Home, Sweet Home

by Useless_girl

Summary

A few years after defeating Gerard with the McCall pack (which had mostly scattered with time), Stiles had decided to settle in San Francisco as a successful detective. But a much needed visit to his dad back in Beacon Hills and an unexpected guest in the house changes everything in the two weeks he stays at home on their couch.
Note: This started out as a roleplay on Facebook, but grew into something massive and we thought with my writing partner that it would deserve to be turned into a Sterek fanfiction, so here we are. Enjoy the first part of the “Home Is Where the Spark Is” series!

Note 2: Since we’re continuously writing the story, the tags might change with time.

Note 3: We’ve put together a double album soundtrack for those who like to have some background music while reading. You can download it from HERE.

Fandoms: Teen Wolf, Sterek

Characters/relationships: Stiles Stilinski/Derek Hale, Sheriff Noah Stilinski, Lydia Martin, Melissa McCall, Alan Deaton, Scott McCall, other TW characters, original characters

Rating/category: R (explicit), supernatural AU, post-Teen Wolf, canon and non-canon elements, slash, M/M, Sterek, aged up characters, established friendship, Spark Stiles, Magic Stiles, Emissary Stiles, Emissary in training Stiles, detective Stiles, matured Stiles, Alpha Derek, switch Derek, switch Stiles, occasional light BDSM and Dom/sub relationship, drama, epic romance, love, hurt/comfort, angst, dark, violence, fighting, magic, blood, gore, rough sex, heat cycle, dubious consent, accidental biting, PTSD, panic attacks, insanity, fluff, smut, knotting, soulmates, Mate bond, Emissary bond, Derek has a daughter, domestic life, werewolves, demons, witches, witchcraft, druids, rituals, pack building, supernatural creatures, humor, wit, sarcasm, Derek is Derek, Stiles is Stiles, miscommunication, werewolf lore, mysteries

Summary: A few years after defeating Gerard with the McCall pack (which had mostly scattered with time), Stiles had decided to settle in San Francisco as a successful detective. But a much needed visit to his dad back in Beacon Hills and an unexpected guest in the house changes everything in the two weeks he stays at home on their couch.

Disclaimer: This is a product of our imagination and was written only for entertainment and fun. We don’t profit from this fanfiction and we mean no harm or disrespect against any real person, culture or custom that might appear in the story. All original pictures and fictional characters used in the story belong to their respective owners and credit goes to them.
Driving down the familiar streets after being away for months always felt strange for Stiles. Once he used to know every rock, every house, every fence and car around his neighborhood. But each time he visited, he immediately saw the changes. A new house being built, another getting torn down. Shops closing or reopening as something completely different than before. Kids growing up, others disappearing. Life was constantly changing. It was the law of the Universe or something. Everything and everyone was always changing.

He has changed too during the last few years. Since graduation, since college and his training. Everything that had happened before all that... all the adventures, the danger, the fights, his possession and near mental break down... the deaths and sacrifices... although terrible, those huge changes have helped Stiles to take steps towards the man he wanted to become. Not necessarily the blabbermouth powerless human he used to be. Damn, he knew that he had gotten lucky that he had survived all that and came out of it more or less sane! They all were. Well, at least those who did survive.

He often thought of the ones they had lost during the years. To death and to distance. Although Stiles threw himself into his studies then work to keep his mind busy and to focus on something he could do to make the world a better place, after a long shift or on a day off, he still wondered how things could’ve been if things went differently. There was so much pain, but good moments too. Love, friendship, companionship... And some he did let die himself. In other cases, he let distance make him drift away from others. Like his friends. Lydia, Liam, at times even Scott.

Like Derek. He stayed a sore spot for him. Even today. Because there was something... special between them. Or at least that’s what Stiles thought for a while. But Derek disappeared again. Without a word. It left a bitter taste in his mouth each time he thought about it. He blamed himself for this too, though. Maybe if he said something when he could. But... as they say, it was water under the bridge...

There was only one person with whom he always stayed close with and in contact. His dad. The
good Sheriff Stilinski. Each time he was on his way home for a visit, Stiles had a smile on his face when he thought about him. Poor man. He not only had to put up with raising a little shit like him alone while fighting crime, he also had to deal with the supernatural forces wreaking havoc in town time after time. Stiles was so proud of him, though. Not many would have taken up that task to help wherever he could and come out of it in one piece. In their case, the apple certainly didn’t fall far from its tree...

His trip down memory lane was ended as he finally pulled up with his jeep to the driveway. For a moment he just sat there, listening to the sound of the cooling engine, the familiar chirping of the birds, inhaling the fresh air that blew in through the rolled down window and let the feeling of being home fill him, warm his heart. It felt good and calming each time.

Then the young man got out of the car in his white tee, black leather jacket, dark jeans and Converse sneakers to retrieve his duffel bag from the trunk.

“Honey, I’m home!” he yelled once he closed the front door behind him, soon being greeted with a bone-crushing hug from the surprised Noah.

“Son! What a nice surprise! What are you doing here?” he asked patting Stiles’ back a few times.

“Oh... did I forget to mention I’ll visit? Otherwise missed you too,” Stiles giggled mischievously just when some movement caught his eye from the corridor that led to the kitchen. It made him frown lightly and he got more on alert. “Hmm... do you have some shy lady friend over, dad? Because if not, I think we might not be alone...” he murmured into his father’s ear then let him go, his right hand slowly starting to inch under his leather-jacket where his gun was holstered.

"I should shave my legs then," a low voice rumbled from the doorway where Derek was leaning against it. At first he had been planning on hightailing upstairs but it was unavoidable to see him since the wolf was staying in the human's old room. One he no doubt was going to need for the few days he was going to stay over. But of course Stiles had to notice movement so that plan had been quickly abandoned.

It had been at Derek’s request Noah hadn’t told Stiles over the phone, he needed time to heal and hadn't want to deal with curious eyes or calls yet. Lydia knew, of course, she was the mother of his child after all, and Scott. Not that McCall had been very welcoming. He had been happy to see Derek, had given a big old hug and warm chatter until the pack came up. In no uncertain terms he had been told by the true alpha that he was not to bother Liam or any of the pack. He wasn't even here to bother anybody. Beacon Hills had been the one place to go, where his loft was. Though that had quickly turned out to be a mistake. He had needed sleep, too much of it, he hadn't been able to take care of himself, let alone his daughter.

It was the Sheriff who had suggested for Derek and Elizabeth to move in for a while, since he had been a man alone and had wanted to help. With some reluctance, the Hale had accepted, because again, he didn't want to be a bother, not even to Noah. The first weeks had been rough, he slept more than he had been awake, his healing had been stunted, nightmares plagued him. And Noah had been a rock through it all, along with Melissa. The last week has been good, finally. Healing had returned, he could be awake the usual hours, eating had gone great. Derek was the first to admit he had lost more weight than he cared to, but he looked healthy at least.

The grey in his beard and the changed body were the outward changes he had gone through, the ones others noticed. Ones Stiles no doubt noticed. His pale green eyes took in the youngest Stilinski, and he couldn't help the amused snort.
"Taking a page from the Derek Hale dress code?" Stiles was dressed exactly the way Derek had been when they had met for the first time but it didn't look like he was playing dress up. The leather was old and worn, the sneakers obviously walked in, and he was taller. Nearly the same height as Derek. College life had treated the human well. Not a college kid anymore though.

