips uncertainly, “… Did Peter withdraw or something?”

She couldn’t look him in the eye as she admitted, “Not exactly,”

Stiles frowned, “What do you mean?”

She gave a supremely awkward shrug, “Talia talked to him, not me!”

Doubting that was all she knew, he fitted all the disbelief and disappointment he could into his voice, “Allison…?”

“Look,” she said impatiently, “It’s simple: Peter’s not willing to go with you. Derek is,”
“Also… he might threaten to shoot you,”

Derek smirked, amused despite the gravity in Stiles’ voice.

The omega swatted at his shoulder ineffectively, “You could at least pretend to take this seriously. I don’t know why I’m bothering, if you’re just going to laugh it off. Suit yourself, then; my dad may not be packing wolfsbane bullets, but even you would have a hard time bouncing back from a bunch of lead in your chest!”

“A bunch of lead,” Derek deadpanned, “Really,”

“A bunch of lead,” Stiles confirmed with a sharp nod of finality.

Derek hummed noncommittally as he dropped his right hand back onto Stiles’ thigh while his left remained on the steering wheel. More and more, he was appreciating the benefits of his decision to leave NY; exclusive rights to the omega’s Heat quickly led having carte-blanche access to Stiles’ person as a whole. Finally, he didn’t have to tip toe around wanting to touch him all the time. So long as Stiles never told him off for it, Derek could touch all he liked.

They were three days past his Heat, and the omega hadn’t stopped him once.

He squeezed Stiles’ leg just because he could, letting his fingers slide just a bit further along his inseam. He thoroughly enjoyed the hitch in the omega’s breath.

“Derek!” Stiles scolded.

“Hm?”

“That’s not fair!” Stiles whined, “You can’t just, just… do things like that right before we meet my father!”

“Ok,”

He didn’t move his hand back and Stiles didn’t stop him from pressing and sliding the tip of his pinky dangerously close to his groin.

Stiles moaned.

As the scent of slick and want filled the rental car, Derek lamented that they didn’t have time to pull over so he could help his omega clean up. With his tongue.

“Calm down,” he told the omega off with a devilishly pleased grin.

Somewhat reluctantly, Derek put his right hand back on the wheel. Stiles was riled up enough, any more and even the Sheriff’s human nose would be able to catch it.

“Calm down,’ he says,” Stiles snarked under his breath, “Like it’s so easy. I’ll show you calmed down, just you wait,”

“I’ll look forward to it,”

Stiles snorted doubtfully.
Derek turned the corner and Stiles’ scent bloomed with happiness and relief. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the omega sit up and stretch his neck as he peered out at his home. It made it easy to pull in to the right driveway without asking Stiles for specifics. The moment the car was in park, Stiles fumbled at his belt and practically spilled onto the driveway.

Derek was just standing from the driver’s seat when the front door opened, and John Stilinski stepped onto the landing just in time for his son to crash into his arms.

The sheriff of Beacon Hills was an intimidating man, for a human. He was an alpha, tall and powerfully built despite years of a stressful career wearing deep frown lines on his face. His smile was warm and fond as he looked his son over, but his expression turned steely when he caught sight of Derek coming up the drive. The man nudge Stiles to his side and braced his hands on his belt as he looked down his nose at Derek.

Sure enough, a gun gleamed from its holster at his hip.

Derek could appreciate the intimidating visage, even if the other alpha was merely human. While Stiles and himself had been closeted for the Heat, Talia had reached out to the Sheriff and explained the difficult situation that Stiles had somehow been caught in the middle of; John had eventually agreed to play host to whichever wolf would be assigned as his son’s protector, but it didn’t mean he had to be happy about it.

And the sheriff certainly did not look happy.

He would never admit it to Stiles, but Derek was rather glad BHPD didn’t stock wolfsbane bullets. He paused a good, respectful distance from the sheriff and held out his hand, nodding, “Sir,”

The Sheriff frowned down at his hand for a moment.

Over the man’s shoulder, Derek saw Stiles inch closer to his dad and poke him in the back.

The Sheriff gave an unimpressed grunt, but then reached out and clasped Derek’s hand, “You must be Derek Hale,”

It wasn’t a question, but Derek answered anyway, “Yes, sir,”

“It’s a question, but Derek answered anyway, “Yes, sir,”

“He’s,” the Sheriff looked him up and down as he hummed and then he spun on his heel and headed into the house.

Stiles popped over to Derek’s side and whispered, “Calling him ‘sir’ was a stroke of genius,”

Derek rolled his eyes fondly as he followed his omega inside.

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Stiles was thrilled to be home.

Sure, he’d been away from home before—he was 18, not 8—but not like this. He’d been in NY for just over a month, making it the longest he’d ever been away from Beacon Hills in one consecutive stretch by far. Add in Kate attacking him and the disturbing appearance of certain intense feelings, and yeah, Stiles figured he could be forgiven for being beside himself with joy at seeing his dad again. So sue him.

“Don’t think for a minute this will continue,” Stiles wagged his fingers to indicate the three large
meat-lovers supreme pizzas spread across the table between himself and the alphas, “I don’t want to know how much take-out you’ve been eating while I was gone, but it ends here. I’m letting this one slide because it’s been a long day of travel and you cheated by ordering before we even got here,”

John grinned, unrepentant as he picked up another slice, “I enjoyed it while it lasted,”

“Tomorrow’s menu is going to be entirely vegan!” Stiles responded with vindictive glee.

“I’m a carnivore,” Derek supplied unhelpfully.

John gave the other alpha an appraising glance, “Already making yourself helpful, I see,”

Stiles glowered at both of them, “Bullshit. You’re just as much human as you are wolf; a day of healthy, plant-based eating won’t hurt you. Now quit enabling him,”

John laughed, shooting Derek another unreadable look. Stiles wasn’t sure what his dad was thinking about Derek, but there’d been an awful lot of ‘unreadable looks’ aimed in the wolf’s direction in the two hours they’d been there. He also couldn’t tell if Derek just hadn’t noticed or was choosing not to react.

“You let him talk to you like that often, Derek?”

Derek shrugged, meeting John’s eye calmly, “I don’t let him any more than you raised him to talked like that,”

Stiles stilled as silence stole over the table. He looked back and forth between the two alphas, frantically watching their blank faces as they both ignored him. He waited tensely for the other shoe to drop.

John blinked, snorted with only the barest hint of humor. He turned back to his pizza like nothing happened.

Stiles blew out a loud breath of relief, “If the two of you are done with the dick measuring—”

“I’d thank you to never associate my Johnson with the guy you’re screwing—”

“—there’s still like, a pizza and a half needing eating here, and—”

“—in the same sentence, ever again—”

As he and John continued to talk over each other in a mostly unheard jumble of words, Stiles noticed Derek hiding a smile behind another slice of pizza. Stiles couldn’t remember the last time he’d been so content to sit at this table, probably not since his mother passed.

It felt an awful lot like being surrounded by loving family.

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It was nearly midnight by the time the Stilinskis were done reaffirming their familial bond through thinly veiled jabs and inside jokes that went well over Derek’s head. He didn’t mind though; it was wonderful to see the omega so happy and vibrant, relaxed in a way he hadn’t managed in NY.

There really was no place like home. Derek sincerely hoped that someday Stiles would think of the pack house as home, even if a part of him always reserved that word for Beacon Hills and the Sheriff.
Stiles was laughing giddily as he led Derek upstairs. His scent was light and carefree, and Derek had never felt more for another living creature. He reached out to run his fingers down the omega’s back, just a gentle, innocent caress, but he aborted the gesture as the Sheriff cleared his throat behind him.

“Guest room,” the older alpha said with a tight, calculated smile. He patted Derek on the back with one hand as he pointed at a door further down the hall, “Right down there. Across from me. I already changed the sheets out for you and everything,“

“Dad!” Stiles hissed, his shoulders tensing and his scent going sour with embarrassment.

The Sheriff didn’t bother looking innocent. He grinned widely as he looked at Derek then his son, and back to Derek, “House rules, boys: no sex that’s not Heat sex,”

“DAD!”

Derek carefully kept his face blank. The last thing he needed was for Stiles’ father to know how much he’d been looking forward to thoroughly debauching his son in his childhood bed. It was all he could think about during the cross-country flight.

“Whatever makes you more comfortable, sir,” Derek said mildly.

“Damn right,”

“What about what makes *me* more comfortable!?” Stiles sputtered.

That was a very valid argument, in Derek’s opinion, though not the Sheriff’s, judging by the unamused look on the older alpha’s face.

Eventually the embarrassment seemed to get the better of the omega and Stiles retreated to his room. It left Derek standing in the hall with his omega’s father. Alone, for the first time.

The Sheriff crossed his arms over his chest and raised his chin proudly. Derek recognized the alpha posturing, even if he’d never met a human stupid enough to pull it on him. John Stilinski didn’t have a hope of besting Derek in a fight, and they both knew it instinctively. They were both painfully aware of the trump-card this particular human had over him though: Stiles.

For the first, and hopefully last time in his adult life, Derek bowed his head. He couldn’t quite bring himself to bare his neck in submission, even for Stiles. He needed the Sheriff to respect him at the very least, even if he couldn’t come to like him.

The human snorted, not unlike the doubtful expression his son tended to make, “You might as well go rest up. Tomorrow you’re telling me in detail whatever the hell it is you and yours got my son involved in. Understand?”

Derek frowned, “Talia said she spoke with you,”

A muscle in the human’s jaw twitched before he said, “We spoke. I’ve been a cop for twenty-five years, kid; I know when I’m not being given the whole story,“

Derek could appreciate that at least. He nodded his acknowledgement, “Fair enough,”

The Sheriff’s stance relaxed slightly as he turned toward his own bedroom, “Goodnight then,”

“Goodnight, sir,” Derek made to turn on his heel and paused, “And Sheriff?”

“Yeah, kid?”
“Don’t call me kid,”

The Sheriff laughed as he closed his bedroom door, nodding good naturedly as he went. At least, Derek thought it was good naturedly; the guy didn’t smell particularly sardonic or irritated.

When Derek entered the guestroom, he wasn’t surprised to find the blue bedspread on the full-sized bed smelled of fresh, lemony laundry soap. However, he was surprised that it was mild enough, a natural rather than chemical scent, that didn’t overwhelm his nose the way most household cleaning materials did. Melissa and Allison were the only humans he knew of who regularly thought about such things when stocking their cabinets, and they only knew better through living with Scott. Derek wondered if the Sheriff had any close experience with werewolves, though before today he would have assumed not.

Choosing not to dwell on it, Derek dropped his travel bag in a corner and stripped down to his boxers before climbing into bed. He squirmed a little, trying to get comfortable in the unfamiliar bed. While he appreciated the scent on the sheets, it was less a matter of its own smell and more the absence of any familiar scents that made it difficult to settle down.

It’d be so much easier to sleep if he could have buried his nose in Stiles’ hair. They could’ve slept spooning, so Derek could scent him throughout the night, reassuring himself with the omega’s well-known body flush against his front. Maybe he’d get away with some gentle humping…

It was disturbing how quickly his thoughts went from innocently sentimental to down-right dirty. His cock was rock hard beneath the sheets, and sleep was nowhere in sight.

“Dammit,” Derek huffed in frustration.

It was beyond irritating to touch himself now, knowing that the only reason he wasn’t in his omega’s bed was because of another alpha who’s authority surmounted his own when it came to the boy. It didn’t stop him from reaching under the covers though.

He was so distracted by said irritation that he didn’t hear the soft footsteps outside until the bedroom door creaked open.

The elastic band snapped against his skin as Derek jerked his hand away and bolted up in bed.

“Hey, big guy,” Stiles grinned widely as he poked his head through the door, “Can I come in?”

Derek smiled as he waved him in. He lifted the corner of the bedding, his expression only a little suggestive as he wordlessly invited the omega into bed. Stiles tip-toed through the door and closed it slowly with comical intensity on his face. The moment it was shut, he practically flew across the room and jumped under the covers, landing on his belly partially on top of the alpha’s legs, his arms circling Derek’s waist, his face buried in Derek’s side.

Derek bit back a laugh as Stiles’ breath tickled the sensitive skin of his side, just below his rips. He whispered his own greeting, “Hey,”

Stiles lifted his face and grinned shyly up at him, “Hi,”

Derek smiled back, probably looking like a love-struck fool by the feel of it, “Hi,”

“I’m not supposed to be in here,”

“I know,”
“So I was thinking… maybe, if we’re just really, super, very extra quiet…” Stiles’ voice got quieter with every word, and he left off speaking entirely so he could duck his head and nip Derek cheekily on the hip.

Derek’s erection positively throbbed. He let out a gust of air that might have even been loud enough to reach down the hall. Thankfully, no Sheriff showed up to crash the party.

Aaand those were Stiles’ fingers, sneaking under the band of his boxers. Yes, please.

“I mean,” Stiles’ breath played over the sensitive skin bellow his naval, making Derek’s abs seize, “It just seems like I could do with the practice, and you’re so conveniently here…”

Derek’s brain was too exhausted from the long day and too caught up in the promise of sex to pay much attention. He knew Stiles was saying words, but he hadn’t a hope of recalling which ones. He hummed distractedly when he realized Stiles had gone silent.

“So… what do you think, big guy?”

“About?”

Stiles snickered, his mouth pressed against Derek’s belly to muffle the sound. Derek felt the vibrations all throughout his dick.

Eventually, Stiles peeked up at him again. His grin was perfectly mischievous as he answered, “About me giving you a blowjob?”

“God, yes,”

Because really, there wasn’t any other possible answer. Not in this universe.

Stiles pulled the covers up, his head disappearing under them as Derek collapsed back into the pillows. The blanket-covered lump that was the omega wiggled and squirmed till he was comfortably situated between Derek’s spread legs. It might have been better if Derek had removed his boxers first, and Derek even raised up on his elbows and opened his mouth to let Stiles know, but then:

“Oh, wow…” Derek abandoned the thought instantly, plummeting back onto the pillows as Stiles’ mouth sealed over his tip, boxers and all.

Stiles gave a happy little moan around his mouthful. He sucked almost painfully hard, enough to have Derek’s ass clench and lift his hips. When he dropped back down his balls landed in Stiles’ palm. Literally. He felt Stiles’ long, slender fingers wrap around him in a teasingly loose cage, fingertips tapping him through the fabric. The omega began exploring, his mouth dragging the soggy boxers over his cock.

“Stiles…” he moaned the name softly, reverently.

He felt the boy nuzzle his balls just before he pulled back. Those long fingers worked into the front of his underwear and pulled him through. Then it was all wet heat and sweet suction and Derek gave himself over to the pleasure of his omega’s wonderful mouth.

It was far from his first blowjob, and Stiles certainly had no finesse or significant skill to speak of, but Derek was practically losing his mind. It was the fact that it was Stiles, his Stiles. His hyper, ridiculous, beautiful omega.

And regardless of technique or skill or lack thereof, Stiles was nothing if not enthusiastic. Stiles could
practice blowing him all he wanted. Derek would happily stay in bed with his legs spread for all eternity of that’s what his omega wanted.

The obscene slurping sound as Stiles popped off was loud as a gunshot in the carefully quiet room.

“You know something?” Stiles was decently breathless as he peeled the covers down to unearth his head.

“Huh?”

Stiles caught his cock in a firm fist and pumped it lazily. It was maddening, “I really like this. You’re dick, I mean,”

“Jesus…”

“I know I don’t have a lot to of experience or anything appropriate to compare to, but,” Stiles tightened his grip and added a little twist that had Derek seeing stars, “it is a really, really nice dick,”

Then Stiles swallowed him down. He didn’t manage to take all of it—Derek was an alpha, after all—but he got far enough that Derek wasn’t surprised to feel him gag deliciously when he hit his tonsils and a bit beyond. Stiles determinedly pushed down, throat convulsing. It felt amazing.

Derek hated himself just a little bit for wanting to keep going. Despite the urge to just go ahead and let Stiles choke himself on his cock, he reached down and gently cupped the boy’s head so he could pull him off.

Stiles gave a disgruntled whine but raised his head obediently just the same. God, but he was such a perfect, wonderful omega.

“Come here,” Derek whispered, his palms framing that sweet face as he drew him up for a kiss. It was absolutely gentle compared to the filthy activity Stiles’ mouth had just been up to.

Derek ran his hand down Stiles’ body until he could get a good handful of his pert buttock. He squeezed, eating up the moan it earned him. The omega was so wet, Derek could feel it soaking through the sweatpants Stiles had worn to bed.

He nibbled Stiles’ full lower lip, heatedly asking, “Can I… Stiles, can I…?”

The omega licked into his mouth, whimpering.

It was unbelievably hard to wrap his mind around words. Almost as hard as his cock, “Stiles!” he tore his mouth away determinedly, “Can I fuck you?”

Stiles nodded eagerly, his chin bouncing on Derek’s pec as he brought his mouth down to suck on Derek’s collarbone, “Yeah. Yeah, fuck me. I’ve been so wet since we were in the car,”

And hard too. Derek got distracted by the omega’s erection when it bounced onto his belly the moment Derek nudged the sweatpants down over Stiles’ rump. He was quick to grab hold, tugging at his boy’s flesh until he mewled, needy and wanton, in his ear.

“Get these off,” Derek ordered with a sharp tug at the pants, “before I rip them off with my teeth,”

Stiles grinned teasingly as he pulled away to do just that, “Kinky,”

The moment the pants were gone, Derek snatched him up by the thighs and dropped the omega in his lap. With his shaft still poking through the front of his briefs, Derek slotted them together.
Stiles gasped as their bodies joined, hastily biting back the volume as he cried out, “Derek!”

He couldn’t wait, didn’t want to wait, for Stiles to adjust and start riding him. He wrapped one arm around the omega’s middle and got a firm grip on his ass with the other. Stiles was so slender and light compared to himself, even if he wasn’t a werewolf it would have been doable; so it turned out to be breathlessly easy to lift him up and down on his cock.

So easy. Like their bodies were made for each other.

It was a little ridiculous. Sentiment wasn’t exactly apparent or well placed in the frantic, heavy sex they were currently having. Derek couldn’t help himself.

“Ah!” Stiles cried out, unexpectedly loud as Derek brought him down hard. The omega clapped a hand over his own mouth, his free hand latching onto Derek’s shoulder like a life line.

Derek growled quietly but no less intense. He couldn’t wait till the Sheriff had to leave for work—he wanted to throw Stiles down and pound away at him till he was screaming Derek’s name and coming explosively. At least he didn’t have to wait for the latter.

He kept control of their movement with the arm circling his boy’s waist while he brought the other around to grasp the omega’s bouncing cock. Stiles stiffened and groaned into his hand.

Derek stroked him, using his thumb to pet the head in a way that made Stiles twitch, “Come for me, baby,”

And like the obedient, wonderful creature he was, Stiles did. He shuddered powerfully as he moaned, coating their stomachs in the thin spunk typical of his dynamic.

Derek’s next breath hitched and he closed his eyes to savor the feeling of Stiles’ body flexing around his cock. His hold on his waist loosened, and Stiles took the opportunity to grind down on him in an insistent roll of his hips designed to prolong his own pleasure. Like the orgasm wasn’t enough, like he wanted to keep feeling Derek inside him.

It was devastating.

He didn’t mean for it to happen. His knot filled so fast it left him lightheaded. Almost too fast. He hadn’t even known he was going to knot until it happened. He gasped loudly, his hands scrabbling to clench his omega’s hips as he came.

Stiles froze with a small, surprised whine. He sat there on Derek’s knot, panting and wide eyed.

“S-sorry,” Derek forced the word out through a sea of unexpectedly intense pleasure.

Stiles stared at him. His quiet panting breaths were the only sound for a good little while.

Derek burrowed his face into the crook of the omega’s neck, grunting quietly against the column of smooth skin. He couldn’t deny the alarm ringing in his head—he’d never popped a knot so unexpectedly before, not even when he’d first discovered the damn thing. But for better or worse, they were tied for the next however-long, and Derek wasn’t stupid enough to ruin a good orgasm with worrying. He could worry after.

He jumped a little when Stiles finally moved. Hands ran through his hair, down his neck and across his shoulders. They massaged him gently, making his muscles twitch. He heard Stiles clear his throat softly, then those fingers gripped his skin and he felt the omega tighten around his knot as his body rocked forward.
With a moan, Derek squeezed his hips in warning, “Stop,”

“Why?” Stiles whispered just before kissing his temple, “I want you to feel good. Mmm, and you really, really do feel good,”

Derek’s laugh was short and strained from the particular joy of knotting, from trying to keep quiet, “you’re not helping.”

He really wasn’t. Stiles was circling his hips, petting him, breathing hotly in his ear, smelling so sweat—all of it was sensual and enticing. Encouraging his stupid knot to hold longer.

“Pretty sure I am,” the omega argued. He moaned happily and bore down as he thrust forward.

Derek’s whole body shuddered in response.

Stiles’ moans turned from languid to lusty. Derek felt his sweet omega cock rise against his stomach, and as Stiles rocked on his knot the organ slowly regained interest.

Derek leaned back on the bed and relaxed his hold so Stiles could move more freely. The knot kept them from any real thrusting action, but it sure looked like his omega was working his way towards a second peak just from grinding in those slow, delicious circles.

He had never had a knot last longer than half an hour outside of Stiles’ last Heat, but he was beginning to think Stiles could possibly coax him into lasting longer.

The thought had barely formed fully when there was suddenly a pointed banging on the bedroom door.

“You boys have two minutes to be decent!”

Fuck.
By the end of the week, Stiles was confident Derek and John could be left alone for short periods of time without it coming to blows.

“Do all werewolves live with their parents into their thirties?”

“No,”

“Ah. So it’s a Hale-family specific thing. I take it you’ve never worked for a company that wasn’t Hale-owned either then?”

“… No,"

“I see,”

“…”

On second thought, maybe Stiles was suffering from wishful thinking. Best to play it safe for now.

“Speaking of the Hales!” Stiles interjected with his standard degree of subtlety—which was to say: none at all, “Talia gave me a referral for an OBGYN in LA. I really should go get a checkup, and I was thinking we could go today—if we leave soon, we could sort of make a day of it, you know: grab some lunch in the big city, maybe do a little sight seeing…?”

Derek smiled at him fondly, “Great idea,”

“So long as you’re home by ten,” John chipped in.

Stiles was sure the guffaw that left his mouth was far from attractive, but Derek was scowling at his father with a focus that suggested he might not have noticed, “LA isn’t exactly spitting distance from Beacon, Dad. We’ll be home late,”

“If it’s too late,” Derek said in a mild tone that was at odds with the shrewdness in the look he shot John, “We can always stop at a hotel,”

“Like hell you will,”

“Alrighty then!” Stiles hopped up from the table with forced cheerfulness and collected dishes from breakfast. He smacked Derek on the shoulder as he passed, drawing the alpha’s attention from glaring daggers at his dad, “Let’s get showered, dressed, the whole she-bang, and get out of here! Come on, big guy, let’s go,”

He let out a relieved breath when Derek pushed away from the table and followed him up the stairs.

“Could you, you know… not antagonize him, maybe? Just a thought,” Stiles shot over his shoulder as he opened his bedroom door, “Because it would probably make all our lives a lot easier,”

They hadn’t shared more than a kiss here-or-there in nearly a week. Ever since John caught them literally knotted together that first night, he’d managed to either invade every romantic moment or otherwise compromise their alone times, be it with supernaturally-well timed phone calls or Stiles’ guilty and paranoid conscience.

Not to mention, the not-so-subtle messages John had been sending Derek directly.
As if Stiles needed the reminder, Derek’s brow lifted in an expression that was equally unconvincing as it was irritated, “He lined my door with mountain ash,”

Stiles sighed, “That was one time, and he was being protective—”

The alpha stepped into him, their noses nearly touching as he growled, “Protecting you is my job,”

Stiles licked his suddenly dry lips. Derek getting in his face with his chiseled jaw and ample muscles was all the more distracting thanks to his gruff, earnest tone. He forced his mind out of the gutter and somehow recovered the brain capacity for a decent reply.

“It’s his job too, though,”

They were so close, Stiles could feel the vibration as Derek growled again, “He’s trying to keep you from me…” his words trailed off into a noise of frustration.

Stiles placed his hand on Derek’s pec, subconsciously mewling. The alpha really was very sweet and took his role as Talia’s appointed omega-protector seriously; he didn’t deserve John’s goading. Stiles just wished the two of them would get along.

Derek’s hands settled on either side of his neck, his fingers just barely touching along the base of his skull and down the nobs of his spine. He pulled him in so he could kiss Stiles’ forehead and nuzzle him.

As Derek scented him gently, Stiles found himself smiling. Just a little, private smile.

Unnecessarily loud footsteps stomped on the bottom steps. John called, “If you’re both gonna take showers before you leave, you better hurry up!”

Derek pulled his face away so Stiles could see the incredulous look on his face. See what I’m talking about? his expression seemed to say.

“Get a move on!” John shouted up the stairs.

Stiles buried his face in Derek’s chest and giggled.

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He had never been more self-conscious in his life.

“Greenberg? Window 3,”

As yet another omega skittered past with a suspicious side-eye in his direction, Derek slumped further in his seat. He stared determinedly at the blank screen of his phone, convenient avoiding eye contact. Unfortunately, there was only so much he could do to seem smaller and inconspicuous; even if he hadn’t been the only alpha in the waiting room, he was easily the biggest person there. The tallest beta (a man silently judging him from the far corner where he was rigidly coralling his twin omega daughters) might have been his height, but Derek must have had at least a sixty pounds of muscle on the guy.

Three other beta patients were scattered about the room, plus the two Medical Assistants behind the desk, but he was fairly certain the other five people were omegas. Which made sense. This clinic appealed to a specific audience, and Derek wouldn’t be surprised if two-thirds of California’s omegas went out of their way to been seen here. It certainly felt like it.
He was also the only wolf in the vicinity.

“Um, excuse me?”

Derek looked up slowly.

A middle-aged woman was standing a few feet away, nervously fiddling with the strap of her bag. Derek barely met her eyes before she looked away demurely. She was an omega, mated to a human alpha according to the plain silver collar around her neck and the absence of a claiming bite scarring the skin beneath it; the simple band on her finger said she was married on top of that.

Almost all omegas mated in early adulthood to secure a permanent, reliable Heat partner, but marriage was about emotional connection, not biology. He knew plenty of alphas who would love to mate but would never think to consider marriage. Peter was one of them.

He wondered how Stiles felt about marriage.

“You’re here with your mate? A-aren’t you?”

Frowning at the woman, he answered, “No,”

She blanched, looking at him with a much warier expression on her face.

It took him a moment to realize what she must be thinking, him, an unmated alpha lurking in an omega-specialty clinic. He cleared his throat subconsciously, his face hot, “I mean, yes, I’m here for my… for someone. We’re not mated yet,”

Her dismay melted into a pleasant smile, “Oh! That’s very sweet of you. Well, um…,”

It was so obvious she wanted to say something, even as she twisted back and forth on her heel in hesitation, to walk away or speak. Derek took pity on her.

“Was there anything I could help you with?” he asked kindly.

She glanced around the room quickly before stepping closer again, “It’s just… we don’t see many alphas in here,”

“Yeah…” he’d noticed.

“Would you…” she stalled, and her heartbeat lurched as she hastily dug a card out of her bag, “We could use more alpha support,”

Derek frowned as he took the card. It was a light lavender color, with the Greek omega symbol watermarked across the background. In its center was an omega’s rights website and bellow it, in smaller print, three columns. Phrases like ‘right to work’ and ‘reproductive choice’ jumped out at him. A longer item across the bottom read ‘dynamic-relevant sexual education.’

“They’re running an online petition right now,” she explained hurriedly, encouraged when he didn’t throw the card back in her face, “to pass legislation to allow omegas to purchase suppressants and birth control without requiring an alpha or legal guardian’s approval,”

Derek frowned up at her, still holding the card, “… can’t you do that already?”

“Well… no,” he was fairly sure she only held eye contact because she was startled by such a tame and interested response where she probably had learned to expect the opposite from men like him, “The Omega Right’s Act only makes the medications legal, but there are still all sorts of hoops and
road blocks we need to circumvent…”

The women took a step closer, her words flowing faster and largely going straight over Derek’s head. It wasn’t that he was disinterested or bored though; he was preoccupied. He saw the beta in the corner with his arms securely shielding his daughters and the twitchy little woman in front of him with all her nervous earnestness for her cause, and all he could think about was Stiles.

Stiles going on damaging medications as a child. Stiles driving around in a Jeep held together with duct tape because he couldn’t get a job that would cover proper repairs. Stiles awkwardly letting their pack throw money and attention at him when all he wanted to do was go to school.

Stiles didn’t want a mate. He wanted the world. Opportunity.

And Derek desperately wanted to give it to him.

“…And your previous OBGYN was also your primary care provider?”

Stiles was starting to feel like a bobble head doll for all the nodding he was doing, “She never mentioned long term side effects, only the standard possibility for weight gain and nausea,”

It was supposed to be a joke, but Dr. Deaton was unmoved. The guy hadn’t stopped looking grim since the moment he’d looked at Stiles’ medical record.

“Do you know if she had any other omega clients besides yourself?”

Stiles shrugged, “No idea. Maybe, but not at the same time though, there were only two of us in the county. But she’s an old name in Beacon, so maybe before my time.”

Deaton hummed, clearly not reassured.

Stiles kicked his feet, the bare skin of his heels bouncing off the cool exam table. He smoothed the hospital gown down over his thighs for the millionth time. The Doctor looked like he was doing some seriously deep and concerning thinking, and Stiles didn’t think he should interrupt, but the suspended silence was killing him.

“So…,” he drew the word out, long and slow, “Did the suppressants royally screw me up, or what?”

Deaton didn’t answer right away.

Stiles leaned forward anxiously, “They didn’t, right?”

Deaton’s head was still bent over Stiles’ paperwork when his eyes flitted up to look at him, “Hormonal imbalances are fairly common among omegas to begin with, Stiles. Suppressing your body’s natural methods for managing them for so long, especially while still in puberty was… highly irresponsible;”

“It wasn’t my fault…”

“No, it wasn’t. But the fact remains, we now need to treat and mitigate the side effects,”

“You mean my Heats,” Stiles said dispassionately. He wasn’t sure what to expect or how to feel, but he thought he recognized a tinge of self-disgust and worry in the sick feeling growing in his gut.

“Yes,” the doctor set the paperwork aside and folded his hands in his lap, “Fortunately, you’re still
young and resilient. I’m switching your birth control and I want you to take a hormone stabilizer for the next two weeks. We should reserve you a room at the clinic for the end of the month—”

“Wait, what?” Stile frowned, “For what?”

“For your Heat,” the doctor said patiently, “The medications may have a heavy impact on your next cycle, and given how your past two Heats have gone, I strongly recommend professional supervision —”

Stiles paled, “But… I—I have an alpha…,”

“That’s good. We always prefer to try every natural treatment avenue first—”

“Woah, woah, woah!” Stiles flailed, practically smacking himself in the face as he waved at the doc to shut up, “It’s just Heat! I don’t need treatment! I just need—” Derek, he thought with an instinctive desperation. His voice sounded pitiful and weary as he finished the sentence lamely, “… sex. That’s all. It’s just sex…,”

Deaton nodded sympathetically, but his expression was firm, “Hopefully, yes. But given your experience so far, there are valid grounds for concern that it won’t be just a simple Heat. Trust me, Stiles, if anything were to go wrong, neither you nor your alpha will like having to rush to the nearest hospital, where the staff almost certainly won’t have the expertise to help you properly,”

Stiles felt himself go numb, “Um… I can’t afford a room…”

“You don’t need to worry about that. Talia Hale has authorized any necessary expenses where your health is concerned,”

“Oh…,” Stiles fought back the urge to cry. Once he thought he could speak without croaking, he asked, “Uh, what if I don’t want to take the stabilizers? Maybe I could stay on my current contraceptives and just… I don’t know, deal with the intense Heats?”

Deaton’s jaw tensed as he looked away, collecting his thoughts. He took his time, his expression carefully blank, and when he looked Stiles dead in the eye and spoke it was with utter professionalism and certainty, “Stiles, your current medication is not appropriate for your situation, and may very well lead to your Heats becoming increasingly problematic the longer the damage goes unaddressed. As a medical professional with your best interest at heart, I will not renew that prescription.”

Stiles shook his head in denial, “I’ll just… I’ll go back on suppressants then!”

“Absolutely not,” Deaton sat up, looking appalled.

“But—”

“Stiles, the only doctors likely to give you suppressants again should be charged with criminal negligence. You realize you’re lucky your womb might even still be viable?”

“My wo—what?”

“There are reasons suppressants shouldn’t be prescribed to children. They interfere with natural development, which in turn can lead to infertility—”

Stiles barked a hysterical laugh, “So now I can’t have kids?”
“That’s not what I’m saying,” Deaton held up a placating hand, “As far as I can tell, your organs are in decent shape, all things considered. The hormonal imbalance should be our biggest concern.”

“But not the only one,” Stiles interjected harshly.

“Continuing to use suppressants would drastically diminish your chances to conceive,” Deaton explained firmly, “Not to mention the normal hormonal issues they can cause, even for omegas who start them as adults with uncompromised health,”

Stiles felt his chest tighten. His eyes stung.

“This is not the end of the world, Stiles,”

Easy for him to say. Stiles rubbed his stomach subconsciously. He thought this would just be a courtesy office visit. He thought, at most, he’d get a way to ease his Heats.

“It’ll be a process, but I’m confident we can help you lead the life you want, with minimal interference from harsh Heats,”

He didn’t expect to be told he was… damaged. That he could never use suppressants—the biggest aid to modern omega liberation—ever again.

“I want you to take this reading material home, go over it with your father and your alpha so everyone knows what to expect,”

He might not even be able to have kids. He might not have wanted them soon, but he always wanted them.

“We’ll reevaluate after your next Heat, take things one step at a time,”

Stiles nodded along, only half listening. How had he not noticed he was broken.

Stiles was eerily silent when he came back to the waiting room. Derek jumped to his feet, immediately tensing as he caught the omega’s scent; his regular sweetness was dull and faintly rotten with emotions too complex for Derek’s nose to pick apart. It was nothing good though.

The moment Stiles was within arm’s reach, Derek wrapped a hand around the back of his neck and the other caressed his cheek in concern.

“Can we just go?”

His boy sounded so small and lost. Derek wordlessly drew him in for a quick scenting, then got them out of the clinic with an arm secured around his boy’s shoulders. Stiles went along with it so easily, passively letting Derek steer him. He didn’t even react when Derek reached over him to buckle his seatbelt for him.

They were on the Interstate headed back to Beacon Hills and Derek was growing more concerned with every passing second of uncomfortable, heavy silence. In the weeks they’d known each other, he’d never seen the omega so quiet.

He kept his hand on the boy’s thigh every moment it wasn’t needed to drive, squeezing occasionally. Waiting.

They drove for over an hour before Stiles finally spoke.
“I might not be able to have kids,”

The only reason Derek didn’t freeze up was because he didn’t want to cause an accident. He shot a glance at Stiles’ face, noting the causal tone and the way he was staring out the window, like he hadn’t just mentioned anything more interesting than the sunny weather.

Refocusing on the road, Derek breathed deep; Stiles smelled nothing more than peculiarly dampened omega sweetness. He was in some sort of shock, Derek realized with a start. He rubbed Stiles’ thigh gently, slow and unstartling.

“Okay,” he eventually said, calm and doing nothing more than acknowledging. He didn’t know how else to respond, what Stiles needed to hear.

“I can’t use suppressants ever again, either,”

“…Okay,”

They lapsed into silence again. Derek wasn’t sure what to do, but the urge to do something, make this better somehow even though he didn’t fully grasp how it was so wrong to begin with, was like an incessant itch under his skin.

So Stiles might not be fertile. He thought he remembered Allison angrily ranting about it being a possible side effect of inappropriate use of suppressants. It wasn’t the end of the world. It wasn’t like Stiles was dying.

So he might have to give up the fantasy of seeing Stiles carry his pup. Derek would mourn that possibility if and when they gave it a shot. Right now, he was focused on Stiles. His perfect, lively, beautiful Stiles.

But how…

“Fuck!” Stiles hissed suddenly, his voice quiet and aggrieved.

Derek squeezed his thigh, perhaps a little harder than necessary, “It’s okay, Stiles,”

“No, it’s…,” anger and profound disappointment bloomed in the omega’s scent, breaking through the muted effects of shock, “I was going to go to UCLA next year.”

Derek frowned, confused, “You can still go,”

Stiles laughed, the sound totally void of humor. When he spoke, his words dripped with disdain Derek had never heard from him before, “Colleges don’t accept unmedicated, single omegas, Derek,”

Derek thought about the OR business card in his pocket. Beside him, Stiles sat stewing in anger and the devastation of having the plan for his life ripped out from under him.

He just wanted to make it right for him.
“Enough of this,”

Stiles groaned as his dad ripped his blanket off his legs. He rolled over and buried his head in his pillow.

“Get up, Stiles. Moping isn’t a good look on you,”

Stiles mumbled his reply into his pillow.

“I have no idea what you just said, kid,”

Stiles sighed and lifted his head enough to gripe, “All my dreams have been crushed; I’m entitled to at least a couple days of moping."

“It’s been over a week, Stiles,” John smacked him lightly on his ass, “Stop being dramatic. We’ll figure it out. But breakfast first. Come on, before your boyfriend worries himself to death,”

Paling, Stiles sat upright, “Oh my God, Dad! He’s not my boyfriend!”

“Sure about that?”

Stiles deflated. Truthfully, he didn’t know how he felt because he didn’t know where he stood with the werewolf; he’d been flip-flopping on the subject, his confidence and emotions all over the place, for the past week at least.

