A boy’s head appears upside down, hanging off the bed. “Is anyone there?” he calls out curiously, looking right at Derek’s eyes.
Caught, then. The protocol for being deliberately seen by a child is just to look as strange and fearsome as possible. No one would believe them, anyways. But Derek is tired, and he’s been running and scared, and now he just kind of flickers, curling out a tendril of dark smoke, hoping that he’s a little bit scary.
No such luck.
The boy’s eyes widen. “Oooh, are you the bogeyman?”
“Bogeyperson,” Derek says, before he can help himself.

~

When Stiles was a boy, he had an imaginary friend named Derek. Ten years later, Derek comes back, and is very, very real.

Notes

This work is intended for the private enjoyment of the reader. I do not give permission to this work being shared with or read aloud by the press, or anyone working on said production of Teen Wolf, including but not limited to cast, crew, writers, or producers. I also do not give permission to share this work on third-party websites such as Goodreads, which I believe is a resource intended for published works outside of fandom.
This fic was written for the awesome thewistering, who bid on me in the fanworks auction for the Tyler Hoechlin Birthday Project. I'm happy to have contributed in whatever small way, and the project itself raised $3500 for the Jed Foundation in Hoechlin's name, which is pretty awesome.

This is the second of three works that I'm writing for auction winners.

Thank you to dearjaycee, mikkimouse, literaryoblivion, and fauvistfly for reading and being supportive!

Kate Argent is tagged as a character and she features in the story with similar themes of betrayal with regards to Derek, but she and Derek are not ever romantic or sexually involved in the story. Just a quick heads up, looking out for you guys. Let me know if any more tags/warnings are needed.

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

Derek has never talked to a human before. He knows that they’re different, but not so much, and they come in many different shapes and colors (not quite so many as monsters) and they’re not supposed to be scary, but he’s really nervous about trying his first Crossing into the human world.

Mom had told him not to worry, and eight years old is the perfect age for a little monster to passing through the barrier on their own and try their own hand at Scaring. Derek’s only Crossed into the human realm once, a month ago, riding on his mother’s back in her preferred form, a large black wolf with menacing red eyes. Derek had been clinging on in his much lesser shape, an undefined wolf pup that kept fading into his standard form, the inky, dark shapeless shadow that was the norm for all bogeys when they hadn’t taken on a specific form. He’d watched proudly as his mother snarled at humans walking home at night, bared her teeth at some unruly men being rude to a girl walking home, and then faded into the shadows and made them nervous, questioning their reality, looking for the monster.

Their fear seeped into the air, and it had been wonderful.

“And this is what we do,” Mom had said, nosing at Derek still clinging to our back. “Remember, we only have the witching hour to play in the human’s world, to bring back that sense of magic they thought they lost, to scare, to bring forth terror and excitement. But never to hurt them. It’s all in good fun, Derek.”

Good fun, Derek thinks to himself, following the shape of Laura’s tail, swinging back and forth as she walks down the forest trail. She’s also shifted into a wolf, the preferred shape of their family. It seems to come easiest to them, as most bogey family lines have a preferred form. Derek tries his own at the shift, and he concentrates, trying to settle his body into the shift, feeling the weight of his body as he pads along after Laura.

He catches a sight of his reflection in the stream they pass-- Laura, ferocious-looking and majestic-- and Derek, a fluffy-looking puppy.

He scowls. How is he supposed to scare anyone looking like this?

“It’s just practice, Derek,” Laura says, nudging him along. “Don’t worry, I’ll find you a little human to scare.”

Derek shudders as they cross the invisible magic barrier between their world and the next, and Laura nods approvingly as he steps though. He wonders if he’ll ever get used to it, the feeling of walking into thick fog, wet and heavy with the tingle of magic. Above them in the night sky the moon hangs bright and full, and Laura howls, a great, fearsome sound.

Derek tries to howl with her, and Laura chuckles. “Come on, little bro. Let’s get our scare on.”

They pass by a group of teenagers at a fire in a campsite, and it takes little more than Laura standing in the bushes, growling with her eyes bright and fierce for them to get nervous and head to bed early.

“What’s that down there?” Derek asks, pointing at the glimmering lights.

“That would be Beacon Hills,” Laura says. “Don’t think you’re up for that many people yet, your
shadow form isn’t quite invisible. Come on, let’s go.”

Derek follows as Laura leads him around the campsite, scaring people and then disappearing into the shadows with Derek, giggling as they listen to the humans freak out about a large black wolf. Derek has to remember for all of her large scary form, Laura’s just a teenager herself.

They’re still laughing when a loud noise rings out, somehow like a clap of thunder, but terrifyingly different, and the smell of something acrid and sharp fills the air. Laura gasps, and whispers, “Mountain ash and wolfsbane bullets,” to herself, which mean nothing to Derek, but she picks Derek up in her jaws and leaps away into the forest.

There’s someone pursuing them, and Derek is scared, hanging where he is from Laura’s jaw. He wants to ask what is happening, why they’re the ones that are running when they’re supposed to be the scariest things around, but Laura then sets him down gently on a sloping path that leads towards the town. “Go hide until the Crossing is open again, I’ll lead them off,” she says, nudging Derek forward. He scrambling, but stops to look back up where Laura is facing down the shouts and men with the scary guns.

She growls at them, a challenge, and then turns and runs down another direction, most of them chasing after her.

But one of them sniffs the air and starts walking down Derek’s path, and he feels cold and terrified.

Derek runs.

Soon the forest gives way to a quiet neighborhood, and Derek doesn’t stop running until he’s in someone’s backyard. There’s a loose window open so he crawls inside the house, fearful.

He can smell the man walking down the street, and there’s something about his scent of his weapons that make Derek nauseous. Derek wants to hide, but there are no dark corners here in this family’s living room, nowhere to hide, and he’s too nervous to shift right now. He can’t even manage fading a little.

Derek crawls up the stairs into the main floor, just in time to hear another man, one who smells like leather and metal, but mostly annoyance.

“What are you shouting about this time of night?” he calls out sternly, opening his door. “I hope you have a license for that firearm,” he says, stepping out onto the porch and glaring at the other man.