Stiles froze the second he heard that familiar voice and the mysterious shadow took the form of Derek. He even had to force his mouth closed after a few long moments while he quickly sized up his father's guest. No witty comment, just staring shocked. He hasn't seen Derek for years by then. And for some reason those years had taken a toll on the werewolf. How was it possible that he looked... older? Slimmer? Like someone who went through hell and just stepped on the path of recovery? Oh man, they will have to explain so many things to him and his sharp brown eyes promised a grilling session for Derek too.

Though it wasn't just his changed appearance or that interesting dark/haunted look in his eyes that have rendered Stiles momentarily speechless. It was also the way his heart had suddenly decided that it was a good idea to go all haywire on him. (Probably not a secret for the super wolf hearing.) Gaping for another second or two, he tried to quickly control himself with a deep breath, his mind suddenly kicking back in gear, getting flooded by questions he needed answers to. Right now.

"Sourwolf?! Well, as much as it'd be hilarious to see you with shaved legs... what are you doing here? What is he doing here?!" he turned back to his father as he babbled in his usual fast way, looking from one man to the other. "And why haven't you told me he was back? Bad dad, very bad dad!" he lightly slapped the older Stilinski's upper-arm. "And in no circumstances am I copying your style. Leather and jeans are always in style and not exclusive to the mysterious brooding bad boys running around town!" he raised his chin a bit, waving Derek off with a hand.

For some reason Noah found the situation hilarious, because he dared to laugh in the face of his son's mighty wrath. The bastard!

"Sorry, son, I was asked not to say anything to anyone, really. He needed some help and a place to stay at and I offered it," the Sheriff shrugged and waved for the men to follow him to the kitchen for some beers.

"Oh noooo, nonono! You won't get off the hook so easily, old man!" Stiles snorted as he abandoned his duffel bag by the door and trailed after his dad, pausing only to narrow his eyes and point his long index-finger at Derek. "And you... you have a lot of explaining to do, Mr. Wolf-man..." Then he walked down the corridor to catch up with Noah. "Please tell me that my room isn't a wolf den now with Derek's scent and clothes all over everything?!"

For a moment, Stiles had stared at him intensely and Derek was half-expecting a remark concerning his looks. It was seen, it was noted, there was curiosity about it but not an actual word mentioned about it. Many seemed to avoid it, none said outright that he looked like shit. They were thinking it though. Maybe it was part pity, or maybe they weren't sure if he was ready to hear it, which meant he still looked sickly enough to be on the side of caution when dealing with him. The questions were going to come, it was Stiles, he was not known to leave anything be.

The familiar heart racing at the sight of him made him look down briefly to hide a secret smile. Like everything with this particular human, the heartbeat was irregular, hard to pin down for the werewolf. It skipped beats even when there was no talking so he couldn't always be sure of lies. At first Derek had thought it to be some kind of heart disease but he had learned from Melissa years ago that it was due to the ADD medication. It had some side effects, one of them being the weird
beating of the heart, the quicker beat. Though he had heard it being steady too, it usually raced around him. Even after all this time he still made the human nervous.

"Hmmm." It was all he really said to the style defense because years ago he recalled Stiles mentioning how Derek was making a little leather-clad wolf biker gang of his own. Leather was warm when needed to be, not too hot in early spring, it protected against rain and was tough enough to not rip when running around in the woods. It was practical, and clearly the human being cop now realized it. "I asked him to not tell you, I wasn't ready for anybody to know so stop hassling your old man."

"What he said!" Noah readily agreed, probably just so he could avoid playing twenty questions with Stiles. They went to the kitchen and Derek followed with a shrug. "I've been staying in your room but I'll clean out soon, after I've rolled around in your bed some more with my scent." He could sleep on the floor in the guest room which had been turned into his daughter's own little paradise. Lots of pink and princess stuff.

The Sheriff was still amused, handing them their beers with a snort as he sat down, giving Derek a pointed look to do the same. Right. Sitting down one a chair, he unscrewed the top of the bottle, tossing the cap on the table. "You might want to air the room out, Stiles. I've been living here for about two months now, your pillow is all saturated with my scent."

"Fiine, finee!" Stiles finally threw his hands in the air and rolled his eyes as he sat down and opened his own beer too, taking a quick sip. "I should have gotten used to you two always trying to keep me in the dark. And you two should have gotten used to the fact that I always find things out one way or another..." he pulled his mouth into a wide smile, taking another sip.

Which he nearly spit out from the very vivid image of Derek rolling around in his bed – for some reason all naked in his mind – to mark it with his scent. It wasn't exactly an... unpleasant image in Stiles’ opinion and it made him swallow hard once the beer went down and he stopped lightly coughing. His room. Full of Derek's scent. That was something he secretly wanted to check right away, but he stomped down on that urge in favor of staring at said man with slightly moving eyes, as if mapping out all the smaller changes on his face which the half-lit corridor hid before.

They had to talk. Something was... off about Derek.

"Nah, man, I'm gonna sacrifice myself and sleep on the couch in the living room until YOU air out my room and wash my pillows and cover and sheet, Mr. Room Thief," he tried to keep the conversation light, for a change not sure how to ask Derek. It's been years, after all. Things have changed. Things have happened to both of them. Stiles might be... well, Stiles, but he knew that they just couldn't go back to how things were before Derek's disappearance then Stiles moving out of town. Those years could be felt between them in the air. Like an invisible gap. The old Stiles would've shot at least a dozen questions at Derek about his state in hopes of getting at least a sentence long answer to like three of those questions. But now Stiles hesitated...

"You can wash your own sheets, you're kicking me out of my room." Though the wolf wondered if this was a way to keep Derek in bed without acknowledging the fact, he looked like he needed a bed more than a couch.

"Your room? What?! Are you the new Stiles-substitute now that I don't live here on a regular basis anymore?" Stiles gaped and looked at the quite amused Sheriff. "Dad, is Derek your new son? You finally did abandon me and adopted him?" he made his lips quiver and his eyes big like a puppy who was just kicked.
"Stiiles...." the older Stilinski sighed and rolled his eyes again. "Of course not."

"You better! I worked hard on keeping you alive while I was growing up. I deserve better. Have you been eating enough vegetables and fruits? Not too much red meat and fries, right?" he put his elbows on the table, putting the Sheriff under his scrutiny too, as if he was a suspect during an interrogation.

Derek noticed that as much as Stiles was attempting to hide his curiosity by not asking anything, the way he time after time looked at him closely betrayed him. It was like he was trying to put the Hale under a scope to make out all the differences and dissect him to find out the answers to all his questions. Unfortunately, those sharp eyes never missed details and he was known for connecting the dots quicker than anybody else. Already he had noted that playing twenty questions in his old hardheaded way wasn't going to work.