“At the moment, yeah,” he admitted, “I mean, who wants an omega who probably can’t get knocked up? It’s the one thing we’re supposed to be unmatched at. And it’s not like I have a stellar career or will ever have a degree. I’ve got nothing to offer,” he collapsed on the bed with a comically hefty sigh he hoped masked the vulnerable truth in his words, “Nothing, I tell you,”

John snorted, unconvinced, “Now, I know you don’t really believe that—”

“I do so,” Stiles lifted his head to squint at his dad and raise his finger and thumb with only half an inch between the tips, “This much, maybe. It was more an hour ago, though, I swear,”

“Get out of bed,” John responded, rolling his eyes. He paused on his way out the door and turned back with a soft, uncommonly sympathetic smile, “For what it’s worth, I’m pretty confident that alpha downstairs would follow you around UCLA like a lost baby duck, if you so much as suggested getting mated,”

Stiles snorted, “Oh yeah, file that under World’s Greatest Proposals Of All Time: Hey, Der, wanna be my life-long sugar daddy so I can go to school?! How about no,”

He felt dirty just thinking about using Derek like that. The sad thing was, his dad was probably right: Derek would do just about anything for him, he was beginning to realize any of the pack would; and Stiles had nothing to give them in return.

He hadn’t thought his ability to carry offspring was such a huge part of his self-worth before. Look at him go, setting back Omega Rights by twenty years all on his own.

There was a moment of awkward silence, with his dad just standing there in the doorway. Eventually, Stiles caved and sat up so he could see the look on his dad’s face.
The guy had never looked less impressed with Stiles’ antics. There was a strange certainty in his dad’s eyes that wasn’t altogether new, though. Or comfortable.

“What?” Stiles demanded suspiciously.

John smacked his hand on the doorway in a disgustingly see-through faux-casual rhythm, “Nothing,” his voice was light with sarcasm, “But I’m pretty sure you’re more of a romantic than you’d like me to believe,”

Stiles narrowed his eyes, “I’m confused: you’re anti-Derek, but pro-sugar daddy…”?

“Don’t you put words in my mouth,”

“I just don’t get what you’re getting at, old man: which is it, you want to shoot him or you want me to mate him?”

“Get up and get dressed, son,”

As his dad high-tailed it out of the room, Stiles felt the anxiety creep back over his mind. His thoughts revolved around the same downward spiraling track they’d been stuck on since his doctor’s visit.

It just wasn’t fair.

The things he wanted for himself were constantly just out of reach.

The Hales were there for him, like the proverbial Fairy Godmother and Derek his Prince Charming, ready and willing to sweep him off his feet and make everything better.

But the idea made him feel sick.

The Hales wanted—needed—an omega. Preferably one that could help them build the pack, but anyone who could help interrupt all the testosterone in the house would be great. Stiles could do that even if he couldn’t give Derek babies.

So why didn’t that feel like enough?

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“It’s not like I needed a degree anyway,” Stiles lamented suddenly.

Derek, for the millionth time, told himself not to react.

The omega had an exceedingly strange response to having the possibility of suppressants removed from his future planning. He ran hot and cold: random bursts of spoken thought, often justifications and momentary acceptance, until suddenly closing up and refusing to entertain any conversation about school, kids, or Heat.

And God forbid if anyone came close to mentioning the ‘M’ word. Mating.

Derek was learning to just roll with it. He figured Stiles would work through it all in his own time. It had only been little over a week since they’d gone to the clinic, after all.

In the meantime, Derek was stuck dividing his time between damage control (regarding the omega’s mood) and muddling through the overwhelmingly depressing dump of information he’d found on the Omega Rights site. Signing his name to the petition seemed pathetic and nearly meaningless next to
all the injustice he was suddenly face-to-face with.

Suddenly, Melissa’s near-militant approach to alpha behavior and adamant refusal to belong to their pack seemed worlds’ more reasonable than ever before. Unfortunately, there was only so much one alpha could do.

And right now, Stiles needed him here more than Washington needed a rampaging werewolf.

“I mean, even if I had all the paperwork qualifications in existence, no one was ever going to give me a job in law enforcement,”

Derek had learned fast not to react to every little frantic thought that spewed from the omega’s mouth. Especially when it made him uncomfortable. As much as he wanted to comfort and encourage Stiles, he couldn’t bring himself to lie. Even Derek was well aware that omegas generally weren’t accepted in certain fields. Anti-discrimination laws as a whole were woefully behind the times, which was why practically the entire Pack worked for the security firm. It was one of the many reasons why Melissa ran her own business instead of working for someone else, despite the appallingly excessive lengths she’d had to go to in order to achieve it.

Stiles scoffed as he sat down beside him on the couch, handing Derek a bowl of chips while hording the guacamole in his own lap, “Frankly, it was a miracle UCLA even accepted my application for the criminology program to begin with,”

And if he was being honest, Derek didn’t like the idea of Stiles in such a dangerous career field. It wasn’t because Stiles was an omega and therefore didn’t belong in law enforcement—it was because he was, at least in the safety of Derek’s mind, his omega. He told himself even if Stiles had been a beta, Derek would have wanted him in a more comfortable, safe occupation. For Derek’s peace of mind, if not his own.

The thought of any harm coming to his hopeful-mate didn’t bear thinking about.

“They don’t even have the best program,” Stiles continued gripping as he snatched a chip from Derek’s bowl. He stared at the TV without seeing, his mind clearly still preoccupied. He said a little dejectedly, “But they were one of the only state schools that even accepted omega students,”

Derek lifted his arm to wrap it around his shoulders. He hugged the boy tight to his side and nuzzled behind his ear. There were a dozen different things he wanted to say, but none of them were what Stiles wanted to hear right now. So Derek settled for these little gestures, giving what comfort he could.

Stiles was amazingly receptive to physical affection, thankfully.

The omega practically melted against him with a heavy sigh, “I wish I were a beta,”

Derek grumbled against his temple in displeasure, “No. You’re perfect,”

He could hear the pout as he responded, “You only say that because you have sex with me,”

Derek shook his head just enough for Stiles to feel it where they were pressed together, “No,”

“Yes,”

Derek nearly spilled the chip bowl in his haste to catch Stiles’ chin with his fingers and bring their eyes level with one another’s. He growled insistently, “No,”
Stiles stared back at him, amber eyes impossibly wide, and turning glassy-wet as the seconds ticked by. They were pressed so close, Derek could feel the omega’s chest heave as his breath caught in his throat; he wondered for a brief moment if he was scaring the boy, but his scent was sweet and growing strangely… flowery?

Derek didn’t recognize the scent, but it wasn’t bad. Very, very far from, in fact.

“Okay,” Stiles said calmly, blinking away the hint of tears.

Confused, but cautiously optimistic, Derek relaxed his grip and petted that smooth, beauty-marked cheek, “You’re perfect. You believe me?”

Stiles swallowed and licked his lightly, “I believe you.”

He must have. Whatever he saw as he stared into Derek’s eyes clearly made an impact where words and cuddles fell short. There wasn’t a hint of deception in his scent.

They settled back against the couch, Stiles leaning a bit more into his side.

“What if I can’t get pregnant?” Stiles whispered fretfully.

“Yes, you can’t get pregnant,” Derek said the words matter-of-factly.

“… I thought you wanted kids…?”

Derek hesitated. He wouldn’t lie, but he didn’t know what response would be appreciated right now. Cautiously, he said, “We could adopt,”

Against him, Stiles tensed up. It was a testament to his control that Derek didn’t follow suit, instead managing to keep relaxed and casual. If he was lucky, Stiles would ignore the assumption that they were talking about a future where they were together trying to build a family; if he wasn’t, he was likely to have an extraordinarily grumpy and volatile omega on his hands. This was the first time all week that Stiles had accepted so much as a word being said about his undefined future.

They sat silently, suspended in this awkwardly charged moment. It could have lasted seconds or hours, for all Derek knew. But then…

Stiles wriggled on his couch cushion, visibly forcing his body to chill out. He didn’t pull away to the far side of the couch or storm off in a rage. He slowly, almost uncertainly, lowered his head on Derek’s shoulder.

“Okay,” the omega said, a little too calm to seem natural, “Maybe we could do that.”

Just like that, the growing bubble of tension finally burst, and Derek almost heaved a relieved sigh. Almost. His lips barely parted to take the breath when the implications finally caught up to him.

Stiles acknowledged they could have a future together. Out loud. During a serious conversation.

Derek was immediately overwhelmed with hope and excitement and raw joy of the kind that had people writing freaking sonnets. He had to kiss him. He just had to.

No one’s self control was that good.

Stiles squeaked when Derek suddenly pushed him onto his back and tried to smother him with his lips. It was messy and easily the most unrefined kiss Derek had ever given, but he didn’t care, too caught up in enthusiasm.
And the startled laugh that bubbled up from the mouth under his, just before Stiles began kissing him back?

Heaven.

Another week trudged by with Stiles’ emotions dragging him along with it. He couldn’t seem to figure out how he really felt about the entire situation. He’d expected to learn he’d have a lifetime of difficult Heats ahead of him, but nowhere in his wildest imagination had he considered hospitalization might be necessary. And all because their stupid local doctor had started him on suppressants way too young.

He was angry. Livid, actually. But the funny thing about that kind of fury was how utterly unsustainable it was. The anger would fade and leave him numb and resigned. In the following days he even learned to be hopeful, like the current medications and the next Heat would fix something and things would get better. But hope born of stubbornness instead of belief didn’t like to last any more than anger, and it tended to leave him a wilting wreck of self-deprecating sadness, at least until he got sick of that and cycled back to righteous fury again.

And if that wasn’t enough of an emotional roller-coaster… then there was Derek to consider.

Sweet, sexy, reliable Derek Hale. Annoyingly unflappable Derek Hale.

The alpha was so obnoxiously confident that things were going to work out, one way or another. He was like a giant boulder that refused to budge or crack no matter how Stiles beat at it. And he had this way of making Stiles feel just that little bit better in just the right moments, providing such basic relief from the mental storm.

Some days, it felt like Stiles lived for those moments.

And then Stiles burned dinner.

“Fuck!” he screamed, slamming the pan holding the remains of his veggie stir-fry into the sink. He’d been distracted by his wandering thoughts, especially as they liked to wander into the dangerous territory of ‘what if this Heat means the end of the Heat Contract.’

It was a thought that had been steadily growing, consuming his thoughts with pointless worry. Derek’s reassurances were all well and good, but Stiles was increasingly aware that if he was going to need medical intervention for every Heat, he would hardly be an appropriate candidate for this sort of arrangement.

Such thoughts were nothing but evil, founded on nothing but his anxiety and fear. And now they’d managed to ruin dinner.

“Dammit!” he screamed again, pulling at his hair fitfully.

Suddenly Derek was there, prying his fingers free and drawing him into his big, solid chest. Not knowing what else to do, and desperate for any option that didn’t involve crying again, Stiles went into his arms gladly.

“It’s alright,” Derek’s voice rumbled in his ear gently, his heavy palms rubbing his back, “John’s working late tonight, so there’s no reason not to order take-out,”

Stiles snorted into the alpha’s chest, the urge to cry and scream lessening, “Whatever,” he said
Derek nuzzled him and asked like it was completely reasonable, “Would you rather cook?”

Stiles shook his head, “I don’t know…”

It was so very painfully true. He didn’t know. He didn’t know what to do for dinner, and he didn’t know what to do with his life.

Derek kissed his forehead and whispered, “Whatever you decide, Stiles,”

They were simple words, but something in Derek’s tone sent a shiver down his spine. Such ordinary words, but they shook him like nothing else.

Stiles put his palms flat against Derek’s abs and pushed away. He looked up into the achingly handsome face and not for the first time felt himself struck dumb by the deep fondness and longing he’d only recently begun to recognize there.

The alpha rubbed one hand up and down his upper arm as they stood there in the kitchen. Derek simply waited, unassuming and content to stare back at him until Stiles decided what to do.

He really was like a big rock, steady and solid under Stiles’ hand, before Stiles’ gaze. And not just any rock, but some sort of precious stone, he was so flawlessly beautiful. He was easily the most perfect human being—wolf being?—Stiles had ever known.

Stiles trembled a little as excited bubbles burst under his skin and his heart went spastic for a second in his chest. Even if he hadn’t been on a repeat roller-coaster from hell this week, Stiles was sure the sensation would have overwhelmed him.

He told himself it was no big deal if he fell to pieces in front of Derek, over burned stir-fry and the dubious prospect of take-away meals. It wouldn’t be the first panic attack he’d suffered in front of the alpha. But he didn’t start sobbing like he expected. He didn’t get a chance.

Derek kissed him.

It was just a soft, closed-lipped kiss. It was all things gentle and sweet, everything not what one might expect from the big, perpetually scowling alpha and absolutely perfect in the way it encompassed who he really was. As gentle and sweet as any alpha could ever be. Thoughtful. Loving.

The kiss didn’t stop Stiles from having a melt-down. The epiphany did.

He leaned in and deepened the kiss, opening his mouth just a smidge. As Derek gently—always so gently—licked at his lower lip, Stiles sighed into his mouth.

The good, bright moments didn’t last, but Stiles wanted to thoroughly enjoy this one while it did. He wanted to cherish the instant he realized he was falling in love.

^^^^^^^^^^

Two and a half weeks came and went since Stiles saw Deaton. The omega hadn’t so much as mentioned the packet of information he’d carried out of the office, not to him or to the Sheriff. Derek would know, he’d been holding onto it since he’d been the one to scoop it up off the Jeep’s floor.

He tried to be considerate, slipping the papers under Stiles’ door before bed; he found them crinkled
into a ball when it was dropped in his lap the next morning. Then he took the subtle approach of leaving the paperwork on the table just before breakfast. Stiles had just stared at it for a moment then flicked it across the table before the Sheriff joined them. Later, Derek plopped it down in Stiles’ lap that same evening only to have the omega fold it into an airplane and launch it across the room.

The following morning, after smoothing out the wrinkles and creases from Stiles’ abuse, Derek held the paperwork securely in his fingers and waved it in the air between the Stilinski men.

“We need to talk about this,” he insisted.

The Sheriff looked from Derek to Stiles, noting his son’s dark expression before reaching out for the information packet, “What’s this, then?”

“It’s the doctor’s recommended approach for Stiles’ Heat,”

“It’s nothing, Dad,” Stiles interrupted sharply, “I got it,”

Derek frowned at him, “No, you’ve been avoiding it,”

“This is about the… medical supervision?” the Sheriff asked Derek directly. The only reason the older alpha knew anything about what the doctor had said was because Derek had taken on the duty of informing him after Stiles’ first few outbursts resulting in him hiding out in his room. Derek had rightly assumed he may need the man’s help to convince Stiles to do what was best for his own welfare.

Derek nodded back at him, “There’s a pamphlet in there too. About the clinic’s Heat Center,”

Stiles bristled, “What gives you the right to go through my papers!?”

“You clearly weren’t using them,”

“Stiles,” the Sheriff stressed, rubbing his eyes as if in pain, “He’s got a point. Why haven’t you talked to one of us about this? Hell, kid, he’s got a right to know what’s going on if he’s going to be tending to you—”

“I know!” Stiles put his hands up, to placate them or to keep them at bay, Derek wasn’t sure, “I just… I’ve been trying to wrap my head around it all. I just don’t feel good about it…,”

“Of course you don’t,” the Sheriff spoke like it was obvious, like he fully understood. Derek wasn’t so sure he possibly could, but he was grateful for anything that could help Stiles come to terms with what needed to happen, “but this isn’t going to go away, son,”

“I know,” Stiles’ voice was so soft and dejected.

Derek had to dig his claws into his palms to stop himself from going to him and trying to soothe him. It wasn’t what the omega needed right now.

“I just need… I don’t know, just give me a little more time to get my head on straight about,”

Derek shook his head, “You don’t have more time, Stiles,”

“You don’t need to manage me, Derek,” Stiles snapped, “I’m not a child,”

“I know that—”

“Just give me some space,”
God, but it hurt to see Stiles walk away from him in anger.

As the omega retreated back up the stairs and slammed his bedroom door closed, Derek turned to face the sheriff with a resigned sigh.

The older alpha cleared his throat and tapped his finger on the papers in his other hand, “I know this doc is a specialist your mom highly recommended. Is this really his best suggestion?”

Derek rubbed a hand over his face, trying in vain to wipe the hopelessness away, “It was his only suggestion,”

“… I see,”

“Yeah,”

Another couple days passed, and Stiles continued to waiver unsteadily between stubborn optimism and utter fury over the whole situation. No matter where he sat on the scale in any given moment, it seemed avoidance became key to his survival.

The one good thing Stiles could readily recognize from his treacherously impactful doctor’s visit was that Derek and his father seemed to have called a truce. Mostly, they ignored each other, but when they did speak they were perfectly respectful, and they even seemed to be of a like mind when it came to Stiles and his wellbeing.

Unfortunately, this meant they all too easily ganged up on him about the damn reservation.

“You don’t want to talk about it, fine,” John threw his hands up as if he were bowing out of the fight, but Stiles knew better, “we won’t talk about it. But a decision had to be made, and you weren’t going to make one soon enough—”

“You don’t know that—!”

“I do, actually,”

“It doesn’t matter,” Derek interjected, oh so unhelpfully, “it’s done. You don’t have to worry about it,”

Stiles blanched, hardly believing what he just heard, “I don’t have to worry about it?! Are you fucking kidding me?!”

Derek and John, the collaborating traitors, had called Deaton’s office and confirmed the reservation for a room in their Heat Center. They went behind his back and practically signed him over for a supervised Heat, like he was some child who didn’t yet know his own body.

It didn’t matter that his next Heat was a week away at most. He didn’t care that he’d been avoiding dealing with it, barely deigning to take the stabilizing medication each day only because the interfering alphas in the house had taken to checking the pill bottle every night. He just wanted it all to go away.

“It’s going to be alright, Stiles,” Derek said with that stubborn, aggravating calm he had started adopting when Stiles was being difficult. Stiles hated it.

“Derek will be with you the entire time,” John said in a similarly reassuring tone.
Stiles was most definitely not reassured. He was livid. He was frightened. He didn’t want to be one of those poor, uncontrollable omegas who were enslaved to their biology.

He didn’t want Derek to see him like that.

“You know what, no. You want me to go that badly, then you can damn well watch me go alone!”

“Stiles—!”

“No,” Stiles cut off his dad’s appalled exclamation as he turned to storm out of the house. He just needed to get in Roscoe, go for a drive and clear his head, “Not interested. It’s my turn to make a major decision about my Heat without fucking talking about it first!”

“Stiles, wait—”

“Fuck you, Derek!”

He slammed the front door shut behind him before either of them could think to Command him to stay.

The Jeep barely made it down the street before Stiles’ anger petered out, morphing into awful self-disgust. He knew better than to think either of them would use their Alpha Authority on him like that, it was horrid of him to think so badly of them. Neither Derek or John had ever done a thing to deserve that kind of nastiness from him.

Stiles had thrown his fair share of temper tantrums over the years, but he’d never cursed at his dad before. He wasn’t naturally so harsh, even if he was prone to sarcasm and less typical forms of expression for his dynamic. But he wasn’t like this. This wasn’t him.

Everything was all just… too much.

He pulled over on the stretch of road leading out of the suburbs and into the hub of town. As he threw the Jeep into park, he felt the first bitter tears roll down his cheeks.

Damn it all.

Derek thought he was perfect, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Derek was the perfect one, and Stiles… Stiles was a mess. He was a rude, mean-spirited, defective mess masquerading as an omega. If he had any decency in him, he would drive and drive and never look back.

Maybe this upcoming Heat would be exactly the devastating episode they all feared it might be. Maybe it’d ruin him irreparably. Maybe he should let it.

All he had to do was drive. Get away.

His dad would mourn, but eventually he’d realize how much easier it was to live without an omega freeloader eating up his resources.

Derek would forget about him altogether and find another, better omega to mate. They’d have plenty of beautiful, wolfy babies and live happily ever after.

Stiles dropped his forehead onto his steering wheel and screamed. He screamed till his air ran out, then promptly succumbed to wracking sobs.

He’d never hated himself so much.
Derek regretted letting Stiles leave before he’d even heard the Jeep door slam closed. The regret sat heavy in his chest, weighing him down like a tangible punishment for upsetting his omega. It was persistent and vaguely nauseating. He wanted nothing more than to track Stiles down and grovel till the boy forgave him enough that he could get his arms around him.

Things didn’t stay that way, though. Stiles was gone about an hour when Derek’s instincts roused him from his pity-party. Then all he felt was concern.

“He’ll be fine,” the Sheriff huffed at him impatiently when Derek got up to glare out the window yet again, “He just needs a little space,”

Derek studied the empty, Jeep-less street another moment anyway, growing ever more unsettled. He rolled his neck and shoulders in discomfort.

The Sheriff sighed behind him, “Let’s just give him another hour, okay?”

Derek began to nod but stopped mid-motioned. His frown deepened, the instinctive discomfort making his wolf side stretch beneath his skin anxiously, “No,” he said decisively, “I should text him,”

“You’re just going to ruffle his feathers further,”

“No,” he pulled his phone out of his pocket, “I need to know where he is,”

He was still tapping out letters when the Sheriff’s phone rang.

“Stiles?” he asked, his fingers pausing.

The Sheriff shook his head as he answered the phone with a sharp, professional: “Stilinski,”

“Sheriff…,” despite not having the cell on speakerphone, Derek found it easy to pick up the sound of a youthful male voice. It had enough gravity in the tone that Derek didn’t think twice about listening in.

The other alpha noticed, his eyes flashing red briefly as they snapped to Derek’s face, “What’s wrong, Deputy?”

“Nothing, I hope, but…. Are you aware Stiles’ jeep is sitting on the side of the road around the corner from your house?”

Derek felt his fangs drop the same moment the Sheriff’s eyes bled alpha red, the glow staying put this time.

“What about Stiles?!”

“Stiles isn’t inside?” the human alpha asked at the same time. Where Derek’s voice lurked with an edge of panic, the Sheriff’s went cold and short with practiced control.

“Not sure,” the deputy on the line admitted, “I only drove past for a second, but I don’t think anyone was in the driver’s seat. I can double back and check,”

“I’m on it,” Derek growled through a mouthful of fangs, already ripping the door open.

He heard the man follow him onto the lawn, hot on his heels as he asked the Deputy for a more
precise location. Derek only half-listened as the wolf came to the foreground, not quite in the driver’s seat, but definitely gripping the wheel.

He lifted his nose and immediately caught the scent of omega and the particular clusterfuck of smells that made up the old Jeep.

Distantly, inconsequentially, he heard the Sheriff yell a curse as Derek partially shifted and took off running.

It didn’t matter if the Deputy was already turning around, or if Stiles’ father was as quick as humanly possible to jump in his patrol car. Derek had the scent, it was close, and he was inhumanly fast. He’d beat them there on two feet, even if it meant crossing through a person’s lawn or two.

The Jeep came into view shortly after he was close enough to pick up the emotional imprint of misery in the omega’s scent. It was cloying and sickly, and it made Derek want to whine and lick the boy all over until the scent vanished. He allowed himself an audible gasp of relief when his ears picked up Stiles’ heartbeat, rabbit-fast and frightfully all over the place, but there.

His heart pounding with anxiety more than exertion, Derek skidded to a halt just before he would have ended up smashed into the vehicle’s rear. He might have bent the metal handle out of shape as he tugged to open the door.

It was locked.

Derek whined, pressing his palms to the driver’s side window. He could see the omega where he’d crawled into the backseat and curled up. His face was buried in the crook of his arm, and the limb only tightened across his head when he heard Derek at the door.

With an aggravated hiss too quiet for Stiles to hear inside the Jeep, Derek smacked his hand on the window, carefully pulling the blow so he didn’t break it and shower his omega in glass.

“Stiles!” he barked, “Unlock the car,”

Inside the Jeep, the omega curled into himself even harder, kicking off the back of the driver’s seat fitfully to do so.

Derek smacked the window again, “Unlock the door, Stiles!”

He was so keyed into Stiles’ scent that the wave of desperation and despair just about stole the breath form his lungs. He growled, feeling a fair bit of desperation himself.

The Jeep was in very real danger of having its door ripped off when the squeal of tires announced the Sheriff’s arrival. The patrol car parked directly behind the Jeep and the Sheriff hopped out, shouting at him.

“Stiles!? He’s in there?”

Derek ignored him, smacking the glass hard enough to rattle, “Open the door, Stiles!”

“Stiles!? Stiles!” the Sheriff rounded the car, struggling with his own panic.

They could see the omega shaking. Derek could hear him crying. The normally lovely scent was all wrong. Rancid with negative emotion, still sweet but all sorts of wrong. It wasn’t omega-sweet, it was… sickly-sweet.
“Derek?” the Sheriff had the sense not to touch him when every animal impulse was so close to the surface, “Derek, what’s wrong? He’s okay, right?”

It wasn’t until the human alpha asked that Derek realized that no, Stiles was definitely not okay. He wasn’t bleeding or injured, but his scent and uncharacteristic silence were most assuredly Not Right. The Sheriff didn’t know that though. He didn’t have Derek’s nose. He didn’t have prior experience dealing with Stiles in preheat.

He didn’t have a mate’s instinct regarding the omega either.

Breathing heavy, Derek threw caution out the window and went with his gut, disregarding the potential repercussions of using Alpha Authority outside of Heat:

“Open the door, omega!”

Stiles jerked upright like he’d been struck by lightning. He sobbed harder, showing his face and a mess of complex, ugly emotions for only a second before hiding it behind one hand. The other hand stretched out blindly and opened the door.

The latch popped and Derek threw the door out of his way. He climbed into the Jeep and pulled Stiles to him.

“Jesus Christ,” the Sheriff sounded stricken.

Derek couldn’t be bothered to turn and address the other alpha. All his attention was on Stiles. He manhandled the omega into his lap and cradled his wet face against his chest protectively.

“What… Son, talk to me,” the Jeep rocked as the Sheriff leaned against it, close but thankfully not too close, “What’s happening?”

Stiles just cried harder, his body stiffening like he wanted to fight out of Derek’s embrace. Derek didn’t let him. He tightened his grip and gave a subvocal purr, knowing the omega could feel the rumble in his chest and be comforted by it. He buried his face in Stiles’ hair, scenting him.

Beneath the nasty layer of hurt and vileness, Stiles’ wonderful omega sweetness was thick and insistent, almost disgustingly so.

Derek lifted his face to the Sheriff, “I think he’s in Preheat,”

He couldn’t say for sure though. Stiles’ preheat scent had never been quite so… cloying. It had Derek’s hackles up.

The human alpha’s face paled, “But, we… he’s… it’s too early,”

By a good week, Derek knew. He nuzzled his omega wherever he could reach, rocking them side to side gently while he kept the hysterical boy contained.

“You’re absolutely sure?”

“Yes,” because he wasn’t about to explain his better-safe-than-sorry mentality at the moment.

“Fuck,”

Derek didn’t have any reassurances for the guy. He figured John Stilinski ought to see what the suppressants he’d been buying all these years had done to his son, anyway. He could sympathize with the Sheriff’s ignorance, but that didn’t do anything to make it better.
“We… I’ll call Deaton—wait, you know more about how he’s doing, Derek. You should call Deaton,” objectively, it was impressive how the man interrupted his own turmoil to get what needed done. He was thinking clearer than Derek, at the very least, “We should just go. Come on, I’ll drive you. I can call the station on the way and have someone get the Jeep home,”

He was grateful for the Sheriff in that moment like never before. The man wisely kept his distance, locking up Stiles’ Jeep after he’d climbed out with the omega in his arms and opening and closing the back of his patrol car for them in a similar manner.

Derek was able to focus solely on soothing Stiles, keeping him in his lap and letting him soak his t-shirt with tears and saliva and snot. When they stopped at the house so the Sheriff could run in and throw together an overnight bag for them, Stiles screamed and fought him, running out of steam by the time his father returned to the car.

It was a good thing, too. With Stiles quiet, the Sheriff could finally get through to one of the Deputies so his instructions for the Jeep weren’t drowned out with awful preheat noise.

That was exactly what it was: noise. The smell, the sounds, the behavior, it was all just noise; an unpleasant, unconquerable mesh of stuff that meant absolutely nothing.

He knew so, his wolf did too, but he still had to remind himself not to take it personally when Stiles tried to bite him hard enough to bleed and fought like he couldn’t stand Derek’s touch.

They passed the farewell sign for Beacon Hills’ town limits and Stiles still hadn’t said a word since they found him on the side of the road.

“Don’t worry,” one of the beta nurses at the clinic said through the phone with all the reassuring bedside manner he could want, “Just get here safely. We’ll have a room ready by the time you hit LA,”

“Thank you,” Derek had never meant those words as much as he did then.

He was leaning against the car door, one foot on the floor while the other leg lay across the backseat; Stiles exhaustedly kneeling on the floor with his upper body slumped over the seat and Derek’s thigh. It wasn’t particularly comfortable for Derek, what with Stiles’ head pressing into his gut and weight numbing his leg, but it was how they’d ended up when Derek tried to keep the omega semi-close with one hand (despite his fighting and squirming) and still manage to make the call.

“Try not to use Alpha Authority if you can help it. The less interference with natural progression, the better,”

“Okay,”

“If you absolutely have to, keep your Commands direct and finite. Don’t say ‘stop’ without specifying what he needs to stop, that sort of thing,”

Derek nodded along as he petted across Stiles’ shoulder blades. The omega gave one jerk of a shoulder to shrug him off, the motion brief and ineffective, before immediately settling back down. Derek felt him nuzzle against his hip, sniffling quietly and huffing a small, angry sigh.

“And try to get him to sleep and drink some water. Only water, small sips,” the beta was very good, he thought, her tone conversational and relaxed in a way that soothed the lingering panic from when he first called, “If the mood swings are so intense this early on, he might make himself sick, so don’t give him too much,”
“Ask them if this is normal,” the Sheriff whispered carefully from the front seat.

At the sound of his father’s voice, Stiles made a loud, aggravated groan, almost a growl. He lifted his head, put a hand on Derek’s stomach and pushed away with all the force he could manage.

All it managed was to make Derek grunt and feel like he needed to piss.

“Is this normal?” he dutifully relayed the question as he pushed Stiles’ hand off his abdomen then grabbed the back of his neck to tug him close again.

“There’s no such thing as normal when it comes to Recovery Heats,” the nurse answered kindly.

He liked having Stiles close, but he was either overestimating the omega’s exhaustion, or seriously underestimating his preheat-inspired viciousness. Derek cut off a surprised scream as Stiles bit his thigh, teeth digging in even through the jeans. His bottom teeth latched on the sensitive flesh of his inner thigh, painfully close to his groin.

The car swerved. The Sheriff gasped, “Jesus…,”

“Is everything alright?” the nurse asked, voice cautious but still cheerful.

“Y-yeah,” Derek dropped the phone onto his shoulder so he could pry Stiles’ mouth off his leg, “He just bit me,”

“Ah,” she responded like this was not surprising while the Sheriff cursed again under his breath, “I take it that’s not normal preheat behavior for Stiles?”

Derek made a noncommittal sound as he pulled the overnight bag onto the seat and pointedly positioned the omega’s head on it and safely off him, “He’s been pretty aggressive before, but he’s never tried to nearly castrate anyone,”

In the front seat, the Sheriff choked.

The silence on the other end of the call made him wonder if the nurse had muted herself so she could control an inappropriate laugh of her own. Her slightly breathy voice when she spoke made it seem likely.

“Physically aggressive behavior is normally extremely atypical for omegas but preheat can be an entirely different matter. It’s actually really common now a days,”

“Sure,” Derek huffed unhappily. He grabbed a fist of Stiles’ hair warningly when the omega moved closer, seemingly to nuzzle him, but maybe to bite again. He wasn’t taking any chances, he was still aching despite his enhanced healing ability.

“I’ll let Dr. Deaton know,” she spoke like it was an every-day occurrence, and that idea made Derek want to cry, “If a new preheat symptom emerges or anything else seems unusual, feel free to give us a call,”

“Thanks,”

“We’ll see you soon. Hang in there,”
The room at the Heat Center was nothing like Stiles expected. There were no white walls and sterile plastic bedding, no medical equipment hanging on the walls or creepy observation windows.

There was a giant platform bed centered against the far wall, low to the ground and decked in warm brown and beige bedding that looked irritantly similar to his sheets in the pack house, far away in New York. There were mountains of fluffy pillows, and the burgundy and gold curtains over the two small windows on the one wall. The floor was polished wood, but a thick, impossibly soft rug covered a significant space at the foot of the bed. There was some nicely stained wooden furniture in the room too, a chest of drawers and a large wheeled table that could unhook and pivot on one leg to extend over the bed, and an enormous shelving space hosting stacks and stacks of plush towels and spare sheets. A full-sized fridge sat in the corner, surely fully stocked. There was even some interesting abstract artwork on the walls.

It looked remarkably like a hotel room that had been decorated by Melissa McCall.

Stiles was impressed, begrudgingly admitting to himself that he liked it.

“I hate it here,” he pouted aloud.

There was no annoying werewolf in the room to hear the lie in his heartbeat or smell the dishonesty. Derek had escorted him to the room and then shortly thereafter been asked to leave by the medical staff. Now it was just Stiles and the god damned shrink.

The beta named Dr. Morrell sat in the cozy armchair across from the bed with her legs crossed casually so she could balance her cliché clipboard on her knee. Stiles was perched on the corner of the bed as far away from her as he could get. She made him unaccountably nervous and he hated her about as much as he hated the Heat Center in its entirety.

“I want to go home,”

“So you’ve said,” she had the nerve to smirk, like she amused her, “But you’ve mentioned hating home too, so forgive me for not considering that a valid option,”

God, but he detested her.

“If I can’t go, you should,” he said unkindly.

“I will,” she agreed readily, not moving an inch, “Eventually,”

“No!” he shouted, and before he was aware of thinking it, he’d snatched up a pillow and threw it at her.

She swatted it away with her clipboard.

“I want you gone! Gone!”

The room spun a little, and Stiles belatedly realized he’d jumped to his feet, stomping away from her like the extra few feet would do a damn thing. He’d moved so fast, he felt light-headed for a
“Why are you even here?! Get out! Derek? Derek!!”

His throat hurt as he called for the alpha. It wasn’t the first time. Derek hadn’t responded to him yet, and it made Stiles furious.

“Where’s Derek?!” he demanded.

Dr. Morrell watched him with her beady little eyes and Stiles wanted to claw them out. He was pretty sure she was the one keeping the alpha away.

“Dr. Deaton and I already explained it to you, Stiles,” she spoke softly, making him quiet down in order to hear her, “You never filled out your reservation form naming a Heat Partner. We can’t just let any alpha in here when you’re already compromised,”

“We have a Heat Contract, you idiot!”

“Heat Contracts do not cover everything, Stiles. It will be overruled if we discover there’s medical precedence—”

Stiles screamed at her wordlessly. Sputtering in rage, he snarled, “Fuck you! Derek’s my alpha! You can’t keep him from me! He’s mine!”

“Perhaps—”

“He is!” Stiles tore at his hair, amazed and horrified that she would so casually disregard his right to his alpha, “You have no right! No right! Where is he?! You can’t keep him from me! You can’t! Derek!!”

“If everything moves forward smoothly, then I’m sure Derek will be back once your Heat is underway, Stiles,”

“No,” Stiles bit into his own tongue as he shook his head viciously. He was pacing again, pausing only to glare at her without his vision swimming, “No. Nope. Not good enough,”

“You were goading him, Stiles,” she said in an admonishing tone, “That wasn’t very nice. So at the very least until we can be sure you’ll behave yourself, he’s going to stay away,”

“Because of you!” Stiles scowled, pointing at her accusingly, “You took him away and you’re keeping him away when you shouldn’t! You have no right!”

“You’re very raw right now, Stiles,” she leaned forward, her smile understanding and placating. He wanted to rip it off her face, “And you have some very strong instincts where it comes to that alpha,”

“Damn right I do,” Stiles scoffed, “he’s mine,”

She kept talking as if he hadn’t interjected, “No one wants anything permanent to happen under the influence of your Heat. That goes for you and for Derek, not just the staff,”

“Fuck you. You don’t know shit,”

“I know Derek cares about you very deeply, and he’d sooner abdicate from this Heat than take away your freedom of choice,”

“Because you made him!” Stiles yelled, “You forced him to leave!”
“No, Stiles,”

“He was going to mate me!” his voice cracked, overused and strained with emotion as his eyes began stinging again, “He was going to be my mate, and you ruined it!”

“You and Derek can talk about that after we get you through this Heat,”

“No!” he pulled at his hair till his scalp stung. She didn’t understand, “No, you interfered and now he’s gone! He was mine and now he’s gone!”

“He’ll be back, Stiles,”

“He won’t!” he insisted. How she didn’t see it when it was so painfully obvious was beyond Stiles’ comprehension. He was full-on crying as he yelled, “I had to keep him! He had to stay and mate with me before he realized the truth!”

“What truth, Stiles?”

Stiles dropped to the floor, his knees folding till he was crumpled up on the fancy carpet, sobbing into his balled-up fists, “I’m not an omega…” he cried.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m a fake,” he wailed, “I’m pathetic, and w-weak, and I can’t… I can’t h-have babies,”

He fell over, his body shaking with wracking sobs.

“None of that’s true, Stiles,” her voice was achingly gentle, and way, way, way too close. She touched his shoulder lightly with her fingertips.

He shrugged her off, striking out violently to get her away. He couldn’t have her touching him. Her touch wasn’t fucking allowed. Derek's was. Only Derek's.

Dr. Morrell pulled away smoothly, his hand passing her by harmlessly.

Stiles flailed as he tried to hurry away from her, scurrying backwards over the floor, “Go away! Just get away from me! Derek? Derek! Derek!!!”

The psychologist got to her feet, her hands folded comfortably were they held her fucking clipboard over her stomach, “I’m going to step out, Stiles,” she said conversationally, “I’m going to see if there’s anything we can do to speed things along,”

“Fuck you!”