“Aw, Sheriff, you know, I think I forgot my wallet at home…”

Derek slips up the stairs, padding quietly. There’s an open door on the end, so he creeps inside and slides underneath the bed.

Outside, he can hear the men arguing, and finally the foul-smelling one with the gun leaves. Derek sighs and relaxes, and he concentrates, finally able to shapeshift now that he’s not freaking out. He lets the wolf form melt into the shapeless cloud, and he sinks into the shadows, content to wait. Derek plans until the larger man goes back to sleep, and then he’ll slip away back to the forest…

“Hello?” a voice calls out. The bed squeaks a little as someone moves around.

There’s a kid here, Derek realizes.

He concentrates, thinking of shifting into the scariest thing possible, but can’t manage anything other than making his eyes glow a little.
A boy’s head appears upside down, hanging off the bed. “Is anyone there?” he calls out curiously, looking right at Derek’s eyes.

Caught, then. The protocol for being deliberately seen by a child is just to look as strange and fearsome as possible. No one would believe them, anyways.

But Derek is tired, and he’s been running and scared, and now he just kind of flickers, curling out a tendril of dark smoke, hoping that he’s a little bit scary.

No such luck.

The boy’s eyes widen. “Oooh, are you the bogeyman?”

“You can talk!” the boy says excitedly. “My name is Stiles. It’s not my actual name, but no one else in the first grade would even try sounding it out, except for Scott, but then Jackson said it sounded like a sneeze and then I came up with Stiles! Hi! What’s your name?”

All of this is said very fast.

Derek hesitantly slips out from under the bed, floating shyly and looking at the boy. He’s about Derek’s age, he guesses. Maybe younger?

“You don’t look scary,” Stiles says, poking at Derek.

Derek transforms back into the wolf and landing on the floor, attempting to snarl ferociously, but Stiles just laughs and reaches for him. “Puppy!” he squeals. “You are so fluffy.”

Derek lets Stiles pat his head. “I’m not fluffy. I’m scary,” he says.

“You’re not scary,” Stiles says gleefully. “Do you wanna play Legos with me?”

Stiles shows him a chest full of toys, not unlike Derek’s own back at his home, but these are different in all shapes and colors, and Stiles is happy to share.

They play for awhile, Stiles asking constant questions if Derek can change his shape to more things--he does a few-- a bird, a cat, a small bear, and then back into a wolf, all of which make Stiles clap his hands. Derek is exhausted, he’s never done quite so many shifts in a short time before, but he’s never had such an eager audience.

“Son, I thought I told you to go to bed,” calls a voice from outside the bedroom. “Those toys better be put away and you better be in your bed when I check in on you.”

Stiles hurriedly stuffs everything back in the chest, and Derek helps, pushing the Legos and the figurines inside with his paws. Stiles climbs back into the bed and gestures at the space next to him.

“You don’t have to sleep under the bed, Mr. Bogeyperson,” he says.

There’s a clock on the nightstand that reads ten minutes after one o’clock. Derek sighs. He wouldn’t be able to get home anyhow. “My name is Derek,” he says, getting into the bed and curling up next to Stiles.

“Nice to meet you,” Stiles says softly, carding a hand through Derek’s fur. “I’ve always wanted a magic friend. Do you wanna be friends forever with me?”
Derek doesn’t have any friends his age back home, and Stiles is nice and has lots of fun toys. Friends forever sounds really nice. “Ok,” he says, and Stiles shakes his paw.

They fall asleep like that.

~

The human world during the day is bright and colorful and confusing. Derek fades into a shadow to avoid detection, but Stiles continues talking to him as they play together. His father gets dressed in a uniform with a shiny starred badge, and Stiles’ mother works from home, writing busily away.

Stiles shows Derek everything in their home, answering all his questions about humans, and they giggle and laugh when Stiles asks his mom for extra lunch for Derek.

“Ah, we’re at that age, aren’t we,” Stiles’ mom says, patting Stiles on the shoulder. “Alright, what’s your new friend’s name?”

“Derek!” Stiles says, peering over the countertop where she’s slathering peanut butter on slices of bread. “He can turn into a puppy and a kitty and a bird and lots of pretty shadows!”

“Yeah?” She tilts her head fondly. “That sounds really fun. Make sure you guys clean up after you play, okay?”

Stiles nods, taking the two plates with sandwiches and going to the living room. He eats happily, and thrusts the plate at Derek with his other hand.

Derek shifts into wolf form, nosing at the food hesitantly, and then eating eagerly, enjoying the taste. “This is good,” he tells Stiles. “We don’t have this in our world.”

“I love PB and J,” Stiles says, sighing. There are crumbs all over his face, so Derek licks those too, making Stiles giggle and laugh.

Derek’s in shadow form again when Stiles’ mom comes back into the room, and she looks at the empty plates. “Wow, you and Derek were hungry, huh,” she says.

“Mmm, he never had peanut butter and jelly before, and he says thank you!” Stiles says brightly, looking at where Derek is hiding under the couch.

Derek feels a sudden pang of guilt, thinking about his own family, and he hopes that Laura made it to the Crossing okay last night and she’s home and safe.

~

That evening Derek is curled up in Stiles’ bed again, when a familiar shape floats through the window and reforms into a wolf.

“Mom!” Derek says, relieved. “Is Laura okay?”

“She’s fine. A little shaken up, but fine,” Talia says. “I’m glad to see you managed to keep safe in the human world for a day.”

Stiles blinks, waking up. “Stiles,” Derek whispers. “I have to go home now. Thanks for playing with me.”

“Are you coming back?” Stiles asks sleepily. “You said yes, you wanted to be friends forever.”
Talia nods at Derek. “You can visit him again, if you like.”

“Yeah, I’ll be back,” Derek whispers.

Stiles waves at them as they shift back into smoke and leave through the window.

No one except Scott seems to take Derek seriously, Stiles comes to find. Scott listens to his stories, wide-eyed and amazed when Stiles describes how Derek had turned into a turtle one time, and then had gotten stuck when he’d flipped over on his back. It had been so funny, Stiles had snorted juice out of his nose.

“I wanna meet your magic friend,” Scott says eagerly.