He had changed. Stiles normally wouldn't realize his questions would make Derek feel uncomfortable, he'd plow right on ahead without regards until he'd realize midway he was being an ass. Maybe he had learned to be more subtle? The idea made him smirk around the sip of beer, hiding it mostly thanks to the bottle. Stiles Stilinski and subtle, those two just didn't match, ever. But Derek appreciated the more cautious approach to it all. This wasn't something he was ready to be steamrolled about.

One thing people close to him knew about Sheriff Stilinski was that not much could get past him when he paid attention. And now he was looking between the other two before he felt like he needed to throw in a few questions of his own to take the spotlight off their guest. For now. The Sheriff saved the moment of possible PTSD rearing its ugly head by interfering, dragging the attention back to the prodigal son. God knows Noah had seen enough triggers happening to know when he needed to do some prevention. It still made Derek grumble inwardly, the fact somebody felt he needed to jump to his rescue, to be fragile enough to need said help.

"By the way, son, how come you popped up so unannounced? You usually let me know in advance when you come for a visit. And how long will you stay?" he asked then drank a bit.

"Sure, to give you time to clean out your lady friends before I barge in the front door to something I don't want to see," Stiles turned his attention to his father. "One time I don't call to surprise you and instead of some frisky cougars this welcomes me home?!" he gestured with an over-dramatic move towards Derek and the whole situation. "Oh well, I've learned my lesson, dad. Next time I'll call," he sighed with a fake pained expression, which only made Noah roll his eyes and chuckle a bit.

"Otherwise I have a few weeks off. Order of my big boss," he saluted with two fingers against his forehead.

"Is everything okay at work?" the Sheriff asked with a light frown. "You never go on such long vacations..."

"Correction: I never take a day off. That seems to be the problem. Who would've thought that they don't like workaholics at the police?!! Outrageous..." he muttered to himself. "But nah, all is fine. We just finished a few... difficult cases. I actually convinced myself that some time off will be good for me too," he shrugged, stealing a few glimpses of Derek while he was talking. Like someone who still couldn't really believe he was there.

Intensely listening to the father/son interaction, Derek felt those whiskey-colored eyes land on him often, as he carefully avoided to look at Stiles directly. "I'm sure they frown upon somebody
working 24 hours a day, even when the overtime isn't paid."

A few weeks off. Did that mean Stiles was going to be spending those weeks here? Weeks of Stiles. Sure the younger man was no doubt going to meet up with friends to catch up. Lydia and Scott were still mostly here in Beacon Hills. But he wasn't working and Derek wasn't working so they were going to spend a lot of time together. Weeks with Stiles...

Mouth suddenly achingly dry, he took a big sip of the bitter beer as Noah beamed at Stiles.

"Glad to have you here, kiddo. You're staying here those weeks right? To spy on my food intake, make my life miserable at the station and talk my ears off?"

"A big fat yes to all of the above, father of mine. And I didn't miss how you tried to avoid answering my question. I'll cook tomorrow then," he announced, making Noah raise a brow and open his mouth to ask. "Yes, I can put together a decent meal, thank you very much. You both look like you need one," he cut in before his father could utter a single word.

"But why isn't he in the guest room? Why is he nesting in mine? What's with his loft?" Stiles suddenly flashed a suspicious glance at Derek, trying to put things together. "Don't tell me there's another pup in the guest room..." he drummed his slender fingers against the table top a few times. "You both are acting highly secretive and suspicious. So..." he paused perhaps for more effect but also to look more serious. "What were you up to in the past few years, Derek?" he finally asked the question that was on his mind the second he saw the familiar figure emerge from the shadows.

Weeks with Derek under the same roof... That... might be interesting. And complicated. But even the possibility made his pulse quicken again while he tried to focus on getting some real answers without beating around the bush anymore.

The duo was so alike in their mother hen ways, it showed now. Noah didn't correct Stiles on his eating even though the past weeks he had been making sure Derek was the one to eat well. Sure, there had been fries and red meats but also fruit and vegetables. And take out. He had a feeling Noah was going to attempt to hide the pizza boxes from yesterday as soon as he was able. Because those boxes weren't safe from the newly minted detective even when they were in the trash bin. Yeah, he could imagine the freak out commencing if Stiles discovered those. He sneak ed a glance to the older man, who was pointedly ignoring to look at him, which made them both look like they were caught with their hands in the cookie jar.

And of course he was suddenly involved with the food discussion as well. Why did he have a feeling Stiles' new mission in life was fattening up Derek Hale? The Sheriff looked mildly relieved, no doubt having made the same kind of conclusion. Traitor. He narrowed his eyes at the older man who only, again, made a show out of not looking at him. Just wait, he was going to make sure to sick Stiles on his father, because he wasn't going to be suffering the nagging alone.

Oh god. Derek flashed Stiles a look when he asked if there was another pup in the guest room, again looking like he had made a grab for the cookie jar. How was it that the youngest in the room made the rest of them feel like naughty kids?

"I needed time to heal, Stiles. That's why I came back to Beacon Hills." Sort of. There hadn't been any other place he could have gone to to get help. Stiles was looking at him expectantly but Derek waited for him to drop the bomb as he was sipping from his beer. Because he deserved that much.

"My daughter is in the guest room." It didn't fully explain what he had been up to exactly. But
some of it. "I have a daughter, with Lydia." Of course he was aware of Stiles' former crush on the redhead, but he had no idea there was a crush related to him as well. Honestly, he had figured his stupid fascination with the human had been completely one-sided and he had given up on that years ago.

The spray of beer reached as far as the middle of the table as Stiles literally spit it out all of a sudden, feeling like someone just hit him in the head with a crowbar while pushing him under a cold shower. He suspected that timing this information while he was drinking was Derek's intention all along. Yes, he was still Derek. Broody Sourwolf with his short sentences and giving out a minimal amount of information about himself.

As Stiles wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, he started hearing white noise, like when your brain closes out the outside world before starting to faint. No, he wasn't going to faint, but this... Well, he never would've expected such an explanation. It completely took him off-guard.

His amber-colored eyes lowered to the table, but he made no attempt to wipe its top off. Neither did the other two men as an uncomfortable silence fell onto the kitchen. Stiles used that to try to pull himself together and push down the feelings of pain, disappointment and betrayal. His heart skipped a few beats again, but this time from the surprising intensity of these emotions.

Not that he had any right to feel that way. But knowing that his two biggest crushes had a baby together while he was away... it was a punch into the gut. Especially since it was probably painfully obvious for Derek too a few years back how Stiles used to run after Lydia. (Heck, they even shared a few kisses at one point.) Until some unknown feelings... some strange attraction has started growing inside him for the brooding man sitting opposite him. And as he finally looked up – only some of that pain reflecting in his eyes – he knew. He just knew that this hurt this much because those feelings were still there. The ones not even Scott knew about. No, his crush on Derek was something he hid deeply, knowing that nothing would come out of it anyway. He thought he had buried it deep enough. Apparently not.

"Wow... a kid... with Lydia... I guess congratulation is in order," he swallowed hard and forced a light tone and a suspiciously cheery smile on his face. "Didn't see that coming. At all. You as a father. And Lydia... I never caught a drift of you two... Not that it would be any of my business," his speaking sped up a bit, as if his frozen mind began working again. "This explains why the guest room is occupied and validates your right to my room. I'll take the couch," he said, but somehow his voice still came out a tiny bit flat. "Anyways... how old is she? And what's her name? I hope you didn't choose something weird for that poor child..."