“Remember,” she pointed toward the corner of the room, up towards the ceiling, “When you’re alone in here, the camera gets turned on and the doors to the bathroom and the outside hall lock, for your safety. If you need anything, just say so and the nurse monitoring your room will come help you,”

“I don’t need your fucking babysitting! Get out!”

The door shut behind her, the red light on the security camera blinked on, and Stiles’ anger washed away as he returned to wallowing in a puddle of despair on the floor.

He had his chance, and now Derek was beyond his reach.
There was a sharp knock and the door to Deaton’s office eased open. Derek turned to see a slender,
dark skinned woman slip into the room. She was dressed in a sleek grey pantsuit and she stank of
Stiles’ sickly-sweet preheat.

“Mr. Stilinski, Mr. Hale,” Deaton lifted his pen from Stiles’ paperwork to wave toward the woman,
“This is our resident psychotherapist, Dr. Morrell. She works exclusively with omegas and she’s
very well versed in making sense of the harsh mental and behavioral patterns exhibited around and
during powerful Heats,”

She must have been the doctor who tended to Stiles while he and the Sheriff were going over Stiles’
admission paperwork and explaining what happened earlier that day with Deaton. Derek gave her a
curt nod but stayed where he was, across the room. It was probably for the best that he not shake her
hand anyway; he wasn’t sure he trusted himself to touch a stranger who had his omega’s scent so
fresh on her skin and clothes.

The Sheriff had no such hang-ups. He reached out to clasp her palm, his scent all kinds of anxious,
“Hey, doc. How’s he doing?”

“You made the right call, bringing him in,” her tone and body language were relaxed and unhurried.
Derek hopped that meant good news, “He’s definitely in preheat, and while the kind of atypical,
confrontational behavior Stiles is exhibiting is rare, it’s not unheard of. The notes in his record say he
has a history of volatile preheats?”

“Uh…?” the Sheriff shot Derek an expectant look.

“Yeah,” Derek admitted, “He’s only had two other Heats, but both times he acted out,”

“In what way?”

Derek scratched his neck with his free hand, thinking, “Struggling when you hold him, uh… trying
to run away. Last time he threw things,”

“Just struggling?” she quirked an eyebrow in interest, “Or fighting? There’s a distinct difference.
Was he actually trying to inflict harm? Maybe biting?”

“Oh yeah,” the Sheriff said as Derek grimly nodded.

“All classic signs,” her tone implied she was entirely unsurprised.

“Of what?” Derek asked, irritated. He disliked doctors on a good day; they were too smart for their
own good and generally talked over his head or worse, over complicated every little thing.

“Are you familiar with the term ‘mate goading?’” At their blank looks, she sighed and continued,
“The extreme behavior— everything from uncontrollable sobbing to the atypical aggression—it’s all
the result of millennium’s worth of instinct trying to achieve one, all important goal,”

When she paused, Derek raised his eyebrows expectantly. He wasn’t going to play a guessing game
with her.

She sighed as if disappointed they hadn’t caught up yet. To Derek, she said bluntly, “He’s trying to
provok you into claiming him,”

Derek felt his heart lurch eagerly, damn nearly bursting out of his chest.
“Hold still,” Deaton reprimanded, tugging his wrist.

The Sheriff gave a doubtful chuckle, “No way. Stiles doesn’t want to mate,”

“Not when he’s thinking rationally,” Morrell agreed, “But right now he’s processing years’ and years’ worth of suppressed mating instincts all at once at a time when his body is prioritizing those instincts over higher brain function. He’ll have to work through it before he’ll experience a more manageable preheat,”

Derek scowled, “So you think he’s just going to get more violent and moody with every Heat?”

“With every pre-Heat,” she corrected, “and it won’t last forever, only until the instincts are satisfied,”

“You mean until he’s mated?” Stiles’ father looked pained as he asked for clarification.

“Just so,”

“Stiles is too young to mate!” the Sheriff cried with all the power of parental denial behind it.

Derek bit his tongue, not at all inclined to agree. Thankfully, Dr. Deaton beat him to it.

“Most omegas mate young,” the doctor said calmly, “I only have two omega patients who were still single over the age of 24. They all seem perfectly happy,”

“There’s something to be said for a reliable, consistent partner,” Dr. Morrell agreed, “Especially in Stiles’ case: mating not only ensures he’ll have a natural and effective way to handle his future Heats, it’ll also be the best thing to soothe his overactive hormones and mating instincts. There’s a chance it could even lessen the severity of his cycle over time,”

The Sheriff looked pained and concerned as he rubbed his forehead and went back to pacing across the office.

While Derek hated the idea of their mating being a practical matter, he wondered if it might be the tipping point in convincing the omega to be his. Permanently.

But Stiles wasn’t looking for a mate. He’d been pretty clear on that front.

He cleared his throat, avoiding the Sheriff’s eye and hoping like hell this worked out for him instead of alienating his omega, “I’ll talk to him about it,”

“Good,” Deaton put down his pen with a sense of finality, “Then we really should focus on getting through this Heat,”

“With any luck, this preheat will be the hardest part,” Morrell reassured them, “He’s quite agitated right now, and too susceptible to the slightest shift in his emotional state. I’d like to try to get him into full Heat before he wears himself out completely,”

“…How?” Derek asked frustratedly.

He got that they were trying to reassure them that everything was under control, but he was finding it difficult to track all the details. First they wanted him to leave Stiles alone in the Heat room, then they wanted him to think about mating him, and now they wanted to hurry through his preheat..? As far as he knew, there was no way to speed up the process that brought on Heats or Ruts, the hormones needed time to build up.

But he wasn’t a doctor, so what did he know.
Derek just wanted to know what he could actually do.

“I suspect he’s imprinted on you,” Morrell told him, “a sort of… subconscious awareness that you’d make an ideal mate. If that connection’s strong enough, you could push him the rest of the way,”

He ignored the hope blooming fresh and new in his chest. God, but he loved this omega, and he was beyond ready to jump on the idea that it might be reciprocated on any level. He would do anything to help him, if they would just tell him how!

Fighting back the urge to yell, he asked gruffly, “How do I do that?”

She smirked, “By playing into those same overwhelming instincts,”

The bitch was back.

“God! Just go away!” the back of his skull throbbed as he dropped his head back to the ground carelessly, having lifted it only enough to catch sight of the shrink coming through the door.

There was a faint whisper from the general direction of the door, too soft for Stiles to make out, but he did notice the distinct cadence of a deeper, male voice. He didn’t care who it was; it wasn’t Derek (he’d know Derek’s voice anywhere) and they weren’t talking to him, so why should he bother. Whoever it was carried on whispering with the shrink, their tittering nothing but irritating noise that intruded on his well-deserved pity party.

There was nothing useful nearby, so he was forced to improvise. Stiles kicked up his leg and snatched his shoe off his foot. Not caring enough to look, he launched the footwear across the room, shouting, “Get lost!”

He waited to hear the satisfying sound of his shoe impacting, but all he got was a second or two of silence, then a hurried whisper.

Stiles reached for his remaining shoe—

“Enough,” came a deep, rumbling growl.

He froze, one hand on the toes and the other on a slipping heel. Stiles lifted his head and saw past his bent knee: Derek was standing not six feet away, looming over Stiles with a scowl and Stiles’ first shoe-projectile held tight in one hand.

Stiles blinked, his mind screeched to a halt as he was overcome with the realization that Derek was really there. His alpha was right there! Aaaaahhh!

What was a poor omega to do!? He should strip and present himself—no! He should throw the shoe at the alpha’s stupid, pretty face, punish him for walking away and toying with him—no, no, no, he’ll just stretch out, bare belly and neck, be a good omega—or maybe, maybe… maybe…

“Hi,” he said, still holding his shoe where his foot threatened to slip from it.

Derek’s scowl faltered, those heavy eyebrows lifting in surprise, maybe a little amusement. Stiles wasn’t sure, mainly because the alpha turned away from him before he could decide which it was.

Arching his back sideways so he could see around Derek’s bulk without sitting up, he saw the shrink and the other doctor, Dr. Whatshisname, standing near the door. They were nodding and waving at
Derek encouragingly.

Derek turned back to him, grumpy face firmly back in place as he spoke with just the slightest bit of Alpha Authority, “Get up, omega,"

Stiles rolled onto his knees, but that was as far as he got. He flopped back down, sitting on his heels and frowned up at the alpha, “Who the fuck do you think you—Ack!”

Derek grabbed him by the scruff of his sweatshirt and hoisted him off the floor. Stiles felt the air rush out of his lungs as he was deposited on the bed. He scrambled, flailing wildly to sit up, and the moment he felt his hand come in contact with something suitable to lift he channeled all of his rage into bashing it into the alpha’s face.

He only got a single satisfying whack in before Derek ripped the pillow out of his hand.

No matter, Stiles had an entire fucking arsenal of the damn things. Derek hadn’t even discarded the first one when Stiles reached for the next.

“Stiles….”

Thwump!

He felt the blow connect, heard it, but didn’t get to pull the new pillow back for another hit. Too fast for Stiles’ eyes to track, the alpha yanked it out of his fist and threw it clear across the room. He turned burning red eyes on Stiles, expression fiercely unamused.

Stiles felt a shiver run down his back, ending with a small burst of slick messing his underwear. It didn’t change the fact that this alpha had disappeared, up and left him here alone, in this ridiculously pretentious hospital room, and then showed up like he had any right to come and go as he pleased while Stiles stayed locked up.

He reached for another pillow.

A heavy hand clasped his ankle like a shackle, pinning his foot to the bed as Derek snapped testily, “Stiles, don’t—”

Stiles threw another pillow. When that failed, he used his unhindered foot to kick at the alpha’s infuriatingly attractive head.

The last of his patience blown, the alpha blocked the kick and forced the limb down with a firm hand on his shin.

Stiles screamed, “Fuck y—!”

Derek roared.

It was so loud, the IV stand in the corner of the room shook. Derek’s face shifted, his brow and nose more pronounced as his fur grew and his fangs dropped.

Stiles shut up, his body tensing up and refusing to budge in an instinctive bid to avoid drawing additional ire. He felt the dampness in his briefs become a fucking puddle and his cock surged up as he gaped at the alpha.

In the next blink of his eyes, Derek’s features morphed back to his regularly devastatingly handsome visage. His expression was far calmer, almost satisfied as he stared Stiles down expectantly.
Stiles scoffed, impressed despite himself. His voice was quiet and begrudging when he mumbled, “You… can’t just do that…”

One of Derek’s brows quirked upwards, as if daring him to keep arguing. When Stiles just fumed silently in response, the alpha stood tall, crossed his arms over his chest sternly and turned to look at their peanut gallery of doctors.

Deaton and Morrell shared a look before answering whatever unspoken question Derek had for them.

“I think you’ve got things under control here,” Morrell said easily, her smile small and irritating. Deaton nodded, his eyes roaming Stiles’ still form critically, “The more he acts out, the firmer you’ll need to be with him. He’ll let you know when he’s done playing games,”

“Thanks,” Derek said calmly.

Stiles wasn’t sure what any of that meant, but it made his hackles rise. He remembered that having other people in the room meant the bathroom was accessible, it meant he had a way to foil whatever their omega-exempt plotting was up to. He noted the bathroom door and the way Derek was focused on the doctors rather than him. Despite his body’s disinterest in moving, he forced himself to roll off the bed and make a run for it.

Derek’s forearm caught him around the middle and tossed him back onto the bed. He gave an affronted gasp as his weight carried him well into the mountain of pillows near the headboard.

“Don’t do that again,” Derek’s voice had a hint of animalistic gruffness that made Stiles’ insides squirm deliciously.

“You might try getting more physical,” Morrell said conversationally.

“God, why is she still here,” Stiles lamented from within the pillow pile.

“We humans may not have as strong a sense of smell as you do,” she continued as if Stiles hadn’t spoken, “but alpha scent is still a powerful aphrodisiac, even outside of Heat. You should use that,”

“I’ll show you what you can you can use, you fucking—”

Stiles cut himself off when he felt Derek’s fingers return to his ankle. There were too many pillows around his head to see, but he got the message as Derek squeezed warningly and growled. Tread carefully, omega.

“You’re sure I won’t overwhelm him?” Derek asked.

Deaton’s voice answered, “Technically, that’s exactly what we want you to do. You’re not hurting him, you’re merely providing a catalyst for his instincts to respond to,”

“You won’t scare him,” Morrell continued, “At this stage, he’ll process and react to everything through a lens of mating-oriented thoughts and feelings. The worst you can do is aggravate him same as he’s already been, and then it’s just a matter of waiting him out,”

“Yes. Once he submits, he should slip into Heat very quickly,”

“Okay,” Derek didn’t sound nearly as confident as his firm grip on Stiles’ ankle suggested.

“I don’t want to go into Heat,” Stiles grumbled petulantly, lying through his teeth.
Three voices promptly responded: “Yes, you do,"

Well fine, if they wanted to be assholes about it. Stiles threw a pillow blindly.

“Stiles,” Derek said his name impatiently, a little bit growly.

Stiles liked it. He could stand to hear Derek speak to him like that more, say his name like that again. He tossed another pillow.

Derek’s tone brokered no argument, maybe even with a hint of the Voice, “Stiles. Look at me,”

He felt the foot of the bed dip as the alpha leaned on it. A thrill raced up and down his spine, electric and promising. Stiles froze in indecision.

“Omega!”

He sat up quick, pillows flying away from him in his hurry to unearth himself. Unnecessarily breathless, he blinked up at Derek’s seriously scowly face, “Hmm, yes?”

Derek didn’t look impressed. He looked deeply into his eyes and his voice dropped devastatingly low and thrummed with Alpha Authority, “Stop throwing things,”

Hhheeeey. Stiles looked down at his ridiculously tented pants, somehow surprised to find he was, in fact, still on the bed and not sitting in a tub of slick. Seriously, when did his body possibly have time to let loose a liter of the stuff.

He looked up just in time to catch Derek licking his lips, red eyes darting down in the direction of Stiles’ crotch.

Oh no. Hell no. Irritated and flustered, Stiles pulled his knees up and crossed his ankles, glowering at the alpha, “Don’t even think about, buddy!”

Derek kept his heated eyes on him even as he told the doctors, “I got it from here,”

He didn’t pay any attention as the doctors got lost, he was too caught up in awareness of the enormous alpha werewolf at the foot of the bed. He could feel his face flushing, his mouth going dry as he took in the sight of Derek’s thick arms, shoulders seaming to test the seams of his shirt.

Derek lowered himself to his knees, his forearms and hands pressing into the mattress. Stiles watched that powerful chest heave with a deeply drawn breath. The alpha’s eyes were brilliantly red, like warning flares as they locked onto him.

“Omega,” there was a lilt to his voice, just a hint of The Voice that made Stiles quake, “Come to me,"

It wasn’t a full-force Alpha Command. He could have thrown it off. Probably should have. After everything Derek had and hadn’t done, he didn’t deserve Stiles’ easy compliance. But Stiles was momentarily distracted by the sharp, scruffy line of his jaw.

Stiles’ day had been shitty—Derek might not deserve it, but Stiles did.

He uncrossed his ankles and scooted down the bed till his feet entered the space between Derek’s wrists. With a swift move that startled a mewl out of the omega, Derek took hold of his hips and yanked him till he was seated just on the edge of bed.

The alpha rose up like a tidal wave, huge and fast and entirely unavoidable, till he was inches from
Stiles’ face. Stiles felt his heart race and his dick twitch as he stared, open mouthed, at Derek’s red, red eyes.

When the alpha spoke, his words were growled with all the insistence and power any alpha’s Voice could hope to manage:

“Go into Heat for me, omega. Now,”

Chapter End Notes

The end is in sight, folks. I'm aiming to keep it at 33-35 chapters, but we'll see. I hope you guys find this one as grave and humorous at times as it was intended. ;)
He couldn’t believe it worked.

“Alpha! Alpha! Alpha!” Stiles chanted breathlessly, repeated the word each time his ass bounced off Derek’s hips.

For his part, Derek was busy giving himself a reprieve, snagging himself one of the water bottles he’d moved from the fridge to the bedside tray with one hand while his other tugged on the omega’s cock. He downed half of it as he watched Stiles have his way with him for the third or the hundredth time.

He had long since lost track of how many times they’d knotted.

It was possible he was still reeling from the sheer amazement that it had worked and worked well. When Morrell had told him to simply Command Stiles into Heat, he’d first thought she was joking. Once he’d realized she didn’t have a sense of humor, he’d doubted all the medically-sanctioned Heat advice the clinic had offered him, right up until the moment he’d given the order and saw Stiles’ pupils expand in a flash, almost as fast as the omega’s scent ripened.

The rest was history. Seriously. Derek was burning so many calories right now, he didn’t have the energy or capacity to figure out when and how he’d even ended up sitting against the headboard with Stiles using his pelvis like a trampoline.

There were no pillows for him to relax into. They’d somehow fucked almost all of the bedding onto the floor. God only knew how, because Derek certainly hadn’t been tracking.

“Alpha!” Stiles screamed. His inner muscles clamped down and he threw his head back, eyes wide and a little glassy. Derek’s hand was painted with omega spunk yet again.

Stiles didn’t miss a beat. He just kept bouncing, maybe a bit slower, maybe with a little extra roll to his hips.

“Fuck…,” Derek whispered to himself.

It was more than a little overwhelming. He might have thought Stiles was insatiable last time, but this… this was on a whole other level. Stiles could not be distracted even with a mind-blowing orgasm; he just kept going and going, until Derek’s knot was so large it almost hurt them both to keep moving.
Fortunately, Deaton had given him an in-depth tour of the Heat room. He knew exactly which cabinet housed the sterilized and ready-to-go Heat Aids. There was a greater selection in that cabinet than the Boutique in NY ever kept in stock.

For now, he locked an arm around Stiles’ waist and rolled them over so he could give Stiles the sex he needed.

The omega made an eager, wordless little noise. Slender legs automatically wrapped around his waist and Derek almost laughed at the way Stiles immediately used the leverage to buck up and meet every hard thrust.

“I got it, baby,” he panted against Stiles’ cheek.

He buried his nose in the crook of Stiles’ neck, silently rejoicing at the way Stiles moaned and arched, pressing his flesh to his mouth in invitation. He didn’t bite though. No matter how much he—and apparently Stiles’ inner omega—wanted to. He just breathed deep and took in the deliciously sweet omega scent.

The sickly and wrong tang from the preheat was nowhere to be seen and Derek readily gorged himself on the beautiful flavor that was all Stiles and omega and sex and raw, animal hunger and—

“Ooohh, a-alpha!”

Yeah. That did the trick. Derek collapsed, his arms practically giving out as his knot filled in a hurry.

The first time Stiles surfaced enough to track anything besides need and cramping pain, he was greeted by the entirely unwelcome sight of a stranger standing over him.

“It’s okay, honey,”

The woman—a beta, her voice vaguely familiar—smiled at him as she pulled the sheet off his hip. Stiles hissed in distaste and distrust, but the sound went unheard as a louder, fiercer objection came from behind him.

Oh right. Derek was pressed tight against his back.

Knowing his alpha would defend him, Stiles relaxed somewhat and gave a soft, hopeful moan and pressed his head back into Derek’s chest. He liked the firmness of it, the alpha’s pec a thick, solid presence behind him. Almost as comforting as the alpha’s cock inside him.

The sheet fell back over him as his alpha warned off this interloper with that single, beautifully fierce growl.

“Would you rather I check after you untie?”

Stiles blinked, not realizing he had closed his eyes. She wasn’t talking to him though.

“No,” Derek’s voice sounded hoarse, like his throat was dry. He sounded supremely unhappy.

Oh no, that wasn’t right. Stiles was supposed to be making his alpha happy. If he wasn’t, he might take that wonderful, filling knot away. Whining beseechingly, Stiles shifted his hips and squeezed.

A big hand gently pinched his thigh. Derek growled at him softly, “Stop that,”
“Derek?” said the strange beta who had no business intruding on their time together.

“This is as easy to manage as he gets,” even Derek’s sigh sounded grumpy, “Do it now. Just… move slowly. Please,”

For some reason, this seemed to amuse the woman. She lifted the sheet again, arranging it back so it rested in a pile of folds over Derek’s side, leaving Stiles exposed.

“Just lift his leg for me,” the woman’s voice was nothing but kind and professional.

Stiles knew better though. She didn’t belong here. He sneered and tried to kick her away.

“Hush, baby,” Derek caught his leg by the thigh and held it up, Stiles’ foot falling behind Derek’s leg. The alpha kissed his ear and soothed him with a low purr and some nuzzling.

The sound of a latex glove snapping over a slim wrist drew his attention. He’d closed his eyes again, apparently.

“He’s not bleeding, but I see why you were concerned,” the beta spoke softly. Stiles felt the unpleasant texture of her gloved finger brush over his perineum before it poked at him where he was stretched taut around Derek, “There’s definitely some irritation,”

By his ear, Derek’s voice was uncertain as he said, “He feels… rough. Not like he’s going dry or anything, just… rough. I don’t know. Not as smooth,”

The nurse made a sympathetic noise, “Yeah, he’s producing plenty of slick still, but the surface layers of his anus are a bit worse for wear, so clearly the over-the-counter salve isn’t gonna cut it. Dr. Deaton’s gone for the night, but I can get the on-call doctor to approve a prescription for something stronger. If you untie before I get back, use one of the smaller medicated toys. Do you remember where they are?”

Stiles felt Derek shift behind him, motioning and nodding so the scruff of the alpha’s beard scratched over the back of his neck nicely. He tilted his head a little, angling so Derek’s mouth had access to his throat.

“Good. Keep to the green labeled toys until I get back with the salve,”

“What if he… he can be really insistent—”

That was true, and what a nice reminder! Stiles clenched his inner muscles as if to agree and reached back to try to bring Derek’s face to his neck. The only thing he was more insistent on than Derek’s knot would be Derek’s claiming bite, but the alpha had yet to deliver on that one, unfortunately.

The alpha jerked his head away as he caught Stiles’ hand and gently threaded their fingers together.

“—and sometimes his refractory period is… well…,”

“Nonexistent?” she gave a small, understanding laugh, “Don’t worry. So long as neither of you are experiencing genital pain, it’s fine. Just don’t knot him until we’ve had a chance to treat the skin irritation,”

They kept talking, but Stiles stopped listening at that point in favor of focusing on the nice, heavy feeling inside him. Maybe if he bore down hard enough on his knot, his alpha would chase the intruding beta away and get back to fucking him.
By the end of the first day, Derek knew it was going to be Stiles’ worst Heat yet. But when it was good, it was very, very good.

“M-more!” Stiles moaned beneath him.

The omega was on his back, writhing and touching and being more vocal than ever in his pleasure. Derek kissed him, licking into that hot mouth and nipping at those swollen lips, and marveled at the way Stiles unraveled for him. Even lost in the Heat, the omega clung to him and responded so sweetly. He met every thrust and his hands kept roaming, touching Derek absolutely everywhere.

Derek pulled up for breath and slowed the motion of his hips to a grinding roll that had Stiles keening loudly. He licked his lips at the sight of his omega under him: legs spread, cock impossibly hard and flushed, his lithe chest heaving as he stared up at Derek with hunger-glazed eyes.

Rocking together hard and slow, Derek rested his weight on one forearm so he could free a hand. He used it to gently circle one of those swollen, blood-red nipples.

Stiles jerked like Derek had electrocuted him. His mouth fell open in a soundless scream.

“Too much, baby?” Derek asked huskily.

Stiles was sensitive there on a good day, like most omegas, and Heat had a tendency to heighten sensations enough that nipple play could be more painful than pleasurable. No matter how badly he wanted to lick and bite at the pretty nubs, he wouldn’t touch him there again if it seemed to hurt the omega.

Fortunately, Stiles seemed to like it. His cock twitched and leaked as the omega gave him a sweet, almost bashful grin. Derek tenderly brushed his thumb over one blushing nub, keeping it feather-light, and Stiles moaned beautifully.

“That’s my omega,” he praised as he picked up speed with the roll of his hips.

Stiles’ fingers clenched his shoulders bruising-tight as he arched with a pretty little whine. Derek had to pull his hand back to keep Stiles from forcing too much pressure on his nipple.

“Later, baby,” he promised.

He could hardly wait till he could get his mouth on him there again, to ravish him once doing so wouldn’t be torture. He’d bruise him like he had the first time they’d gone to bed together. Derek knotted his omega with every intention of making good on that promise.


Stiles sighed happily as he all but melted back into Derek’s sturdy chest, the blessedly cool water of the shower washing over his front. The alpha’s hands rubbed soap up and down his arms, squeezing his shoulders and massaging away aches that were sure to resurface and linger the moment those broad, sure hands moved on to a new body part.

“Good boy,”

Stiles preened, smiling as he tilted his head and presented the long line of his throat. His smile
faltered when he felt strong fingers kneed up the sides of his vertebrae, dancing over the space where Stiles had been expecting—hoping—to feel the delicious press of mouth and teeth.

No such luck. Sadly.

Disappointment swiftly gave way to disgruntlement. Stiles rolled the back of his head over Derek’s collar bone and whined. He tried to squirm, but the jostling ache of the knot inside him reminded him he was supposed to be still. With a huff, he went limp.

Derek kissed the top of his head, whispering, “That’s it, Stiles. Just relax for me,”

As the alpha continued rubbing him down with slippery, soapy hands, Stiles felt his head spin. He felt kind of floaty as he let himself do as his alpha asked of him; he relaxed and trusted that his mate would care for him.

He couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

By the end of day two, Derek was sore and more than happy to entertain his omega with the variety of toys the clinic provided.

“Good omega,” he said fondly as he watched from his seat against the headboard.

Stiles was sprawled out beside him, his head at the foot of the bed, one leg stretched over Derek’s lap. The alpha affectionately rubbing his fingertips along his inner thigh while his other hand played between the omega’s legs. His hand was on the omega’s cock, the vibrator inside him whirring away.

“A-aalph-ah!” Stiles moaned brokenly. His slender hips jerked as he tossed his head, frustrated tears leaking from his eyes.

Derek hummed softly to reassure him. He stopped petting Stiles’ thigh so he could slip a couple fingers into his hot and swollen hole, pushing the small egg-shaped vibrator harder against his sweet spot. The way three digits glided in with zero resistance was unsurprising at this point in the Heat.

Stiles bowed off the bed, crying out as he came.

Derek wasn’t surprised when Stiles came back down only to start squirming and sobbing almost immediately. The orgasm must have been but a momentary distraction from the Heat pains, and largely unsatisfied without an alpha’s seed flooding him.

“One more, Stiles,” Derek encouraged with his words and his fingers, crooking them to rub at his inner walls and jostle the toy, “Come for me one more time, baby. Then you can have me,”

It wouldn’t take too long—Stiles’ stamina seemed to be limitless this Heat—but it should give Derek the extra time he needed to get it up again. It would be nice if Stiles would stop crying and making pleading eyes at him though.

It was starting to make him feel like a shitbag of an alpha.

“Alpha…?” the omega sniffled as he turned his face to rub his tears off on Derek’s shin.

Derek pulled his hand back just enough to slide his pinky inside, “On my fingers, baby. Come on,”

The omega’s face crumbled for a moment and Derek worried he would go into another desperate
tantrum. It wouldn’t be the first time. Derek’s wasn’t a fan; the episodes were straight up heartbreaking at best, and making Derek feel like a failure at worst.

Desperate to head him off, Derek put just the slightest bit of Alpha Authority into his tone and tugged on the omega’s rim pointedly, “Ride my fingers, omega. Be good for your alpha,”

Like he’d said the magic word, Stiles’ devastated expression melted into one of eagerness. The omega bit into his own lower lip and nodded like a tired bobblehead. He pressed his shoulders into the bed for leverage and lifted his hips.

“Good omega,” Derek barely allowed himself a breath of relief. He kept a hint of power in his voice, hopeful that it would soothe Stiles enough to hold him over, “My good omega,”

Stiles practically beamed up at him. Chest heaving, he shot Derek a heated look through the heavy fan of his lashes and tilted his head. The tendon in his neck was in stark relief as he presented his throat, and Derek had to close his eyes for a moment to keep himself from accepting the blatant invitation.

“Not right now, baby,” he said gently.

Stiles whined, reached down to paw at Derek’s wrist where he was still stroking his angry cock. He pleaded sweetly, “M-my alpha…?”

“Yes, love,” Derek reassured, tightening his grip so he could get the omega to focus on the pleasure of his hands instead of any romantic notions of claiming. He pushed a little more Alpha Authority into his tone as he encouraged Stiles, “Fuck my hands, omega. Come for your alpha,”

Stiles moaned, the sound a little high and needy but still lovely and pleased. He was beautiful in the way he writhed and bore down, taking his pleasure with open-mouthed panting and sweet little cries, just as his alpha had told him to.

“That’s it. Keep going, baby,”

Stiles’ smile faltered as another cramp hit him; Derek could feel it as the slick, burning muscles working his fingers rippled with spasms. Derek leaned forward a little so he could massage his omega’s lower abdomen in firm, tiny circles.

“Easy, Stiles. Keep going till you come. That’s it. Just keep working through the cramps,” Derek coached him on like that, still relying on Alpha Authority to keep Stiles cooperative while he got him off without a knot.

Eventually Stiles’ whines became louder and more strained. Derek let go of his cock, much to Stiles’ immediate and very vocal displeasure, so he could fish around the sheets for the remote to the vibrator. Once he had it, he turned it up a notch or two.

Stiles keened, his eyes sparkling with tears again. “Kn-knot,” he whimpered desperately.

Derek shook his head, “Not this time, baby,”

The tears fell and Stiles cried out brokenly, “A-alpha, please!”

“No, baby. You’re gonna come for me like this first,”

Stiles screamed wordlessly, eyes screwed shut and leaking in frustration as he humped into the air and back onto Derek’s fingers.
“That’s right, keep going, omega,”

Derek reached for the remote and turned it all the way up. The toy hadn’t even caught up to full speed when Derek dropped it so he could bring his hand down to join the one fingerling the omega’s loose hole. Without hesitation, he fitted two more fingers inside and gave Stiles’ wrecked rim a firm tug.

This time, Stiles’ scream was nothing but pleasure as he came, his cock untouched.

There was a TV hanging off the wall directly across from the bed. Stiles had no memory of noticing it before, but his brain came online with him staring at the screen. He must have been the one to turn it on, too, seeing as the remote was in his hand.

Plus, Derek was fast asleep. The alpha was practically comatose, heavy limbs spread all over the bed as he lay on his front. Stiles could see the side of his face that wasn’t smashed into the bed (all the pillows were somehow on the floor), and despite the exhausted bags under his eyes and the complete wildness of his growing beard, Stiles couldn’t help but think the guy had never looked more beautiful.

The man would make gorgeous wolfie-babies someday.

And just like that, Stiles’ whole world was ruled by his achingly empty hole.

“Alpha?”

Abandoning the remote, the TV screen glowing a stead and obnoxious blue, Stiles crawled over the bed and squirmed his way under Derek’s arm. He tried to wriggle under the alpha’s body, but the guy was just too big, too heavy. Stiles ended up on his side, Derek’s arm limp and awkward over his neck. Stiles threw his leg over the alpha and the next thing he knew, he was humping his dick against Derek’s hip.

“Mmm. Alpha?”

He whimpered/purred into Derek’s face. Kissed his cheek.

God, but he was so empty and his cock was so hard it hurt. He shimmied his hips forward, clung to Derek’s sleeping form harder with his one leg as he placed his hands on the alpha’s nearest shoulder and tried to shake him awake.

“Alpha!?”

His insides quaked terribly, pain lancing through his entire lower body. He whined.

And then he was flat on his back, Derek wide awake and staring down at him with bright red eyes. The alpha slotted himself between his legs with an ease and familiarity that made Stiles’ heart flutter. Because this alpha belonged here, on top of him, inside him.

“Good omega,” Derek murmured sleepily as he guided his cock back inside, “Waking me up so nicely,”

Stiles sighed, already anticipating the relief he’d get once his alpha was good and knotted within him. He closed his eyes and bared his neck, hopeful that this time, this time for sure, his alpha would claim him fully.
Derek began thrusting, his movement long and slow, but steady and wonderfully deep. When he spoke, his voice was rough and strained in a way that didn’t match the pace:

“You’re killing me, Stiles. So perfect, submitting so well. I’ll mate you, make you mine. I promise, baby. Later. Later, I promise,”

His thoughts were getting muddled again, so it took him a while to make sense of what the alpha was saying. Eventually though, Stiles understood. His alpha wouldn’t claim him.

“Shh, Stiles. Stiles. Don’t—” Derek’s voice broke with heavy emotion as he panted. His thrusts were getting faster, a little more desperate, “Don’t cry, baby. It’s okay. I’ve got you,”

But it wasn’t okay. It wouldn’t be okay until he was claimed. By this alpha. His alpha.

He didn’t understand. His alpha clearly enjoyed his body. He’d given him countless kisses and taken such thorough care with him. He’d protected him. And Stiles had tried so hard to be a good omega in return. His hardest even. There was nothing more he could possibly do to prove himself a worthy mate.

As Derek covered Stiles’ face with kisses, Stiles let the desperation, the need and frustration and pure, infuriating love get the better of him. He lifted his head from the bed and tried to do what his alpha should have.

“Fuck!”

Derek ripped away from him with a roar. The alpha sat back on his ankles, a grimace on his face as he held a hand to the bloody side of his neck.

Stiles blanched at the angry-shocked look on his alpha’s face, only then noticing the coppery taste on his lips.

Oh God. He’d hurt his alpha. What kind of an omega was he.

He covered his face with his hands in shame. The disorienting wave of Heat, all pain and mindlessness, was almost a relief as it carried his mind away from the first gut-wrenching sobs.

Derek genuinely hoped Stiles wouldn’t need medical supervision for every future Heat. Truly. But holy shit, did he appreciate it this time around.

Sort of.

“Try one more time,” Deaton was impressively calm as he frowned down at Stiles.

Sparring only a second to shoot the doctor an incredulous look—wasn’t it insane to keep doing the same thing over and over to try to get a different result?— before he looked down at the grumpy omega stuck on his lap.

He’d never put as much force behind Alpha Authority as he had in the past few hours, but he might as well give it another go.

“Omega,” he bit out, perhaps a bit harsh as he held the cup up again, “Drink.”

Stiles sneered, turning his nose up and kicking as he tried to squirm again.
Derek was ready for him though. Ever since Stiles had bitten him, Derek had been on high alert. There were no more kisses, nor more relaxed cuddles. No more sweet Stiles. If he was awake, the omega was either furious and violent, or heartbreakingly sorrowful.

And always lustful. Always.

Before Stiles’ renewed struggling could gain traction, Derek tighten the arm wrapped around the omega’s waist and prevented him from moving and simultaneously hurting either one or both of them. Stiles whined, and Derek winced as he felt nails digging into his forearm—again—in Stiles’ attempt to force him to release him. So it wasn’t entirely painless—Derek was scratched, and doubtless he was irritating the bruises he’d left on Stiles’ body the last few times they’d done this. At least they weren’t hurting in a way that meant they’d have to go another round or two with a toy instead. Again.

Stiles had only gotten more active and aggravated the more Derek had tried to soothe him or get any food or water into him. He’d told Deaton as much, but the doctor had optimistically assured him Stiles would respond better while knotted.

Now they knew better.

Derek felt vindictively justified in glaring and throwing the brim-full cup at the doctor.

Deaton didn’t even flinch as he fumbled with the catch. The lid held stubbornly, and only a few spots of mineral water made it onto his white coat. Setting the cup down, Deaton asked, “I don’t suppose you can hold him still long enough for me to get an IV in his arm?”

Derek felt his frustration evaporate. He stared at the doctor, “Is that really necessary?”

“Not yet,” Deaton spoke stoically, “he’s dehydrated, but not dangerously so. I’m more worried that he won’t eat and he’s still acting out.”

“Yeah, I know,” Derek sniped sarcastically, “That’s what you said two fucking hours ago,”

Deaton was nearly no help at all. This was his fourth visit since Stiles had turned wild, and the best the doctor had been able to tell him was that Stiles’ hormone levels must be unusually unstable despite no longer being in preheat. He’d said Derek shouldn’t worry, just keep doing his best to manage him. And to keep Stiles’ humanly blunt teeth well away from himself.

But that was hours ago, and Stiles’ uncontrollable moodiness was making it impossible for Derek to get any sort of sustenance into him.

Deaton watched Derek struggle to get the omega to submit for a long moment. The frown on his face only deepened.

Derek glared at him over Stiles’ furiously tossing head. He had to raise his voice to make sure he was heard over the omega’s peevd scream.

“I can’t keep doing this indefinitely. He’s going to hurt himself, if he doesn’t end up badly dehydrated first,”

With a grim nod, Deaton told him, “Call for assistance once you’re untied. I need to speak with Dr. Morrell, but I’ll approve a minor sedative in the meantime. It should give you both a couple hours’ rest, and enough time for an IV to restore his fluids,”

As Deaton left him, still fighting to keep Stiles more-or-less still, Derek felt the reality of how shitty
this Heat was turning out crash over him.

For the first time in years, he felt like crying.

The first thing he noticed was the irritating stiffness of his left wrist. Stiles pulled his hand out from under the pillow he was snuggling to see a neat wrap of medical tape binding his hand and wrist, something lumpy beneath it. Frowning, he poked at the stump of a clear tube sticking out of the bandage. Something about it was familiar enough that the sight didn’t upset him, but he wasn’t quite clear-headed enough to figure out what it was, or what it meant.

It was different though. Maybe bad…

“Leave the IV alone, omega!”

Stiles jumped at the force and loudness of Derek’s voice, heavier with Alpha Authority than he could remember ever hearing it before. He spun onto his back and saw the bathroom door swinging behind Derek as the alpha stalked toward him. The big guy was tense and stern looking as he rushed over, clearly concerned as his eyes locked on the hep-lock and totally unconcerned about his own nudity.

Heeeeyy. Well, Stiles could appreciate it, even if the alpha didn’t.