“He can only visit in the middle of the night,” Stiles whispers, and this makes Scott sad because his dad is mean and doesn’t allow Scott to go to sleepovers.

Stiles makes up for it by giving Scott all the good Legos to play with that afternoon, and sticks his tongue out extra long when Mr. McCall comes to pick up Scott to take him home.

Mom sets out an extra place setting, and she pats Stiles’ head and says, “For Derek.”

Stiles shakes his head. “Derek went home,” he says sadly. “He can only visit sometimes. Tonight I’m gonna ask him to turn into a frog this time because I wanna see how far he can jump.”

Dad ruffles his hair. “Okay, kiddo, that sounds great,” he says, and he looks over at his mom and they grin at each other indulgently.

“Derek is real,” Stiles insists.

It doesn’t matter how much he says it, no one seems to believe him. Like when Derek’s big wolfy butt knocks over the lamp in Stiles’ room and it breaks, and Stiles says Derek did it, but he still got in trouble. It’s okay, though, because that night Derek figures out that he can pick Stiles up, curling shadowy tendrils around his arms and lifting him into the air, Stiles giggling endlessly as they fly around the room.

Stiles gets used to it, waking up excitedly at midnight and peering under his bed, looking for Derek’s glowing eyes. They talk about everything and nothing, and Stiles teaches him the names of all his action figures, while Derek sings to him strange lilting songs from his world.

They play every night until the hour is almost up, and then Derek will turn into a bird and fly out the window, but not before licking Stiles’ face enthusiastically in his wolf form.

“Can you stay for the whole day again?” Stiles asks one night, surprised at himself for taking so long to ask after so many weeks. “My best friend Scott thinks you’re cool too, and wants to meet you. Plus with the three of us we could play a really fun game of hide and seek!”

Derek nods excitedly. He leaves at one o’clock as usual, but promises the next night he’ll come and stay over for a whole day. Stiles is so excited he almost falls out the window as he’s waving goodbye to Derek’s bird form flying off in the night sky.
The next night Stiles wakes up at midnight and peers under his bed. “Derek!” he calls out excitedly, but he doesn’t see any glowing eyes.

“Derek?” Stiles stands up, looking in all the shadowy corners, throwing open all his clothes drawers in a fit of panic.

His parents find him sobbing in the middle of a his room, toys and blankets and clothes scattered everywhere.

“What’s wrong, sweetie?” his mom asks.

“Derek didn’t make it,” Stiles says tearfully. “It was my fault, I knew he was magic and there are probably stupid rules and stuff and just because he stayed for a whole day one time doesn’t mean he could have done it again but I asked and he tried and what if he’s hurt and--”

Stiles hiccups, too upset to think about what could have happened. He looks up at his dad, who just gives his mom a bewildered look.

“What does he mean, gone, Clauds, I thought imaginary friends just always--”

Stiles’ mom shushes him and gently picks Stiles up, setting him back down in bed. His dad grabs the blanket from where it’s been discarded carelessly on the floor, shakes it and tucks Stiles back in.

“Shh, it will be okay,” his mom says, kissing him on the forehead. “Maybe Derek was busy, with his family or something, in… where did you say they were from again?”

“Monster-land,” Stiles says, feeling a lot more calm. Busy, that makes sense. Sometimes it happens to him too, like that Mom and Dad decided that they would go visit Aunt Coral in San Francisco, only Stiles had told Scott that weekend he would come over and they would play with Scott’s new robo-dog, and Stiles had to tell Scott sorry. He’d visited Scott the next weekend instead, and they had a lot of fun, and Scott wasn’t mad at all.

This must be something like that.

“Well monsters are very, very busy,” his mom says, wisely, wiping away the now-drying tears on Stiles’ face.

“They have to scare everyone! And they only have one hour a day to do it!” Stiles says, smiling a little, remembering what Derek’s told him about monster land.

His dad chuckles. “Gotta love that imagination, kid,” he says. “Now go to sleep.”

The next night Stiles sneaks a peanut butter and jelly sandwich into this room and leaves it under his bed, hoping Derek will see it and know that Stiles isn’t mad.

He wakes up at midnight and peers under the bed, and the sandwich is still there.

Stiles falls back into an uneasy sleep.

Derek doesn’t come back the next night, or the next, and then the next day at school Scott was crying because Mr. McCall was being mean to his mom, and then both Scott and his Mom come over that night and have dinner with them. There’s a lot of hushed whispers and serious grown-up stuff, and they don’t even notice when Stiles grabs the carton of ice cream right out of the freezer and spoons for him and Scott to eat out of it.
There’s something going on, but Stiles is so determined to cheer Scott up that it’s all he thinks about. Plus Scott actually gets to sleep over! This night, and the next. Something about giving Scott’s mom a break while she deals with some legal grownup stuff.

Stiles finds out later the legal grownup stuff means Mr. McCall isn’t coming back, and Stiles is fine with that. He was mean.

Life goes on, and Stiles goes to school, plays at recess with Scott, gives Lydia all the green crayons when she discovered her box was missing one, then gets his own crayon box smushed by Jackson, goes home and hangs out with his parents. They learn new things in school, Stiles plays with his toys at home, and Scott gets to come over more now, which is awesome.

He leaves a peanut butter and jelly sandwich underneath his bed sometimes, but every morning Stiles wakes up and it’s still there, untouched.

Ten years later

“Stiles, get up! You’re gonna be late for school!”

“Mmm,” Stiles grumbles, flopping over on his pillow.

Stiles can hear the door slam, and breathes a sigh of relief. His dad leaving for the station means it is now only about seven forty-five, which means he still has five minutes to lay in bed and then has enough time to jump up, throw on some clothes and drive the seven minutes to campus. And if he’s late, Stiles doesn’t care, it’s just Harris for homeroom anyways.

Then the sirens start.

Stiles jolts up, the loud and high-pitched wailing making him curse and he flails and trips over his sheets as he tries to get out of bed, gets tangled and flops helplessly to the floor, hanging upside down.

Ugh. Stiles is gonna tell every single fast food joint in town to never, ever serve his dad, just to get him back. He can hear the police cruiser drive away, his dad probably smirking to himself, and Stiles tries to extricate himself from the sheets, only to fall to the floor.