At first, the way Stiles had choked on the sip of beer had been giving him a pleased kind of feeling. Until the emotions of the young human hit him full on long before his behavior could. With how they were all sitting around the table in a smaller room, the chemo signals hard to avoid, an inhale was all it really took. Stiles felt crushed. Shockingly crushed. If Derek had known the feelings of love for Lydia hadn't been over, that the former fascination hadn't been as former, he wouldn't have said it like this. Guilt settled in his stomach, it made him look down so he didn't have to watch Stiles come to terms with the new information.

This was why he avoided making connections. He absolutely failed at it, managed to foil any attempt at normal interactions. The silence stretched on for a moment too long, making his faux pas even more of a blunder as nobody seemed to know how to break through this. The human attempted to, with a fake smile which never quite reached his eyes, the tone of voice light but the werewolf could detect the slight tremor to it.
"It's not... we're not... She offered to surrogate for me. She's still single."

At least his voice sounded even as he said it, because he didn't want Stiles to know she was single. He didn't want to be the reason those two would get together and he didn't want to watch from the sidelines as that would develop. Not that it mattered. Stiles was still in love with her, he never stood a chance. It was Lydia Martin after all. A petite red-haired female with high intelligence and sharp senses – as sharp as her tongue. It was why he had agreed to her being the mother, because she brought good genes even though their daughter was a mini Derek and didn't look like Lydia at all. "Elizabeth, her name's Elizabeth Laura Hale. And she's..."

Great, explaining her age would mean latching into what happened. And Noah wasn't much help because he was watching this train wreck happen with a grimace on his face, like he was watching a boxing match to see where the blows would land. "She's a toddler," the sheriff provided.

"Kind of." Derek’s tone suggested it was complicated, because that's usually what happened with Derek. It was complicated. "I can sleep in her room, just... give me a day to get a decent mattress."

"Son..." Noah protested, because last time Derek had gone into town, it hadn't gone all that great. But Derek was tired of hiding in the house, so he nodded at the older man. It was fine, he could do it. "At least take Stiles with you tomorrow," the sheriff continued. It wasn't as much a suggestion as it was an order.

"Good for Lydia... I guess. If that's what she wants," Stiles said a bit unsure and quite confused from the way Derek found it important to say it out that she was still single. Not that it would concern Stiles as he considered Lydia just a friend for long years now. "And... it was very nice of her to offer to carry... your child..." he ran a hand through his already unruly hair, making it look even messier. "But... how... why... I mean..." Stiles paused for a moment. "I never saw you as a father figure with all the brooding and all... What made you decide to ask Lydia? But most importantly to have a kid?" he asked, unable to contain his legendary curiosity for long. It was also better this way. It helped subdue his stirred up emotions with which he knew he was going to deal with probably while lying awake for most of the night.

"I love her name, though. And I'm curious about her... I'm just surprised, shocked," he babbled, loosening his grip on the poor beer bottle so that now his knuckles weren't white anymore. He also took a long sip, emptying the bottle the fastest from the three of them.

Then of course he narrowed his eyes when Derek's comment hit his ears. "Kind of? What do you mean?" the youngest male asked, raising a brow. Frankly, probably both Derek and Noah would've been surprised if he didn't bite on a bait like this. Even if it wasn't an intentional bait.

"And absolutely not! The couch is mine, my room is yours so you can be close to your daughter! I refuse any kind of objection against that," Stiles lightly slapped the table top and stood up to go to the fridge for another beer for himself. He felt like he needed it...

The fact that Stiles was surprised to see him as a dad made him frown even though he didn't blame the human for it. With how he had treated his former betas, it was no wonder Stiles was confused about Derek wanting a kid since he never had radiated maternal instincts much. The past years had been different though, he had been different.

"She offered when she saw me with her other daughter, it took some time to say yes." For very obvious reasons. But he was good with kids, her other daughter was his goddaughter and he watched her often, considered her part of the family. "I've always wanted my own pack, my own
family but I wasn't good at it."

He had never thought he had deserved it, because everybody around him got hurt. Because he had gotten his former family killed. Half the time he still thought that, but the other half he felt like he was doing well with her, he was doing something right, had something to live for, or die for. There was meaning to what he did, instead of only surviving one day to the next. At the rest of the questions, Noah stood up, reaching out to ruffle Stiles' hair because that mess couldn't get worse.

"It's getting late, I've got the early morning shift so you boys talk and we can catch up tomorrow, son. At dinner, which you're cooking."

The sheriff hightailed out of there rapidly, which was both a blessing and a curse for Derek. Maybe more of a curse at this point because now those sharp brown eyes were going to be solely focused on him. What were the chances Stiles was still a lightweight with alcohol? Probably slim to none.

Stiles was so focused on what Derek was saying and also thinking about what he was saying that Noah's announcement made him blink a bit dumbfounded and he needed a moment to make sense of what he was saying. "You bet, old man! You're gonna lick all ten fingers after it!" Stiles shouted after him then once his dad was gone, he did look back at the sitting man. Even a bit slimmed down and older-looking, Derek was a sight to behold. Making their normal-sized table look somehow smaller.

"You're not an objection, it's better for her to sleep alone. She's part werewolf, part banshee and is picking up on too much." Because Derek was a bit of a mess and he didn't want his daughter to pick up on his dreams. It had gotten better though so he didn't mind to try it, even if Stiles was adamant he was going to sleep on the couch.
Home, Sweet Home – part 2

Man, maybe the beers were starting to kick in. It's been a while since Stiles drank, but if he wanted to be completely honest with himself, he needed some kind of a crutch to keep himself from starting to overthink things immediately. He can do that later once he's alone. Which will be a bit more difficult now that the house was quite full. He liked that thought, though.

He remembered the long evenings while his dad was working and he was left alone in the house once he was big enough and for some reason couldn't go to Scott. Those nights the house felt so huge and empty to him. So silent and cold that he had to always come up with something to distract his always running mind before he could fall asleep.

And although he knew this was temporary, it still managed to put a small smile on his face. He understood Derek's need for a pack, a family, better now after all those years. He had a... much more troubled and tragic past. Some peace of mind, warmth and love were nothing special as far as personal needs went. Even if it was hard to come by these in Beacon Hills...

"So... obviously you haven't given up on that understandable dream and started your family on your own. You know..." he lowered his voice as he was leaning against the fridge with a shoulder, slender fingers scratching the label on his second bottle as if a bit embarrassed, the lightest blush coloring his previously so pale cheeks. "I really do hope that it'll work out well for you this time. I think you deserve that... after everything. Even if you were an ass for disappearing on us so suddenly. We were worried, you know..."

Oh man, the beers definitely must have kicked in...

"Sooooo... a hybrid, huh? Does she do the... screaming and shock-wave part too? Can she change? Does she have sharp teeth and little claws? And what's she picking up on? Premonitions? Feelings? Dreams?" he asked while pushing himself away from the fridge to take his usual seat opposite the other man, drinking in the familiar sharp features and colors of his face. And once more the new slight changes. Like always when he didn't want to answer a question, Derek simply ignored it as if Stiles never asked it. Sometimes it drove Stiles up the walls and left him with trying to piece the information together. Like now.