Derek got one knee on the bed and was reaching for his bandaged wrist when Stiles sat up and scooted closer, all obedient and helpful. Stiles was all about getting closer, his hole wetting with a fresh wave of slick as he reached for his alpha’s cock.

He squeaked unattractively when Derek intercepted him by snatching his wrist and tugging him abruptly. The alpha manhandled him till his back was flush to his bigger, stronger chest. Almost immediately, Derek’s arm around him and pinned his unhindered wrist to his stomach. Derek lifted the bandaged wrist up to his face and was already inspecting it before Stiles’ brain caught up with all the non-sexy action.

His alpha didn’t want him close so they could mate. He’d done that before, but now he wasn’t even trying to mount him.

The sense of rejection hit him like a punch to the gut. He gasped. His eyes welled with hopeless tears.

Behind him, Derek froze. Stiles’ bandaged hand still in the air, he felt the alpha press his face into Stiles’ hair and heave a deep, slow and hyper-controlled breath.

“Don’t cry, Stiles. Please,” the alpha’s whisper was gravelly, pained as he nuzzled him and gently brought Stiles’ wrist down so he could still hold it as he surrounded the omega with a hug. “Please, baby. Not this again. Please, don’t cry,”

Stiles’ breath hitched as he pleaded, “A-alpha!” His chest felt too-tight in a way that had nothing to do with how he was embraced.

Derek’s shushing sounds were so soft, he almost didn’t hear them over his own cries.

“Ah-ah-ah-alph—!”

Stiles knew now there was nothing he could do to earn Derek’s bite. So much wasted time, and all he got was a hug and a needle in his hand.

“We’ll do better next time, Stiles. My Stiles. I promise—”

He was bereft. He was achingly hard, too empty, more than a little in love, and he didn’t have an alpha to fix any of it. This alpha, the alpha he wanted, wouldn’t have him. Even though he’d submitted and been so good….

It was awful.

“Come on, baby. Work with me,”

Depressing.

“You’ll see, next time will be better—”

Unfair.

“It has to be. I can’t do this again—”

Infuriating.

Stiles’ cries ended with a sharp, angry scream. He jerked his head forward and threw it back, uncaring as pain flared at the back of his head as Derek grunted. He only cared that he was free.

Derek didn’t just release him. He tossed him.

Stiles landed face-first on the bed. Taking the opportunity while he could, he grabbed the pillow he’d been sleepily cuddled with and swung it back over his shoulder. Sure enough, Derek had followed him and the pillow hit with a satisfying thump.

“That’s right,” Derek sounded oddly relieved, considering the way he tore the pillow from Stiles’ grip so forcefully, “Good omega. Fight me. Anything’s better than cry—ugh!”

Stiles’ aim wasn’t great on a good day, yet alone when Heat-addled. He’d meant to flip over and jam his knee into the alpha’s exposed crotch, but he’d misjudged where Derek was. The blow landed rather softer than intended and awkward just above the jut of an unfairly attractive hip bone.

While the alpha rubbed at the spot, Stiles rolled clear across the giant bed. He slipped off and landed among an entire fucking arsenal. All the pillows that belong on the bed were immediately within reach. Not hesitating, Stiles snagged two and rose up on his knees. The instant Derek’s form was in view, he fired.

Derek caught the first one and let the second collide with his chest, full-force. He didn’t move, not even a slight sway backward. The alpha just sighed and sat down on the corner of the bed.

Stiles grabbed more pillows.

Day three came to an end without so much as a hint of the Heat doing likewise.

“Ow,” Derek said without inflection as Stiles smacked his cheek weakly with the hand still hosting the IV hook-up. It was more of a pat, really, except the look on Stiles’ face made it clear the intent was harm rather than affection. He’d learned by now that not responding to Stiles’ attacks in some
way, regardless of their effectiveness, only aggravated the omega worse.

Stiles was still panting, chest and shoulders heaving, from his latest round of struggling and fucking. Most recently, Stiles had launched himself at Derek with seemingly every intention of clawing out his heart, only to seat himself on Derek’s cock the moment the alpha had wrestled them safely down to the floor. Then it was a matter of constantly whacking Stiles’ vicious hands away from his face and throat while the omega rode him like it was a race to see if he’d strangle or fuck him to death.

Neither, apparently. Stiles was losing energy fast, and neither of them had reached their peak.

“Are you done, now?” Derek asked, deadpan.

Stiles gave a petulant whine and bore down on Derek’s cock as he smacked both palms on Derek’s pecs and pushed till his arm’s were fully extended.

“Apparently not,” Derek sighed and leaned back against the side of the bed.

Stiles floundered, unbalanced without the resistance until Derek caught him with a wide grip on either side of his waist. The omega swayed. He looked around them for a moment, but Derek doubted he was really seeing much, given the glazed and disoriented look to his amber eyes. Eventually, Stiles gave another whine and started rocking his hips again, even as he tried to angrily push Derek’s hands away.

It was the weirdest thing. The omega’s behavior would be comical if it weren’t so concerning.

Derek’s hands dropped to the floor like deadweights and he let Stiles fuck him with short, exhausted jerks. He’d just have to wait until Stiles got tired or irritated enough to let him help.

Sure enough, only a few moments latter those big honey-gold eyes watered and the poor thing dissolved into emotional shivers as his bodily hunger and frustration got the better of him.

“Alpha?” Stiles’ voice waivered, all hopeless and needy.

“I’m right here,” Derek was quick to assure him.

Stiles went pliant as he rolled them, getting the omega on his back without disconnected their bodies. As Derek started up a far more satisfying pace, Stiles covered his eyes with one hand, hiding his tears, or possibly just hiding from Derek.

He wasn’t supposed to get any part of himself so close to Stiles anymore—he was too likely to bite again—but Derek couldn’t resist placing a kiss or two on the parts of his face not smothered by his hand. The tip of his cute nose. The line of his jaw. The curve of his ear. The spot where sweat stuck the hair to his temple.

Getting close, no matter how cautiously, had the added benefit of letting Derek scent him. He took in the sweet stench greedily, letting it fuel his thrusts and bring on the physiological response his omega needed most.

“Ah!” Derek gasped softly once they were locked together once more.

Beneath him, Stiles sighed. He clenched and wiggled just a little, not to escape, but more like he was reassuring himself.

“That’s right, love,” Derek panted as he balanced on one forearm so he could reach for his omega’s twitchy cock, “You’re turn now. Come on, Stiles,”
It didn’t take much. Just a few careful pulls on the feverish flesh between his legs, and Stiles’ whole body went taut as he came.

“Good omega,” Derek whispered warmly. He placed another kiss on top of his head, “Time to get some rest. Sh. It’s alright, we’re not going anywhere for a bit,”

Stiles was still sniffing, tears clinging to his lashes, even after his heartbeat slowed with sleep

Chapter End Notes

If you don’t feel bad for Derek by this point, shame on you ;)
Stiles wasn’t in the Heat Room when he fully realized he was himself again.

“Alright, there?”

He had to blink water out of his eyes as he turned. Once he did, he could make out the vaguely familiar features of a pretty, middle-aged nurse as she smiled down at him from her seat beside the shower. Her hand was on his back, and he realized she was keeping him sitting up more than he was.

“Welcome back, Stiles,” she said cheerily as she waved the detached spray nozzle over his chest.

He looked down, frowning at the weak water pressure as much as her unfamiliar hand. He went to take the nozzle from her, but she pulled it away gently.

“Let me. You just relax and focus on not brain ing yourself on the tile, okay?”

“Where—” he licked his lips, feeling his throat ache and scratch when he spoke, “Where’s Derek?”

“No worries. He’s sleeping it off in the main clinic. You’ll see him tomorrow morning. Maybe even tonight,”

That didn’t sound right. Stiles rubbed at his chest subconsciously. He was thinking clearly again, finally, but he couldn’t shake the cold, nasty feeling that the alpha’s absence was all wrong, like he just knew Derek was supposed to be with him. It should be Derek washing him, caring for him.

Derek said he would be with him the entire time. His dad had promised it.

“Hey, hey, easy, sweetheart. You’re okay,”

“Shit,” he muttered as he wiped his stinging eyes, “Um… Derek’s supposed to stay with me. How—how long has he been gone?”

“Only a couple hours,” she urged him to lean forward, then the shower head switched hands so she could stream the water down his back, “He didn’t want to leave your side, but once we were all sure it was over, even he had to admit he needed to go clean up and rest. You really did a number on him,”

The water was warm, but Stiles felt goosebumps prickle over his skin. He blinked rapidly to keep his eyes clear and pay attention, but despite hearing her words, what he was feeling felt an awful lot like abandonment.

Oh wow. Look at him, really rocking the pathetically-needy-omega shtick.

“I’m not—I’m not usually a crier,” he told the nurse awkwardly, “I don’t even know why I’m all weepy. This is ridiculous,”

“No at all,” she ran careful fingers through his hair. She tugged gently till he tilted his chin up, then warm water sluiced down his head, “You’re fresh out of a difficult Heat, and still working the fallout from the suppressants out of your system. It’s perfectly reasonable that you’ll have a hard time getting back to balanced. You’ll get there though. It just might take a little while,”

“Ok,” he agreed, but his chest still felt hollow and achy. Wrong.
The nurse helped him out of the tub and wrapped a thick white bathrobe around him before leading him back out to the fancy Heat Room. He needed the assistance, too; his legs shook and ached, his arms felt heavy and loose where they hung at his sides, every last muscle in him exhausted and overused.

Jesus. He hadn’t felt half this shitty after his previous Heats. What the hell happened.

The bed had been remade, the sheets and blanket fresh and the pillows returned to their rightful place. Stiles sank back into them like a puppet whose strings had been cut. The nurse wheeled a tray over, flipped the latch and swung it over his legs so he had what looked like a whole turkey dinner in his lap.

He didn’t touch it, instead turning to the nurse with a frown, “What about my dad? I think… I remember he drove us. Right? Is he still here? Can I see him?”

She smiled warmly, “He’s here. Why don’t you eat first, and we’ll see if you have the energy to keep your eyes open long enough for a visit,”

He picked up the plastic fork on his tray, but couldn’t quite bring himself to dig in. His eyes tracked the nurse to the door, noticing the IV stand was not where he thought he remembered it being.

“Hey,” he called out before she could close the door behind her, “How long did it last?”

Her cheerful smile finally dimmed before she reluctantly admitted, “Well… just over five full days,”

It was midafternoon the day after Stiles’ Heat finally finished with them and the first person Derek saw after waking was the Sheriff. The older alpha was pacing the hall between the waiting room and Deaton’s office.

“Have you seen him yet?” he asked gruffly as he neared.

The Sheriff didn’t pause in his pacing, though he nodded, “He was asleep, but they let me sit with him for a bit this morning. They finally took the IV out,”

Derek leaned against the wall and crossed his arms, “Did Deaton… tell you anything?”

“He was asleep, but they let me sit with him for a bit this morning. They finally took the IV out,”

“Only about his medical concerns; the dehydration, continued mood swings,” the Sheriff shot him a suspicious look without breaking stride, “Why? Is there something else you think I should know?”

He debated with himself what and if he should say more. Stiles surely wouldn’t appreciate him sharing details with his father, but then again, the man deserved to know why things were going to have to change. And Derek could use some advice, and who better than the alpha closest to Stiles.

“Did Stiles tell you he tried to get me to claim him the first Heat we spent together?”

Finally, the Sheriff’s worried steps faltered. He stared at Derek with wide eyes and said a tad harshly, “Uh. No. No, he did not,”

Derek met his incredulous gaze and boldly admitted, “He was more insistent this time around,”

The Sheriff folded his own arms, staring him down with all the posturing a human alpha could manage, “Yeah, right. If Stiles was thinking about mating, he would have told me,”

“Yeah… I don’t think he really has, not lucidly, anyway. But he…” Derek tapped the side of his
own neck and finished lamely, “bit me,”

“Bullshit,”

“If I were human, I’d have stitches. You can ask Deaton if you don’t believe me,”

“Omegas don’t give mating bites. Not even among wolves,”

“Yeah, well…,” he floundered, at a loss for how to explain, how to describe how wretched he’d felt each and every time he had to refuse Stiles. He threw a hand up and let it flop down against his thigh as if to say he gave up.

The angry cynicism fell from the Sheriff’s face. The man rubbed a weary hand over his face and sighed, “Shit,”

Silence stole over the hallway again. The Sheriff returned to pacing, his steps faster and uneven this time around as he repeatedly rubbed at his temples or pressed a palm over his mouth. Derek watched him with growing discomfort, waiting for the man to say something.

Eventually, the Sheriff stopped pacing, his head in his hands. If it weren’t for the complete lack of salt water scenting the air, Derek would have thought he was crying.

Exhaling, Derek pushed off the wall and took a cautious step closer, “Sheriff—”

“No,” the other alpha dropped his hands and stared at him with a resigned expression on his face, “Call me John,”

Unsure of what was happening, Derek nodded with a firmly set frown in place.

The Sheriff’s shoulders and chest heaved with another hefty sigh. He looked anywhere but at Derek as he said in a matter-of-fact tone, “You’re going to mate him,”

“If he’ll have me, yes,”

“And you’re going to help him get through college,”

He didn’t hesitate to reply, “Yes,”

The Sheriff jabbed a finger at him, face stern, “And if I ever hear you’re pressuring him to have kids before he’s ready—”

“Never—”

“Damn right,”

Silence reigned over them again as they stared each other down. Why, Derek didn’t know. He was pretty sure they had just agreed they wanted the same thing to happen here, yet he couldn’t shake the aggressive tension from his shoulders.

Perhaps it had to do with the one major problem with this proposed mating.

Visibly forcing himself to relax, Derek quietly asked what he really sought the man out for, “What if he says no?”

Stiles had been infuriatingly consistent the entire time he’d known him. The omega was not looking for a mate. The only time he hadn’t shied away or reacted badly to the suggestion was in the days
leading to this disastrously unstable Heat.

If Derek forced the issue, he feared the omega would run in the other direction. Full speed.

From the pained look on his face, the Sheriff thought the same thing, “Hell… I don’t know, Derek. I wish I did, but I just… don’t know,”

It was the longest, worst, most awkward car ride in the whole history of automotive transportation. Stiles sat rigidly, uncomfortable where he’d squashed himself against the front passenger’s door of his dad’s cruiser. His dad was similarly tense behind the wheel. Derek (what little of him Stiles might see if he wasn’t pointedly looking out the window) was in the back. At least he’d finally slid across the seat, putting the most distance possible between them in the confines of the police car.

It did nothing to stop Stiles from smelling him, sensing him, feeling his presence. He was simultaneously too far away and much, much, much too close.

It was driving Stiles crazy. How could he be expected to think like this. He felt like he was being torn in two.

The sound of a deep inhale came from the backseat, “Stiles—”

“Don’t,” he snapped, pressing his forehead harder to the cool window, “You said you’d let me think. I need more than ten fucking minutes, Derek,”

Yep. Yes. Yes, thinking was absolutely what he needed to be doing. About his future. About Derek’s. He should be weighing the odds and applying logic. He should be figuring out if this was really the best way to get what he wanted out of life, rather than just the easiest. He should be thinking about his would-be-degree, his wishful-career.

He should not be thinking with his omega-dick about how good it would be to just submit and let his alpha take care of him. No matter how loudly that part of him was screaming.

He wasn’t about to consider the part his heart had to play in it.

“Stiles—”

The omega breezed passed him, not deigning to so much as glance at him as he dumped his dishes in the sink and made a quick getaway to his room. He heard the door to Stiles’ bedroom slam shut seconds later and it felt like he might as well have had his heart placed between its sharp edge and the frame.

John’s hand came down on his shoulder in a peculiar, sort of comforting pat, “I gotta admit. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him give someone the silent treatment before. Not successfully,”

“Thanks,” Derek couldn’t muster the energy to imbibe the word with the appropriate amount of sarcasm. He just didn’t have it in him, too raw and peevd with his omega so thoroughly ignoring him.

It was a week after his Heat, and Stiles hadn’t said more than ten words to him since they got home from the clinic in LA. A week since he’d last held Stiles’ hand, since he’d last kissed him. Since he’d seen his smile or heard his excited chatter. Whatever intimacy and hopefulness Derek had enjoyed
leading up to the Heat was now gone.

If he didn’t know better, he’d say Stiles was angry. But his scent didn’t hold the hot musk of temper hardly ever. All there was, was exhaustion and a dejected sort of thoughtfulness. Whatever thoughts or emotions were flying through Stiles’ head, they were too fast and convoluted for Derek to catch wind of.

And any attempt to talk about it had been unceremoniously shot down or studiously ignored.

“At least he hasn’t terminated the Heat Contract,” Derek forced himself to admit.

John gave another one of those heavy, sympathetic sighs Derek was becoming annoyingly familiar with, “Stiles isn’t stupid. He may be dramatic and thrown for a loop, but he’s not stupid,”

Deaton had made it perfectly clear to all of them that Stiles would never go back on suppressants again, and while carefully monitored (ie. expensive) sedation could be available to him in an emergency, he would need an Alpha’s assistance from here on out. Going it solo with a couple reliable toys was a luxury Stiles would never be able to afford, his condition too severe.

Because apparently being an omega was considered a condition if it got complicated enough. Derek might have been too caught in his own emotional fallout to follow everything Deaton had spouted at them. Maybe.

“He knows he needs you,”

John’s words should have been reassuring, at the very least soothing the alpha instinct to care and provide. Instead, it just made Derek’s heart hurt.

“Exactly,” he sounded as exhausted as his omega seemed.

A part of him was starting to think Stiles would never agree to be his mate. And Derek couldn’t even fault him for it. No one should go into a mating because they needed to.

He just wished Stiles wanted him as much as he needed an alpha.

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CHS, they called it. Compromised Heat Syndrome. He had his own medical bracelet and everything. It just arrived in the mail today, courtesy of Deaton’s rush order.

Stiles lay on his bed and ran his finger over the band wrapping his left wrist. He could feel the raised sections where Derek’s phone number was embossed on the band. Etched in metal. Permanent.

Not as permanent as a mating bite or a collar, though. Stiles tried to imagine a thin, classy piece around his neck, like the one Allison wore. Maybe they could get one to match his new bracelet.

Mating. Jesus.

It wasn’t like he hadn’t been considering it. Maybe not in the term itself, but the implication had been there pretty much every time he’d imagined living with the Hales long-term. He hadn’t been picking out baby names or anything, but the topic of having little cubs—especially with Derek—had crossed his mind more than once.

But that had been idle fantasy. Hadn’t it?

The sound of his phone ringing with Beyoncé’s “Run the World” interrupted his musings.
“Hey, Allison,” he answered absently, still toying with the bracelet.

“Hey,” her voice was soft and gentle, unassuming, and he knew someone must have told her something about his Heat.

“Who told you,” he asked without inflection.

“Talia,” her answer was hardly a surprise. As the alpha legally and financially responsible for him per the contract, she had been included via video call in the debriefing Deaton had laid on him just before he was discharged, “I know we haven’t been exactly subtle, but… Stiles, I… as much as I want to call you pack, I wanted to make sure someone told you: you don’t have to mate Derek if you don’t want to. No one’s forcing you into anything. You have options. Clinic’s like Deaton’s have registered alphas who help single omegas in these situations all the time. And I found this private agency in Ohio that—"

As Allison went on at length about all the tried-and-tested alternatives, Stiles only gave her a portion of his attention. He suddenly longed to be back at O.R. Gasm, snug between her and Melissa. He could really use some of those omega-feel-good-vibes right about now.

“—alphas, called Overseers. I don’t think Derek would, uh… could do that for you, but a more um… emotionally distant alpha could. You’d have to terminate the Heat Contract first, but it’s a totally viable treatment option for single omegas with CHS who don’t want to be sexually active—"

“But I like sex,” Stiles finally interrupted.

“Oh. Well, of course—"

“No, I mean,” Stiles sighed and hoped to hell she couldn’t tell he was seconds away from crying again, “That’s not the problem. I don’t mind needing to have sex. I don’t even mind needing to have sex with Derek. Especially don’t mind sex with Derek. I just… I feel like I’m… like I’m…,”

At war, Stiles thought privately. With myself, go figure.

“… like you’re what, Stiles?”

“It’s like I’m using him,” he whispered, suddenly fearful that Derek might be listening through the door. It was ridiculous, of course, he knew Derek wouldn’t do that.

Allison made a confused little noise, “What do you mean?”

“I mean, if I mate with Derek, I’ll get all the benefits of being pack. He’d help me get into school, through school, probably pay for it too, if Talia didn’t beat him to it. And I’d never have to worry about how to deal with my Heats, and any money problems would practically become nonexistent overnight. It’s a little too-Cinderella-esque to believe, honestly. And what does Derek get out it? A spaz of an omega with fucked-up Heats who abuses him as part of the monthly routine,”

“Stiles!” Allison cried, appalled, “You know that’s not true! You’re clever, and funny, and sweet and a complete idiot if you haven’t noticed how much you make Derek smile. He smiles, Stiles. Derek. Like he hasn’t since before I’ve known him, and that’s thanks to you. And how you think you’ve ever abused him is… I don’t even know what to say to that,”

Of course, she didn’t get it. Allison hadn’t been there. Stiles may not remember all of his Heat, not even most of it, but he retained enough. He’d bitten Derek without his consent, drawn blood, and he was fairly sure he’d broken the guy’s nose at one point. Not to mention the coppery tang of blood on his lips during his more lucid moments was pretty distinctive.
But she was also right. Derek certainly did smile around him more than he originally did. And what a great smile it was, too. Might even be a smile he could see himself waking up to every day.

“Maybe you’re right,” he admitted almost woefully, “So how do I stop myself from feeling so damn guilty about it?”

Two weeks. They were at the halfway point, between Heats. Stiles still wasn’t really talking to him, but at least he wasn’t diligently avoiding him either.

“Can I sit...?” Derek wasn’t literally tip-toe-ing toward the couch, but his nerves sure felt like he should be.

Stiles looked up from the comic book he was reading and nodded, “Sure,”

Derek settled onto the cushion next to Stiles and reminded himself not to hold his breath. It was the closest they’d been since he left Stiles to get some rest at the clinic. He desperately wanted to wrap his arm around the omega’s shoulders, tuck the boy into his side and just hold him while he read. Maybe steal a kiss to his brow here or there. He folded his hands together in his lap instead as he slouched into the couch.

Beside him, Stiles’ scent lit up with the flavor of nervous anticipation.

Derek swallowed the excessive saliva gathering on his tongue, “I… I don’t want to pressure you into anything. But we have to talk about this,”

Stiles’ eyes were trained on the page in front of him. A little glassy. A lot stubborn. They weren’t blinking, or roaming across the page, just staring determinedly downward at nothing. When Stiles didn’t say anything, Derek figured he was at least listening since he wasn’t reading.

He’d had a lot of time to figure out what he wanted to say, but all those words flew out of his brain now that he was about to say them.

“If you don’t want to mate with me, that’s fine,” he was lying through his teeth, “but your next Heat is going to come whether we like it or not. And, Stiles… I can’t do that again. The way things were last time… I won’t put myself back in that position,”

“Okay,” Stiles said with uncharacteristic softness. He closed his comic book, kept staring down at the cover unseeing.

He somehow managed to keep his voice calm, refused the desperation in his gut from lurching up into his throat and becoming obvious. He didn’t want his desires to unduly influence his—the omega’s decision, “I can help you if we go into this one as mates. I would always help you f we were—uh… Or even if you agree to let me give you the bite during Heat. But if you’re not sure… or if you’d want me that way…,”

Jesus. Fuck. He couldn’t do this. He couldn’t make himself say the words. He cleared his throat and tried again.

“Deaton has a registered alpha on call who can help you. He… I didn’t get his name,” because no one in their right mind was going to give an alpha werewolf the name of an alpha who might be tending to his omega in his stead, “but he can assist you. Without sex. He’s a trained nurse, and his scent, any alpha’s scent and authority… I mean. Just until we… until you get better or… or make a decision…”
Fuck. He was butchering this.

“Why did you leave?”

He looked up, startled not only to hear Stiles’ voice directed his way, but to see the omega was even looking at him. Well, frowning, but he was at least aiming his eyes in the right direction for the first time in weeks.

“W-what?”

“At the clinic. When my Heat was ending. You just… left me there with the nurse. You said you’d be with me the entire time, but then you left me…,”

Immediately, Derek felt like the worst alpha in the world.

“God, Stiles, I… I’m so sorry. I wasn’t thinking clearly. I was exhausted, and sore and, and… and a million other things, and the nurse told me to— that’s no excuse. I shouldn’t have left you—”

Stiles looked back down at his comic book, and Derek stopped talking as he caught the scent of confusion and salty tears.

God, but he just wanted to take him in his arms and make it better. Somehow.

When Stiles spoke, his voice waivered achingly, “I don’t understand…,”

“I love you,”

He hadn’t thought before speaking. He’d just wanted to stop the uncertainty, heal the ache he could hear in his omega’s voice. He’d thrown out the only words his mind could supply him with.

Stiles stared at him, eyes and mouth wide and shocked.

Feeling like his heart was about to burst out of his chest, Derek slumped back, avoiding Stiles’ amazed gaze, and rushed to get more than a couple grunted words out.

“I love you, and it killed me to see you unsatisfied and hurting. No matter what I did, it was never enough. You kept begging me to claim you, and everything in me wanted to do it. But the entire time, I just kept thinking how much you’d hate me if I did it,”

He took a breath then. He wasn’t sure what Stiles was thinking, feeling, too caught up in his own racing heartbeat and trepidation to take note of the omega’s scent. He braced himself and looked up to meet Stiles’ eyes, still frozen and staring.

“I didn’t think I could handle it if you hated me;”

“… Oh,”

Stiles looked forward, training that shocked stare on the TV instead.

“I love you,” Derek repeated. He was losing the fight to keep his desperation under wraps, his voice coming out gruffer than usual, “I want you as my mate, and if you don’t…,” he stopped, his throat constricting around the hateful words. Backpedaling, he changed tactic, “if you’re not ready yet, I’ll wait. You can…,” It physically hurt to get the words out, but he managed, even if they were half growled, “You can handle your Heats with someone else, and I’ll just… I’ll wait till you’re ready to be mine;”
He already knew Stiles was crying from the salt water scent, but it still felt like a knife to the ribs when he looked over and saw it. Stiles was looking at him again, tears glittering in his whiskey-honey eyes.

“Say something,” Derek practically begged, his voice gravelly and quiet.

He was pretty sure Stiles was going to break his heart with his next words.

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Stiles supposed he was surprised Derek’s eyes weren’t bleeding red right now. The guy looked grim and dangerous, like a wounded animal who’d been backed into a corner. He demanded Stiles respond, impatience evident in the clip of his words and the tension tightly coiled in his muscles, and Stiles honestly expected those alpha eyes to flash at him.

He was glad they didn’t though. Stiles wasn’t so sure he could have stopped himself from going belly up in submission if they had. That wasn’t what they needed right now. They needed to talk.

“Stiles?” Derek prompted when he’d been silent too long.

“Oh! Um…,” he fiddled with his latest New 52 comic, his leg bouncing on its own accord. He was so not equipped for this conversation, “I was thinking about it. Of course, I’ve been thinking about it, that’s the whole reason we haven’t been talking lately. Which… you totally already know, uh… I was going to, that is, I wanted to sort a few things out, just get my head on straight. Bit of a hopeless cause, though, I guess—”

“Stiles,” Derek’s heavy palm landed on his knee, stilling his fidgeting and lighting up every giddy omega nerve ending he had on the whole damn limb.

He took a deep breath, met Derek’s broody gaze, and released it in a loud puff, “I don’t know if I’m ready to mate,”

It was only because he was watching from a foot away that Stiles caught the way Derek’s jaw twitched and his mouth shrugged in a swiftly aborted grimace. The alpha gave a short jerk of his head that approximated a nod of acceptance before removing his hand.

Stiles caught it, squeezing Derek’s fingers with all the strength he had.

“But I’m also pretty far gone on you too,”
“What the fuck did you do?” Peter’s voice barked through the phone, so loud Derek had to pull it away from his ear.

“Why are you calling on Laura’s phone?” he countered, once he couldn’t hear Peer growling, a full arm’s length from the speaker.

“Because you won’t answer my calls. Now tell me what the hell happened to have Stiles terminating the Heat Contract. You were supposed to be convincing him to stick around and come back with you, not cut and run,”

Derek sighed, “It’s not like that. Things are… we’re figuring it out. Not that it’s any of your business,”

“Bullshit,” Peter snapped. Derek heard a muffled snarl, suggesting Peter had covered the phone or turned away for a moment in anger, too upset to bother with the mute button. When he came back to the phone, his voice was clipped, with a note of gravity Derek was never comfortable hearing from his normally flippant uncle, “We need an omega back in the house, Derek. I…,” he cleared his throat and practically hissed: “I don’t want to have to leave my pack again,”

Derek winced despite himself. Since his father’s death, Talia regularly needed to interrupt the inevitable feedback of alpha pheromones clogging the house by sending one or more of them out of state for months at a time. Allison’s presence, while well intended, was not constant or intimate enough to make a long-term impact, especially not when considering how many non-blood-related alphas were in the pack as well. Peter, as both the oldest and most volatile of the family, tended to be the first to go in times of tension.

The Kate situation probably wasn’t helping, even if Derek’s absence might.

“I know,” Derek said softly, “Things are complicated though. I’m staying here for a while yet, and… hopefully he’ll come back with me in time. As my mate,”

Peter was quiet for a long moment, then, “What do you mean ‘hopefully’?”

“I mean, because of… reasons,” Derek landed on the word awkwardly. Peter wasn’t part of any contract or Stiles’ immediate family, so there was no way Derek would be sharing any of Stiles’ private health information with him, “Stiles is no longer eligible to sell his Heats, and… well, I can only service him again if we’re mated,”

Peter gave a sardonic huff of a laugh. Derek could hear the sneer in his voice as he said, “You seriously gave him an ultimatum, nephew? Derek, you idiot—”

“It’s complicated,” Derek retorted shortly, bristling, “You don’t know. I couldn’t… He’s thinking it over, and hopefully he’ll agree before next week. Before his next Heat…,”

“Hopefu—? Derek, what the fuck?”

“I have to get going,” Derek lied, not caring how transparent it seemed. He ended the call and threw the phone. It skittered across the Stilinski’s living room floor and thunked against the far wall with an abruptness that matched the headache gathering behind his eyes.

Three days ago, he’d been as close to giddy as Derek had ever been in his life. Hearing Stiles admit
to caring for him—even if he hadn’t used the ‘L’ word yet—had made everything seem better. His affection had been accepted, not thrown back in his face and he’d finally been able to touch his omega again. He’d even been happy to give Stiles the requested space and time when he needed it to let him figure out what he wanted. He was hopeful, even confident, it would ultimately result in their mating.

Then Talia had gone and reported Stiles’ hospitalization and related diagnoses to Nature’s Sanctum, as legally required of her. She’d put it off for as long as she could. The auction house had promptly terminated the existing Heat Contract and removed Stiles from their registry, then given the Sheriff a call to let him know they’re insurance would not allow them to continue assisting Stiles.

That would have been all well and good, except that the company’s solicitor had apparently gone out of their way to contact any medical providers Talia had named in her report. Deaton’s Clinic was told in no uncertain terms that John Stilinski, not Talia Hale, was the alpha legally and financially responsible for Stiles’ health concerns, starting from the date Stiles’ latest Heat ended.

Needless to say, Stiles had gotten one look at the bill and nearly gone into hysterics.

It was like the damn auction house had hit the reset button on their relationship. All Derek’s optimism was crushed beneath the sudden weight of Stiles’ anxiety.

It didn’t matter that Derek was able to clear the bill that very same day, with Talia’s encouragement. The reminder, particularly seeing the sum of actual figures involved, that he was costing the pack such significant amounts of cash was devastating in some way to the omega. It didn’t make any sense to Derek, and Stiles’ explanations tended to be so convoluted and emotionally wrought that he couldn’t follow.

He’d done his best to reassure him though. Stiles just barely regained his breath and found his footing before someone’s off-color comment (“How inappropriate! The county sheriff shouldn’t be housing an alpha werewolf under the same roof as an unbonded omega!”) sent him into a paranoid rant. Suddenly, Stiles was convinced Derek was going to leave him. Or Derek would be chased out of town by bigots. Or that his father was going to kick Derek out of the house from societal pressures. Or just… something.

It was almost like Stiles was anticipating any off-the-wall scenario that might complicate their mating. And with every day, Derek became more bewildered and less confident.

It didn’t help that John had insisted Stiles take Talia up on the offer to pay for him to meet with Deaton’s Registered Alpha, on top of the expense of next month’s supervised Heat. Derek knew it was best to let Stiles explore his options fully, but it didn’t stop him from pacing the Stilinski’s home like a caged animal.

An angry, irritated, nearly wild, caged animal.

"Deucalion, huh?" Stiles read the guy’s name tag with a skeptical quirk of an eyebrow that would make Derek proud, “No way that’s your real name,” The alpha shrugged, that calm little smirk stubbornly in place, “Some omegas can get… unduly attached, for lack of a better word. It’s for everyone’s safety that clients don’t know my real name,” “Just your medical and sexual history,” Stiles snorted indelicately.
The alpha was unphased, his posh accent crisp and clear as ever, “Just so,”

Stiles fought (and largely failed) not to squirm under Deucalion’s studious gaze. The guy was large, packing more muscle than even Derek had, and Stiles couldn’t help imagining what it might be like to be held down by him; while that line of thinking usually had him secreting a good amount of bodily fluid, right now it just made him a little queasy.

Drumming his fingers on Deaton’s desk, Stiles asked, “Soooo… why this line of work?”

The curve of Deucalion’s lips grew in unsurprised amusement. It was probably the top question on his FAQ list, Stiles figured. Still, Deucalion’s tone was nothing but patient and professionally cordial, “Servicing an omega through Heat is an incredibly rewarding experience, with the strong likelihood of being both difficult and pleasurable. Beside the fact that it is a highly necessary and rarely available resource for omegas such as yourself, I like this work far better than my previous roles in healthcare. This, I find fulfilling, if you will,”

Stiles just barely refrained from scoffing, “You say ‘fulfilling’ like you love it or something,”

He stole the wind from Stiles’ sails with a simple: “I do,”

Stiles blinked owlishly. Rallied his thoughts, “Well yeah, you get paid to have sex. Course you love it,”

Deucalion shook his head side-to-side, his expression the slightest bit condescending, “No, sex is merely a tool. If I wanted to be paid for it, it’d be far easier and less stressful to list myself on Craigslist or stand on street corners. You see, I actually get paid to give omegas the attention and safety they require when at their most vulnerable. Along with the occasional medical attendance, of course,”

“Right,” Stiles uncrossed and re-crossed his legs, “Because you’re also a trained nurse,”

“With the full credentials and 10 years of experience as an RN, yes,”

Stiles leaned forward and stared deeply into the alpha’s face for a moment. He was looking for something creepy or suspicious, but all he saw was that cool professionalism, maybe some mild amusement.

Stiles threw himself back into a slouch as he said dismissively, “Nah, dude. I think you’re in it for the sex,”

“Ah,” Deucalion sounded entirely unsurprised. Definitely amused. Maybe, “And I’m sure it’s the sex that has your alpha refusing to service you himself, then,”

Every omega instinct he had lit up at the insinuation, like he was preparing to fight or something. But all he saw was that cool professionalism, maybe some mild amusement.

Stiles sputtered, suddenly on his feet with his fingers curled into fists, “You- you don’t know a damn thing about it!”

Deucalion threaded his fingers together in front of his mouth as he stared at Stiles shrewdly.

It felt a little too much like when his dad would stare him down after catching him in a lie. Stiles crossed his arms over his chest defensively, his words ending weakly as his anger turned to
awkwardness, “So just… don’t talk about Derek like that,”

Uh. He was so lame. What was he even doing, bringing Derek’s name up during a… a… a freaking interview with a new Heat partner!

Deucalion didn’t move a muscle, his penetrating gaze still annoyingly focused. Only one well groomed eyebrow lifted in response.

Stiles sat back down, “Sorry. That was… uncalled for. I am a mature adult, really. Well, maybe not all that mature, but still…,”

“I would be happy to service you in Heat, Stiles,” Deucalion shocked him into silence with the pronouncement. Once Stiles met his gaze, the alpha finally brought his hands down and finished speaking, “I pride myself for taking on difficult clients, after all,”

Stiles huffed a mirthless little laugh, “You’ve already decided I’ll be difficult in Heat?”

“Of course,” Deucalion spoke like it was obvious, “I’ve never serviced an omega so at odds with their own mating instincts,”

Feeling insulted, Stiles grumbled, “You haven’t even seen me in Heat. You don’t know that,”

“I do,” that superior little smirk was back, “I’ve never had a client who already had a mate. Not one that was still alive, able and willing, anyway,”

“I… I don’t have a—”

“In order for this to work, Stiles,” Deucalion cut him off, all amusement gone from his expression, “You and I must be completely honest with each other,”

Irritated, Stiles glared, “Derek and I aren’t—”

“You’re as good as,” Deucalion gestured to encompass all of Stiles’ person, “You’ve brought him up several times, with and without prompting, in the forty-five minutes we’ve been in here. You’re extraordinarily defensive when I question the strength of your connection. The only reason you’re here instead of Morrell’s office is because there isn’t time to deal with your mental hang-ups about mating before your next Heat,”

Dead. Silence.

Stiles felt his jaw unhinge, leaving him gaping like a fish.

Deucalion at least managed not to smirk as he quirked that posh eyebrow of his, “Well?”

“You’re a dick,”

“But I’m not wrong,”

“This… I—I’m just gonna go. This was a waste of time,”

He got to his feet, Deucalion mirroring him and meeting him at the door with the paperwork he’d have to complete in order to secure Decualion’s service for next week. After an unhappy pause to weigh his pathetic options, Stiles went to snatch it from his hand.