The underneath of his bed is a mess. His old baseball bat, a few scattered clothes and comic books, and even some of his toys when he was a kid.

There’s a plate shoved all the way to the back, forgotten, and Stiles snorts at the sight of it. He was such a weird kid, sneaking food for his imaginary friend. Stiles never could pin down what exactly he’d come up with. All the other kids he’d talked to who had imaginary friends normally thought of like, another kid their age, but Stiles had imagined this whole creature that was usually a wolf, sometimes a bear, or duck, or bird. Or shadows.

Shadows like the one creeping by the wall, thick and cloudy, and a little unnerving. The morning sunlight doesn’t quite seem to reach it, even though Stiles knows that window lets in the most unrelenting harsh rays (why Stiles’ bedroom faces the east, he’ll never understand).

Stiles blinks. He swears he just saw the shadow move.
“Hello?” he asks, even though he knows it’s exactly what the person in a horror movie would say before they get eaten by the monsters.

Stiles shakes his head in disbelief. *Monsters aren’t real, get a grip, Stiles*, he thinks.

And then he sees the eyes, two large greenish-yellow eyes, gleaming at him in the dark recesses of the shadows.

Stiles screams.

He scoots backward in shock, and then the eyes *blink* and the shadows move forward and curls out from under the bed, and there’s a huge dark cloudy creature with eyes floating in the air, just looking at Stiles.

“What--what in the--” Stiles splutters.

“I’m sorry,” the creature says, and the eyes stop glowing, and the shape kind of bobs apologetically, and there could be a shrug of some sort, if the creature had shoulders. “I didn’t know where else to go, and you always said we-- we’d be friends forever.”

The creature drops to the ground. Without the glow, the eyes are a jewel-bright green, flecks of gold and brown, and nowhere near as startling as they were a moment ago. And then the shapeless shadowy mass seems to shimmer, and there’s a huge black wolf staring up at him.

It takes Stiles a good minute to process both what just happened and the *friends forever* thing, and then the memory hits him all at once.

“Derek?” Stiles asks hesitantly.

The wolf bounds forward and puts his paws on Stiles’s shoulders in a very un-wolflike manner and starts licking his face eagerly.

“Wow, hi, um, not that I’m not glad to see you,” Stiles says, mind whirling, still trying to process that *magic is real*, “But… it’s been like years? What gives, dude?”

“Sorry,” Derek says, and wow, that is weird hearing that voice come out of the wolf’s mouth. It makes Stiles feel like he’s in a Disney movie or something. “I can explain later, but right now our worlds are in danger.”

He goes back towards under the bed, shifting back into the shapeless, shadowy mass again, reaching out with a long tendrils and coming back up with a tattered old leathered book, covered in unfamiliar runes.

“I need your help, Stiles,” Derek says earnestly, holding the book open unsteadily with his smoky form. He’s trying to flip the pages open, but they keep slipping from his grasp.

Stiles reaches out to help, but Derek floats backward. “Sorry, you can’t touch it, it might hurt you, it’s warded against humans,” Derek says.

“Sorry, just thumbs?” Stiles says, wiggling his own.

“Oh, taking a human form never occurred to me,” Derek says, and he shuts his eyes in concentration.

Stiles watches as Derek turns into a human-- an attractive human with those same green eyes, dark hair, a strong jaw-- and he also happens to be naked.
Stiles can feel his cheeks flushing hot and he looks away, staring hopelessly at the ceiling.

“Oh man,” Stiles says. “I am so going to be late for school today.”

Chapter End Notes

INCREDBILE FANART FOR CHAPTER ONE CAN BE FOUND HERE! So beautiful, sigh.
The human form is very strange, Derek thinks. It doesn’t quite have the sensory perception he’s accustomed to in his various forms, but he can tell Stiles is in some sort of distress. His face is red, he’s breathing quickly, and now he’s staring fixedly at the ceiling. Derek was looking forward to seeing his childhood friend again, but now it seems like Stiles is sick or something.

“Stiles, are you alright?” Derek sets down the book on Stiles’ bed and walks towards him.

“Yep, fine and dandy,” Stiles says, not looking at him. “The magical friend I had when I was a kid came back to tell me that we have to save the world, and he just happens to be hot and naked, yep. Totally fine.”

Derek looks down at his human form. He doesn’t feel unusually warm, considering. If Derek was in wolf form he could lick Stiles and see if maybe Stiles’ temperature is alright. He wonders if this form could probably tell. Derek holds his hand experimentally and licks his palm so he’s got a temperature to compare, and steps towards Stiles.

“What are you--”

Derek grabs his shoulders-- it’s a little different when he’s not a wolf, but he can make do. He leans in and licks Stiles’ cheek.

Stiles’ eyes widen, and Derek wasn’t sure it was possible to turn even redder, but he does, and he stumbles backwards, falling flat on his bed. “Derek-- what?!”

“I was checking if you had a fever,” Derek explains, concerned. He remembers when Cora had that awful fever, even her formless shape had run awfully hot.

“Oh my God, no, I’m not sick, just-- you-- can you cover up, I really can’t deal with this,” Stiles says.

He’s embarrassed, Derek realizes. But for what reason? Why Stiles does want him covered up? Did Derek mess up the transformation? It’s possible. Maybe he looks strange.

He looks down at his body. Arms, legs, feet, he recognizes these and remembers them from the last time he Crossed over to the human world. He’s never seen this before, though, there’s something between his legs--

“And now there’s touching, please, um, I’m just gonna close my eyes until you’re done exploring your new body,” Stiles says, shutting his eyes tight.

“What is it?” Derek asks, jumping up and down and watching the thing flop. It’s kind of silly looking, actually. He doesn’t really know why Stiles is so freaked out about it. “Do you have one? Can I see it?”

Stiles opens his eyes one at a time, and he sits up, looking at Derek. He grabs something from his laundry basket and throws it at Derek-- a shirt. The texture is interesting under Derek’s fingers, and he holds the fabric, stretching it.
“Just put it on!” Stiles shrieks.

Derek tries putting his arms in the holes, but he gets stuck. “This doesn’t fit,” he says, frustrated, caught in the shirt. He struggles with it until he takes it off and flings it to the floor.