Yep, the moment the older Stilinski was out of the room, Stiles' eyes were leveled on him with that razor sharp attention, something most researchers would be envious about. Often it felt like the younger man could lift up his skin and scratch straight at his soul just by looking and observing, because he saw too much and remembered even more. It was one of the reasons why Derek always felt like he couldn't be around Stiles for too long, because he could get to him in ways others couldn't. He'd know too much and that? That was a dangerous thing.

As dangerous as it was to notice the slight flush on the pale cheeks, making the man look more alive, more appealing, if that was possible. Looked like the beer was working well and he was still a lightweight after all these years despite growing taller and filling out more. Typical Stiles. In a world ever-changing, it was kind of nice to know some things didn't change at all. He snorted at it, and the fact Stiles said he hoped it would work out for him to have a family. He had already messed up her life and she wasn't even capable of stringing along full sentences. Then again, Derek wasn't known for those either so that might also be his doing.
"I had to, I was a wanted man by the FBI." It hadn't taken that long for Rafe McCall to clear it all up, a couple of months at the most but by then, he had already stopped looking back. Scott had his pack, he had Chris Argent and Peter to help him besides that and Derek hadn't been so sure Kate Argent had been dead after killing Gerard. It was safer for all involved if he had moved on. "There was Kate, hunters....." The usual Derek Hale fuckery. He hadn't enjoyed it, it had been something that had to happen.

Clearing his throat because yeah, Kate Argent wasn't something he wanted to talk about, he sipped from the beer, picking questions to answer without answering the ones Stiles wanted to hear about. Talking about Elizabeth was safe, it was relatively harmless. If he was careful enough.

"She screams, a lot, high pitched screeches which aren't suited for werewolf hearing." Aka his eardrums had exploded a few times unfortunately. "She dreams but she's too young to explain it. She's terrified then, and she picks up on my emotions and moods flawlessly. She doesn't have beta shift yet, she's too young for it. Born wolves aren't capable of that when a baby, to protect the mother." Or there would be alien like situations and that would kill mother and child both. "She's had one premonition. But I'm still waiting to drop dead." Yes, that had been a joke, Derek Hale could joke. They were mostly dad jokes but there was humor there.

Stiles snorted a bit amused from that joke. Yes, it was one morbid one, but Stiles always loved and appreciated morbid things and also sarcasm. He was familiar with sarcasm the most. He even enjoyed it a lot. Just like when Derek Hale sometimes decided to let him get a glimpse of that side of him too. It was rare, but that made it even more special to the now all of a sudden nostalgic Stiles.

The slight blush stayed on his cheeks, now from the beers too as a nice mild buzz started in his racing mind, lulling him into a comfortable feeling of companionship as they were sitting there talking. Like adults. Not like in the past when Stiles did most of the talking (okay, that was usually still the case), often trying to prove that he was not some snotty teen, but someone who should be actually taken seriously.

Now he was a grown man with a respectful and challenging job as a detective. Fighting crime, trying to make the world a better place to live in both for humans and the supernatural. Finding that outlet after moving away from Beacon Hills where he was always just the boy with the big mouth and risky ideas without any supernatural powers, it made him calm down a bit. Finding his calling obviously did good for him. He did struggle less and was more confident, although he too still had his shadows to fight with. Like coming into terms with his possession and killing people during it. He still had nightmares about that and other bloody cases he had to work on as a detective since then.

But now... now as he was sitting there opposite Derek, studying his familiar face and movements, he felt... calmer. His being – both mentally and physically – more relaxed somehow. Despite Derek's occasional bad decisions and tendency to disappear time after time, Stiles had learned to enjoy his company. To even long for it.

"Then you have your hands full with the little missy. But I didn't expect less from a child who's part Lydia..." Stiles hummed, storing and already analyzing the information Derek was giving him about his daughter. He was looking forward seeing the two together. He wanted that picture imprinted in his brain for some reason. He had the suspicion that he would melt on the spot from seeing Derek Hale with his daughter. Damn, he was curious about her now even more! But he had to be patient, he knew. Not his strong forte, but at the police he had learned that barging into
situations head first often had a hefty price.

"Okay, I get it, you had to be on the run for a while before we saved your ass with Scott's dad. But will you ever talk about the reason why you look so shitty now? Why you had to heal cooped up in my room?" he asked with a sudden change of the subject, which wasn't uncommon when it came to Stiles.

The familiar warmth spreading when he made Stiles snort in amusement, made him scold himself inwardly. Even after all this time, it made him feel pleased and accomplished when the human enjoyed his sense of humor. Not everybody enjoyed being subjected to the snarky scathing and often dry remarks, but the people he had chosen to surround himself with, seemed to be okay with it.

Amusement faded quickly though when the other decided to go in for the kill, and outright asked about what happened. Blunt, to the point. Normally Derek would have been proud of it but since he was the one dealing with it at the moment, pride wasn't the emotion he was feeling. Stiffening in the uncomfortable chair, his green eyes stared at the empty beer bottle, wishing it worked on him. This was why Noah had made himself scarce, knowing full well his son was going to ask, maybe even hoping Derek would open up about it. Though he should know better, Derek was a vault dropped at the bottom of the deepest ocean.

He could avoid it, he could refuse to answer, he could leave. It wasn't as if Stiles had any right to know, it wasn't as if demanding answers would mean he'd be getting them. But Derek was tired of running, tired of dealing with the human's feelings of utter disappointment if he would be shut out. Tired of hurting others. So he pushed the bottle away and leaned back with a sigh.

"I've been in Hell for a long time, me and my daughter. I kept her safe by feeding her my energy even though she still aged some. I took the torture and did what I had to do, for her. I've sold half of my soul to get out and even a werewolf body needs time to heal from that. At first I've only slept, my healing wasn't working. I didn't know what was real, like I was still caught between dimensions. It's why I didn't want others to know. I needed time."

Frankly, Stiles half-expected Derek not to say anything. Every non-verbal sign – like the clenching of his jaw, the narrowing of his eyes and the tensing of his shoulders – told him that like so many times, he wouldn't budge, just continue staring back at him with one of his trade mark brooding looks. So the younger man's brows started to climb up on his forehead the second he saw said muscles starting to relax a bit as if giving in.

What he heard took him completely off-guard again. It seemed Derek had developed this ability during the past years...

"Wait... what? Hell? I'm assuming not Hell in Michigan or Norway..." Stiles' eyes widened into big brown saucers before he began rapidly blinking, a bit in shock, trying to quickly determine if Derek was pulling his leg or not. But his instincts and the way he looked back at him told him he wasn't joking this time. "So... that place truly exists?" Stiles swallowed hard, trying to wrap his over-working mind around that. And why wouldn't it? After all, werewolves and chimeras and all kinds of creatures existed. He had accepted that fairly quickly. Other dimensions and hellhounds – those had to come from somewhere, right? – were things he was familiar with by then.