The papers pulled taut between their grips. The alpha reached up, patted his shoulder and tousled his hair like the condescending asshole he was.
“Go home to your alpha and agree to mate, Stiles. Besides,” Deucalion sneered, eyes flashing red with hint of fang that made Stiles jump, “you reek of him already.”

It was only once he was climbing into the Jeep that he thought to doublecheck the paperwork Deaton had given him on Deucalion. Sure enough, right at the top, next to alpha, in bold letters he somehow missed before: WEREWOLF.

Stiles was out of the house for a total of three hours, at most, for the sake of meeting Deaton’s alpha. Derek spent every minute of them telling himself he had nothing to worry about.

And then his omega came back covered in the scent of another alpha wolf’s arousal.

“No,” he said firmly, meeting Stiles not two steps inside the door. A quick, searching sniff and he tugged the plaid overshirt from Stiles’ shoulders, shaking his head, “No way. Find someone else,”

“Wha—Derek!?”

Before he was aware of even thinking it, he’d thrown the omega over his shoulder and turned on his heel, heading for the bathroom. He could smell the foreign wolf clinging to the strands of Stiles’ hair. It made him see red.

“Oh my God! Derek!” Stiles squeaked as he was deposited in the shower and blasted with lukewarm water.

Derek grabbed the first bottle his hand landed on and was rubbing soapy suds over Stiles’ head and still-clothed shoulders when he came back to himself. He froze, soap and water trickling down his arms and over Stiles’ face, the omega blinking rapidly through the impromptu bathing to gape at him.

“I… Stiles,”

With the foreign scent disappearing fast, he was finally able to think through the possessive aggression, finally able to recognize that while the stranger had left an imprint of his interest on Stiles, the omega himself smelled of nothing but shock and bewilderment. There hadn’t been so much as a hint of Stiles’ slick or returned interest.

Stiles wiped the sudsy streams from his face, the action knocking Derek’s hands from his hair.

“Jesus, Derek…,” he said in amazement, “I’m still fully clothed!”

Derek watched the way Stiles’ white graphic-t clung to the line of his collar bone, the lithe muscle of his chest. He caught the exact moment Stiles’ left nipple puckered beneath the cool water and was immediately reminded of the plans he’d had for the tight nub since the last Heat. Since the last time they’d been so physically intimate.

“Sorry,” he muttered distractedly, eyes fixed on Stiles’ chest.

The omega leaned out of the spray and glowered at their feet, “Aw, man! My shoes are soaked!”

“…I’ll buy you new ones…,”

He wasn’t sure if Stiles heard him, he barely heard himself over the downpour of the shower as he stepped forward like he was bewitched. He had to touch him. Just a little. Enough to show this omega how well he could please him, better than any other opportunistic mutt.
“You don’t need to buy—whoa! Oh!”

The shredding of that t-shirt as Derek ripped it down the middle wasn’t particularly satisfying, as wet as it was, but sighting the pale expanse of the omega’s torso certainly made up for it. He pushed Stiles back against the shower stall, stepping close and into the spray himself. His clothes weren’t soaked quite through by the time he got Stiles’ jeans undone.

Derek bent down to finally get his mouth on his omega’s erect nipple as his hands slid down the back of the jeans to get a handful of his plump ass.

“Oh-okay! Yeah, that’s… okay, I guess we could just—Ah! Fuck!”

Derek sucked at him hard, pausing only to worry the tight nub between his teeth. He pushed at Stiles’ jeans repeatedly, but they were practically plastered to the omega’s thighs. He managed to get them under the sweet plush of his backside, enough to get a finger inside that wonderfully slippery hole, and gave up with a frustrated growl.

“Derek. Derek. Derek!” Stiles patted at his shoulders, chanting his name fast and insistent, “Gimme a min— ugh! Yeah, yeah okay. More fingers. That’s—wait, your—I can’t reach your belt. Derek, let me—Aaaah-ha! N-never mind then,”

He abandoned the abused nipple and Stiles nearly slipped as he spun the omega around and pressed his chest to the shower wall with a heavy hand between his shoulders. As much as he’d love to stay and feast on his omega’s teats, they couldn’t compete with the fresh scent of slick and the lingering memory of another alpha wolf’s threat. Derek’s claws made quick work of his belt and clasp of his pants, and his balls pinched painfully on his zipper in his haste to shove inside Stiles.

“Je-esus!” Stiles cried as Derek’s hips snapped against his ass.

Derek set a punishing pace right from the off. He was only distantly aware that Stiles had turned off the water, the vast majority of his attention focused on where his hands clutched all the gloriously pale, beauty-marked skin. His claws were still out and just barely indented the supple flesh where he gripped Stiles’ left hip and right shoulder a bit too tightly.

He couldn’t make himself sheath them. God, but he hopped he left marks. He wanted to see his mate wear the evidence of him for weeks. For the rest of his life.

With a pained groan that spoke of nothing but desperation and self-denial, Derek pressed his forehead against Stiles’ back. His eyelids and fingers squeezed harder as he refused to give in to the nearly overwhelming instinct to bite and claim.

Beneath him, Stiles gasped and shuddered. The smell of his release flooded Derek’s nose, tempting him viciously.

He dropped his right hand to Stiles’ as yet unmarred hip. Both hands holding firm, Derek pressed his forehead against Stiles’ back. His eyelids and fingers squeezed harder as he refused to give in to the nearly overwhelming instinct to bite and claim.

Beneath him, Stiles gasped and shuddered. The smell of his release flooded Derek’s nose, tempting him viciously.

He dropped his right hand to Stiles’ as yet unmarred hip. Both hands holding firm, Derek pulled the omega back into his next few thrusts, turning the movement vicious and rough enough to make each smack of their bodies coming together be punctuated by Stiles gasping loudly.

“Der—ah! Der! Ek!”

Derek roared loud enough to rattle the shower door as he shoved in just in time for his knot to blow up.

“Fuck! What—Derek Hale, did you just knot me in my father's shower!?”
Stiles wasn’t about to admit Alpha-Douche, aka Deucalion, was right. It just so happened that he rather liked seeing the blue blossom from the bruises on his hips and shoulder as they faded from black and purple two days later. Coincidence.

A knock, then, “Hey, kid?”

Lurching forward to snag a shirt and pull it on, Stiles hollered at his dad through the door, “Just a minute!”

Closer to fifteen instead of sixty seconds later, Stiles opened his bedroom door to his father’s Seriously Frowny Face. Time for real talk, apparently.

“What’s up, pops?”

No matter how often he was on the receiving end of the sheriff’s soul-flogging stare, it never ceased to make him uncomfortable. The man only let him squirm for a moment before raising the crumpled papers in his hand to eye level.

“I noticed Deucalion’s paperwork made its way into the trash,”

“Uh… yeah,” Stiles shrugged, going for nonchalant, “We just didn’t really, y’know, click. And really, I think at least a little chemistry is sort of a necessity, all things considered. Plus, really, he was kinda an asshole. Except not kinda. He totally was,”

John gave him that unimpressed look that just barely bordered on exacerbated as it deepened the lines on his forehead, “Stiles,” he said slowly, bluntly, “Your Heat is in a week. Less, if last time was any indicator,”

“Yeah, I know—”

“Do you?” John sounded just a teeny-tiny bit incredulous, his eyes squinting skeptically, “Because we can’t keep playing it fast and loose like this, Mieczyslaw,”

Damn it all. If he was getting blasted with his real name, this wasn’t just real talk. This was serious, tough-love, end-of-the-line sort of talk.

The last time his father had used his real name, they’d buried his mother the next day.

“I- I know,” he said meekly. He didn’t know what else he could say.

John poked him in the chest with the paperwork, “If you really can’t stand this guy, fine. And if you’re that desperate not to settle into a mating with Derek, well… Honestly, kid, I don’t get it,” he sighed, rubbing his temple tellingly, “But I called Dr. Morrell. She’ll stay late for you today, if you want to go back out there. Just to talk or… even for an interview with a different registered alpha,”

“Oh, that’s…” he floundered for something to say, not sure how he felt, or if he’d even processed the conversation yet. He finished in a tone that sounded more than half-dead, “that’s nice of her,”

“Derek’s a good guy, Stiles. A good alpha,” John patted his shoulder reassuringly, “But he’s not a saint. It’s not fair to leave him stewing in this house while he waits to hear about which alpha you’re considering over him,”
Stiles nodded. After all, there was nothing new being said. He still felt shitty hearing it, though.

“I want you to go,” John continued, his voice going firm in a way that Stiles knew meant this wasn’t up for debate, “At least talk to Morrell. And I’ll… I don’t know, I guess I’ll take Derek out for a bit. We’ll get those steaks you won’t let us bring in the house. And you can tell us your decision when you get home,”

And that was that. With one last not-so-comforting pat to his son’s shoulder, John turned around and walked away. Stiles stood there anxiously, not sure what to do with himself, and entirely unconcerned with how long he stayed there. It was long enough to listened as his dad called for Derek, his voice a distant thrum as he told the younger alpha they were going out for dinner, John’s treat.

There might have been mention of a ‘shotgun talk’ being long overdue, but Stiles was too caught up in freaking out to be worried or amused.

Eventually, well after the house had fallen silent with the alphas’ departure, he managed to unglue his feet from his doorway.

“Fuck. Just…” he hissed at himself, pacing restlessly as the prolonged stillness caught up to him with a burst of stomach-churning energy.

His thoughts jumped from Derek, to Deaton, to the pack, Deucalion to Morrell. Back to Derek. From the pressures of being an omega in 21st century America to his dad’s expectations to his own wants and dreams. He thought about his non-submissive drive to be an educated, independent and impactful adult, and to follow his dad’s footsteps into law enforcement, only to end up on the edge of an endless pool of warm contentment every time he thought about cooking meals for the Hale pack.

Inevitably, his mind would return to Derek. Derek, who was always so careful to let Stiles make the big decisions on his own. Who had found a round-about way to make his silly skydiving dream come true, before they’d even known each other. Who’d came to his rescue when he’d been in need… because he was his alpha.

His alpha who loved him.

So why couldn’t he bring himself to accept his claiming bite?

“This is ridiculous,” he muttered to himself, “I am ridiculous. I should just do this. Go for it. Fuck!”

He grabbed his keys, patted his jeans to make sure his wallet and cell were on him, and practically tumbled down the stairs in a series of spastically jerking limbs.

“Morrell. I’ll talk to her, just bounce it all off a trained, understanding professional,” he told himself aloud, voice mockingly calm and self-placating, “Clear the air, sort of thing. It’ll be fine. Just fine. I can do this, I can totally make this decision,”

He flicked the lock to the front door and slammed it closed behind him in his hurry. He smacked his hand on Roscoe’s hood in a distracted rhythm as he rounded the Jeep and grabbed onto the handle of the driver’s side door and tugged it open an inch.

“I am a strong, capable omega, dammit!”

The door slammed closed, snapping his arm forward with it as another person’s arm reached past his shoulder.
A frightfully familiar voice teased in his ear, “Hm. Are you, though?”


Sometimes, Derek really wished he could get drunk. He wasn’t sure if it would help him forget the painfully awkward conversation he’d just had, or if it might have screwed him over further by getting him to tell the Sheriff even worse things the man never needed to hear from the alpha dating his son.

The disgustingly weird silence in the cruiser on the ride home suggested the Sheriff might have been thinking the same thing. At least Derek wasn’t locked in the backseat again.

“So…,” the human alpha drew the word out, tapping his fingers on the steering wheel in a way strongly reminiscent of Stiles, “that was some good food, though. Right?”

“Mmm,” Derek nodded agreeably.

The low twittering of the radio was the only sound for a long moment.

“I don’t know about you,” the Sheriff eventually admitted, “but I could use a drink,”

“… I don’t suppose you have anything wolfsbane-laced?”

“Nope. Sure wishing I did though,”

Derek believed him. They both stank of discomfort, more than ready to put the past hour of stilted conversation, semi-serious threats, and off-colored comments well and far behind them. Whatever bonding time John Stilinski had expected to get out of the evening hadn’t quite gone to plan, that was for sure.

They rounded the corner and Derek felt a little bubble of relief when he saw Stiles’ Jeep in the driveway. They needed a buffer. Desperately.

“Dammit,” the Sheriff hissed from the driver’s seat. The scent of his discomfort turned sharp and nasty with frustration and worry.

“What’s wrong?” Derek frowned, genuinely concerned at the abrupt change in mood.

“Stiles,” he practically spat the name in disgruntlement, “It’s too early for him to be back already,”

“Back from where?” Derek was irritated to learn Stiles had plans he knew nothing about. He had to remind himself, again, that he wasn’t actually Stiles’ mate. Not yet.

“He was supposed to drive out to LA and see Morrell tonight,”

Derek forced his frown to smooth out, his expression carefully blank as he guessed, “You mean he was supposed to interview another registered alpha,”

The Sheriff sighed, “I don’t know anymore, Derek. Maybe he’s decided to pull his head out of his ass and he’s waiting for you in there,”

“How confident you sound,”

“Hey. I get enough sarcasm from Stiles as it is, I don’t need it from you,”

Derek couldn’t help himself, he gave a snarky, “Yes, sir,”
“Smartass,” he shot back as he shifted the car into park, “You two deserve each other,”

He could only hope.

He followed the Sheriff up the drive and as he passed the Jeep, he was stalled by a vicious coughing fit.

“Alright, Derek?” the sheriff called over his shoulder as he went to open the front door, “Huh, that’s weird. Stiles never locks the door when he’s home—”

Derek felt his claws and fangs pop out. A spike of adrenaline shot down his spine and his vision flashed red as his wolf reacted faster than his human mind could catch up to. He snarled, ears ringing with mental alarms, and bounded up the porch steps.

The moment his feet hit the welcome mat, Derek recognized the cloying scent neutralizer that had inspired the reaction. It was an old hunter’s trick.

“… Derek?”

He met the Sheriff’s eye, his own wide and burning red as he snarled, “Kate,”
“You would think those stupid mutts would learn,”

Stiles sat rigidly on the rickety chair and glared at her with all his might. His hands were balled into fists so tight his knuckles were white and aching. He wasn’t tied, his mouth ungagged. Why bother when she could use his biology to equal or greater effect.

Kate flicked her pocket knife open and closed a couple more times, “See, among hunters we learn early on to protect our weak spots. That’s why we keep our omegas under lock and key, so they’re kept safe. It’s what I would have done with you,” she waved the open knife a little too close to his face for comfort.

Stiles shivered, his guts twisting awfully as he breathed harder. It was the only outlet he had for the fear, her Commands to keep still and quiet too adamant and literal for anything else.

His eyes were stinging again, no matter how often he told himself not to give her the satisfaction of seeing him cry. The only thought more prevalent was that he had to hold on long enough for Derek to find him.

“But that was before I thought better of it. I wouldn’t want to touch some wolf’s sloppy seconds,” she sneered down the length of his frozen body, “I mean, it just seems a little unhygienic, ya know. Like second-hand bestiality or something. Although, that Derek sure does make it appealing, doesn’t he,”

She drew the tip of the knife along his jaw teasingly and Stiles gagged as bile rushed up his throat. Oh God, but Derek needed to hurry up.

“I fucked him once, you know,” she drew the next word out, sing-song like, “Long before you ever came around,”

Her words were venomous. He wanted to smack her. He wanted to scream denials and call her a liar and a sadistic pervert, even as he remembered Derek’s sorrowful insistence that Kate’s first attack against his family, against Stiles, had been his fault.

She grinned that disgustingly sweet smile that made her look deceptively lovely, “I bet he never told you. How he likes getting screwed by other alphas. Oh!” she giggled, like they were friends sharing precious secrets, “Or did he, and that’s why you’re still not mated? How could a measly little omega bitch ever throw him down and use him up the way he likes it?”

He was going to be sick. Her Orders would hold him just as he was, and he was going to choke on his own vomit, sitting up straight and fully aware.

Petting his tear-stained cheek, she prattled on, “Sh, it’s okay. I’ll bet even if you were an alpha, he’d never be able to mate you. Derek doesn’t have a particularly stellar history when it comes to
romance,”

Whatever deity or divine intelligence that made his dynamic was a sick fuck. No matter how hard he tried, how his muscles strained or his mind rebelled, he just couldn’t disobey. He was still frozen, utterly silent and complacent as she spewed ugly half-truths.

“That’s how I destroyed the pack, actually. Derek told me everything I needed to know. Practically drew me a map. Oh, and the best part!” her voice went high with excitement.

He’d never wanted to cause someone such visceral pain before in his life. For a wild moment, he wished he was part of the Pack in truth, with fangs and claws of his own that could rip into her.

Her lips brushed his ear as she whispered sweetly, “He was on his way to answer my booty call when he left Daddy Dearest in the house alone,”

Stiles managed to breathe out a small, despairing moan. His eyes squeezed shut, leaking more tears. He didn’t want to hear this. Derek. Where the hell was Derek.

“Derek didn’t tell me anyone was still at home,” she said conversationally. Her fingers toyed with his hair as she continued, “It was such a nice surprise. I heard there wasn’t enough of him left for the mutts to know exactly what I did to him. A pity; I had a lot of fun with all that soft tissue. You know,” she pressed her cheek to his as she laughed sadistically, “before I left him sitting all nice and neat on the floor. At least his bones held up enough for the doggies to get the message,”

Alpha Authority or no, Stiles couldn’t sit still any longer. He somehow managed to jerk his face away from hers in disgust.

“Nah-ah,” she scolded gently.

Her grip on his hair was less so as she yanked his head back till his neck ached and his throat itched with the stretch. She stood abruptly, so he was staring up at her. He heard the snitch of the pocket knife and felt the cold blade against his Adam’s apple.

“Course,” she continued, calm and considering as she played with the knife up and down the tendon in his neck, “Papa Hale wasn’t nearly so pretty and ripe as you,”

The blade lowered, and with a flick of her wrist Stiles felt the top few inches of his shirt give way and cool air hit his chest. The sides of the shirt caught on his nipples and he winced at the unexpected sensitivity.

Fuck. He was already doubting his chances of getting out of here alive, but he seriously couldn’t imagine surviving if his Heat was brought on early by Kate fucking Argent. He needed Derek to find him. He needed Derek to find him NOW.

“Aw!” she cooed, stashing the knife so she could push her hand inside the severed front of his shit. Her finger plucked at his nipple harshly and Stiles gasped in pain; he was too close to Heat for it to be anything but hurtful.

She cackled as Stiles silently sobbed, “Oh, we are going to have so much fun together,”

*Derek! Her hand tightened in his hair, and he mentally screamed for his alpha.*

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“How the hell did this even happen!?”
Derek growled and paced across the living room like a caged animal. Which is exactly how he felt right now. He should be out there, hunting Kate down and rescuing his omega, not standing around, answering BHPD’s repetitive questions and waiting for the fucking cavalry.

“I don’t give a flying shit about your excuses, Talia. My son is missing!”

He never should have left Stiles unprotected. He let himself fall into a false sense of security with every mile they’d put between the omega and NY. He should have known better. Kate had evaded his pack and the law for years. Of course she could give Peter the slip and track Stiles back to his childhood home.

“I’m the goddamn sheriff, Talia. I can’t hire you and you have no official jurisdiction—”

Kate always went after the omegas in packs first. The only reason Allison was safe was because Kate respected and fear her big brother just enough not to touch his only daughter. Derek should have expected this. He should have been prepared.

“Pack Law?! Are you fucking kidding me!? He’s not pack!”

It didn’t matter what John screamed into the phone, that he was right, that legally the Hales didn’t have a leg to stand on if they hunted across state lines and well outside their territory for an omega they weren’t officially connected to. Derek was going to kill Kate long before Peter could catch a flight into town. He didn’t care that he’d go down for murder.

Stiles would be safe and avenged, even if Derek wasn’t free to claim him properly at the end of it. It wasn’t like he had any confidence Stiles wanted that anyway.

He just needed the damn police to clear out, or at least stop watching him long enough to slip away and give chase.

“No. No. You had your chance to take care of the problem. Now you just tell me anything and everything you know about Kate Argent’s West Coast contacts—"

“Mr. Hale?”

Derek growled darkly at the young deputy. He managed a barely civil, “What,”

“If you’d like to step outside with me, I can take your statement—”

“I already gave it,” he snarled, stepping into the beta’s space with eyes flashing.

The bright blue of a beta werewolf flashed back at him, so quickly, Derek almost missed it. The Deputy, Parrish by his nametag, lowered his gaze submissively before Derek could feel challenged. Damn. Derek was so worked up he hadn’t even noticed the scent of another wolf. Some protector he was.

“Please, Mr. Hale,” Parrish said softly, “Step outside and we can talk privately,”

Now he knew where the Sheriff’s peculiar knowledge about werewolf amenities came from. It wasn’t every day a lone wolf settled down in a small conservative town. Especially since it was still very illegal in many of them for a wolf to be granted a position of authority over humans.

Derek led the Deputy onto the porch and folded his arms over his chest sternly, “Does Stilinski know?”
“Yes, but he and my partner are the only ones on the force who do,"

“Good. Hope you can keep it that way,"

“Yeah,” Parrish’s voice trailed off uncertainly for a moment before he rallied himself. Derek could practically see his backbone stiffening with resolve, “No one else will think to say anything, so I have to. Stiles may be yours to any wolf’s nose, but no one else here will see it that way,"

“I know,"

“This is California, Mr. Hale. If you hunt her down, you won’t get 25-to-life. You’ll get the chair and vial of monkshood in your veins within a week,"

“Noted,"

“I’ve known Stiles for a long time, Mr. Hale. He wouldn’t want—”

Derek cut him off with a possessive growl, “Watch yourself, beta,”

He didn’t need some lone wolf giving him advice about what his missing mate would want.

Parrish bowed his head and fell silent for a moment, “I only meant that if you find her and Stiles is…,” he paused as his scent soured with grief before he tried again with a stronger voice, “When you find him alive, make sure you bite him first, before you take her out. Federal law supports pack bonds, and the Sheriff and I will back your story that you claimed him this morning before the abduction,”

It took him a moment to dial down the aggression—he was reasonably on edge, after all—but he managed to give a respectful nod, and when the beta shook his hand, he deftly grasped the keys pressed to his palm and gave a heartfelt murmur, “… thanks,”

He already knew he wouldn’t claim Stiles without the omega’s permission, not even to save himself from biased justice.

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Stiles was about ninety-eight percent sure Kate wasn’t actually going to rape him. Mainly because he was even more certain the stress was sending him hurtling toward Heat, and she’d find it more entertaining to watch him go insane with dissatisfaction. The remaining two percent though… they were responsible for the terrified, cold sweat plastering his hair to his temples and drenching the remains of his shirt that hung from his shoulders and arms in torn strips.

Or maybe that was simply due to the strong possibility that she’d just carve him up with that fucking knife.

Kate gave another appreciative whistle as she picked at his waistband, inching it just a little lower, over his hip bone, “Damn, but he sure did a number on you, didn’t he? I think I can make out each of his fingers from those bruises,”

Stiles gave an impressively high-pitched whine as she tucked the knife inside the front top of his boxers. He felt the sting as the blade sliced a thin cut horrifically low on his belly.

“No wonder you’re not mated. Only a little harlot would let an animal go wild on their ass like that. Ha! Literally, I’ll bet,”
She hadn’t yet bothered to reinforce her Command to keep quiet, and Stiles was adequately terrified enough to get out a few whimpers and sobs. He wished it was from his desire to fight her power over him, but he knew it was more likely from his fear simply overwhelming his biological imperative to obey.

He was all omega at the moment. Weak. Vulnerable. Desperately in need of his alpha.

Derek’s name ran through his mind on repeat, his own personal mantra to try and keep it together until help arrived.

“Am I right, omega? Hm? When I take off those pants, am I gonna find your hole all stretched out and used up from fucking around with monsters?”

She crouched down in front of him, trying to catch his eye. He still retained the slight movement of his head and neck, not that it did him much good but it did allow him to avoid looking at her delighted face.

“Look at me!”

He tried to fight it. He fought the Command so hard, the muscles in the back of his neck shrieked in pain, shortly followed by a burst of agony behind his eyeballs. With an inaudible gasp, his head snapped forward and his eyes popped open to focus on her.

She smiled cheekily and Stiles hated how much it reminded him of Allison. She raised the knife between them, making sure he saw it well before she began flipping it in her palm.

“Think you’ll still want to fuck animals if I cut your dick off?”

She lowered the knife. With his eyes still obediently fixed on her face he couldn’t see, but he felt the knife point pick at the inseam over his crotch. Stiles screamed behind closed lips —helpmehelpmederekpleasehelpme—with tears blurring his vision. The knife danced along the inseam, down one thigh halfway to his knee before starting back up again. It didn’t cut, but the threat mounted with every second.

“Talia’s bitch was still intact when he burned up,” Kate spoke as if she was recounting a fond memory, not a brutal murder, “Well, physically, anyway. Couldn’t say how his mind was doing by that point. Hey, why don’t you help me out here, I’m tired of doing all the work,”

Stiles was shaking violently as she took his hand and wrapped his fingers around the handle of the knife.

“Hold that,” she Ordered.

Stiles obeyed, swallowing back the vomit that lurch into his throat. He could do nothing but watch and wait as Kate untied his shoes and slipped them and his socks off as if he were a particularly agreeable toddler.

The last alpha who’d used their God-given power over him had been Derek. If he made it out of this alive, he swore he would never take the werewolf for granted ever again. He’d do better. Be better. A better omega that an alpha like Derek would deserve.

“Omega brains are truly fascinating,” Kate was continuing on as she folded his socks all neat and tight, slotting them into his shoes to be set aside deliberately, “You would think, at some point a sense of self preservation would kick in and put an end to things, but… nope! The last Hale omega let himself burn alive rather than disobey my ity-bitty alpha command,”
Stiles was hyper aware of the knife in his hand, and his inability to let the thing drop to the floor.

Kate sat back on her heels and grinned at him expectantly, “Go ahead, omega. Pick a toe, any toe,”

Stiles’ beloved Jeep was a death trap, and old enough that the reasonable, cost-effective thing to do would be to put it out of its misery and buy a new Jeep. But Derek and Peter had pitched in a good amount to order new parts over the months, and Derek promised he would make sure every last one was installed and the hunk of junk purring like a kitten if it got him to his omega in time.

He drove around town for half an hour with the windows down, not daring to go faster than a crawl in case he missed the scent he was so desperately searching for. The vehicle smelled too strongly of the omega for Derek to pick up a fresh trail that way. He would have to jump on the slightest reminder of Kate instead. Or the suspicious sting of the scent neutralizer she’d used in the Stilinski’s driveway.

“Fucking finally,” he whispered heatedly to himself.

He was on the outskirts of town, a ways onto a woodsy stretch of road, when he finally caught her on the wind. There were a handful of off roads here and there, but Derek pulled onto the dirt shoulder to park instead of trying to follow the faint scent to the right turn. They were in the woods, far enough from the main hub of town. He would have to track her the rest of the way on foot.

He’d be faster on four paws than in the Jeep on the wild terrain anyway.

He stripped down and threw his clothes carelessly onto the seat, stashing the keys in the center console. He turned, sniffing deliberately till he had a definite heading. From there it was almost too easy to let the wolf take the reins.

Normally, he’d howl. Signal the pack that he’d found the trail. But he was all alone out here. And this wasn’t a friendly hunt and there was too much anger and desperation for the wolf to be interested in raising its voice. There would be time for that later. When he was too close for his prey to escape.

Not too far into the veil of trees he could discern Stiles’ fresh, panicked scent from the older imprint on the Jeep. There was no trace of blood or violence, but Stiles’ fear left a heavy ball of dread and fury deep in his gut. His paws flew, eating up the distance as he chased the combined scents of his omega and his adversary.

Eventually, he found it. The trail had been almost too easy to follow once he’d made it into the woods.

It was a run-down little hunting lodge, more of a shack, really. It was clearly abandoned, old and in severe disrepair, with any path that might have led to and from long reclaimed by the forest’s overgrowth. As he drew near, the smell of rot and decay nearly overwhelmed him, masking the scent trail he’d been following.

He might have skirted away, if he hadn’t known Kate. It would be just her style to drag his omega here.

He circled the building slowly, carefully checking the filthy, broken windows and any other weak spots he might use to gain access. The shack was decrepit and old enough he could probably plow right through the wall, but he didn’t want to risk bringing the crumbling roof down on his potentially injured mate.
All he could smell was rot and filth. Maybe a little Kate, but her stench was hardly any better to him. No matter. There was no doubt in his mind his omega was in there and he wasn’t leaving without him.

With a furious roar, Derek raced at the building and launched himself through a partially shattered window. The wooden frame splintered and the remaining glass rained down around him as the hulk of his furred body landed on putrid, molding wood.

Only then did he catch Stiles’ scent. And the blood.

“Glad you could join us,”

Derek whirled with a snarl, eyes searching Kate out but stalling along the way. Stiles was on the floor not five feet away, his shirt torn to shreds and his jeans marred with blood and dirt. His face was splotchy red and a mess of tears, saliva, and snot. He was holding a pocket knife in one shaking hand, one knee bent to hold his left foot closer. It took Derek a horrifyingly long moment to realize what he was seeing.

Stiles was in the process of sawing off his own toe.

Before his brain could process the sight, searing pain jolted into his side, and Derek collapsed as it reverberated throughout his body. He gasped as the sharpness let up, leaving a deep, terrible ache behind.

“Yeah. That never gets old,” Kate snickered, waving the military-grade shocking prod in front of her.

Derek bared his teeth and tried to lunge at her. His limbs were too achy and heavy with lingering electricity and he stumbled, snapping ineffectively at her heel as she danced out of reach. Literally. She did a little twirl as he stumbled and landed on his face, and when she faced him again, she brought the tip of the weapon to his backbone.

He didn’t howl. His jaw locked and his entire body spasmed with the particular agony that could only be caused by electrocution. She held the contact longer this time, long enough for his sight to white out and his heart stutter. When she finally let up, he lay panting and hurting, telling himself to get up and take her down only to have his body entirely uncompliant.

She knelt beside him and he felt her fingers pass through the fur on his side, “I gotta say, Derek, you sure have better taste in omegas than your mom. This one’s pretty and feisty. At least he keeps trying to fight me, as pathetic as it is,”

The scent of Stiles’ blood and pain was rancid in the air, even with his nose pressed to the decaying wooden floor. As Kate petted him though, he caught the shift as Stiles’ fear and anger skyrocketed. It nearly overwhelmed the fragrance of his hurt.

“It’s lucky you showed up when you did,” Kate poked him with the prod, just a brief flash of burning pain before she was petting him like a dog again, “I was just telling Stiles: omegas can’t help but obey alphas, even at their own expense. I don’t think he was quite appreciating the lesson though, so I was thinking. Next, I’ll maybe have him cut off something bigger. Maybe a hand,”

At that, Derek somehow found the wherewithal to force his protesting muscles to move. His head lifted and his jaw snapped. On air.

Kate leaned back on her heels with a joyous cackle, the witch. Her laughter petered off and she continued, “Hey, now. It’s okay, I wouldn’t really make him do that. Honestly! He could do without
a couple toes, but I can think of far better uses for those long, pretty fingers, can’t you? No, now I’m thinking…”

She trailed off and Derek growled darkly as she grabbed his ear and forced him to meet her eye. All he saw was her satisfaction and madness.

She smiled widely, “How about I just have him cut you up, huh? What do you think, Stiles?” she held Derek’s stare as she raised her voice to address the omega, “Want to come over here carve out your alpha’s heart for me?”

All he could smell was Stiles’ fear. It was impossibly stronger than even his own.

There was blood soaking his shaking hands and his foot felt like it was being flayed anew with ever dig of the knife. He was hitting bone, had been for a while now, it seemed. The pain turned even sharper as it spread up into his shin. All he could do was keep hacking at himself.

Derek was here now. Derek was here, but there was no rescue. He was still mutilating himself and now he had to listening to the sickeningly quiet thrashing and buzz of the damn prod as Kate tortured Derek.

The quiet was frightening in a profound way he couldn’t fully process. More terrifying than the pain, than the sight of his flesh coming apart under his own fingers. There should be screaming. His. Derek’s. She had stolen his voice, left him without even the most basic outlet for the fear and pain, but he was an omega. She had that kind of power over him. Derek… how had she taken Derek’s voice too.

It was wrong. So very, very, very wrong.

He heard the zap of the prod again, then it cut off and he heard and felt the thud of Derek’s body flopping on the nasty wood.

“Yeah, let’s do that,” Kate said cheerfully, then her voice boomed with Alpha Authority as she called to him, “Come over here with that knife when you’re done, omega,”

Stiles flinched as his hand jerked the knife against bone. He was crying too heavily to see much of anything.

“Oh! How cute!” Kate cooed, her laugh high and mocking, “Are you trying to shift back into a man, Derek? Maybe you could Order him to disobey me, huh? I don’t think so,”

He heard a thud, saw her kick the giant wolf out of the corner of his tear-blurry eye. There was a vicious snarl that was cut off by the crackle of electricity. The sound drew out long and long. Longer.

She wasn’t letting up. She was going to electrocute him to death. Derek. His alpha. She was going to kill him!

Derek, who had come to rescue him. Who loved him.

He was still under the force of her Command, still forced to cut himself and to bring the weapon to her beyond that. He was an omega, and he had no choice but to obey. For once, he didn’t try to fight it.
Stiles wasn’t even aware of the anger behind it, only the resolve.

He wiped his eyes on the remaining shirt on his shoulder. Once he could see a little, he pulled the knife free of the spot he’d cut where the toe met his foot. He was able to reposition the blade across the top of the intact flesh. He gripped the tip of his smallest toe firmly with his left hand and, before he could psyche himself out of it, forced the whole of his weight down on the knife.

The crunch was nauseating on its own, but nowhere near as bad as the pain. Even if he’d been free to make a major sound, he might have been struck dumb by the agony of it.

He wanted to grab at his foot, apply pressure and sob over the wound. He couldn’t. Kate’s latest Command wouldn’t let him, and he couldn’t afford the time beside.

Derek was still spasming on the floor, his big furred body shaking under the current from where Kate held the prod to his side. The alpha’s eyes were screwed shut, his jaw equally tight as he endured.

His torturer watched with a malicious, insane glee.

She was so entranced with watched the alpha twitch, she didn’t even notice Stiles. He came at her too fast and too soon. She wasn’t expecting him.

It was laughably easy to jab the knife into her neck. He didn’t hesitate to yank it across her throat right after.

Utter shock spanned her face as she dropped to the floor.

And a second latter, Stiles found his voice.

Stiles screamed, one wailing shriek of horror and pain and anger, and fell hard on the wretched floor beside him.

The electricity singing through his veins cut off, but Derek’s muscles refused to respond for too long. He panted, tongue lolling out against the filthy wood, and listened to Stiles sob, feeling the omega’s hand fist his fur and tug fitfully at him. Derek gave a canine groan and bit his own tongue, trying to stimulate the healing process. It took too long.

“Derek!” Stiles sobbed, “Please be alive! I’m s-sorry! Derek! My Derek!”

The moment he was able, Derek shifted. He changed skins faster than he’d ever done before without going completely feral.

“Stiles,” he croaked out earnestly as he sat up and reached for his mate.

Stiles was just staring at him in shock, pupils blown wide and wet as he breathed broken breaths through his continued sobs. The boy was still holding the fucking knife, it and his hand completely drenched with red blood.

His own and Kate’s. Jesus, but he’d done it. His omega had slaughtered his enemy.

Stiles had killed an alpha. While under her Command.

His hand shaking from the lingering pain, Derek clasped Stiles’ bicep gently, “Stiles? Stiles, baby, let go. Just let go. Dammit,” he cursed at himself and frantically remembered to imbibe his words with plenty Alpha Authority: “Let go of the knife, omega!”
Instantly, Stiles released the knife and jerked his hands back as if burned.

Derek’s other hand swept forward, tortured muscles screaming as he snatched it from the air and tossed it away. A heartbeat later, and he was pulling his omega into his lap, smoothing trembling hands down his back and kissing his temple frantically.

Which of them he was trying to reassure, who knew.

“Derek!” Stiles cried into his bare chest, “Derek! D-Derek, she…,”

“I know,” he murmured, still petting as he glanced down to see the damage.

He felt his blood run cold. Stiles was missing the smallest toe on his left foot. And there was a deep, straight cut into the meat of the next one.

His stomach rolled as he remembered catching sight of Stiles, crouching and silent, when he’d first burst into the room. He had been too late.

Shaking himself out of his thoughts, Derek tore part of the omega’s shirt free to wrap his foot. Then he clapped the handful of fabric over the injured extremities.

He felt Stiles’ messy wet face press against his naked shoulder as the omega’s body was wracked by vicious, wailing sobs. All the eerie silence was broken more thoroughly than the window Derek had barreled through not too long ago. But long enough.

Derek covered the bloody rag to applied pressure with one hand and wrapped his other arm around the omega more firmly to hold him close. Stiles screamed and continued crying into his chest. Derek had never felt more helpless. Trying with only minor success to keep his own heartbeat and breathing under control, Derek stared around the disgusting room and tried to spot the missing toe.

Humans could… they could still have severed pieces reattached, right?

Stiles was trembling violently against him, crying loudly and clutching at his shoulders with a desperation that was heartbreaking.

“I… Stiles, I’m…,” his shaky words were drowned out, totally unheard under the sound of his omega’s pain and terror.

He had to get him out of here. His phone was back in the Jeep, he couldn’t even call an ambulance for him.

He unwrapped the arm holding Stiles against him and tied the cloth around the raw end of his foot. Stiles’ sobs cut off with a shocked gasp when he pulled it tight, only to resume in quieter, but no less wracking whimpers and cries a moment latter.

“I’ve got you,”

Derek pressed his lips to the boy’s forehead and lifted him into his arms. He turned in a circle, looking for the missing toe one last time before getting the fuck out. He hugged the omega tighter to him as he raced back to the Jeep, uncaring about the harsh ground on his bare, human feet, or the cool autumn breeze on his exposed body.