Stiles throws another one at him, and Derek tries again, scowling. This is ridiculous. This time he figures out the sleeves and puts his arms through, and his head, but it’s tight, too tight. “No,” Derek says.

“Thought those were boxers,” Stiles mutters. “Just try that first drawer,” he says, pointing behind Derek.

Derek turns and bends over to open the drawer, finding it filled with more clothing.

“Fuck,” Stiles says, behind him.

Derek tries on a few shirts, but they’re all too small, tight across the chest and uncomfortable. He frowns, plucking at the lurid orange and blue fabric, looking over at Stiles. “This no fit,” he says. They’re wasting time with this, he needs to tell Stiles what’s happening, but Stiles seems to be strangely preoccupied with finding coverings for his body.

Stiles glances down. “Boxers drawer,” he mutters, which doesn’t make any sense to Derek.

“Are you sure you’re not sick? You’re really red,” Derek says, worried now about his friend, the frustration with the clothes subsiding. There are lot of pressing things on his mind right now, and he glances at the book he's brought, thinks about the impending dangers-- but it wouldn't be immediately solvable anyways. For the moment, Derek's safe. He’s with Stiles. Who if by going with his concern for Derek and willingness to listen, he’ll try to help. Derek knew following his heart was the right thing to do. And now Stiles is panicking, sick possibly, and if Derek can help with this clothes thing, he should.

“Please, just--” Stiles gestures frantically.

“Will me finding something that fits make you feel better?”

“Yes, absolutely yes, lets just forget about the shirts, big guy, and just-- yes-- here! Sweatpants!”

Stiles stands up, spotting a lump of gray fabric in another laundry basket-- some sort of organizational system, Derek guesses-- and closes his eyes, handing it to Derek.

“Oh my God, you are so hopeless. Here, let me help you before you knock over something with your huge perfect butt.”

“Are you still mad at me because I broke your lamp that time?” Derek asks. “I told you I was sorry.”

Stiles drops to the floor, picking up Derek’s legs and pushing them into the sweatpants, one by one. “No, I’m not mad, I just--” and now he’s looking right at the strange tentacle between Derek’s legs. He’s red again.
“Stiles--”

“Just let me--” Stiles yanks up the pants quickly, pulling them up over Derek’s hips, and then his hand brushes across the floppy thing, and Derek feels strangely warm all of a sudden.

“Sorry,” Stiles blurts out, and he stands up quickly.

It’s been ten years, Derek thinks. His eyes are the same, bright brown and staring right back at Derek, startlingly close. It feels the same, the way they’ve fallen back into that old, easy intimacy and trust, but also different. Different like how Derek wants to move closer, touch--

“Um,” Stiles says.

“My tentacle is getting hard,” Derek says, a little awed. He didn’t know human bodies could change form on their own. “Look, it’s different.” He reaches for Stiles’ hand so he can show him.

“I’m going to the special hell,” Stiles says breathily, and he blinks and shakes Derek’s hand away. “Derek, look, you’ve never had a human body before--”

Something on Stiles’ bedside table vibrates violently and then falls onto the floor with a hard klunk. Stiles takes the moment to dive for the thing, and he sighs, looking at Derek and then back at the slim black case in his hands. It lights up again, and Stiles taps it violently. “Okay, I’d love to save the world and everything, and Scott getting me notes for the day would totally work but I have a Chemistry test third period and if I miss it Harris will just give me a big fat zero, please tell me like, the doomsday scenario is something that can wait a few hours? Because providing, that if we do save the world, I’d love to not come back to a flunked class.”

Derek only understands a little of that. “It’s urgent, but if you have to leave for a little while, I can take the time to translate the runes to your language so you can have a better understanding of what we’re dealing with.”

Stiles breathes out in relief. “Okay, I’m gonna go to school and deal with this test, but I’ll ditch at lunchtime and come back, okay?”

“Okay,” Derek says. He watches as Stiles grabs more clothes out of his basket and goes into his bathroom, coming out with entirely different ones. They both looked nice, and Derek doesn’t understand, but he smiles anyways and Stiles nods at him.

“Look, uh, just hang out here, and I’ll be back, okay-- there’s food downstairs and you remember my room, and hey, I still have that old toy box somewhere-- you probably don’t play with that kind of stuff anymore, but--

“Stiles,” Derek says, stepping forward. “Thank you.”

“Yeah, no problem,” Stiles replies easily. The corners of his lips quirk up. “You’re gonna tell me all everything when I get back, and especially why you disappeared.”

Derek nods, and the distraction of the human body and the clothing and all these new things aside-- it sinks in again, that this is Stiles, that he’s here after all this time, and he still cares about Derek.

Stiles takes a deep breath. “It’s really good to see you, Derek.”

And then he reaches out and wraps Derek in a warm embrace, and Derek feels safe and warm and content. It’s different, in this form. If Derek was a wolf he’d curl his tail around Stiles’ body, or
nuzzle into his neck with his snout, or lick Stiles’ face, but Stiles reacted really strangely when he did that earlier, so Derek just copies Stiles and holds him in his arms.

“Wow, you’re like, a hair trigger kind of dude,” Stiles says, pulling back, but not before Derek can feel something knock against his body.

“Why is your tentacle hard too?” Derek blurts out. It must be a normal thing, right?

“It’s not a tentacle,” Stiles says. “I really don’t have time to explain anatomy right now, as much as I’d love to, but I, uh-- I mean-- you--”

“What do I do?” Derek says, looking down at his own. It’s making a funny shape in the pants Stiles gave him.

“Um, well, you can touch it, or you can think of other things to make it-- you know what, the longer I keep talking the more likely I’m gonna stay and try and explain to you the wonders of jerking off and self exploration, so I’m just gonna go. There’s porn on the computer, please don’t leave the house, kaythanksbye.”

And Stiles runs out the door.

“What is porn?” Derek asks to the empty room.