"Okay... okay.... But... how did you end up there in the first place? Why was your daughter with you? And... what does it mean selling half of your soul? What does that entail? How is that possible? And how does it make you feel? I mean... if that's the case then you're now missing half
of your soul... It has to affect you somehow, no?" the questions tumbled out of his fast-talking mouth, the shock making Stiles fall back into old habits. Suddenly he felt himself like that hyperactive teen and it took some effort from himself to shut his mouth and cut off the long lines of questions and thoughts that wanted to flow out of him.

There hadn't been an answer expected, Derek could have gotten away with it if he had steamrollered with his trademark glare until wearing the other down. Unfortunately, it would have meant he would have gotten away with it for now, for tonight. The questions were going to come again, especially now that there wasn't a Peter to harass for answers or a Scott, because the former wasn't here and the latter had no clue. Still, the surprise on Stiles made him regret saying it all.

Lydia and Scott had acted as if it had been no big deal at all, because the two of them were whole and relatively healthy, no long-term bodily damage done. It had been offensive and damaging, had made him feel like the age old thoughts of not being important enough were true. Just Derek who went to Hell, shit happened. So he had avoided them, letting Lydia take their daughter when she wanted to and lied about how he was doing, because all they wanted to hear was fine. Stiles reacted differently, of course he did. He was full of questions, needing more to form an opinion on what it meant.

"Hell is just another dimension, like the one you have been stuck in." Derek wondered how Stiles would react to learning there's more than one Hell, that there's such a thing as angels and demons. Maybe someday he'd learn about all that, if he asked. He wasn't sure how to talk about the rest. Half of him was gone, there was an emptiness inside, an aching need which was never going to be filled again. It made him even blunter, more of an asshole. He had bouts of anger or where he was cold.

"My grandfather is running that Hell dimension and he took Elizabeth to make sure I'd come with him. He wanted to groom me and he didn't like hearing no." Which meant Derek hadn't deserved to be in Hell, he had been a good person who had been forced to deal with bad events in his life over and over. Fighting hard always to survive, to not turn to the dark side. Truth was though, he was broken and this hadn't done him any good either. Shifting in his seat a little, there was a tired shrug. "I don't know how it affects me, I was dealing with other things. There's a... wrongness, but I'll get used to it." His tone suggested any more soul talk wasn't appreciated right now.

The dimension being mentioned where Stiles had been stuck in made him tense up a bit and he didn't allow himself to think about it. It was still a nightmare-inducing experience and he didn't wish to rehash it, thank you very much. He slept little on a good day too, no need to make it worse with those memories. Instead he focused on examining Derek. It was always an effective coping mechanism of his. Putting others and their needs in front of himself. Not the healthiest way to cope, but it was easier for Stiles. Even now when he was somewhat more mature and perhaps wiser.

Without knowing how their friends reacted to the news of Derek literally going to Hell and back, his eyes showed sympathy and understanding. Not pity. He knew Derek Hale was too proud for that. He needed no one's pity. And Stiles wouldn't be one of those people who would react with that to the shocking news. He also didn't doubt any of it. He just... knew Derek was telling the truth. Stiles also appreciated this rare moment of openness. It showed him how vulnerable and broken Derek really was. And... frankly... it hurt Stiles to see him like this. More than he would've thought.

Perhaps the intensity of wanting to help and protect Derek made him stop with further questions. Or the look in the other man's eyes. So he let silence fall on them, giving time mostly for Derek to pull himself together and for himself to process all this. Unsurprisingly, his mind was already
trying to map out the possible solutions. Thinking, always thinking about how to help others. That's just how the younger Stilinski was wired. In this regard so similar to his father.

He saw that Derek was far from fine. And he had decided that it had to change.

Taking a deep breath, he exhaled slowly. This wasn't how he had imagined his extended vacation back in Beacon Hills, but he did expect some bumps on the road. After all, we were talking about Beacon Hills. The hot bed of bumps on the road...

"Alright... alright... We're gonna figure this out. I'll help you get back the missing part of your soul, Derek," he stated on a tone that allowed no objections. Just like when he placed dibs on sleeping on the living room couch. Even if this situation was a tiiiiny bit more serious.

"You've gotten even bossier."

Stiles took the couch and hadn't wanted to be persuaded otherwise and now he was stating he was going to help in a tone which wasn't going to stand for objections. The human had always been bossy, but in an insecure kind of way. He'd push and shove to get his point across, usually accompanied by a lot of flailing. And now? Now he had a confidence to him, he didn't need to get his way, he demanded it with his facial expression, tone of voice and body language. Derek hadn't been planning on objecting to it anyways because Stiles was good at research. He wasn't exactly sure if this was something they could figure out but he was all for trying it at least.

He stared, waiting for more to come. Comments about how the Hale was literally related to the devil. Or how he needed to go to Hell to get a sense of humor. Maybe even the dreaded pity even though he wasn't sure he could take that coming from Stiles. The human had always been his safe haven, his anchor and pity was... not what he wanted to see in those brown eyes. It didn't come. It just didn't come at all.

Good old Stiles. It made him smile, amused and sad at the same time because why did it always have to be the younger man? Always the one to understand, in Derek's corner when there was nobody left. Literally this time. It made his throat ache, the emotions gathering once again as he attempted to swallow them. Derek was aware how raw and open he must seem to his friend right now but it mostly felt like he had stepped into a ravine and there was no turning back from that.

To have somebody wanting to have his back, to not drop him like he was damaged goods, to have somebody at all besides Noah and Melissa and his daughter was... overwhelming. The three years in Hell he had been on his own and now somebody was trying to get him, help him. "Okay," he managed to say without his voice breaking.

Stiles – to be honest to himself – expected at least a little resistance on Derek's side, but the fact that he got none just told him how serious the situation was. How desperate Derek really might be for help. That reassured the younger man that this was the right decision. One just had to look at Derek to see how... broken he was. Or maybe it was just Stiles whose eyes always saw more than anyone when it came to Derek Hale. He instinctively saw behind the stoic, often statue-like facade. How he usually hid his pain behind his poker face or the acts of his surface wolf-side. Aside from the very beginning when he didn't know Derek yet, he never feared him like many did.

There was something about this man that stayed with Stiles even after his disappearances and him moving away from Beacon Hills. Something that always made Stiles circle back to him. Perhaps that's why he couldn't commit to any relationship in his past. Be it with men or women. They just... lacked that something. And the fact that Derek now had a daughter didn't change anything in Stiles'
eyes, he realized.

"Oh you always secretly liked my bossiness..." Stiles slightly nodded with a small satisfied smile, his eyes dropping for a second as he felt his cheeks lightly warming up again. That was flirting right there. Why was he flirting with Derek all of a sudden? He shouldn't be flirting now, right? *This is about helping him, for god's sake,* he bit the inside of his bottom lip. But then he looked right back into the still mostly open green eyes. "I'm glad you accepted. Though... you should expect a lot more questions, but for now I let you off the hook," he chuckled and drank from his beer instead.

It was getting late by then indeed. Past midnight, but Stiles wasn't planning on going to sleep any time soon. He was already thinking about pulling out his laptop from his duffel bag to start researching the soul topic on the couch. He also saw that the man needed some more rest and probably to check on his daughter.