All that mattered was Stiles.

Stiles, who’s sweetness was just starting to compete with the stench of terror and hurt.
Stiles had quieted down to sniffles by the time they pulled up to the ER of Beacon General Hospital. He was slouched across the center console, desperately clinging to Derek’s side as the alpha drove, one hand soothingly petting Stiles anywhere he could reach whenever he didn’t need to shift gears. Stiles only squeezed his arms around him harder each time, briefly wishing Derek had bothered to get dressed so Stiles could have some fabric to secure his hold.

The Jeep jolted to a stop and Derek parked, rolling down the window so he could speak to someone in gruff, clipped word, “Other side. I can’t carry him in like this,”

The idea of leaving the comforting warmth of Derek’s body was almost enough to send him back into hysterics. He felt the tears start flowing again as he burrowed into Derek’s naked chest and squeezed his arms around the alpha determinedly.

“Stiles! Oh my god!” he recognized his dad’s voice as if he were dreaming, the sound wholly unimportant and distant despite coming from so close by.

Then large hands were touching his back and arm, trying to pull Stiles out of the Jeep, away from Derek.

Stiles lost his shit.

“No! Nononono!” he kicked, howling at the flash of pain that was so much sharper than the constant ache he’d been aware of through the shock, “Let me go! No! DEREK!”

Derek was prying his arms off, forcing Stiles away from himself, and it made something in Stiles’ chest clench alarmingly.

“No!!” he wailed, fighting to get back into Derek’s hold, “Alpha!”

He needed his alpha. Derek had come for him, rescued him. Again. Derek had heard his cries for help even when Kate’s gag order meant he couldn’t hear it himself. He was meant to be with Derek. He needed his alpha. They couldn’t take him away from him.

“Get him out of here,” Derek growled, pushing him away, “he’s well into preheat,”

“God dammit,”

Someone—his dad—stopped messing around and grabbed hold of his arms forcefully, yanking him to the edge of the seat.

“Calm. Down,” someone Commanded, but it wasn’t Derek, wasn’t his alpha, and Stiles was too scared and desperate and in need to give a shit about anyone else.

There was roar. Some sort of commotion.

He was dropped onto a gurney, restraining hands pinning him down, and he could just barely hear Derek’s vicious growling, “Don’t ever use the Voice on him!”

“Derek, let the nurse go!”

“No!” Stiles flailed, arching his back and craning his neck to try and catch sight of his alpha, “Derek! Derek!!!”

There was a prick against his neck and everything went black.
Thirty-One

Chapter Notes

Sorry this one took so long. We're nearing the end, and I'm having a tiny struggle with getting from where we're at to where I want it to end. There's a lot more world-building here, too, and I couldn't resist adding just a little bit of Lydia and an even littler bit of Danny. Enjoy!

Less than 24 hours later, Derek was unsurprised to see Allison and his mother standing on the Stilinski’s front porch. Peter and Scott coming up behind them, though… that was unexpected.

Allison gave him a brief hug, letting him scent her just long enough to take in a breath of her soothing omega scent, “I wanted to go straight to the hospital, but it’s not like they’d let me see him anyway,”

Because when an omega in Heat was hospitalized without a designated partner, they were quarantined. Protocol. In Stiles’ case, heavily sedated as per the instruction coded onto his medical bracelet. Derek vaguely remembered nodding along beside Stiles’ father as a doctor explained how they’d proceed with treating him. Something about putting him under fast so they could treat his wounds before the preheat progressed too far for the alpha surgeon On Call to do his job undistracted.

Derek mutely stepped back to let Allison inside. Then his arms were full of his mother, his Alpha, and her hug was far longer and firmer than the omega’s.

Talia kissed his cheek and whispered, “It’s going to be alright, my sweet boy,”

Only then did he slump against her, trusting his weight to her as he closed his eyes and let himself be surrounded by her strength and comfort. He didn’t believe it himself—the sight of Stiles’ bloody hand holding the knife, the honey-brown of his eyes eclipsed by dilated pupils, hit him like a physical blow every time he closed his eyes—but for one desperate moment, he was able to cloak himself in Talia’s confidence, let her assurance carry him through the anxious grief.

He was no stranger to blood and violence. But Stiles… he just couldn’t get over the fact he had failed his mate so epically that the omega had needed to kill. Some primitive part of his brain felt sick about it, disturbed that his omega had been pushed to do something so beyond his nature. Because Derek hadn’t stepped up.

God, but he hoped Stiles wasn’t as haunted by this as he was.

When Talia released him, Peter and Scott had already swept by and taken preferred positions within the living room. Peter leaned his hip on a corner table and Scott settled on the sofa with Allison in the crook of his arm. With Talia’s hand on his shoulder guiding him, Derek claimed the remaining cushion on the other end of the couch.

“We already checked in at the hotel,” Talia told him, voice level and confident.

Peter snorted, “If you can call it that. It’s practically a hostel,”
“It’s a small town, Peter,” Scott admonished good-naturedly, “A five-star Hilton would stick out like a sore thumb here. You’re lucky we weren’t stuck with a bed-and-breakfast,”

“It doesn’t matter,” Talia waved them off, focusing her attention back on Derek, “We have rooms, and Sheriff Stilinski knows we’re in town now,”

“You shouldn’t have bothered,” Derek muttered.

“Bullshit,” Allison snapped, “You need us here; you dropped an omega at an emergency room, injured and in preheat while you were naked and both of you covered in blood. It’s a small town, Derek, and everyone knows. John might as well have told me to come as your legal adviser!”

“Besides…,” Scott added, trailing off as his scent turned sorrowful, “Stiles is our friend too, you know,”

They were right about that, at any rate. But he knew protecting him from prejudiced persecution wasn’t why so many of the pack were here. He eyed Peter and Scott warily.

His uncle, at least, didn’t bother dancing around the issue, “Where did you find Stiles? If we move fast, we might be able to pick up Argent’s trail—”

“She’s dead,”

They all stared at him.

Allison’s eyes gleamed and her mouth dropped open, as surprised as the rest of them at the proclamation. Derek belated wondered, numbly, if he should have shared the news with her privately; he wasn’t sure if the omega still harbored any emotional attachments to her aunt, but it was sure to be complicated, either way.

Then Derek thought of another certain omega’s strong emotional reaction to Kate Argent and decided he didn’t give a shit.

“Come—come again?” Talia blinked at him expectantly.

“She’s dead,”

“As in…for real?” Scott squinted at him, “You’re not just saying that, like a threat or like… as a protective gesture?”

“No,”

“Jesus,” Allison rubbed a hand over her face, still staring at him.

“Derek,” Talia touched his knee lightly, her face earnest, “What did you do?”

“Nothing,”

And he hated himself for it. It should have been him, not Stiles. Stiles should never have had blood on his hands. Kate wasn’t his problem, she was Derek’s.

Peter hurriedly pulled out his phone, saying, “I’m putting you on the first flight out of here—”

“I’m not going anywhere without Stiles,”

Assuming he hadn’t finally proven to the omega that he was a shit alpha.
“Scott and I will stay with Stiles!” Allison urged, “Peter’s right, if they find her body and you’re still around—”

“I’ll be fine,”

“Derek, even the Sheriff won’t be able to protect you. He can probably shield you from any omega-abuse accusations, but Federal and state laws are very clear on the matter of cross-country hunting —!”

“I didn’t hunt her down,” he admitted, probably sounding as numb and half-dead as he felt, “I meant to, but…,”

Peter paused, his thumbs poised over the screen of his phone as he peered over at his nephew shrewdly, “Spit it out, Derek. What happened?”

“Shut up, Peter,” Scott sneered over his shoulder at the older alpha.

Derek sighed, “She was ready for me. I didn’t… I was distracted. Emotional, and I… she had me,”

“I don’t understand,” Allison muttered to herself.

At the same time, Talia leaned forward and shook Derek’s shoulder determinedly, “How did you get Stiles out? Are you absolutely sure she’s dead?”

He nodded. He could still see Stiles’ shaking, bloody hand holding that fucking knife, “He killed her,”

“…What?”

“Who?”

“He had a… Kate had a knife,” Derek huffed and scrubbed his palms over his eyes, trying to clear his head of the guilt and sorrow enough to tell them. He cleared his throat and spoke more confidently, “Kate used Alpha Authority to order him to bring her the knife, and when he did, Stiles slit her throat with it,”

There was more staring then. This time, there was a fair undertone of disbelief involved.

“Stiles,” Peter said bluntly, “Killed Kate. That’s what you’re telling us,”

It wasn’t a question. Not really.

“I already told Sheriff Stilinski where he could find the body,”

Complete. Silence.

“Stiles killed Kate,” Peter repeated. It still wasn’t a question, “An omega killed an alpha. While carrying out a Command,”

Derek hated that he could recognize the disturbed amazement in his uncle’s voice.

Then Allison had to add, “No one’s going to believe this,”

There wasn’t anything more to say.

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Stiles woke up suddenly and violently. Violently ill, that is.

“—all out. There ya go!”

He was puking so hard, he hadn’t even noticed his surroundings, his head pounding and ears ringing. By the time he was capable of taking a solid breath, several minutes of painful retching had passed. Each heaving breath brought a throb of achy pain behind his eyeballs. He gasped another breath, wincing, and lifted his head enough to realize he was in a hospital bed, shakily gripping the sides of a pink plastic bin containing more yellow-green bile and mucus than actual regurgitated food. Despite his white-knuckled grip, he was shaking so bad that it required another pair of hands to hold the bin steady over his lap.

Blinking, Stiles followed those extra hands up long, tan arms until he was looking at a handsome, totally foreign face.

“Hey,” the guy smiled, letting go of the bin with one hand so he could wipe the sweat from Stiles’ brow.

He wasn’t a nurse, that much was obvious. He was wearing jeans and a button-down. A moment later Stiles realized he was so relaxed despite the unfamiliar face because the guy was an omega.

“…Who?”

“You can call him Danny,”

Stiles looked over and just about lost the nonexistent contents of his stomach all over again from dismayed shock. Lydia freaking Martin sat in the corner chair, looking mighty comfortable in her designer jeans, like she’d been there a while, as she flipped through a magazine with her pouty lips pursed.

“L-Lydia?” he stammered.

He was beyond confused. Last thing he remembered was agony and terror and a desperate sort of need. He woke up to that memory compounded by very present pain and sickness, only for the nausea to fade enough to find himself in the Twilight Zone. His was in a hospital bed, his dad and Derek were nowhere to be seen, and Lydia Martin and some strange omega were at his sickbed.

Lydia tossed the magazine on the side table with the careless disregard she’d treated the whole of Beacon Hills High when they were at school together. Including Stiles. They’d been the only two omegas in their class, and he could count on one hand the times she had spoken to him.

“Glad to see you remember me, Stiles,” she gave him a considering look, her gaze unsettlingly shrewd, “I half expected that Heat to have melted your brain,”

The other omega, Danny, sighed, “She doesn’t mean that,”

“I do so,” she insisted, but in a totally unconcerned manner, “You were seriously injured and emotionally vulnerable when they brought you in, you know. Even without the preheat,”

“Lydia,” Danny said her name like he was broaching an exhaustingly recurring argument, “Remember the whole bed-side manner thing we talked about,”

She rolled her eyes, pointing her magazine at Stiles as she continued, “They should have let your alpha take care of you instead of inducing a Heat Coma. You’ll be bed-ridden for days now, if you’re lucky,”
Stiles slumped back onto the bed abruptly as he found he didn’t have the energy to stay upright. Thankfully, Danny was there with a quick hand on his shoulder, easing him down gently.

He gave Danny a small smile in thanks and turned to address Lydia, “Yeah, that’s great and all, but I don’t have an alpha. I mean… I do, but… it’s complicated,”

“It always is,” Danny said, rolling his eyes good naturedly.

“Not according to your father,” Lydia quipped in that tone that made it clear she knew best.

“Yeah, where is he?” Stiles craned his neck, rubbing his stomach as if he could ease the achy nastiness still sitting like a rock there. He couldn’t see much out of the tiny window in the room’s door, but he was woefully aware that there was no sign of Derek.

“Probably down at the Station,” Lydia rose from the chair in favor of perching herself carefully by his knee, opposite Danny. “He wanted to be here when you woke up, but he figured you would rather he keep your alpha out of jail,”

“What!” Stiles jolted upright again, panic flaring in his chest.

He moved too fast. The headache that had dulled once he finished vomiting surged fresh and new, making him dizzy. His visitors caught him on either side and pressed him back down.

“Like I said,” Lydia sympathized, patting his shoulder, “Bedridden,”

Danny hummed sympathetically, “You’ll want to avoid solid food for at least a day, too,”

His stomach rolled at just the thought of eating. Fortunately, he had plenty to distract him.

“Derek? What’s happening? Why would anyone want to arrest Derek?”

“Dude, seriously?” Danny sounded torn between sarcastic amusement and genuine concern, “I know you weren’t really with it, but you do remember he showed up naked with you bleeding and going into Heat, right?”

“Or maybe,” Lydia had no problem laying on the sarcasm thickly, “it’s the fact he’s an alpha werewolf who assaulted a nurse in front of half the town,”

“Also while naked,”

“Not helpful, Danny,”

“I’m just saying,” he held up a defensive hand, “He was naked. From what I hear, it was a sight worth mentioning repeatedly,”

“You weren’t there?” Stiles frowned at them both, trying not to turn his head too much to fend off the headache and worrisome nausea, “I don’t get it… why are you even here?”

“We’re your advocates,” Lydia said firmly, as if her words weren’t the last thing Stiles expected. Stiles stared, “Advocates?”

“You were the victim of an omega hate crime, Stiles,” Danny’s voice was slow and quiet as he peered at him with somber eyes, “That woman used Alpha Authority to torture you, didn’t she?”

“…Oh,”
The guy might as well have struck him.

He hadn’t had time to process. He didn’t… he wasn’t a victim, he was… Jesus, but he was a murderer. Wait, but… Unheralded, he remembered the revolting crunch of severing his own toe, the pain that was somehow electric even though he wasn’t the one being shocked to death. He remembered the blood. His. Kate’s. Her slender flesh under the blade, eerily unresistant compared to his own. He remembered Derek, twitching and silent.

Derek. His rescuer. His alpha.

He remembered being torn away from his alpha right when he needed him most.

It was all too much. The grief, the fear, the anger. The pain. The confusion of waking up ill had distracted him, but now he could feel the wrongness, the heavy weight, of his bandaged foot. Whatever was in his IV was keeping him numb enough not to feel his intact digits twitching against the medical tape, but he knew. He couldn’t feel it physically, couldn’t even see the damage, but he knew. And that was almost worse.

He was having trouble breathing. He could feel the hot tears and snot running down his face. It felt an awful lot like he was being tortured all over again.

The Heat and the meds had only put the maelstrom on pause, they hadn’t diminished its strength.

“Breathe, Stiles!”

Bodies pressed in on him, strange and wrong and not what he needed. Derek. Derek, where was he. Where was his alpha. Oh no, Derek was dead, that bitch killed him. Stiles had been too late.

“Shh! It’s okay, it’s over now,”

“Breathe, Stiles. We’re right here, we’ve got you,”

He shook his head violently, spitting strawberry-blond hair out of his face one second only to find his head pinned to a firm, lean chest. Hands ran over his back, across the hospital johnnie and his exposed skin alike.

“You’re safe, Stiles,”

He didn’t believe it—he didn’t know them, didn’t want to believe them, they could be lying!—but his next handful of desperate breaths filled his lungs with nothing but reassuring omega pheromones. It wasn’t enough to put him at ease, but eventually they were able to rock him to sleep.

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Stiles’ Heat lasted three days. Derek only knew because the Sheriff gave him an update every few hours. He was technically staying in the hotel with his pack now, giving the appearance of distance in case anyone started asking uncomfortable questions about Stiles’ dubious connection to the Hales, but they managed to congregate at the Stilinski home each night so far.

This night was no different. Except Stiles’ Heat was finally over.

“Half the station’s still trying to convince me to press charges for omega battery, which I’m not going to do,” John reassured the visiting pack over dinner, shooting Derek a small, but genuine smile, “I know you didn’t do a thing to him but get him to safety,”
Derek wished he felt that optimistic. Stiles’ Heat ended sometime that morning, but the omega had yet to call or text him. He was only slightly mollified by the fact John hadn’t spoken with him yet either, his son having been asleep when he’d stopped by between the station and home. And Allison kept saying fully sedated Heats normally had devastating side effects that lingered from days to weeks after.

Still. Derek wouldn’t be surprised if Stiles had decided he wanted nothing to do with the Hale pack. Heartbroken, yes, but not surprised.

“What about that nurse?” Scott asked.

The Sheriff shrugged, “He called yesterday to say he wasn’t interested in taking it to court, so I guess we’ll drop it unless he changes his mind,”

“He won’t,” Talia said confidently.

The Sheriff eyed her carefully, “Do I want to know?”

She rolled her eyes, smiling, “He wasn’t seriously injured, and it’s not illegal to make reparations outside of court mandates,”

He wondered if John knew Peter hadn’t given the alpha nurse in question an option about the money. Derek suspected that was one speciesist who wasn’t likely to change his personal views any time soon, despite [or probably because of] fear and a lump sum keeping him quiet about the one and only time he’d knowingly encountered a werewolf.

God, but Derek couldn’t wait to get back to NY. He still hoped fervently it would be with Stiles at his side, but he was expecting it less and less with every passing minute.

“I’m going to go back to the hospital tonight,” John informed them as he poked at the chicken on his plate, “I’ll stay with him till my morning shift, maybe longer if he’s lucid enough to give a statement,”

Derek winced. Around the table, he caught the scent of anxiety and anger rising from the rest of his pack. Derek himself just felt… tired. He’d been prepared for this kind of scrutiny the moment he took the Jeep’s keys from Parrish.

The good people of Beacon Hills didn’t care that he hadn’t followed through. They only cared that a human was dead and a wolf walked out alive.

“Don’t worry,” John said to the table at large, proving he didn’t need a wolf’s nose to catch the mood, “The only reason the case is still open is because they’re waiting on Stiles’ testimony. It’s a clear matter of self-defense.”

John smelled and sounded confident. He was the only one convinced though.

“No one’s going to believe Stiles killed her,” Peter stabbed at his plate, not even pretending to eat, “I don’t even believe it,”

The first was true, the second much closer to a lie. Peter had been as speechless and unsettled as the rest of them when he’d heard the honesty in Derek’s heartbeat.

“I wouldn’t be so sure,” John countered, “According to the Beacon General rumor mill, Stiles was put into a Heat Coma as punishment for killing his alpha in a preheat rage,”
Derek growled at the merest suggestion.

Talia beat him to the right words though, her voice uncommonly harsh, “She was not his alpha. Derek is,”

The entire table flinched. It was the first time anyone had dared say it aloud, they were all so paranoid at this point that Stiles would continue to deny the mating. Or worse, maybe Stiles wouldn’t be in any state of mind to agree. After everything.

They weren’t talking about that though.

“I know that,” John said solemnly after a tense moment, “But it’s still evident that people are willing to accept that he killed her, despite being an omega and her an alpha,”

“Stranger things have happened,” Allison muttered as she stared unseeing at the table.

“Right,” John took a bite of his dinner, the action perhaps a little more vigorous than really warranted, “Besides, someone at least took it serious enough that they called an Omega Rights Advocate in. I didn’t even know they had an office in California,”

That caught Allison’s attention, “The ORA is sending someone over?”

“Cool,” Scott graced them with the first full-fledged smile any of them had seen in days, “Mom used to let them us the café for events,” the grin faded, “but that was before the NY office got shot up,”

“They’re already here, actually,” John nodded, motioning with his fork, “Daniel Manny, or something or other, I met him when I stopped by after my shift. He and Lydia haven’t left Stiles’ side since they got there this afternoon,”

Allison tilted her head to the side, “Lydia… Martin?”

“That’s the one. Stiles told you about her?”

“Yeah, she really left an impression,”

Derek crossed his arms grumpily at that—Stiles never mentioned this Lydia person to him. Unfortunately, Peter noticed.

“Jealous of an old flame, nephew?” he teased.

“Don’t be,” John and Allison said in unison.

After sharing a quick giggle with the Sheriff, Allison shot Derek a wink, “She’s an omega, I think it was more idol-worship than a crush. Impressive that she’s with the ORA though. Stiles gave me the impression she was more of a conventional sort of omega,”

“I wouldn’t know about that,” John said with a considering frown, “I know she never showed an interest in Stiles, but I imagine she had a similarly… ugh, misinformed upbringing. Jesus,” he paled, eyes going wide, “she probably saw the same doctor as Stiles when she presented,”

“I want to meet her,”

“Well… she’s staying at the hospital as long as Stiles is,” John looked around at the wolves pointedly, “I’m not so sure the general public will be comfortable with… uh… too many visitors,”

Wolves, Derek thought with a sinking heart. They wouldn’t be comfortable with a pack of wolves
traipsing into the hospital. Derek would know, this morning he hadn’t even made it out of his car before someone called security on him.

He was desperate to see Stiles though. The trip was ill advised to begin with, but knowing Stiles’ Heat was over had been too little information for him to sit in the hotel and do nothing. So far, John’s brief visit was the only reliable eye he’d gotten on his omega’s situation in there.

“Allison’s human though,” Scott blew a hole through the Sheriff’s attempt at tact, rubbing his hand over his mate’s shoulder affectionately, “And an omega! No one would think to stop her from visiting her friend,”

One the one hand, the way Scott’s besotted certainty that Allison’s charm was universally well received irritated Derek. On the other, Derek liked Allison, because it was annoyingly true, plus she was pack. He trusted her.

“And she won’t be going as a member of the pack,” Talia added, “She’s a lawyer,”

“Yes,” Allison reached across the table and took the sheriff’s hand with a decisive grin, “If anyone asks, you hired me for Stiles’ medical malpractice suit. No one needs to know I’m doing it pro-bono,”

“Oh,” John blinked down at their clasped hands, “I didn’t know we even had a case for that,”

“You definitely do,” Talia said, her eyes wide and slightly incredulous.

“And now you have a damn good lawyer you can afford, too!” Allison added with a wide grin.

“Even if Stiles doesn’t…,” Derek had to clear his throat, noticing how the other wolves frowned as they caught the scent of his sorrow, “she’ll help you even if he’s not pack,”

“Of course,” Allison agreed, her cheery smile dimming as she noticed the wolves’ frowning in Derek’s direction, “Though I’m sure that won’t matter anyway,”

“Yeah,” Scott’s chipper agreement was just a little too forced.

Derek watched him clap a hand on the back of Allison’s neck, rubbing around her gold mate collar in a move meant to reassure his claim to her as much as to soothe them both. He would give anything to be able to do the same to Stiles. He’d follow Scott’s example, let Stiles choose the metal and design, and they’d forego the traditional lock and let his omega decide when and how often to wear it.

Derek ached with how badly he wanted it.

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Later that night Stiles woke again to find Lydia was sitting next to him with a bowl of broth and some shaved ice. He nearly spewed stomach acid when he sat up too quickly, but she was there to steady him and hand over the remote so he could raise the bed to support sitting up.

“Go slow,” she cautioned as she raised a spoon to his lips.

“I can—”

She pulled the spoon away when he reached for it, giving him an unimpressed glare, “Who here has prior experience with Heat Coma side effects?”
“If I knew you were this bitchy, I wouldn’t have worshipped you so much back in high school,”

Her perfectly formed lips smirked, “The bitchiness is worth the worship, trust me. Now open wide,”

He accepted the spoonful of broth with a petulant glower. It only made her smile wider.

He supposed she was probably relieved. Childish irritation over her not-so-tender care had to be far preferably to the anxiety attack and ensuing meltdown he’d suffered earlier. Bitchiness aside, Stiles wasn’t dumb or blind enough to miss the careful, worried stares and the way she and Danny kept touching him, soothing him, at every opportunity. At any given moment, one of them was within arm’s reach, and both seemed happy to climb into the bed with him for some platonic omega cuddles while they pretended Stiles was watching TV instead of crying or silently freaking out.

There were too many Alpha and Beta medical professionals coming in and out for any sort of resonance. Even still, Stiles was impressed how much comfort he could still find in Lydia’s and Danny’s presence.

“It’s alright if you can’t finish it,” Lydia set the bowl in her lap when Stiles waved her off, needing a moment to catch his breath and let his stomach settle, “Remember, you haven’t had anything to properly eat or drink in a few days,”

He nodded slowly, careful not to aggravate the lingering headache. He closed his eyes for a moment to take a few more recovery breaths before asking snidely through the panting, “Can I still have that shaved ice?”

“A little bit. So long as you take it slow,”

They did take it slow. Lydia tipped a spoon of the syrupy ice chips into his mouth at near glacial intervals, but he never once felt the hint of a brain freeze or the alarming clenching that foreshadowed another puking fit. They were maybe two-thirds of the way through the cup when Stiles intercepted the next spoonful in favor of resting his eyes.

He could hear her rearranging things on the bedside table a moment before he felt her weight dip the mattress at his hip. She settled against his side, the bed still raised so they were mostly sitting up with a slight recline, but she managed to get comfortable with her head on his shoulder anyway.

“So all your prior experience,” he asked softly, eyes still closed and feeling too drained to do much talking despite hating the silence, “You’ve been helping omegas through this for a while, huh?”

He felt her tense briefly, “Not really,”

“Yeah?” He really hopped she’d give him more than that. She’d seen a nurse change out his bed pan, for crying out loud.

He felt her chin rub his johnnie as she nodded, “Yeah. I picked up most of these tricks from my own Heat Comas,”

Stiles opened his eyes to peer down at her, his stomach turning for an entirely new reason. “Why? I mean… did someone…,” he stumbled over what to say, finally settling on a word that wasn’t too specific, “hurt you?”

She was silent for a long moment. Stiles stared at the top of her pretty head, and he was suddenly struck by how very small she was. He’d always known he was tall for an omega, but Lydia was the stereotypical size: petite and lovely, fragile looking. Like a beautiful flower.
Someone like Kate wouldn’t need Alpha Authority to crush her. The thought made Stiles sick.

He was about to grab for the puke bin, but then got distracted by Lydia speaking so casually.

“The only person who hurt me was me. I suppose you know I used to sell my Heats? Practically the whole town knew, I was only sixteen when I started. My dad signed off on it because I convinced him it would be good for me. And it was good, for a while anyway,”

Her sigh was almost wistful. Stiles could only frown at her, increasingly confused about how the Prom Queen he’d known ended up Advocating for her disenfranchised dynamic.

“It got me off the suppressants, at least. And the sex was usually pretty good, even outside of Heat. Thing is…” she continued in that story-telling tone, “eventually you get sick of being treated like a prized poodle. I wasn’t expecting to find a love match or anything, but I was done being valued only for my ability to turn mindless with lust. I stopped selling, tried dating and was even more disappointed,”

“That sounds…” he stalled, but since he had no brain-to-mouth filter, kept going anyway, “unfortunate, yeah, but not exactly the sort of thing that leads to an epiphany that you should board the Social Justice bandwagon,”

“You think so?” she sounded genuinely interested in the idea, though she continued on in her casual tone, “I think it’s the little things that add up over time. I have a 138 IQ, and while it was fun to coast along on superficial sex-based appreciation at first, it wasn’t sustainable. I got bored and frustrated, and every time I went to fix it invariably led to disheartenment,”

She heaved a heavy sigh, snuggling into his side a little more. Stiles nuzzled her hair in return and wondered aloud, “What did you try to do to fix it?”

“The usual,” she shrugged, “College, job. Even tried to find a mate,”

Stiles felt his heart sink. Only one of those had been going well for him, and he’d been fighting not to dwell on Derek’s absence, or he’d invariably end up think Derek didn’t want him. A murderer. A disfigured murderer. If someone like Lydia couldn’t find a mate…

“By then I knew I couldn’t go back on suppressants,” Lydia continued leisurely with her story, and Stiles desperately latched onto the distraction, “So college was out. And no one wanted to give a job to an omega with no experience. And alphas, well… it was hard enough just to find someone I could stand to have dinner with,”

She said it so easily, maybe a little sarcastically, but hardly as if it had been the most emotionally tolling experience of her life. Stiles was still trying to connect all the dots, when a hint of shame flavored her tone as she admitted:

“That’s when I started sedating. I was angry more than anything, scared too, if I’m being totally honest, and instead of dealing with it… I checked myself into this same hospital and requested sedation. For months,” here, bitterness seeped into her blasé attitude, “And I was ignorant and desperate enough to believe it when the doctor’s told me the side effects were normal and acceptable,”

“You mean… this isn’t normal?” It would be just his luck. Nothing about his biology had been textbook since he’d gone off the suppressants.

“Oh, it’s normal for someone coming out of a Heat Coma,” she sat up and turned to level a severe stare at him. It was disconcerting in the extreme, what with her face only inches from his own,
“Poisoning yourself to avoid what your body was meant to do naturally is the abnormal and unacceptable part here. You understand that, right?”

Stiles nodded, flushing despite himself, “It’s not like they gave me a choice,”

“I know,” she said softly and reached up to caress the side of his face almost maternally. It immediately reminded him of Talia, and it brought along a painful pang in his chest when he realized it hadn’t brought his own mother to mind first.

“We live in a society that likes to control us, when we are inherently uncontrollable,” she continued with a sympathetic smile, adamant with her eye contact, “They abuse us and call it helpful because they don’t know how to deal with us at our best. The ORA helped me realize that before I could kill myself through sheer capitulation,”

Stiles swallowed the knot in his throat and found he couldn’t look away from her unafraid gaze. He opened his mouth to say something, to acknowledge her journey or sympathize, he wasn’t sure. For once he was speechless, and he hadn’t a clue why.

Lydia placed her hands on his shoulders and rested her forehead against his, their eyes still open and meeting. They shared a few loud breaths, and despite the growing sense of vulnerability, Stiles felt terrifyingly safe.

So naturally, that’s when he started crying.

Her hands squeezed his shoulders through the paper gown and she whispered, “It’s okay,”

He shuddered hard enough to make her head wobble against his, and tearfully admitted, “I don’t think I can survive a Heat alone,”

Regardless of any sexist agendas, it was well documented that a severe Heat could be dangerous, even deadly, if not attended by an alpha, medical professionals, or some combination of both. Stiles had come close enough during his own few Heats to never want to attempt it solo. Ever.

“I know, and that’s okay,”

Her words were backed up by complete nonjudgment in her face and demeanor. She kept touching him, never pulled away. She stayed with him, just like that, with a patience and acceptance that rattled him to his core.

This was nothing like his experience with Allison and Melissa at O.R. Gasm. Here, there was no room for celebration, but grief.

“I had an alpha,” he whimpered, “A good one, and I don’t know if he’ll still want me,”

“We’ll deal with it if he doesn’t,”

That only made him cry harder. Hearing someone else validate his doubts was terrifying, but there was relief in it too. She wasn’t lying to him, wasn’t promising something she couldn’t possibly guarantee.

“I was s-so stubborn,” he cried, “I was so scared of… of everything that I kept turning him away,”

He was pulled forward and surrounded by her tiny arms. His chin wedged into her neck. His bigger body hunched over, into her embrace, and he clung back like he’d been touch-starved. He all but dissolved into a scared and desperate omega puddle.
“He hasn’t come t-to see me,” he cried brokenly into her shoulder.

He felt her nuzzle near his ear, heard her pained sigh.

“I’m broken, and I—I’m…,” his breath hitched, and he was sure he was leaking all sorts of nasty fluids into her hair, “I’m a killer. I killed her. She made me—she made me cut myself and I killed her!”

She held him tighter.

“I just wanted to save my alpha!” he was shouting, practically in her ear, but he didn’t care and she didn’t stop him, “Why isn’t he here? W-what if he leaves me all alone?!”

“I don’t know,” she murmured, squeezing him to her and rocking them ever-so-slightly, “But no matter what, Stiles, you’re not alone.”
Chapter Notes

Just a reminder to be patient with poor Stiles. :) He's been through hell.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Derek caught Allison and John on their way out the door. He handed the omega a note and his voice sounded pathetic even to his own ears as he asked, “Give this to him?”

It was just a slip of paper, too little to do much good. It was all he could offer right now, though.

Derek had never felt more aimlessly desperate.

Stiles thought he recognized Allison’s voice at one point, but by the time he’d dragged himself to full consciousness, she was gone. Only his Dad and Danny remained past visiting hours, and the Sheriff was snoring lightly in the plush chair.

There was a neatly folded square of paper resting on his bed, right by his left hand.

Stiles,

I love you, no matter what.

Love,

Derek

Stiles read the words over and over again, until his eyes were too clouded with relieved tears to make out the sharp lines of Derek’s handwriting.

He slept the rest of the night with the note jealously guarded between his palm and his chest.

Derek got a text from John early the next morning. It was a series of photos, three of them. His heart lurched when he realized he was looking at a scribbled letter from Stiles. The individual symbols were so tight and wild, whole chunks scratched out at points and the ink blurred with drops of moisture at others, that he had to zoom in just to make out the words.

My Alpha,

I love you too! I’m SO SORRY for ----------- everything. Dad told me about the investigation, and how people are being such prejudiced shibags, but he won’t let them hurt you. It was my fault, I’m the one who ---- did that awful thing. And I was stupid, I didn’t pay any attention and I should have known better than to put myself at risk like that. ------If I had just followed my heart instead of dragging you through the ------ colossal fuckwad that is my issues, none of this would have happened. Also, I’m realizing now that I look at that
I just hope you can forgive me for all of it and still want me. That includes the shitty grammar and self-absorbed fuckery and anything else I’ve done that has me metaphorically dying locked up in a hospital away from you.

I wish I could get out of here and run straight to you. I wish they’d let you visit me.

I keep thinking how this wouldn’t be an issue if I just let myself be yours instead of tying myself up in knots. We could have spent this Heat together. I could have been eating curly fries with you and Dad instead of sucking on ice cubes.

You would have been allowed to come save me so much sooner.

I’ll never take you for granted again, I swear. I’ll be the best damn omega for you. I’ll even make Lydia Martin look like a consolation prize—she says that’s not possible, but I’m beginning to think it’s not hard to be more loving and sweet than she is, and I am ALL ABOUT being loving and sweet to you. ONLY for YOU.

Please believe me. I don’t know what I’ll do if you see me differently after what I did. I wouldn’t blame you if you did though. It wasn’t exactly model omega behavior.

Love,

Your omega

There were too many emotions, good and bad, swirling through his head too fast to identify. Derek put his head in his hands and sobbed.

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“I brought you a treat!”

Stiles couldn’t move fast enough to catch the blue Henley before it flew into his face. He caught Derek’s familiar fragrance in an instant, though. He was no wolf, but the warm musk was distinct and comforting all the same.

“Also,” Allison continued, “he bought you a new phone, since your old one has disappeared in all the craziness,”

Or rather: since Kate Ordered him to throw his old phone out the window of her car.

He wasn’t thinking about that though. Stiles practically tried to smother himself in the lingering alpha pheromones on the shirt. He ignored it when he felt the cell get placed on his knee.

“You should already have a message or two on there,”

“Of course I do,” he hugged Derek’s shirt close as he hastily picked up the phone, “That’s me, Mr. Popular,”
He swiped through the security set-up for now and ignored the cues to respond to his dad’s and Scott’s texts, going straight for the text message with Derek’s name on it.

_Got your letter. I love you, no matter what. Still._

Stiles smiled. It was only a little, but still.

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Allison had left for the hospital barely thirty minutes ago when Derek’s phone chimed with a text from Stiles.

_Enough 2 make a honest Ω out of me?_

Derek froze.

“Dude!” Scott said, nearly running into his back. His indignation didn’t last though as he drew the next word out cautiously, “O-kaaay. What’s going on here, Derek? Your scent’s up to something and it sounds like you might be having a heart attack,”

Hope was a dangerous thing. Derek had the peculiar sensation of being on the edge of a cliff, tragically looking forward to the exhilarating joy of a free fall, but anxiously aware of countless sharp rocks along the way. Rocks growing wolfsbane.

Scott poking him in the back, “Derek? Are you… okay?”

“Shut up, I’m thinking,”

What was he supposed to say, how should he respond? What was Stiles _really_ asking here? Why the fuck hadn’t Derek gotten around to asking him how he felt about marriage along side mating earlier?

He didn’t want to keep Stiles waiting though. Besides, he’d already taken the leap with this omega, hadn’t he. Without second-guessing himself, Derek’s thumb danced over the screen.

And hit Send.

He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He had never agonized over a single text message so much in his entire life.

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Stiles stared at his phone.

_Mating? Marriage? I just want you._

“What’s up?” Danny said, looking up from his delicious burrito when Stiles’ envious moaning went silent for too long, “What’s with the face?”

“Hush,” Stiles wagged his fingers at him without looking away from Derek’s latest text, “Serious business is afoot,”

Danny shrugged and raised his burrito for another bite. That was the good thing about Danny, unlike Lydia and Allison, who had stepped out for lunch and a well-deserved break from sterile settings, he never pushed. Danny was just too chill for that. Like a calming balm to Lydia’s more… _aggressive_ approach to helping.
Such help might be exactly what he needed though. Stiles chewed on his lip nervously as he stared at Derek’s text. He didn’t know how to respond. He’d never entertained the idea of marriage. Alphas mated omegas, they didn’t typically marry them! Matting was like… well, WAY more permanent.

What if Derek wasn’t as confident as he seemed to think he was? He hadn’t seen Stiles hobble on his disfigured foot, hadn’t seen the disgusting mess he’d become since… everything.

Aaaand now he was second guessing himself all over again.

“Actually,” Stiles gave the other omega a considering, slightly desperate look, “Do you have an alpha, Danny?”