Chapter End Notes

And the CUTEST FANART EVER for chapter two done by the awesome tobyness!
Check it out here!
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Thank you all so much for the wonderful feedback so far! I adore that everyone was super fixated on the tentacles. I really appreciate it and you all are amazing. <3

Jay is amazing because not only does she beta-read, but she tolerates me telling her about Derek’s butt in much detail and helpfully points me back towards writing and not just rhapsodizing about his curve of his ass.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Stiles ended up missing homeroom and gets to school a few minutes before first period lets out, so he just sneaks quietly onto campus via the back gate and hides in the bathroom until the bell rings. It’s not like he’s missing much, anyways, Scott is texting him constant updates about Mrs. Neiman’s new hairdo in World History and lets him know he’s got notes for Stiles.

>> did u sleep in again or smth

Stiles chuckles to himself, shaking his head in disbelief at the situation.

<< would u believe me if i told u something rly weird happened

>> of course bro why wud u even ask

>> because its VERY WEIRD

<< weirdr than the time u found out that a creampie isn’t a type of dessert

>> YES

<< ok sounds more interesting than crop rotations in mesoamerica tell me more

The bell rings, which saves Stiles the trouble of figuring out how to compose a text message that accurately conveys the situation. He hears the sound of doors opening and people chattering fill the hallways, so Stiles leaves the bathroom, disappearing within the crowd of kids hustling to make it to their next period. Nobody bats an eye, like he’s been here all along and didn’t just miss two class periods without an excuse.

Scott waves excitedly to him by the science building, grinning as Stiles walks up to him.

“Is this the kind of thing where you stayed up all night watching Ancient Aliens again and then the TV did something weird and now you’re convinced someone from space is trying to talk to you?”

Stiles shakes his head, although he’s still not entirely convinced that incident last month wasn’t just an electronic glitch. After all, if monsters and magic were real, who’s to say aliens weren’t? “Um, remember when I was a kid and I had a… friend named Derek?”

“Sure. The one that visited you at midnight and turned into a wolf and all sorts of other animals,” Scott says good-naturedly.
“Okay, well, he’s back. And he needs my help with something, so I’m gonna ditch at lunch— I’d ask you to come with, but I know you have that in-class essay in English at fifth period and you like gave me that speech at the beginning of the quarter about being responsible and stuff, so. Come over to my house after and you can see him.”

Scott’s eyebrows knit together. “Your friend Derek. Who magically turns into a wolf. Is back?”

Stiles laughs, a little high pitched and nervous, rubbing his hair. “I know, it’s ridiculous, right? I mean, he even like, has a human form. And it’s hot. And he’s naked and waiting at my house after staying last night—”

Had Derek stayed the entire night? Had he floated in through the window at midnight and then hid under Stiles’ bed, waiting for morning?

Scott whistles. “Whoa. You could have just led with that instead of your imaginary friend is back! When did you have time to get down to Jungle and pick someone up? And why is your hookup still at your house? Stiles!”

Stiles turns red. “I didn’t— you know I would tell you first if I ever hooked up with anyone! And it isn’t like that— he’s Derek! He’s magic! He doesn’t know what to do with himself! He doesn’t even know what sex is!”

Stiles realizes belatedly as they enter the classroom that his loud voice carries, and Mr. Harris glares at them as they enter the room.

“Not that there’s anything wrong with that,” Stiles says hastily, as a few of his classmates giggle.

He shakes his head and plops into his usual seat next to Scott, who gives him an excited thumbs up. Stiles sighs as Harris passes out the tests, wishing that it was as simple as what Scott was assuming. Oh man, the idea that he’d met Derek somewhere like Jungle, danced all night and Derek had gone home with him--

“You have forty-five minutes. You may begin now.”

Stiles can barely concentrate. The sound of pencils scratching and people breathing in classroom does little to distract him from the images in his head unbidden now, of Derek’s open, eager face, the feel of his mouth and tongue on Stiles’ cheek, the look of the broad lines of his tanned back, a strange swirl pattern, like a tattoo, splayed between his shoulder blades.

Stiles blushedes, trying to focus on balancing the equations in front of him, but all he can think about the way Derek’s ass looked when he bent over that morning, all round and supple, bouncing slightly when Derek stood back up.

Somehow he finishes the test and turns it in when the bell rings. He shrugs sheepishly at Harris, who is glaring at him for being the last student to finish, and then catches up to Scott, already standing with Allison and Lydia in the hallway outside.

“Hm, I’m not sure if I got question seven, part c right,” Lydia says, twirling a strand of her hair around her finger. “I mean yes, temperature is a measure of the average kinetic energy of the molecules in matter but the way Harris worded the question was tricky because it could technically be--”

“Lydia, we just took the test, I don’t want to think about it again,” Allison says, shaking her head in exasperation. “Ugh, I hate it when teachers somehow all decide to do tests on the same day.”
Stiles makes hopeful eyes at Scott so they can talk about the Derek situation before their next class, but he’s already taken Allison’s hand and is whispering something probably very supportive in her ear, being boyfriend-of-the-year as usual.

“Aww, thanks,” Allison says, cheeks turning pink. She gives Scott a quick peck on the cheek.

“Alright, we’ll see you guys at lunch.”

“What’s with you?” Lydia asks as they walk to their own English class, which thankfully does not have any in-class essays today. “Usually after tests you argue with me about questions.”

“Nothing,” Stiles says.

Lydia narrows her eyes suspiciously, but she doesn’t bring it up again. Stiles almost follows her into the classroom, but he clutches his backpack strap, thinking about Derek waiting for him, and if he left after fourth everyone would be heading to the cafeteria and one lone student walking towards the exit would be much more noticeable.

Stiles doubles back and races back out past the humanities building just as the bell rings. He sees Coach Finstock patrolling the halls and ducks behind a wall, waiting for him to pass, then runs all the way out to the parking lot.

He drives all the way back home, heart pounding nervously as he pulls into the driveway.

Stiles isn’t sure what the expected, but opening the door to utter chaos wasn’t it. The living room is a mess-- couch upended, curtails ripped, tablecloth dragged off the dining table.

“Derek?” Stiles calls out, dropping his backpack to the floor in a panic.

He hears a loud thud coming from the kitchen and grabs a chair, hoping it’s not a burglar or a dangerous monster or something, walking forward hesitantly.

Derek bounds out of the kitchen doorway as wolf, his huge furry snout stuck in a jar of peanut butter, tail wagging happily when he sees Stiles.