So he finished his beer and got up to take Derek's empty bottle too. He put them in the trash then got himself a bottle of mineral water from the fridge before putting a slice of leftover pizza on a plate. With his back to Derek, he paused by the kitchen counter.

"Hey Derek..." he said on a softer tone, hesitating only for a moment. "I'm glad you came back and that you're here," he added barely audible, although he knew the wolf would hear it. Not knowing how the other man would take this confession, Stiles found himself holding his breath back, not turning around just yet.

"Not that secretly." At least, he didn't think he had been mysterious about his like of the human. Always protecting him, bickering and challenging him to think with snappish comments. He had even stopped throwing him against hard surfaces. Peter had often teased him about going soft on the boy and Isaac had known but he had wisely not said anything, just had wrinkled his nose in distaste at Derek. It was a good thing neither wolf was here at the moment, he didn't want them judging him.

Stiles wasn't going to get answers to all his questions, Derek would point it out but they both knew it wasn't happening. Some things he wasn't ready for to talk about, some things he probably never was going to talk about at all. He had gotten to mention his family members sometimes, and the fire was over a decade ago. Some traumas ran too deep, needed time to be tentatively mentioned. Cora didn't seem to understand that, she often talked about life before the fire and he growled still, would go quiet around her or walk off. She didn't even know about Kate, and he didn't want her to know.

The human moved to busy himself and Derek watched him quietly, rubbing at his eyes. The only way for him to sleep now was to tire himself out. Which wasn't as easy as it seemed because exhaustion didn't mean tired enough to shut the mind off and he wasn't so keen on sleeping now with the chance of night terrors. Stiles would know how he wasn't dealing at all with everything. At the soft mention of his name, he looked up to stare at the younger man's back. His eyes softened even though Stiles couldn't see it. "Me too."

Of course, he knew Stiles had hated him always leaving, he understood the need for it but felt also hurt by it. It was why Derek never had done goodbyes, looking back had meant he wouldn't be able to go. "I'm not going away anymore." He was done running. There was nothing to run to, and it hadn't made life easier, only lonelier.

A secret smile tugged at Stiles' lips from Derek's first comment. Yes, it wasn't really a secret. It
also brought back a lot of fond memories to the young man. All the good-natured bickering, the way he tried to talk Derek out or into things in the face of danger. Yes, fond memories for Stiles which he secretly treasured. Only admitting that to himself. There were things he never talked about with anyone and he was more than sure that Derek had and will always have his own secrets too. Which was... normal in Stiles' opinion. Though it didn't mean that he wouldn't try to extract as much information from his friend as possible in order to look for more specific clues and hints during his research.

What he said next, though, abruptly stopped his mind and he finally exhaled. Was he still tipsy and misheard it? That promise... It made him turn around to lean against the counter, his slender hands resting on its edge by his hips. That promise... the way Derek said it had weight. A finality. And it made Stiles' heart skip a beat again. Man, if he really stays, he's gonna have to get used to an irregular heartbeat, it seemed...

"You mean it," he said nearly in awe and once he truly believed it, he couldn't help himself and gave the softest and most relieved smile Derek could ever see on his face. He couldn't hold it back. Not when they were finally talking so openly. Maybe later he will regret it, but not now. Not when his friend was in such a state. "I'm happy you finally realized that running doesn't solve much," he said, but the sarcasm was missing and he sounded like someone who was talking from experience too.

It was true. Taking a longer break from his hometown to recover, to learn new things, to better himself... all those were helpful for Stiles to become a useful and resourceful man. But it never filled the void in his heart.

There it was again, that little blip in the heartbeat when Stiles wasn't talking even. No lies to detect, at least he was still taking the medication for ADD. Maybe he'd finally learn to take it as prescribed instead of using it as a way to remain awake forever. That soft smile did it though, the relief was palpable. He didn't even need to be a werewolf to see it and it made him have that familiar stab of guilt. Sure, Stiles had not once said he hated Derek leaving, not with so many words. So to see him be so happy with this was, a relief and a guilt trip at the same time.

It was going to be Stiles leaving again. He was a detective in another city while Derek was going to have to find a way to build his life here in Beacon Hills. That seemed to be the best for his daughter, and there was Cora needing his help with her baby on the way. It was good to have a solid base, it was where he had grown up, and he wanted the same for Elizabeth.

"The problems only ran with me. It doesn't matter where I am." The plan had been to live with the boyfriend eventually, somewhere. Since there was no boyfriend, Beacon Hills was a good place to start because he had to start somewhere. And he had realized he had the tendency to move where others expected him to go. New York because Laura had wanted to, Beacon Hills because of Peter, South America because of Cora, traveling around with Braeden, DC because of... yeah, he didn't want to go there. He had started to see the pattern and knew he had to do something for himself for a change.

"I picked Beacon Hills for me. Because I want Elizabeth to grow up here. And you can come visit." The last part he added to it out of spite, because Stiles smiled at him so softly and he was going to leave.

And he was reading way too much into it. Stiles wasn't going to visit because of him, he'd visit his dad.
"Took you long enough to realize that," Stiles chuckled a bit sarcastically at Derek's realization but there was no biting edge to it. He himself didn't need that much time to realize he cannot outrun his problems. They would always catch up with him sooner or later. It was an important life-lesson. Something that has fundamentally changed his look at the world. Most of the time he went head on to solve such problems. Only those remained for which he thought he wasn't strong enough to fully face yet. Like his time being possessed by the Nogitsune (though he was trying to work on that still). Or his... feelings for Derek. Which were definitely there, he confirmed it for himself once more as he was watching the sitting man.

A light frown appeared on the detective's forehead from his last sentence. The slight spite in it. Stiles didn't understand why Derek felt the need to say it that way. But it stung him a bit. After all these years this man was still a mystery to Stiles. A very, very hard nut to crack. Each time he thought he had figured Derek Hale out, he did or said something that made him take that back. He wondered if he would ever fully understand the brooding man. At times he very much doubted it. But perhaps that was a part of his charm. The thing that has always been drawing his weak human self toward the 'big bad wolf'. Not once in this story he felt himself like Little Red Riding Hood skipping through the dark forest, but instead of heading towards the relative safety of the grandmother's house, he would skip right towards the wolf den to poke at the beast he wasn't supposed to poke. He was a cute beast, so who could blame him, right?

Stiles' previous soft smile slowly disappeared from his face. "It's good to see that you finally picked something for yourself and your daughter," he said maybe a bit proudly, but then he paused for a split second. "And I could visit. If you want me to. Do you want me to?" he asked at the end unsure and a bit confused from the biting tone the wolf used previously. Maybe he was just too sensitive from the beers and the late hour. He knew he would visit either way now that he knew Derek Hale was finally staying in this town. But he wanted Derek to want him to visit. He's gotten used to the feeling of his presence not being wanted around because of how he used to be and what he is now, but he knew he wouldn't be able to bear that from this man.

To hide his worried and vulnerable look, he instead bit into the cold pizza slice just to do something. He wasn't really hungry, but he had to eat if he wanted to be able to stay up for a few more hours to do a general research as a first step. He could dig deeper in the following days.