Danny gave a little laugh, “Nope,”

“Oh,”

“I used to, though,” Danny adjusted himself on his chair and leaned back, training his eyes on Stiles, “Nearly mated him too, before I learned better,”

Tapping his fingers on the back of his phone, Stiles asked awkwardly, “Better than to mate? What about… y’know. Marriage?”

“Both, I guess. He wasn’t the right alpha for me. But, Stiles…” Danny blinked owlishly for a moment as his carefully chose his next words, “Marriage is a matter of emotion and mind. Mating is about biology,”

Stiles frowned at him, “You mean… they’re separate?”

“No,” Danny sighed gently, and it was the closest to frustrated Stiles imagined he would ever see from him, “They’re like… two sides of the same coin. You can… this is a shit analogy, but you can see, or use rather, one without the other. And you can use them together as a whole coin. You can’t split the coin though; it’s too messy and neither side is left with enough to satisfy anyone;”

“I see,” Stiles looked back at his phone, already pondering on that concept aloud, “So I could marry Derek and if—” he paused, considering how Derek might not be so accepting of his disfigurement or his ridiculous Heats and even more ridiculous hysterics years down the road, “if we ever divorced, I could still find an alpha? Even a mate?”

Danny stared at him grimly for a moment, then nodded reluctantly, “Technically, yes, because matting has a permanent physiological reaction where marriage does not. But that’s not your reality, Stiles;”

God damn it. His eyes were stinging again. Stiles swallowed and sniffed, trying to keep his face dry for one fucking hour so he could carry a reasonable conversation.

“Derek mentioned he’d be okay with marriage. I think,”

“unlikely, and I doubt you would be either,” Danny set his lunch aside and leaned forward, elbows on his knees and fingers steepled together, “You guys would be in the same situation you were in with the Heat Contract; marriage would give him legal rights and responsibilities during your Heats, but it will do nothing to make those Heats easier. You’ll keep goading him into biting you, and he’ll keep tearing himself apart trying to resist,”

“Right,” Stiles whispered, fiddling with the phone again. He couldn’t do that to Derek.
“Stiles,” Danny got up and took a seat on the bed, putting his hand over Stiles’ twitchy fingers and hiding the phone, “Look at me,”

It was almost painful to see the compassion directed at him when he raised his head.

“Do you love him?”

“Yes,” Stiles said easily, even if the admission tipped the first tear onto his cheek, “Right now it feels like the only thing I’m sure of,”

“Then what’s stopping you?”

Stiles swallowed, his throat clogged with excess saliva and mucus, “W-what if--?”

“No, we’re not dealing with what-ifs,” Danny cut in, not unkindly, “We’re dealing with the present reality. The one where you’re in love with someone who loves you back, someone who’s done a lot to prove it to you. And yes, in this reality you can’t ignore that you need a reliable Heat partner every month,”

Stiles wiped at his eyes and nodded along. None of this was news. He’d been telling himself the same as he left the house to go see Morrell.

But his entire life had been focused on himself, his education, his career, and none of that had ever included settling down with a mate so long before he’d had a chance to prove himself strong and capable. He’d always planned to be independent in a world that kept telling him he wasn’t. That had always, always been his focus: himself!

And then there was Derek.

Stiles was inherently selfish, on top of being wholly undeserving of such a genuinely perfect alpha. And he was terrified of the day Derek realized it and resented him for it.

He finally understood what Lydia meant when she told him about being angry and scared. He may not be actively poisoning his body, but he kept putting himself and his alpha in increasingly awful situations just to avoid facing the fact that his totally-independent-omega dreams had no place in actual waking life.

Maybe it did for omegas like Danny. But that wasn’t his reality.

It was long past time he accepted that. And maybe he could find another way to feel worthy of Derek’s love.

“I guess I’m getting mated,” he smiled at Danny, a little shaky but genuine all the same.

Danny didn’t return the smile just yet, “Are you sure that’s what you want? Just because this is an all-or-nothing situation with Derek, doesn’t mean it would be with a different alpha. The ORA can put you in touch with vetted Registered Alphas from all over the country; you have options,”

Stiles’ stomach rolled at the mere idea of going through Heat with someone else, after everything, “No. No, I’m not doing that. I want Derek,”

“You’re sure?” Danny pressed, a hint of a smile lighting his eyes, “Absolutely sure?”

Wiping the emotional tears from his face, Stiles felt nothing but relief as he answered, “Absolutely,”

“Remember that,” Danny patted his wrist and returned to his burrito, like their little tête-à-tête was no
big deal.

Stiles picked up his phone and opened a fresh text box.

Derek wasn’t usually prone to exaggeration, but it took forever for Stiles to reply. *Forever.*

“Glaring at your phone isn’t going to make him respond any faster,” Peter remarked, setting two tumblers on the tiny glass dining table in Talia’s hotel room.

Derek shifted his so-called ‘glare’ slightly to the glass placed next to his phone. He didn’t drink often enough to know what kind of alcohol was in it, but the whiff of wolfsbane told him plenty.

“No thanks,”

Peter raised his own glass as he extended one irksome finger to nudge the drink at him. His uncle took a sip, staring at him pointedly over the rim.

“No,”

“I’ll drink it.” Talia stole the glass from under her brother’s finger and returned to lounging against the headboard of the nearest full-sized bed. Derek watched her grumpily as she stretched out her legs, crossed her ankles, and pulled her laptop back onto her thighs before downing the beverage in one go.

Scott was almost mirroring her on the other bed, except his phone was also glued to his hand and a dopey smile was on his face.

It was his Allison-smile.

Derek also wasn’t typically prone to snooping or getting over-involved. It didn’t stop him from asking sharply, “Isn’t Allison back at the hospital yet?”

Scott looked up from his phone, smile going the slightest bit guilty, “Uh, I don’t think so. She and Lydia are getting pedicures before they head back,”

Derek breathed deeply through his nose, loud enough that Scott could hear it along with smelling his irritation, “Ask her,”

“Don’t,” Talia overruled in a bored tone, eyes still on her computer screen.

Peter directed another long-suffering sigh his way, “I’ll go pour you another drink,”

“No,” Derek snipped.

He must have flashed some red eye, maybe a little fang, because Peter’s wolf bristled and the older man had to close his eyes and take a step back to collect himself. It was only a moment’s slip up, but when he opened his eyes again, Peter downed the rest of his drink and turned deliberately to Talia.

“Talia,” Peter said in his smarmiest voice, “Tell your son to relax, or I am going. To. Bite. Him,”

“Try it,” Derek snarled.

“That’s enough,” Talia said. Her unconcerned attitude didn’t mesh with the fact she turned to Scott and said, “Why don’t you ask Allison to come back for the night?”
"Stiles is expecting her!" Derek fumed. The tabletop under his hand creaked as his claws made an appearance.

Scott stiffened. Peter sneered and his eyes turned red.

"Enough," Talia lost her patience and her cool veneer, "We are not doing this. Peter, go for a walk, don’t give anyone a reason to call the police. In fact, stay inside the building until Allison gets back."

Peter slammed the door on his way out.

"I should probably…" Scott slid off the bed awkwardly, "I’ll just…"

"Stay in your room, don’t give anyone a reason to call the police," Talia repeated with exasperation, "I’ll call Allison myself,"

Allison was already on the line, Talia delivering the curt order to come back before the girl could speak, when the door clicked shut behind Scott.

They were alone after that. It was the first time he’d been alone with his mother since he left New York with Stiles. Scott had gone and took the aggression with him, leaving Derek abruptly exhausted.

Talia set aside her computer and beckoned him.

He didn’t hesitate, didn’t complain that he wasn’t some pup who needed to be coddled. He just crawled onto the bed and dropped his head on her leg.

"Allison’s only been gone a few hours," he worried aloud as her fingers combed through the short spikes of his hair.

They were renting three rooms between them, but last night they’d all piled into this one so Scott wasn’t the only one benefiting from an omega’s presence. Allison had done all she could, she slept between Talia and Scott the whole night and she took every opportunity to hug Derek and Peter and spend casual time close to them. She’d only left for the hospital a few hours ago.

They shouldn’t be in such danger of Resonating so fast. It had never happened to their family like this before.

Talia scratched the back of his scalp and he felt her entire body heave with her next sigh, "We’re all stressed. Far from home,"

Surrounded by bigots while separated from an injured pack member, Derek thought grumpily.

They lapsed into a heavy silence. Derek was too tense and too busy wishing he’d sent a different text to relax under Talia’s soothing hand.

And then his phone buzzed with an incoming message.

Talia went still and attentive as Derek fumbled for his phone even though it had been tightly clenched in his hand the entire time.

Just so we’re clear…

Derek held his breath—literally held his fucking breath—and felt Talia peer over his head as they waited for the stupid dot-dot-dot to yield another text.
“Yes,” Talia hissed and shook his shoulder. “Say yes!”

Lungs screaming for air, Derek typed.

Across town, Stiles gave a short squeal loud enough that Lydia jumped and spilled her macchiato all over Danny’s lap.

“So help me,” Lydia spoke with a terrifying calm as she glared down at her depleted cup, “If that wasn’t a scream of joy from the best news of your life, I will throw that phone out the window,”

Stiles didn’t have the strength at the moment to jump up and down, but he made up for it with some spectacular flailing to turn his phone around and show her Derek’s reply.

Yes

Derek’s thumb was still hoovering over the Send icon, Talia leaning in with her nails digging into his shoulder, when it happened.

His phone lit up, a picture of Stiles’ lopsided grin front and center.

“Yes!” Talia shook him excitedly.

“Sh!” Derek yanked free of her and sat up, already bringing the phone up to his ear, “Hello—?”

“Yes!” Stiles’ voice would have knocked him over with its earnest enthusiasm if he hadn’t still been sitting. “Yes, yes, yes. Yes. Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the underappreciated donkey they rode in on, yes—”

Derek was finally able to draw a breath that didn’t feel like his last. He closed his eyes, ignoring his mother’s teary-eyed grin so he could focus on the sound of his mate’s voice.

“A million times yes. Yes to the infiniteenth power—”

Stiles’ voice was a little gravely, but otherwise he sounded… happy? Relieved? Almost normal. Definitely better than expected. Far better than expected.

He sounded almost well.

Stiles was decidedly not well. Lydia took the phone away from him and wished Derek good night just in time to save him from being sick all over the device.

It came out of nowhere and ended up everywhere. One second he was professing his undying love, luxuriating in the sound of Derek laughing quietly in his ear, and the next his insides were trying to jump out through his mouth with a violence that was, frankly, rude.

And a total mood killer.

When he finally stopped and could take a breath, the whole room was a mess. Vomit on his gown.
Vomit on the sheets. Vomit on the freaking floors. Lydia was pouting at the vomit on her nifty Prada shoes.

Neither of his so-called advocates had attempted to bring him his puke bin.

“This is why you should try to keep the excitement to a minimum,” Lydia turned scolding eyes on him as she pointedly dropped his phone in her purse, well out of reach.

Danny was slightly more sympathetic as he came over to help Stiles from the soiled bed, “I had a feeling that porridge was a bad idea,”

“It was porridge,” Stiles moaned, the room spinning slowly as Danny pulled him upright, “And I’m starving,“

“Back to liquids tomorrow,” Lydia was entirely without compassion.

“But I’m starve—”

"It won't do you any good if you just puke it up again!"

“We’ll see what the doctor says in the morning,” Danny reassured as Stiles used him like a crutch to get to the bathroom, “For now, just calmed down and you can try some more vegetable broth,”

“You can have your phone back after you get some sleep,” Lydia called after them.

Stiles was now sure her bitchiness must have progressed with age.

Beacon General Hospital was the unfriendliest place in the entire town, Derek now knew.

It was mid afternoon on the third day since the Heat broke, which made it nearly a week since he’d found the omega in that forest hovel and Stiles had put Kate down. It had been the worst week of Derek’s life, yesterday’s news not included.

In the past few days, Derek hadn’t made it as far as the lobby before he’d been told to leave by security or overheard someone calling the cops. Dropping Allison off in the parking lot was the closest the townspeople seemed interested in letting him get.

He seriously couldn’t wait to get back to NY.

But not without his omega. Who he was finally allowed to see. Finally.

Allison and John assured him Stiles was as desperate as himself for more than a scent-saturated t-shirt and a brief love note. The shirt had been Lydia Martin’s suggestion after she’d learned of the first time the staff barred him from the building, and Derek agreed that the gesture was woefully insufficient. Derek hadn’t met the girl yet, but Allison said her vehemence on their behalf was as alarming as it was endearing.

Maybe he’d meet her today. After he made sure Stiles believed all his hastily scrawled or typed, but always inadequate, professions. Derek never had been good with words. He did action better.

And now he could finally act.

Because Stiles had given his statement and the decrepit hunting cabin had been processed, and Kate’s closest living kin thought the idea of trying an omega for murder in this case was laughable.
The case was as closed as could possibly be.

And the freaking Sheriff was walking him all the way from the car to Stiles’ hospital room. In uniform. With Peter bringing up the rear in his best, most intimidating suit, for good measure.

No one stopped them.

“He’s right down here,” John said, patting his back.

Derek nodded gratefully. The competing scents of chemical cleaners and sickness clogged his nose, making it hard to discern anything like normal.

“How anyone expects to get well here…,” Peter muttered, wrinkling his nose.

Derek understood all too well. Every time he tried to focus, to point out the elusive hint of Stiles underneath all the mess, he ended up breathing too deep and coughing. How Peter kept from rubbing his nose every three steps was beyond him.

Their ears worked fine though.

“Stiles!” a feminine voice shrieked somewhere down the hall.

Derek took off, Peter close enough behind him, his elbow brushed his suit.

“Woah! Guys! Wait up!”

John hurried after them, barely catching up as the two wolves got jammed in the doorway of Room 308. They could hear the gagging and retching from several paces away, so Derek wasn’t entirely surprised to see Stiles throwing up into a plastic bin the color of Pepto-Bismol.

The doll-like red head holding the bin was a little more unexpected, but Derek didn’t hesitate to replace her hands with his own. She hardly took a look at him before she conceded her seat on the bed at Stiles’ hip.

“Fuck,” Peter hissed, finally clapping a hand over his nose as he stalled at the foot of Stiles’ bed.

“Stiles! I’m here!” Derek’s voice nearly broke as he wrapped an arm around the omega’s heaving shoulders and steadied the bin with the other, “I’m here!”

The omega was too busy being sick to notice him.

It was a testament to Derek’s need for contact that he could stand being so close. Stiles hadn’t made it to the bin in time, and there was a suspiciously liquified green-brown muck all over the paisley blue hospital smock and the white sheets. Derek didn’t see chunks of food in it but it smelled especially foul, more toxic than the industrial cleaners the staff used to sanitize the hospital floors. This close, it made his nostrils burn.

“What’s wrong with him!?” he demanded, looking at John and the girl.

“Where’s the doctor?” Peter took a step back, lowering his hand only to immediately wipe at his nose again, “Jesus. Shouldn’t there at least be nurse in here?”

John shared an unreadable look with the girl, his face scrunching in uncertainty.

It was the girl who faced the wolves with a no-nonsense tilt of her head as she propped her fists on her hips, “Nothing’s wrong, per say,”
“You’ve got to be kidding me—” Peter sneered.

“This is what happens after an omega spends a Heat sedated,”

Stiles was still bent over, shaking and spitting even though he wasn’t bringing anything up. Derek slipped his hand into the open back of the johnnie and ran his hand up and down. He nearly whined; Stiles had only been in the hospital a week, but there was no mistaking the weight loss. Derek wasn’t imagining the pronounced ridge of his spine under his fingertips.

He looked down at the back of Stiles’ head. He’d always been slender, but… Fuck.

Despite how hellish the week had been, this was the first time Derek regretted letting the hospital manage Stiles’ Heat.

“What can—there has to be something,” he floundered, staring around the room blindly, “Can’t they give him anti-nausea meds or something?”

“They offered,” the girl gave him an exasperated stare, “I told them not to. All the Zofran will do is mask the symptoms and make it worse.”

“Oh?” Peter snarked and flashed red eyes at her, betraying his alarm, “And you’re a doctor, are you?”

She met his stare unflinchingly, “No. I’m better. Stiles gets to benefit from my years of experience and all the ORA’s research, so say thank you and put the fangs away,” she turned to Derek and one manicured brow arched up, “You too,”

Derek blinked, only then realizing his teeth were bared, fangs and claws at the ready. Apparently he was growling loud enough to earn a few stares from the hallway.

The girl glanced between the two of them expectantly, “You won’t be doing him any favors if you get yourselves thrown out of here.”

Derek snapped out of it like he’d been slapped awake. Biting the inside of his bottom lip, he bowed his head and buried his face in his omega’s hair.

He heard Peter huff, then make an uncharacteristic squeak, “Did you just—?”

“I’m waiting,”

“—poke me?”

“For my thank you,”

Somewhere in the corner, John coughed. Derek could hear the smile in the sound.

“Now would be good,” the girl said as Peter’s scent ripened with incredulity.

That was the point Derek stopped listening because Stiles finally seemed done panting and shaking over the bin.

“Derek?”

“I’m here,” he replied readily.

He pulled the bin from Stiles’ lax fingers and felt John take it away. Stiles swayed as he leaned back
enough to see Derek’s face. His naturally pale complexion had shaded to a sick grey and his eyes looked bruised. There were all manner of bodily fluids smeared on his face, and those precious whiskey-colored eyes were glassy in a way that didn’t have to do with the tears.

The poor boy was having trouble focusing on Derek’s face. It made his heart hurt to watch.

“I’m right here,” he whispered solemnly as he pressed a little firmer along Stiles’ back. As if that would reassure him that the boy in his arms wasn’t a ghost.

Stiles gave him a weak little smile that didn’t reach his eyes, “You could’ve picked a better time. Like—” he paused to catch his breath, “—maybe when I don’t desperately need to be hose down with a fire—” more panting “fire truck’s assistance,”

Frowning, Derek looked up to try and catch the girl’s eye, “Should he still be breathing this harshly?”

She turned away from where she’d backed Peter into the wall and said like it was no big deal, “It’s to be expected. He hasn’t had anything substantial to eat in days and he’s passing veritable poison out his pores. General weakness is kind of a given. He’s in no danger though, we’re through the worst of it,”

“He’s been worse?!”

Derek clutched the omega to his chest reflexively. Stiles made a small noise that could have been a whine of complaint or a hum of appreciation. Derek wasn’t sure. He loosened his hold anyway, just to be safe.

“He needs another shower,” John said helpfully, his own nose wrinkling in distaste, “I’ll go get a nur —”

“I got him,” Derek insisted.

He made to rise and Stiles choked as he grabbed at his t-shirt, “Der!”

“I’m here,” he repeated, “Let’s get you cleaned up, ok?”

“Sheriff, could you ask the nurse’ station for some clean linens, please?” the girl, presumably Lydia, asked sweetly.

“Sure thing,”

Stiles hesitated as Derek bent to lift him out of the bed, “Ugh, I can walk,”

“He can’t,” Lydia countered, “And we have to wrap his foot in plastic before he gets wet,”

“Okay,” Derek gave her a short nod as he reached for Stiles again.

The omega floundered, not strong enough to keep himself from falling back on the bed as a result, “Don’t! You don’t have to. I’m a mess—”

Derek didn’t hesitate, “I noticed,”

“No, Derek, really. I don’t want to get my funk on you—”

Peter snorted, “Too late for that,”
“Peter,” Derek snapped.

“Why don’t you go do something helpful,” Lydia told his uncle as Derek gathered a faintly blushing Stiles into his arms.

Stiles wrapped his arms around his neck and Derek frowned at how light he felt.

“Like what exactly?” Peter all but snarled.

Derek followed Lydia’s gesturing hand and carried Stiles into the adjoining bathroom. There was a white plastic chair in the corner of the tiled stall. Derek set Stiles down on it gingerly before undoing the ties and starting to slip the hospital gown from his shoulders. Stiles crossed his arms and shied away.

“There’s a Starbucks down the street. I prefer the blonde roast,” Lydia told Peter just before she shut the bathroom door.

Derek didn’t care. Stiles was avoiding his gaze and pulling away, and that was all sorts of wrong.

“Stiles?”

The omega clutched at his hospital gown and whispered, “I don’t really want you to see me like this,”

Derek crouched down to get a good look at his soiled, sickly thin face, “I love you even at your worst. Okay?”

Stiles’ eyes were able to focus better now. They watered as he trained them on the line of Derek’s jaw.

Derek tugged at the smock again, not forceful but pointed, “Come on, Stiles. I’ve got you,”

His lower lip trembling, Stiles nodded and let go of the flimsy material.

There were a few shallow cuts on his torso, one of them low enough in the front that it filled Derek with a disgust and rage that nearly choked him. He forced the feelings to the back of his mind though, he needed to focus on Stiles. Worse than Kate’s memory, he hated how the omega seemed to hunch in on himself like he was hiding.

Lydia handed him a plastic bag, twirling a roll of medical tape on her finger, “Wrap his foot,”

Under her careful guidance, Derek shielded Stiles’ injured foot from any possible moisture. He went slowly, taking his time to get it secure and drag his fingers over Stiles’ lower leg in as reassuring a caress as possible.

He wondered if it hurt. He was afraid to ask. Stiles stank of enough misery without Derek poking at the mental wound on top of it all.

Lydia turned on the water and wet a cloth hastily before passing it to him, nodding at Stiles’ face. Derek wordlessly accepted the wash rag and left her to micro-adjusting the temperature and spigot settings on the removable showerhead. He made quick and gentle work of the mess on Stiles’ face, then set the cloth on the boy’s knee so he could cup his clean chin and draw him in for a kiss.

Stiles gasped just before their lips met.

“Derek!” Stiles squawked, weakly jerking back in the chair with wide eyes, “I haven’t brushed my
teeth!”

“I don’t care,”

Stiles’ blush was muted by sickness and he looked less than certain about it, but he didn’t resist as Derek drew him in again. It was true, Stiles’ breath tasted vile and his lips were badly chapped, but it didn’t stop Derek from showing he still loved him dearly.

Derek only hoped Stiles got the message.

They parted on a broken sob. Derek felt the omega’s s face crumble with emotion before he scented the salty tears, before he felt Stiles’ thin frame shake with the force of it.

Long, trembling fingers gripped his hair and the omega held his head close to his own as he cried, “I’m sorry, Derek. I’m so sorry! So sorry,”

“Sh,” Derek rubbed his palms on Stiles’ naked thighs, trying to soothe, “I know, baby. It’s going to be okay,”

Stiles shook his head slightly from side to side, their faces still close, “I was so stupid. I just kept second guessing everything—”

“You’re not stupid, Stiles,”

“You were so perfect, and I want you so badly that it scares me—”

“Me too, Stiles. Me too,”

“If I had just gotten over myself sooner, she never would have—”

“No!” With a growl, Derek pulled away to grip Stiles’ chin firmly, voice insistent, “Nothing Kate did was your fault. Nothing,”

Stiles didn’t look convinced, just stricken as his tears kept flowing, “I was going to tell Morrell…,“ he whimpered, “I was going to tell her I wanted you. I was going to be your mate,”

This precious boy was going to be the death of him. Derek never knew it was possible to feel your heart break from sorrow at the same time the muscle went into overdrive with joy.

He kissed him again, and said with absolute conviction:

“You are my mate,”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the shoddy formatting here: the long lines in the letter at the beginning are meant to represent where Stiles scratched out his words till they were illegible.
It took another two days before they let him out of the hospital. The last 24 hours of that were, thankfully, spent keeping down multiple bowls of porridge without incident.

Five days post-hospitalization, and Stiles limped his way into the airport to see the Hale pack off. Well. Most of them.

“We’ll see you in two months,” Derek murmured as he scented Talia and kissed her cheek, “Three at most.”

“Two at most,” Stiles corrected, smacking Derek’s leg gently with his crutch. He didn’t really need it—not when he had Derek to help him keep his balance when he got tired—but Derek was nearly militant about making sure Stiles had optional support any time he planned to be out of the house longer than an hour. They’d been well over that just at brunch, and Stiles would be damned if he admitted to Derek that his entire left leg ached. He might also be ready for a nap; he just hoped they made it all the way home before he couldn’t keep his eyes open anymore.

“You still can’t plan an entire wedding in only three months, Stiles. Or two,” Peter dared to roll his eyes.

“Watch me,”

It was useless to tell him there was no need to rush the marriage side of things. As far as Stiles was concerned, they’d wasted enough time not being cemented in any and every possible way. The only logical concession he’d given was waiting till he had his doctor’s permission to travel, so the whole pack could attend.

“Make sure you text me the second Deaton gives you the okay!” Allison ignored Peter as she squeezed Stiles with the arm not looped around her mate’s waist.

Scott patted Stiles’ shoulder instead of overwhelming his invalid-self with a group-hug, “I mean, we don’t need to know the exact moment it finally happens, though,”

“What?” Stiles asked innocently, “You don’t want me texting your mate while I’m still naked in bed?”

“I could probably handle that,” Scott laughed good humoredly, but the wince was very real, “Just not if you’re still… you know… tied up,”

“Scott McCall!” Talia gaped in mocking shock.

“Such vulgarity,” Derek deadpanned, shaking his head in disappointment as Scott blushed crimson.

“And on that note,” Peter knocked shoulders with his nephew on his way to steal Stiles for a quick hug, “We should probably get through security before Scott discovers he can say the word ‘knot’ in public without magically summoning his mother,”

So Stiles watched his pack take off amid laughter and heartfelt bickering, his alpha close at his side.
The night after the pack preceded them to New York, Derek finally had his omega all to himself. The Sheriff was at the station for the night, and Derek was armed with fresh sheets on the bed and a stack of movies on Stiles’ desk, complete with Chinese food and a generous helping of curly fries.

Stiles was still struggling with stairs, taking each with his right leg first; but tonight Derek didn’t have the patience for the slow-going so he scooped him up without comment and carried him all the way to bed.

“Star Wars, take-out and curly fries?!” Stiles exclaimed as he spotted everything set up in his room. He unwound his arms from Derek’s neck and leaned back on his pillows with a mischievous grin, “You up to something with all this buttering up, big guy?”

“No buttering up,” Derek couldn’t resist the sneaky enticement in his omega’s expression, he ignored the food and movies and hopped right into bed, making a space for himself between Stiles’ thighs, “Definitely something.”

“Yeah?” Stiles gasped as Derek’s weight came down on his groin.

“Yeah,” Derek kissed the smirk off his omega’s face.

_Devoured_ him, more like. Derek had been stealing kisses frequently in the past week, and he’d noticed as the last vestiges of illness and toxicity vanished from his taste and scent. Now there was nothing but _Stiles_: pure, eager omega sweetness. It was a delicacy he’d managed only teasing licks of, and now he could finally feast on.

And feast he did.

Stiles was a breathless, shivering mess with his pants undone, cock out, and shirt rucked up to his armpits by the time Derek released his mouth. The alpha reared back and stared. It was nearly overwhelming to see his gorgeous, clever mate splayed out beneath him like this after everything that had happened. God, but Derek wanted—needed—to mark him up all over and display his claim.

But that would have to be some other time. Later, when Stiles was healthy and able to take everything Derek wanted to give him.

For now, Derek was going to have to satisfy himself with scent-marking. He’d be thorough. Very thorough. Thorough enough even a human beta wouldn’t be able to stand next to Stiles without smelling that Derek Hale was his alpha.

“Fuck,” Stiles whispered heatedly, leaning up on his elbows as he watched Derek shove his jeans down just enough to free his throbbing erection and start yanking on it almost violently.

Derek watched Stiles watching him strip his cock with blatant hunger in those whiskey-honey eyes. He smelled the gush of slick, still hidden by Stiles’ underwear but no less potent. He saw the exposed length of his omega’s cock twitch and weep for him as Stiles moaned at just the sight of his alpha.

That was all it took. Two more aggressive tugs, and Derek was coming.

All. Over. Stiles.
“S-sorry,” Derek groaned brokenly as he worked himself all the way through, till Stiles’ torso was covered in him.

“I’m not entirely sure if you should be or not,” Stiles sounded distracted as he lay there breathing heavy and flushed, eyeing Derek’s slowly-flagging erection.

Not yet recovered from his peak, Derek scooted back to get rid of Stiles’ pants and underwear. With his own pants still more-or-less on, Derek dropped down and practically shoved his face into the silken wet mess between his mate’s legs. Stiles screamed as he went to town.

The Chinese food was still warm by the time he was done apologizing properly.

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Despite the world-shattering relief of sexy times with his alpha, the next day saw Stiles seated in Morrell’s office amid a small mountain of soggy tissues. He was beginning to think crying at the drop of a hat was a part of his core personality; he seemed to be doing it so much. Now more than ever, actually. Like Kate had finished destroying what the suppressants had already damaged.

It sucked. And just when everything else in his life seemed perfect.

“Sometimes you just have to let it out,” Morrell’s voice was soft and melodious, soothing in the way it mimicked gently lapping waves. Stiles was used to thinking of her with far less appreciation, but now that calm way of hers seemed to be exactly what he needed.

“I don’t even know why I’m still crying!” he blubbered, yanking a fresh tissue free.

“Maybe there isn’t one specific reason. Maybe you just have to let the build up from everything that’s happened overflow. It’s healthy to give those emotions an outlet,”

“H-haven’t I d-done enough of that already!?”

“There isn’t a defined finish line for processing trauma, Stiles,” she maintained that gentling rhythm with her words and passed him the full tissue box from her desk.

He snatched it up and tossed the empty one in the general direction of the trash bin. He didn’t look at her. He could feel the compassion in her stare enough to know he couldn’t handle seeing it too.

“I don’t want to process it!” he yelled vehemently enough that the tears didn’t fumble his words, “I just want to move on, and be happy Derek and I are still alive!”

She nodded gently, always gently, “Human beings don’t work like that, Stiles. We’re emotionally complex, and there’s no reason you can’t be happy even while you work through some very heavy issues,”

“But I…” he floundered, looking around the office with a lost expression. Morrell stayed silent and patient as he searched for the right way to voice his thoughts, “I’ve wasted so much time already. I’m… I’ve hurt Derek so m-much with my s-stupid—all my problems, and I don’t… I don’t want to keep seeing that look on his face w-when… when…,”

Morrel folded her hands together atop her desk and leaned towards him encouragingly, “When what, Stiles?”

He sniffled. Rubbed a tissue over his face. Avoided looking at her.
“Tell me, Stiles. Whatever you’re choking on, say it out loud,”

His throat hurt from breathing so awkwardly through the waterworks. He shook his head as he glared down at the messy tissue in his hand, “He’s a-always there. He’s so p-perfect and attentive and I… I can’t always…,” he wiped at his running nose again, “When I start crying. Or when I w-wake up from nightmares. He sees it all and he just… his face… I hate seeing him like that. I’ll be dying inside a-and he’ll look at me in this w-way that makes me feel even worse. And I hate knowing I’m still h-hurting him,”

His voice broke and he gnawed on his lip anxiously. Morrell took the opportunity to say in that smooth insistent way, “Stiles, it’s important that you realize something: you are not the only one grieving here. Derek may heal instantly from physical wounds, but nearly losing you and seeing what was done to you must be affecting him fiercely—”

Stiles nodded frantically, “I know!”

Morrell held up a hand to stop him so she could continue, “The pain you see in him when you’re hurting isn’t your fault, and it’s not bad. Healthy relationships require vulnerability, Stiles, so you both can share the load. And that goes both ways. Do you think you would have made it out of that forest alive without him?”

The mere idea startled a short hysterical laugh, “No!”

“And do you realize, given how things were going in that cabin, that Derek almost certainly wouldn’t have made it out without you?”

The thought sent a terrible chill down his spine, “I… I don’t know…”

“I do,” she said with a certainty that briefly interrupted her tranquil demeanor, “Kate was prepared to handle Derek, another alpha. And she’d done enough damage that you wouldn’t have been able to find the road on your own. Do you understand what I’m saying, Stiles?”

It took a while, but he eventually nodded. He felt a little numb about it, though. The shift in perspective startled him enough that the tears on his face began to dry.

“You and Derek are going to be mates soon,” Morrell gave a small sigh and returned to her melodious speech, “That’s a life-long commitment, and somewhere along the way, you’ll need to learn to be okay with sharing the joy just as much as the sorrow. It’s not something you can wish away,”

“Then how…,” he finally looked at her, gaze pleading, “how do I stop him from feeling so awful when I cry?”

“You don’t, Stiles. You can’t control anyone’s feelings, not even your own. But,” she fished in her desk and pulled out a slender journal, then slid it across the desk till it hung off the edge right in front of him, “to an extent, you can control your own thoughts. I’d like you to start keeping a journal, and I want you to try to focus on the positive things. For example: instead of writing about how guilty you feel crying in front of Derek, try reminding yourself how lucky you are that you don’t have to carry these burdens alone. Overtime, this should help you handle your anxiety better, and perhaps you’ll be more comfortable being emotionally intimate with your alpha,”

“Well,” Stiles sniffed again and dried his eyes, almost reluctantly, “When you put it like that,”

He picked up the journal.
Two nights later, Derek slipped the journal out from under his omega’s hand before he ended up scratching meaningless squiggles across the pages in his sleep. Stiles barely twitched as he pried the pen from his lax grip and set it and the journal on the coffee table. Then he tenderly repositioned Stiles’ head and arms so he wouldn’t wake with a stiff neck and numb fingers.

“He’s asleep?” John whispered as he gently closed the front door closed behind him.

Derek had heard the Sheriff in the driveway, so he wasn’t alarmed when the other alpha showed up behind him. Stiles, however, twitched and his brow furrowed as his head started to lift off the cushion Derek had placed it on.

“Sh,” he kissed Stiles’ ear and nuzzled him till the omega sighed and relaxed back into deep slumber.

John tip-toed past the couch, mouthing ‘Sorry’ as he caught Derek’s eye.

Derek joined him in the kitchen moments later, after reassuring himself that Stiles was sleeping peacefully. While the fatigue was expected, even more than a week after leaving the hospital, Stiles’ rest was regularly interrupted by nightmares and anxious restlessness. He was recovering weight quickly, but there were persistent shadows under his eyes.

“I take it he hasn’t been out long?” John spoke quietly as he grabbed them a couple beers. One of them was the good wolfsbane-infused honied ale he’d decided to keep in stock since Stiles’ first night in the hospital.

“Only a few minutes,” Derek accepted the bottle readily, “But he slept for four hours straight earlier, so that’s something,”

“That’s good,” John took a thirsty gulp and eyed the corner of the couch visible from the kitchen window, “Jordan said he saw you guys at the park. He made it all the way to the pond and back on his own two feet today, huh?”

“Yeah,” Derek laughed just a little sardonically, “Might be why he slept so well,”

“Probably for the best. He never did well with being cooped up. Too much energy,”

There was a peculiarly charged silence as they both sipped their drinks.

John was the one to break it, “Listen. Ugh…,” he rubbed the inner corners of his eyes with his thumb and forefinger, “I know you’ll officially be his alpha and everything, and you’re solidly based in New York, but… he’s all I’ve got,”

Derek nodded and took an awkward gulp.

“I just want to make sure I’ll still see him plenty,”

“Of course,”

They both drank.

“You’ll come out for the wedding, right?” Derek scratched the back of his neck as he asked.

“If I have enough advanced noticed and can get the time off,”

“Well, I think Peter’s finally convinced him not to rush things, so…,”
They shared a small smile. Everyone but Stiles had known he’d be too busy recovering to cram wedding planning into the two months before they returned to the East Coast. Eventually, Stiles had been forced to concede the point after he realized how exhausting it was to relearn how to walk, not to mention the frequent sleep disruptions. It hadn’t been a pretty realization to witness.

“Just in case though, I should probably give you this now,” John reached into the breast pocket of his uniform and something clinked on the counter top when he put his palm down, “It was his mother’s,”

It was a ring, or rather two rings. A simple silver wedding band carefully soldered to a delicately braided silver band that held the traditional omega-trellis, but with three not-so-traditional sapphires instead of diamonds. The stones were not particularly large or remarkable, faded and slightly dinged from age and little upkeep, but they were just big enough not to overwhelm the slender finger of the female omega who wore it.

“You’ll have to get it resized. And you could probably afford a bigger diamond; Stiles…” John cleared his throat emotionally, “he has ugh… bigger hands than Claudia. It’d look better on him with something more substantial. Or… something,”

Derek set down his beer before he picked up the ring and slowly ran his finger tips over the band, feeling the bumps of the braid flush against the smooth finish of the other ring.

“He’ll recognize it even if I altered the stones?” Derek asked.

He eyed the matching simple band on the Sheriff’s left hand and thought carefully about slipping Claudia Stilinski’s ring onto her son’s finger. Of course John had married her beyond their mating, he’d loved her all the more dearly for her ability to give him a son rather than despite it, her dynamic had only elevated her in his eyes, not made her seem weaker or less. And marriage was a traditional human concept anyway. Derek felt ashamed not for noticing John’s ring sooner.

The Sheriff had always assumed Derek meant to mate his son, but he never once mentioned marriage. At least not within Derek’s hearing.

The man stared at his wife’s ring in Derek’s hand with the smallest forlorn smile, “Yeah. He’ll recognize it,”

Derek palmed the ring and held it over his heart, “Thank you,”

It was the most honestly heartfelt moment the two of them had shared yet.

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Laura had been left in New York as the resident Pack Alpha while Talia and Peter had rushed to Stiles’ aid, but she certainly made up for the absence with gusto.

“Oh wow, that is… just, wow!” Stiles reached out to accept the five-foot tall Get-Well-Soon teddy bear, but thought better of it, “Could you just leave it on the porch? I’ll have someone bring it in later,”

The delivery guy dropped the apparently heavy bear like a bad habit he’d kicked to the curb years ago, “Cool. Wait right there,”

“There’s more?!” Stiles gaped as the guy jogged back to his truck and returned with a far more manageable gift box and an envelope. He accepted both with a bashful grin and a quiet “Thanks,”
The letter, at least, explained the bear and its unusually hefty weight for a stuffed toy, giant or no.

Stiles!