“Oh my God,” Stiles exhales, and peers into the kitchen to see that-- yep, it’s also similarly destroyed. All the cupboard doors are open, as is the fridge, and it looks like Derek went on a sampling spree of every type of food in the Stilinski house.

The massive black wolf, who might in a different context look utterly terrifying, is currently nosing helplessly at the floor, trying to get the peanut butter jar off his face, and looks up balefully at Stiles.

“I should get you one of those dog shaming signs,” Stiles says, shaking his head and looking at the mess. “Hold up, don’t move.” He snaps a photo of Derek’s guilty face and chuckles, sending it to Scott.

Stiles grabs the end of the jar and manages to free Derek, who shakes his tail and leaps up onto Stiles, like he’s gonna lick him again. “Oh no you don’t, peanut butter breath,” Stiles mutters, but it’s too late, Derek’s tackled him to the ground and there’s a hot tongue on his face.

Stiles pats Derek’s fur awkwardly, and Derek says, “I missed you.”

“Missed you too, buddy.” Stiles makes a face. “The talking out of the wolf’s mouth isn’t any less weird, though.”

Derek shuffles backward and settles on the floor, and that hazy shimmer is starting to form around
him again, and Stiles can already see tanned skin--

“Wait, wait! I didn’t mean transform into a human!” Stiles blurts out. He can’t deal with naked Derek again, he really can’t. “Maybe into another animal, something where I could laugh at the talking-animal bit and not get freaked out? Your wolf is supposed be scary, dude.”

Derek keeps shimmering and his form shrinks a little, changing midway, and then turns into a large tortoise. He must have gotten it wrong somehow, since he already started to shift to human, and there are huge bushy black eyebrows on the tortoise.

“How is this?” Derek asks, looking up at Stiles.

Stiles starts cracking up. “Sure. Awesome. So you need to show me what was in that book thing, right?”

Derek starts to shift forward, moving infinitesimally slow. “Yeah, I did a few translations, but then I got really hungry, and you did say there was food, so I went looking around…”

The eyebrows move while Derek is talking, and this is the funniest thing in the world. Stiles just wants to watch Derek attempt to explain his quest for food but he figures they’re on a tight schedule, probably. Derek in any case looks like he’ll take forever to get to the stairs, let alone up them, so Stiles just picks Derek-the-turtle up gingerly and heads upstairs to his bedroom.

Derek wobbles a little and says, “This is undignified,” but he lets Stiles hold him anyways.

Stiles gingerly sets Derek down on his bed, and he takes care to avoid touching the elaborate leather-bound book Derek had brought with him. His room doesn’t look as messed up as the rest of the house, or maybe Stiles can’t tell because his room is so unorganized anyway. There are sheets of white printer paper scattered across the bed and the floor, filled with small, cramped handwriting.

“I only translated half of it,” Derek says. “This is a history of my people. How our worlds came to be divided.”

“Okay,” Stiles says, gathering the sheets. There’s even a neat little page number circled on the top right hand corner of each one. “What’s going on?”

Derek stills, blinking his little turtle eyes and shifts a little on Stiles’ bed, like he’s reaching for the book. It’s almost comical, but Stiles feels guilty about laughing earlier because this is a serious issue and Derek needs his help. Stiles should totally get over his hangups with the nudity because it’s obvious a human form would be the most useful with Derek right now.

Stiles spots the discarded sweatpants on the floor and grabs them. “Here, wait, it’ll probably be easier if you have hands again-- just wait until I’m out of the room to transform, and get dressed.”

He rummages in his laundry basket as well and finds the biggest t-shirt he has, setting both t-shirt and sweatpants on the bed next to Derek.

Derek nods at him, and Stiles hastily backs out of his own bedroom, waiting awkwardly in the hallway. He can hear some rustling and then Derek say “Okay.”

“These coverings are very important to you,” Derek says, picking at the fabric of the sweatpants.

Stiles blushes and looks away from the bulge in Derek’s lap, but that means he’s looking at Derek’s gorgeous face, with that jawline and those eyes and --
Oh, fuck, Derek was talking to him. Stiles has no idea what he just said, because he’s busy staring at Derek’s mouth. “Yeah,” Stiles just says, agreeing.

Derek smiles. “I would not care for them, but you are important to me, so I will do whatever I can to make you comfortable.”

“I— uh— thanks. You— you’re important to me too. I remember we used to be really good friends. So, uh. Anything I can do to help?” Stiles sits down next to Derek, and his room all of a sudden feels very small and strange and he can feel the heat emanating from Derek’s body. He looks like a teenager, but his broad shoulders still stretch out Stiles’ biggest t-shirt.

“The Crossing. It’s— it’s been destroyed,” Derek says, looking down at his hands, a guilty shadow on his face. “It’s my fault,” he adds in a small tone.

“Derek,” Stiles says softly. He throws his arm around his shoulders and leans into him, and Derek looks out towards the window.

“The hunters— they— it’s my fault,” Derek says, voice wavering a little, and then he looks at Stiles, hope in his eyes. “I just need to fix it.”

“Whatever you need, you know if you wanna talk about it— or not— or just tell me how I can help.”

Derek nods. The story comes out of him in slowly, and then Derek gets nervous, speaking quicker. He explains the details of what Stiles as a kid had called “monster land”— Derek’s home, a parallel universe where all the bogeypeople lived. Once a day, all over the world during the witching hour, starting at midnight, there were special areas called Crossings, where the bogeys could travel to the human world and Scare people.

It’s how Stiles interprets it, Scare with a capital S, because that’s the way Derek says it, like it’s something amazing. And Stiles is sure it is, especially when Derek goes on to describe that the bogeypeople feed off this energy from the human world— the fear, the excitement, the thrill of their interactions in the Scares. They don’t need to eat food— although Stiles has seen evidence that they can, and definitely enjoy it— but it looks like the bogeys mostly sustain themselves off of emotion.

“The boundaries between our worlds used to be undefined,” Derek says. “The stories say one could start walking in one land and end up in another completely by accident, and that the two worlds were constantly in flux. But it wasn’t necessarily peaceful. There were bogeys who took advantage of their ability to take monstrous shapes, pursued humans for sport. And then the humans in turn took up arms, found ways to hurt us, wanted to drive us back to our land and keep us there forever.”