"Took me long enough? Says the one who firmly believes it works to ignore a problem until it goes away." To be fair, Derek was also six years older than Stiles so he took a while longer to figure things out. And he felt like he still hadn't figured anything out because he was as much floundering and surviving as he had done at 18 and 22 and....yeah, that's been pretty much all he knew. One day at a time because the next one was going to take everything away anyways. At least his time in Hell had taught him to appreciate what he had, even when it wasn't much.

And to be honest, he hadn't picked much, now that he was 'healed' physically, he could start working on making the loft suitable for a child to live in. Cora could move in until he had made her an apartment in the building for her and her little one. There was an attempt at drawing Theo in, because Derek saw himself in the broken Chimera and wanted better things for him, wanted to offer a hand when none had done that to Derek at his age. So yeah, he picked for himself, there was a struggling basis of a plan to hint at a future. The idea of a pack building, many other ideas included in it as well to further the Hale legacy his mother had been trying to build as an alpha. To guide others as she had once done.

Did he want Stiles to come visit? Does he ever? Even now, when the human had cold tomato sauce on his chin while he was chewing on old pizza with an open mouth and... Oh... Shit. They had forgotten about the leftovers in the fridge. Busted! "Why wouldn't I want you to?"
There was an insulted tone to his voice because he didn't understand why Stiles thought he wouldn't be welcomed at Derek's. The Stilinskis were friends, extended family. He wouldn't turn them away, years ago the loft had always been open for pack business. Stiles had stormed in at the most inopportune moments, probably still had the key to the door downstairs because he had never had the big loft door locked. And it wasn't that he had given a key, Stiles somehow always magically acquired keys without asking. "Of course I want you to visit."

With the half-eaten slice of pizza hanging from his mouth, Stiles reached to open the water bottle then chewed on another bite, never taking his eyes off Derek. "Hey! That was the old me. Now I know well that the problems won't go away until you grab them by the balls and solve them yourself," he shrugged after swallowing and drank a sip too. "I doubt my cases would've solved themselves with that old belief still in place in me, you know," he added and stuffed the last bites in his mouth, making his cheeks bulge like a chipmunk's.

Maybe it was also a way to shut himself up before he would say something stupid that he would regret later. Because his silly heart began fluttering in his chest again. Hopefully. Such a stupid, stupid heart, right? But it indeed filled him with warmth to know that Derek wanted him around. Even if just occasionally.

Winning over the last mouthful of food, he washed it down with some more water and sucked some sauce off his fingers before wiping his face clean with a napkin. "Good. I would've visited anyway. I just thought... I don't know. It's been years. We kinda drifted apart and I just... But I'm gonna continue brightening your days with my presence!" he grinned then tossed the used napkin into the trash. There was also a small secret smile there under his nose. Mostly for himself. Being wanted always felt good. Thanks to the years living alone and experiencing things, he believed he understood that better too. Saw why Derek came back and started a pack. Now a small family. Stiles couldn't blame him. He just wondered if he, himself would ever get that one day. But he was rooting for Derek from the bottom of his heart. If anyone, then this poor guy deserved some happiness in his life.

"Alright, big guy... Coffee or bed?" he suddenly asked with a raised brow.

Derek honestly doubted Stiles had that changed belief when it came to his own problems. It was one thing to tackle a case as a detective, but it was another to deal with personal changes and emotions. He suddenly realized he had no idea if there was anybody special for the human, what the past years had been for him so there were some questions of his own to ask these coming weeks. It wasn't as if they didn't have the time for it. Noah had work so it was going to be the three of them often, him with Stiles and Elizabeth. And he kinda wished Stiles would grab him by the balls but yeah, he wasn't saying that out loud.

The heart was doing that rapid beating again. It was soothing in a way because if it stopped doing that, something would be terribly wrong. Watching Stiles stuff the last pizza in his mouth, and that didn't help because clearly Stiles could fit A LOT in his mouth and that was taking his mind to places it hadn't been in for years. But of course, the moment he was around Stiles, it had to betray him like that, just like his body. Derek had just gotten out of Hell, and out of a relationship, he shouldn't even be willing to go there. And yet he was.

"I'll continue grumping up yours with mine." Though the Hale was sure that after spending two weeks with Stiles in one house, he was going to be the same old lovesick idiot he had been years ago. Some crushes weren't crushes at all. "I'll go to bed, I'm sure you have a list of questions for me to answer in the morning and Beth is up early, demanding attention. So be prepared for not getting
to sleep in."

Derek was sure he wasn't going to get much sleep, he was going to be awake for a while, listening to that heartbeat downstairs while pondering over the human. And then in the early hours there was going to be a squealing banshee demanding to be let out of her crib so she could waddle around with the big diaper. Potty training was next on the list of 'Big steps for Beth to take'. Standing up, he lingered a little awkwardly, not sure what to say or do. "Good night, Stiles."

"Good! Then the balance of the Universe will be restored and you can bet on that list! I also wasn't planning on sleeping in," Stiles beamed at Derek from the counter then watched him stand. He didn't want him to go, but he could see that the other man could use some rest and he had a lot of digging to do. For which his fingers were already kinda itching, his mind restless like usual. Still... being in one room with Derek again was somehow both unnerving and soothing to him. He missed his presence and silent looks. The brooding expression. The grunts and short replies. It was as if a missing piece all of a sudden dropped back into his life. Making it less empty.

"Enjoy my bed, you usurper," he told Derek's broad back with some laughter in his voice, but right after that he had to swallow hard from that image, his cheeks heating up once again. It was back with full force and he had to take a deep breath and exhale slowly to somewhat calm his racing heart. He reminded himself that Derek could hear it.

"The sun, the moon, the truth..." he mumbled absentmindedly and grabbed his water to finally move towards the living room to make his bed and fire up his laptop and fish out a notebook and pen from his bag too. As he tossed his leather jacket on the back of the couch and kicked his shoes off, he had to admit to himself that being around Derek like this was going to be... challenging, to say the least.

One long-ish and quite open soul-searching conversation in the kitchen was enough for Stiles' emotions to get stirred up again. For millions of questions to be born in his head. To start wondering again if Derek would ever look at him like that. If there was a sliver of chance for them. Stiles only saw him with women, so he wasn't even sure if Derek was swinging this way too. Or what he would think about Stiles' inappropriate feelings, thoughts and fantasies if they ever came to light.

As he settled back onto the couch, opening up his browser, he thanked the Universe that werewolves usually didn't have telepathy to read human minds. Because he would be in trouble. He was already in deep trouble... again. But this... this was still better than going home to an empty apartment without anyone who cared waiting for him.

Taking another deep breath, he put his pen in his mouth, slender fingers quickly typing in words to the search field. Occupying his mind with their task at hand was going to help push these thoughts back. For now. He will have time to pine over Derek Hale in the morning too.

So he did just that. He continued researching the soul topic for hours. Saving down texts, jotting down several pages long notes, narrowing down the vast source material and trying to map out possible connection points. He put his laptop aside around dawn, only when his eyes were burning too much and he started seeing double.

Then he dreamed of Beacon Hills, green eyes, fire and soulmates.
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