My condolences for the hospitalization and everything that made it necessary; I always knew you had some fight in you! Also, CONGRATULATIONS on finally giving that brother of mine some peace of mind. And that makes this, without a doubt, the most peculiar sentiment I have ever written in my life, but no less true.

I hope you like the bear. It’s from a start-up company in Switzerland, called ‘Ωpen Arms Gifts.’ Melissa told me about it after Scott mentioned why he was leaving town. They’re an omega-owned wellness shop that makes organic home-remedies and beauty products. There should be instructions with the bear, but it should release synthetic omega pheromones when you lay on it. Melissa says it’s nowhere near as good as a real cuddle from a fellow omega, but we thought you could use a little special comfort and reassurance while you’re stuck in the omega equivalent of a dead zone.

And yeah, there were smaller, more lap-friendly bears available to order, but I just couldn’t resist. Promise me you’ll take a picture of Derek’s face when he sees it!?

I can’t wait have you back at home, safe and soundly surrounded by pack. In the meantime, give Derek hell from me!

Love,

Your sister

The gift box turned out to be gourmet chocolates with the Ωpen Arms Gifts logo elegantly scrawled across the lid. And yes, Derek’s expression when he came home from the grocery store to find Stiles lounging on the giant bear in a pheromone-and-chocolate induced high was absolutely magical. Stiles took a picture and texted it to Laura with his thanks.

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“Why the hell is Allison planning your wedding?”

Derek frowned at his phone, “She offered. Stiles has enough to handle right now, and he didn’t want to post-pone it indefinitely till he feels better. Why?”

“Then why, pray tell, aren’t you planning this wedding, nephew?”

He really didn’t like the way Peter sounded so accusatory, and for the life of him, he hadn’t the faintest idea what he might have done to deserve it, “I don’t care about the details. And Stiles and Lydia seem convinced I’d do it wrong, anyway,”

There was silence from the other end. If his wolf ears couldn’t hear Peter’s angry breathing, he would have thought the call dropped.

“Peter…?”

“I didn’t realize Stiles and Lydia were friends now,”

Derek wasn’t so sure they were friends, strictly speaking. Their relationship was odd. Now that Lydia’s role as Advocate had been set aside, they simply found themselves the only omegas in town again, but with a far better appreciation for what that meant than when they were in high school. They interacted almost daily, yes, but not necessarily like friends, or at least not like Stiles was with
any of his friends Derek knew, ie. the pack. They seemed to operate more like a pair of mad scientists who saw each other as their latest lab rat; constantly observing and poking at each other while maintaining a mutual investment of some undefinable sort.

There were only two things Derek knew for sure about Stiles and Lydia.

1: “Pretty sure they’re both friends with Allison,” he admitted slowly, trying to ignore the feeling like he was handing a loaded gun to a psychopath.

“Oh?” Peter sounded… odd, “I suppose that explains why she has my number and is texting me wedding errands, then?”

“Who?” Derek supposed they had just established Allison had permission for that sort of thing, “… Lydia?”

“Yes, Lydia!” Peter yelled, incensed, “Why is this small-town, upstart omega who no one knew a month ago, helping make decisions about your goddamn wedding, Derek!”

Ah. Well.

And 2: “Stiles seems to trust her,” he shrugged.

Maybe they were friends.

On the other end of the call, Derek heard Peter huff just before the phone cracked with the sound of being thrown.

Days after that, Stiles practically skipped into Deaton’s office, or he would have, except for the fact he was still limping. At least the crutch was history.

And the pain. Mostly.

Getting that much-anticipated ‘okay to mate’ would go a long way toward vanishing the lingering aches and occasionally sharp twinges. Stiles was sure of it.

“Your injuries are looking well,” Deaton informed him with the slightest smile, “and I’m glad to see the sutures on your foot came out with relatively little fanfare,”

Stiles snorted, “Sure. I cried like a baby,”

“I’m sure you handled it just fine,” Deaton’s slight smile remained as he folded his hands in his lap and his studious gaze settled on his patient’s face, “And Dr. Morrell tells me you’re coping admirably besides, tears included,”

The omega shrugged and ducked his head, awkward and uncomfortable at the mention of his now regular visits with the psychotherapist, “Yeah well… I’m still working on accepting the fact I’ve turned into a permanently leaky faucet since ditching the suppressants, so thanks for that,”

“Oh of course,”

“Though let’s be honest, doc, if I was here to talk about my feelings, I’d be in Morrell’s office, not yours. So!” Stiles clapped his hands and rubbed his palms together, “give me some good news!”

Deaton’s expression didn’t change as he began levelly, “You’re still a bit underweight—"
“I’ve always been a skinny guy,” Stiles rubbed his thighs reflexively. He just couldn’t sit still right now, no way, “Tell me something I don’t know, doc,”

The doctor stared at him patiently, waiting till Stiles gave him a bashful nod indicating he’d stay silent and let him continue, “I want to make sure you’re healthy enough not to end up injured,”

Stiles rolled his eyes, “Derek would never hurt me,”

“Derek’s not the one I’m worried about,” Deaton agreed readily enough, “Mating has some pronounced physiological effects, and on rare occasions an omega’s body may not be able to process them all safely. Given your track record, I’d like to err on the side of caution and wait till you’re a bit stronger. I’ll see you again next week, Stiles,”

“I’m not going to gain any significant meat on my bones in a single week!” Stiles protested.

“We will see,” Deaton said with that annoyingly condescending almost-smile, “If you’re not ready next week, we’ll plan to do it here the following week when your Heat will be able to help you,”

Right. Because regardless of when Derek claimed him, they were still booked for the clinic’s Heat Room, just to make absolutely sure mating had the easing effects they hoped for. Lucky him.

He really didn’t want to have his claiming medically supervised.

With nothing more to say, Stiles practically ran out to the waiting room so he could hide his frustrated, disappointed tears in Derek’s waiting embrace.

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One week—seven measly days—latter, and they left the clinic in a drastically different mood.

“I’m getting MATED!”

Derek winced as Stiles screamed happily, too close to his sensitive ears as Derek carried him out on his back, piggyback style. The wince smoothed into a grin as the omega finished pumping his fist in the air and squeezed both arms around Derek’s shoulders as he kissed his cheek. His face hurt from how widely he was grinning; he couldn’t remember ever being happier.

“Did you hear?” Stiles whispered cheekily, if slightly apologetic, against his ringing ear, “I’m getting mated today,”

“I might have,”

“To the best alpha in the whole wide world. Which makes me the happiest omega in the whole wide world. And my alpha?” Stiles continued casually, at least until his whispers turned heated and devious, “He has the absolute best knot in the world too,”

Derek nearly tripped on the pavement as Stiles nipped at his earlobe.

“Stiles,” he groaned, not sure if he meant it as a reprimand or a plea for more. Maybe for mercy. They were in public, for crying out loud.

He felt one of Stiles’ hands snuck inside the collar of his shirt, “What? It’s true! And you know, the next time I get to have that knot nice and deep inside me, you know what’s going to happen?”

Derek swung the imp off his back and practically slammed Stiles against the Jeep. Gently though, because he still wasn’t quite comfortable with how easily Stiles bruised since leaving the hospital.
“Knock it off, omega,” he growled without real intent as he stepped into Stiles’ space and pinned him with the press of his body, his palms flat on the hood to either side of Stiles’ hips.

Stiles snarled and puffed up his chest till Derek imagined he could feel the boy’s nipples through their shirts, “Or what, alpha? What’s the worst you could do? Fuck me? You gonna ruin me for any other man or wolf?”

If Derek hadn’t been hard before, he sure as hell was now.

But no. No, no, they were supposed to be going back to Beacon Hills for dinner with John so they could tell him they had the all-clear.

“Maybe you’ll steal me away to a nearby hotel and have your wicked way with me?”

But…! Derek’s mind struggled to remember they had plans. They were expected.

“Because I could totally be down for that,”

“Enough!” Derek shut him up with a firm kiss and a firmer, covert roll of his hips, “Get in the damn car,”

The Sheriff wouldn’t really shoot his son’s mate and fiancé, Derek reasoned privately as he pulled out his phone to find the nearest hotel. Besides, they’d be mated by then and no one, even the Sheriff, would be allowed to interfere with his right to the omega.

Jesus. They’d be mated.

Derek might or might not have ran a couple red lights in his haste to get to the nearby Marriott.

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Objectively, Stiles knew the hotel room was more extravagant than even his fancy-schmancy heat room in the Hale’s house. The concierge had taken one look at Stiles wrapped around his alpha, seconds away from climbing him like a tree in the goddamn lobby, and booked them into the Honeymoon Suite. Stiles didn’t notice any of the expensive surroundings though, not even when Derek threw him onto the bed with an eager growl.

Stiles bounced and slid on the silken bedding and it was like being transported back in time to the first time they’d been together.

Except there was no fooling around this time. Derek didn’t look playful or cautious this time. No. This time Derek looked hungry and expectant. His eyes burned alpha-red and his nostrils flared as he panted and prowled towards him, like he was ready to do real damage.

Yeah, to Stiles’ ass. That’s right.

Stiles ripped his shirt off gracelessly and whined, “Alpha!”

Then Derek was on him. There was skin and growling and ALL the touching and grinding. Their clothes were magically gone and there was impossibly more skin and noises that were sure to inspire complaints from any other guests in the freaking building. There was heat and sweat and precum and wet, wet, wet, so much wet. All kinds of wet.

Derek was inside him before he caught up with exactly what was going on.

“Oh. My. God!” he said between kisses, some sloppier than others, “Yours. Yours! Make me
yours!”

Derek’s answering growl made his cock lurch eagerly.

“Do it! Do it! Do it!” Stiles chanted, touching his alpha absolutely everywhere, “Claim me!”

Rough hands grabbed his butt and hiked him further up the bed. Derek laughed, low and deliciously dark, against his throat, “Soon. Mmm, so soon,”

Then all Stiles could do was hold on tight as Derek pounded into him with every bit of werewolf strength Stiles’ hungry body could handle. He couldn’t even talk through it, just broken little gasps making their way out of his gaping mouth as he tried to keep breathing with Derek’s weight on top of him, all that beautiful muscle driving, driving, driving…

He flailed for the half-second it took Derek to pull out and flip him over. He rallied just in time to get his knees under him, then Derek was back. Inside him, on him, surrounding him. Derek fucked into him and resumed his punishing pace with an enthusiasm that shoved Stiles’ upper body into the mattress.

His knees slid wider, leaving him impossibly open, and Derek dropped low till Stiles felt like he was being crushed in the best way. He felt one of Derek’s palms land over the back of his left hand and their fingers weaved together till they were holding hands tightly.

Derek’s trimmed beard scratched over the bend of his neck as he panted against his ear, “Ready?”

Stiles nearly broke his neck in his eagerness to present his throat, “Yes! Yes! Alpha!”

Derek bit him.

Stiles exploded.

Immediately, Stiles realized why everyone had insisted they wait till he was stronger before they did this. It was like being in the middle of a super nova. The orgasm was intense and almost paled in comparison to the surreal feeling of having his mind and soul laid bare only to be inundated by the sense and feel of all things Derek. It wasn’t just his own desire and satisfaction blooming under his skin, it was Derek’s too.

No, no, it wasn’t just intense. It was too much. Far too much. It was beyond him.

The pleasure, physical and otherwise, was so fast and forceful that it actually hurt. His body went unresponsive, his muscles twitched, and his eyes rolled into the back of his head. There was visceral, undeniable knowledge that he was owned more fully than ever before, than he ever would be again. It shook him to his core.

It felt like being ripped apart in the most incredible way only to be remade in the same instant.

When he came back to himself, he was lying on his side, Derek’s bicep under his head and knot in his hole. The alpha was tracing absent symbols over his tummy with the tips of his fingers in a hypnotically soothing, feather-light caress.

“Woah,” Stiles eventually said, voice weak and shaken.

Derek’s roaming fingers paused. He could hear the grin in his alpha’s voice when he spoke, “Alright, my mate?”
My mate. Jesus.

With a goofy smile, Stiles craned his neck to look up at his mate, “You know that feeling, like a day after the hardest, most thorough work out of your life? No, I guess you wouldn’t, being a wolf and all, but still,” he wasn’t sure why he was whispering, but it felt right, felt somehow more… private, “It’s like that. Everything hurts. But it feels kinda good,”

“Mmm,” Derek looked incredibly pleased with himself as he kissed the tip of his nose, “Anything I can do to make it better?”

Stiles caught him with a hand in his hair before Derek could pull away and brought them together for a more tender kiss, “Maybe,” he whispered just before licking into the alpha’s mouth.

“Maybe?” Derek teased, his dancing fingers dipping low along the omega’s treasure-trail.

Stiles moaned wordlessly and clenched down on the knot still lodged inside him.

He really did have the best mate in the world, Stiles thought as Derek’s hand dutifully slipped between his legs.

The very best.

Chapter End Notes

The End
Maybe.
There might be an epilogue.
Probably.
Epilogue

It was three days into the week and Stiles admittedly understood why Peter always fought so hard for the downtown apartment.

It was sort of like the Heat Room, back before it had been repurposed into Stiles’ full-time sanctuary and Derek had moved in. There were plenty of creature comforts, though the color scheme was rather bland; the carpeting was plenty plush, but a muted brown, and the sectional couch was enormous and comfy, but off-white and in need of a few more pillows, in Stiles’ humble opinion. The kitchen was roomier than any downtown apartment should be, with pale wood cabinets and slightly darker counter tops. Even the bathroom was enormous, with it’s ridiculous jacuzzi-bath and pale green accents that somehow matched the shade of the bedspread in the other room.

It was wonderfully luxuriant and comfortable. It was also boring. Which was why they were here.

Because alphas—especially werewolf alphas—were extraordinarily sensitive during Rut Week. To. Every. Thing.

Despite the boring surroundings, Stiles had to admit, it was worth it. The apartment was a far cry from the non-specific Alpha Hotels they’d used the previous four years because Cora or Peter had called dibs first. Talia, as usual, laid claim to the pack house while Laura was spending the week in an over-the-top Colorado mountain retreat.

The apartment was the best alternative to actually being at home, though.

They had done their due diligence and prepped the fuck out of the place. The only pronounced scent for Derek’s hyper-sensitive nose to deal with was Stiles’, and maybe the gentlest hints of pack. The kitchen was stocked with bland, mostly-meat meals for Derek and more varied (but no less pre-made) meals for Stiles. The place had been thoroughly cleaned with mild, chemical-free products and the temperature was pretty much tepid, the air circulating from the vents so gently even Rut-stuck Derek couldn’t hear the conditioning.

It definitely beat the stale, scent-neutral air of the hotels. Stiles was already planning to snag it for them again next year.

Or maybe it was time to just buy their own boring and expensive apartment. Maybe on the other side of town, well away from here, where Cora or Peter or Laura would be in residence for the same week.

“No, bad Stiles,” he muttered to himself as he closed out of the web browser before any real estate listings loaded and caught his eye, “I need to focus,”

He clicked back onto the page hosting the bare bones of the flier he was working on for Melissa. Well. He was supposed to be working on the flier, but he was finding it harder and harder to focus with each hour that passed.

He seriously could not wait for the tension to snap. Derek usually gave in to the haze of his Ruts by the second day, but this time he was being obstinate because he felt bad about ‘distracting Stiles from his work,’ or something equally absurd.

“Just get it done,” Stiles grumbled under his breath, staring at the screen, at a loss for how to proceed. He was pretty sure the words “ORA” and “fundraiser” were supposed to be on there somewhere. It
was perplexing that they weren’t; he was sure he’d included that earlier. Pretty sure. Maybe.

A low, dangerous growl rumbled through the apartment.

Stiles paused with his fingers over the keyboard. He craned his neck to stare at the open bedroom door expectantly.

The rumbling growl lasted a few more tense seconds before it petered off into an even tenser silence.

“Der?” Stiles called softly, “How we doing in there, big guy?”

There was the rustling of sheets and a short, gruff groan. Then silence.

With a disappointed sigh, Stiles returned his attention to the flier, his motivation at an all time low. It wasn’t like he had to get it done this week anyway. Melissa wouldn’t have the café ready for another major event for another month, at least and by now most people already knew about the fundraiser, considering there’d been five over the past three years. It was becoming a regular event at O.R. Gasm.

Course, this was Stiles’ first time as an organizer. Or rather, the primary organizer.

It was also the first year Danny and Lydia weren’t flying into town to help with preparations. At least Lydia would probably be there for the event itself, provided Peter didn’t piss her off again. She’d been gradually spending more and more time in NY as her on-again-off-again thing with Peter become longer stretches of on with the off periods brief enough that at least one of them was seriously considering marriage, maybe even mating. Eventually. Maybe.

The only thing Stiles knew for sure, was that Lydia’s priorities while in town over the past year were increasingly focused on Peter and decreasingly involved with the ORA campaign. Stiles would probably never know if that was an intentional way for her to give him more responsibility concerning the budding NY office or if that was just a happy coincidence related to her infatuation with the older alpha. Regardless, she wasn’t bothering to pretend to be organizing this time around, but still seemed intent on staying the two weeks surrounding the next fundraiser at the Pack House, Peter’s bed specifically even if she ended up kicking said alpha out of it. It had happened before, hilariously enough.

Still. She would be there to witness Stiles’ first solo-run event. Most likely.

He couldn’t decide if that was a relief or a stressor. The tenacious redhead had epically high standards, and they had started the campaign to reopen the New York ORA office together almost three years ago.

So no pressure.

Finishing his degree had been less stressful. Probably because he’d done it all online and the whole “social” part of “social sciences” had been admittedly lax. Now though, he was dealing with actual people. Like… in person. By now, he knew he made a far better professional impression through email than he did in person. Derek liked to argue with him about that, but he was biased.

Speaking of Derek.

“Hey there,” Stiles perked up as he spied Derek coming out of the bedroom.

His cheeky flirting was entirely lost on the alpha. Derek prowled across the room like a hunting predator, his red eyes hyper-focused on Stiles. He was naked and vividly, angrily hard, and what
kind of omega would he be if he didn’t take a moment to appreciate the sight.

Stiles was hard and slick-drenched by the time Derek reached the couch.

Derek wordlessly closed the laptop and tossed it to the far side of the couch. Stiles watched his work go flying with complete nonconcern as the alpha dropped to his knees and buried his face in the front of Stiles’ briefs.

Stiles took a harsh breath in surprise, his hands automatically digging into Derek’s hair. He could hear the alpha breathing deeply as he rubbed his nose into the apex of Stiles’ thigh and groin. A deep, satisfied growl vibrated through Derek’s upper body as he scented his mate with the single-minded focus of an alpha lost in Rut.

Oh, yeah. Stiles knew that sound.

Derek couldn’t fight down his instinct any longer. He was well and truly gone. Rut-drunk.

All thoughts of work vanished as Stiles spread his legs helpfully and gave an intentionally loud whimper. It was the one week of the year when Derek tended to ignore anything and everything Stiles said, but nothing got the alpha to respond better than some desperately needy noises.

With a pleased huff, Derek nipped his inner thigh fondly and shredded the underwear off his body. Literally. Stiles felt the gentle brush of claws parting cloth, and a second latter he was on the couch wearing nothing but one of Derek’s old t-shirts.

With a very hungry alpha between his legs.

“God,” Stiles whispered to himself as Derek bathed his balls with his tongue, lapping up slick and slowly making his way toward the heart of the mess.

His head fell back and he slumped into the couch. He might as well get comfortable, Derek tended to be a while whenever Rut sent him into this kind of mood.

Derek grabbed his butt with both hands and yanked him to the edge of the seat, then nudged one massive shoulder under a leg so he could get where he wanted. Stiles’ breathing picked up as the alpha slurped at his hole with greedy lips and insistent tongue.

“Fuck, yes—ugh!” Stiles gave a breathy sigh and closed his eyes as he tried to stave off orgasm. He didn’t want to come too soon, or else Derek might steamroll right over him when he was too sensitive to do anything about it. It had happened before, usually at least once each Rut, and Stiles seriously thought he might die from too much pleasure before reaching that beautiful plateau where his mind and body was floating in an uniquely overwhelmed sort of bliss.

Omegas in the know at O.R. Gasm called it a Rut High.

It weirded him out the first time, all those years ago when he’d still been insecure and terrified from the events that led to their mating. That first Rut had been intense and uniquely terrifying because he’d had close to no idea what to expect; it had snuck up on them so quickly after the official mating, he hadn’t even thought to ask Allison for pointers. At the end of it, he had felt miserably deficient over the fact he’d essentially turned into a ragdoll when his alpha had needed him most. He’d had no idea it was a natural omega reaction to Rut, allowing him to enjoy the overstimulation even when his body couldn’t possibly keep up with his mate’s lusts.

Thankfully, he’d had a reliably knowledgeable network of confidants by then. Allison had set him straight with much blushing, Melissa hanging on her every word at his side, since apparently it was
something omegas could only experience with their mate. Specifically, an alpha mate who could be trusted, truly and explicitly. Melissa couldn’t relate to that, sadly, but Allison and a couple other omegas he’d met through the café knew.

Stiles had never looked back since.

But no matter how nice Rut High could be, getting there could be tough on him, and it had never happened within the first day of Derek succumbing to his mating instincts. Then again, Derek usually eased into the more animalistic parts of his nature than he’d done this year.

Between his legs, Derek purred. Stiles didn’t just hear it, he felt it.

“Go easy on me, big guy,” Stiles moaned softly, knowing Derek wouldn’t pay him any mind.

Derek’s hands left his ass. One wrapped around the thigh resting over his shoulder and squeezed firmly. The fingers of his other hand immediately began prodding at his rim.

Stiles wasn’t as loose and swollen as he would if he were in Heat, but it was a close thing. Three days trapped in an enclosed space with a rutting alpha tended to have that affect on omegas. The fact that they were mates supposedly exaggerated it, Stiles’ body uniquely attuned to Derek’s hormonal urges; but Stiles had never serviced any alpha before he’d mated, so that was really just hearsay. Besides, even in Rut, Derek always went to lengths to avoid hurting Stiles, even minorly.

It made for consistently excellent sex. It also meant Derek was probably going to rip at least three orgasms from his meager human body before he finally fucked and knotted him.

He was hurtling toward No. One already, sooner than he’d hoped. Derek plucked at his rim with two fingers and his tongue, growling in a way that made Stiles’ untouched cock jump.

“Sooh! Gah—you! You’re gonna kill me!” Stiles giggled breathlessly as he rocked against Derek’s face. He suspected Derek’s beard—uncharacteristically unkempt for the week—would leave him red and all the more sensitive by the time he was done. It wouldn’t be the first time.

There was a sharp thrust of those fingers.

“Ugh!”

Then a soft pinch as Derek nipped at his rim.

“Oh!”

The noises coming from between his legs were downright obscene.

“Ah!” the cries were torn from his throat, coming out higher pitched and in quick success, “Ah!”

Derek’s answering growl was a clear, wordless demand. The muscles in his back and shoulders bunched and he seemed impossibly huge nestled down there, his face pressed close and wrecking absolute havoc. The alpha slurped and nibbled at him, adding another finger without pause as his mouth worked around the digits.

“Ah! Ah-ah-alpha!”

Stiles tumbled over the edge helplessly, writhing in Derek’s persistent hold. He painted the t-shirt and even got some of his thin spunk in Derek’s hair. When it was over, he fell boneless against the couch, panting.
Derek didn’t seem to notice, or maybe didn’t care. It was difficult to say when he was in this state.

“Yeah….” Stiles spoke weakly to no one in particular as he patted Derek’s shoulder in fond exhaustion, “That was nice. Good job,”

Derek ignored him. Stiles didn’t expect anything different, so he stretched his arms up and cupped his hands behind his skull, trying to relax and recover his breath before Derek inevitably got him hard again. After giving in to the Rut, Derek typically spent the first couple hours opening him up, sometimes lazily, but Stiles suspecting that wasn’t happening this year. So instead of twitching from over-sensitivity, Stiles closed his eyes and calmed down enough to enjoy the slowing swipes of Derek’s tongue and fingers before things got heavy again in a bit.

He wasn’t expecting the alpha to change up their regularly scheduled program.

“Woah!”

Stiles jerked in alarm when the alpha surged over him like a tidal wave. Instead of picking the omega up and making room for himself, Derek grabbed the backs of Stiles’ thighs and shoved him till Stiles’ back curled, ass in the air and shoulders jammed into the couch. Derek got one knee on the couch, the other foot braced on the floor, and that was that.

“Derek!” Stiles screamed as his mate’s cock shoved inside and wasted no time pounding him into the furniture.

Stiles had zero leverage like this. He was super sensitive and he hadn’t been mentally prepared to get straight to it. Derek’s cock filled every hidden corner of him regardless, and the second orgasm it forced from him was so soon—too soon—that his cock didn’t even have time to harden.

It was unusual. Derek didn’t usually get so over-eager, even in Rut. It left Stiles lax, utterly useless and senseless as his body and mind thrummed on cloud nine.

He was jolted out of his pleasure-induced stupor, not quite Rut High, when Derek abruptly pulled out and just as quickly flipped Stiles onto his belly. Stiles grunted as Derek mounted him again. The force of his next few thrusts fucked them out of position enough that Stiles’ knees slid off the couch, and then Derek had him bent over the couch cushion as he shoved forward once, twice, and on the third thrust Stiles nearly cried in relief at the tell-tale swelling of the first knot for this Rut.

From there, it only took a few short, almost desperate thrusts before they were tied and then Stiles had an incredibly pleased and cuddly alpha snuggling into his back. Stiles grumbled in complaint as Derek’s weight pinned him down. Eventually, the alpha pulled back enough to get his arms around the omega’s middle and resituate them.

Which was how Stiles found himself stuck in Derek’s lap on the floor, his computer just out of reach.

“Next time,” Stiles sighed and bared his neck helpfully as Derek’s mouth sought out his mating bite. After all this time, the scar was so faint it was easily overlooked entirely by people who didn’t know it was there, “Next time, let’s try to land this plane a little better, huh? I’m thinking the bed, but within arm’s reach of the laptop would be cool too, okay?”

Predictably, Derek showed no sign of hearing him, just kept gnawing gently on his neck.

“Or the jacuzzi would work too,” Stiles mused aloud.

He usually loved knotting—there were few things more intimate and cozy—but it was an entirely different experience during Rut. There were no post-coital whispers of praise and endearment in his
ear, and more often than not, Derek would spend the ensuing knots sleeping. Not right now, though. Right now, he was too pent-up from ignoring his desire for the first few days of the Rut.

Sure enough, Derek’s first knot had barely finished deflating before the alpha tried to lift him up and down on his cock again.

“Mmm,” Stiles arched and struggled to get his feet on the floor around Derek’s manhandling so he could help them move, “It’s gonna be like that, huh sourwolf?”

In almost no time at all, Stiles was hard and bouncing eagerly in the alpha’s lap, Derek’s encouraging growls loud in his ear.

When the second knot locked in place, Derek’s arms enveloped him in a near-bruising hug before he tilted them to the side and laid them down on the incredibly thick carpet.

“Bed, Derek,” Stiles murmured even as he snuggled deeper into the alpha’s body, “Next time, we do it in bed,”

Thankfully, Derek didn’t insist on going again immediately. The alpha fell into a light doze and stayed there long enough that Stiles was able to hop up, use the bathroom, tip-toe around the sleeping alpha to grab his laptop, and settle himself in bed. He even managed to add a couple important elements to the flier before he heard Derek make sleepy, mildly irritated noises in the other room.

“In here, alpha,” Stiles’ voice was barely more than a whisper; he knew from experience that yelling anything other than pleasured moans tended to aggravate the alpha.

Stiles hit ‘Save’ just as Derek snagged his ankles and dragged him down the middle of the bed.

“Hello again,” Stiles grinned and set his work aside as Derek inserted himself between his thighs.

The alpha’s face was especially scowl-y as he fitted them together again. He grumbled unhappily at Stiles, probably still bothered from waking up alone, and promptly buried his face in Stiles’ chest. The omega gasped at the sensation of Derek’s beard raking his nipples. The nubs weren’t painfully sensitive like they were during Heat, thank God, but it was still a bit of a shock. Some shadowy corner of Derek’s brain must have realized that, because the unhappy grumble turned to a sympathetic whine and he started laving at the scratched teat with gentle licks.

“Ooooh!” Stiles moaned appreciatively, hugging Derek’s head to encourage him.

The whole while, the alpha kept fucking into him in slow but forceful rolls of his hips. Their bodies were so tightly pressed that each thrust sent Stiles’ cock sliding across Derek’s incredible abs. Stiles clenched down just to hear Derek groan, and the resultant push at his insides sent a sharp thrill of delight up his own spine.

Above him, Derek went still for a moment.

Stiles whined, tugging at him with fingers in the alpha’s hair and legs winding around his waist.

An excited hum thumbed up from Derek’s throat. Stiles felt him shift his knees and brace his forearms on either side of his head, then Derek set about fucking the ever-loving brains out of his head. The alpha pounded into him, his thick chest rumbling with animal satisfaction every time Stiles wailed in pleasure.

Derek stayed low, their bodies tight together in a way that kept Stiles’ cock thumping between them wonderfully. Stiles didn’t need much there—he was a pro at coming on his alpha’s cock, always had
been—but it was a delicious sensation all the same. He came hard, stars bursting behind his eyes. When his limbs fell boneless and heavy to the bed, Derek lifted enough to relieve the pressure on Stiles’ wrung-out cock.

That was as far as his consideration went.

Stiles closed his eyes and let his mind wandered to that blissfully sated and warm place that usually graced him for only moments after an orgasm. But now? Thanks to the Rut? With Derek still moving so powerfully and desperate inside him, with so many orgasms so freshly flooding his system, it was easier than ever to lounge there, high on sex and the secure knowledge that he was taking care of (and in turn, taken care of by) his alpha. All he had to do was relax in this state somewhere between sleep and a perpetually looming orgasm, and let Derek overwhelm his body with beautifully intense sensation.

Stiles had never been high in the traditional sense of the term, but this… this was wonderful.

Wonderful, but also impossible to track anything when Rut High. So Stiles wasn’t all that surprised to find he’d gone from actively getting fucked half to death to leisurely lounging in the span of a heartbeat. He usually came down much more gradually, but not if something was incessant and non-sexual enough to pull him out of it.

In this case, ‘something’ was Derek poking a forkful of chicken alfredo at his lips with a look of such deep concentration on his face that was comical.

Stiles lifted his chin with a smirk and reached for the fork, “You forgot to heat that up, big guy,”

Derek huffed and nudged the fork toward his face halfheartedly, “Eat,”

“Ah, he speaks!” Stiles let his eyes goes wide as he took the fork and Tupperware container from Derek. The alpha was normally so stingy with his words to begin with, so Rut tended to be a practice in entirely none-lingual communication for both of them as Derek’s mind and body sank deeper into his wolfen instincts. A single word here or there wasn’t completely out of the question though.

“Thanks for reminding me to eat,” Stiles commented for his own benefit as Derek followed him into the kitchen like a lost pup.

Derek’s broad palms smoothed over his hips from behind as Stiles popped the meal into the microwave. The alpha ran his hands up his sides then down again, lower over his flanks and lazily dragging back up and around. Derek passed over his backside with a gentle caress but dug his fingers deeper as he came up the omega’s back.

Stiles bit his tongue to keep from moaning at the pressure—he didn’t want to encourage anything more until he’d gotten some food in his stomach.

A soft kiss landed over his mating scar and Derek nuzzled him with a sweet little pur that Stiles had never heard during Rut before. It was perfectly affectionate and not at all sexy or expectant.

Derek breathed in his ear, kissing him again, “Eat,”

With a start, Stiles realized the microwave was beeping at him in that chipper way it had when it felt it was being ignored after completing a job. Stiles rescued his dinner and set it on the counter, ready to eat it standing right there, with Derek snuggling against his back.

With Derek fucking purring against his back.
The alpha stepped closer till he was flush against Stiles’ back. His cock was hard and hot, but entirely content to just press against the globes of the omega’s ass. There was more purring and nuzzling, and Derek sounded inordinately pleased about something. He sure was talking an awful lot, for a supposedly Rut-drunk alpha.

Stiles paused in his chewing, startling himself with a sudden thought, then deliberately finished the bite and cleared his throat as he stirred the remaining pasta.

Derek kissed his neck again, his hands rubbing gently over every bit of Stiles he could reach.

“Hey, Derek?” Stiles said calmly, his thoughts racing to conclusions.

Somewhat surprisingly, Derek answered, “Yeah?”

“I think your Rut’s ending early this year,”

Derek froze, the peculiar purr interrupted, then resumed cuddling with an unconcerned hum.

Stiles considered that carefully. Derek was certainly speaking more than he was normally prone to during Rut, especially four days into it. And that goddamn purr…

Derek kissed his shoulder with an open-mouthed, sucking smack of his lips, “Mmm. Taste good,”

Almost experimentally, Stiles wiggled his butt till the alpha’s cock slipped into his cleft.

Derek growled playfully, arms going tight around the omega’s middle. He gave a little thrust and nipped at Stiles’ ear, whispering huskily, “Done?”

Stiles stabbed the fork into the remaining pile of pasta and chicken, “Yeah, I’m done,”

Before Stiles felt he’d properly pronounced the period at the end of that sentence, Derek scooped him up. Carrying him bridal-style, Derek hustled back to the bedroom. He settled the omega in the middle of the bed and Stiles wondered if he was imagining the extra care the alpha gave the act. Probably. Maybe.

He didn’t get to dwell on it for long. Not just then, anyway. Derek reclaimed his place between Stiles’ thighs with an eager growl and he didn’t wait for further permission before slotting his cock home.

It was a sign of how close they were to the end of the Rut that Derek held his gaze more often than not, and the affection staring back at him nearly made him weep. Stiles stared up at the burning red eyes of his mate and felt himself go breathless from the mere sight of him, his beautiful, perfect alpha.

When Derek knotted him, Stiles didn’t have to revisit his hyper-active thoughts from the kitchen. The alpha settled on top of him with a relieved sigh and between one blink and the next, his red eyes faded to their normal, gorgeous green. And Stiles knew.

There was only one reason an alpha’s Rut would be so short and sweet.

He reached up to run his fingers over Derek’s scalp and the alpha leaned into the touch with a small smile.

“Hey, alpha,” he whispered.

“Hey, omega,” Derek looked down at him with sleepy, human eyes.
“I think you’re done,” Stiles smiled sweetly, tugging him down for a kiss.

Derek obliged with a low moan of agreement, sighing almost wistfully against his lips, “Yeah. I think you’re right,”

“My last Heat was pretty short too, remember,”

“Mmm,” the alpha gave Stiles more of his weight, settling in to scent his mate for the duration of the knot.

Derek’s unenthused reaction was understandable; the guy was barely out of Rut, and his brain probably wasn’t fully back up to speed for fairly large leaps of human logic. And really, there was nothing special about a particularly short Heat, either. The first year of their mating had seen significant improvement in that area, and while he did tend to have unusually intense Heats, they were almost always less than three days by now, with even an occasional 10-hour Heat here or there. This last Heat had barely hit the national average of 14 hours.

It wasn’t a big deal.

Not on its own, anyway.

Stiles couldn’t quite keep the mischievous smirk off his face as he asked mildly, “I don’t suppose now’s a good time to tell you I haven’t bothered taking my birth control in a couple months,”

On top of him, Derek froze. Then Stiles felt the air blast the side of his throat as it rushed out of the alpha’s lungs like the organs had been punctured. Derek pulled up abruptly and stared down at Stiles with wet eyes.

God, but the hopeful joy in those eyes could just melt his mushy omega heart right then and there.

“Are you…?” Derek gaped at him. Jaw unhinged, tongue loose. Stiles had never seen his mate with such an expression, “Stiles, are you saying… you think you’re pregnant?”

And there were the cry-baby tears he still hadn’t grown out off. He’d held off on the waterworks by pointedly NOT dwelling on this possible new reality, but now there was no use trying. His vision blurring fast, Stiles grinned and nodded.

Damn it all. He was too busy sappy-crying to see the look on his alpha’s face. He raised a hand to clear his eyes and found Derek’s bearded cheek in the way.

The alpha kissed him.

It was easily the least refined, most unsexy kiss they’d ever shared. Just a hard smash of their lips against one another, pressing, pressing, pressing in the longest moment as shared tears of unbridled emotion matted the scruff of Derek’s beard. It was messy and choking and slightly uncomfortable.

And it was perfect.

Derek broke the kiss with a gasp for air that ended with a roaring laugh.

Stiles couldn’t help his own giggle that burst out as he finally wiped the overwhelming happiness from his eyes. He’d barely caught his breath when it was stolen from him again by the sight of Derek’s expression, so full of joy and excitement in a way that was rare to see on the alpha’s stern face.
“I love you,” Stiles whispered, more for himself than for Derek.

The alpha heard him though. Of course, he did. Derek always heard him. Derek kissed him soundly, teeth nipping at his lip in exuberance, “And I love you, my omega. My Stiles,”

As the alpha dove to bite and tease at his mating scar with a playful growl, Stiles had the surreal feeling like everything was right in the world. It was a foreign feeling, to be sure, almost indescribable in the way it lit him up from the inside like a bubbling warmth that was the dawning realization that there was nothing more he could ever want. He’d been fighting for so long, always against something, be it Kate Argent’s ghost, his own biology, or the education and authority he’d earned by rights and defended every step of the way.

For once, there was nothing but resolution. Relief, or maybe a sense of peace.

He had everything, maybe not how or when he’d imagined it when he was younger, but he had it all just the same. And so much more.

He had a degree. He had the beginning of a worthwhile career. He had the most supportive, amazing mate. And if they were very, very lucky and Stiles’ intuition was as strong as his suspicions, he was about to have a perfect little wolf-baby.

Derek’s wolf-baby.

He had it all, and he’d earned it, despite the varied degrees of unfairness involved in the achievement.

There was nothing he could ever want more from life.

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