There was a treaty, Derek explains. A very powerful human who was gifted with magic created a powerful boundary between the two worlds and bound the spell to the earth itself, with permeable pockets between them, accessible during the witching hour.

“But something happened yesterday,” Derek says. “The Crossing located in Beacon Hills was destroyed.”

Stiles frowns. “But you made it through?”

Derek seems to shrink into himself, a regretful look in his eyes. “I was already on this side,” he says. It doesn’t seem like something he wants to talk about, but it’s obvious that something happened. “Okay,” Stiles says simply. “So… now all the bogeys can’t come to Beacon Hills?”

Derek shakes his head. “All the Crossings are tied to each other by magic. This one closing means all
the other ones aren’t working anymore. Which means every single bogeyperson on the other side will be trapped, unable to cross over and get the energy they need to survive.”

“They’ll starve to death!” Stiles exclaims in shock.

“Not just that,” Derek says grimly. “There will be a lot of us that will die. The children, the weak, the old. But those who will survive will just get hungrier, and hungrier… and I’m not an expert at magic and I don’t know how the Crossings work at all, but the destruction of one Crossing that causes the shutdown of all the others might be temporary… and then I think that the barriers will just collapse entirely.”

“So just bogeys and humans again like before, right? That doesn’t seem too bad. I mean, I love a good scare,” Stiles says, hoping to find a positive light.

“Stiles, when the barrier breaks, hundreds of thousands of starving bogeys, driven rabid by the time spent without sustenance, will just descend upon the human populations. It will be worse than the dark days. People will die of terror. And then your hunters will retaliate, and it will be all out war.”

“That’s terrible,” Stiles says.

“I need your help,” Derek says. “I need you to help me find someone-- a human gifted with magic, a specific kind of magic that makes them a natural talent to fix the spell that keeps our worlds from collapsing into chaos.”

“Of course,” Stiles says, puffing up his chest in mock-confidence. “Not only am I really good at getting fixated on researching really weird things. Just tell me everything you need to know about what you’re looking for.”

Derek sighs with resignation. “It was the one part of the book I didn’t really understand.”

“What?”

Derek looks him in the eye. “I need to find a spark.”

Chapter End Notes

EDIT: NOW WITH FANART OF DEREK AS TORTOISE.

Next chapter: something gets lost in translation, and Stiles learns why Derek stopped visiting him as a kid.
Chapter Notes

Kate Argent is tagged as a character now and she will feature in the story with similar themes of betrayal with regards to Derek, but she and Derek are not ever romantic or sexually involved in the story. Just a quick heads up, looking out for you guys. Let me know if any more tags/warnings are needed.

~

Thank you to Jay and mikkimouse for the awesome beta help. /(^_^)/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Derek waits for a response, expecting Stiles to tell him that it’s impossible, or he’s never heard of it, but Stiles just gives him a curious look and then blinks, nodding. “Okay, so where do we start? What do you know about it, and where should we look?” Stiles asks.

Derek gestures at the half-finished translation spread out on Stiles’ bed. He’d only gotten so far in interpreting the history when he’d gotten hungry and decided to go look for food, but finishing it would be the first step.

“Mm, okay, I guess you can work on that. I’ll try and figure out if it’s a metaphor, or if there’s any local legends on our side about bogeypeople or anything,” Stiles says, and then plops down in front of his desk, stretching his fingers out.

“Thank you,” Derek says again, but Stiles waves him off with a gesture, like it’s nothing, helping Derek with this monumental task. They haven’t even seen each other for ten years, and Derek is kind of amazed that Stiles has agreed to help him with this. He’d thought at the most Stiles would have given him refuge for the night, or direct him towards some resources, but it seems like he’s willing to just dive right in and help.

Derek shakes the thought off and gets back to work, reading the runes and transcribing the rest of the history book in English. The runework is old, from hundreds and hundreds of years ago, a much older generation of bogeypeople, and while Derek can understand it, it takes him awhile to figure it out. They speak the languages of the world, but this specific form is theirs and theirs alone. It makes him tremble a little, to think that all this history might be gone if they are not successful.

Stiles is typing away at the computer, humming thoughtfully and his screen flickers with information quickly, and then he turns to look at Derek poring over the book.

“So, uh, what happened with us?” Stiles asks quietly.

Derek looks up from the English translation, setting the pen down. “I wanted to come back and visit, I really did,” Derek says. He closes his eyes, thinking back to when he was eight years old, excited and flushed with the warmth of friendship, how he’d come back every night to spend time with Stiles, instead of learning how to Scare. Not contributing to the stored well of energy that would sustain their family. Being selfish.
“My mother said she thought our friendship would be a passing phase,” Derek says. “That she allowed me to come back because she thought it would be amusing for me, to see how the humans lived. But then I kept coming back, and we were close, and then I asked to stay past the witching hour again--”

Derek takes a deep breath. “I’m sorry I broke my promise to come back. I really wanted to-- my mother said it was dangerous, that we were too close, and it could only end badly. And we stopped using this Crossing, moved to a place you know as France--”

“Holy shit,” Stiles says, sitting upright on his chair. It squeaks as Stiles leans forward. “Your whole family had to move to another country because of me? I’m sorry, that really sucks.”

Derek looks up at him, hopeful, and Stiles’ whole face softens.

“Look, I don’t blame you at all, okay? Totally forgotten. I’m just glad you’re here now. I promise, I will help you find the spark.”

Derek’s heartbeat quickens a little. Stiles is making him a promise, looking up at him expectantly. Do humans acknowledge their promises the same way? Sealing it face to face, after a spoken declaration of intent?

Stiles stands up with a small smile, stepping forward to where Derek is sitting on the bed, leaning forward. Derek’s mind races, trying to think-- surely humans have a similar gesture, after all, humans and bogeys did live together long ago. He quickly comes up with what he hopes is the correct equivalent in his head, and says sincerely, “I accept your oath, and I give you my thanks.”

Derek takes Stiles’ face carefully in his hands and gently moves to touch their faces together.

It’s soft and warm, and actually quite nice, Derek thinks. Stiles makes a soft noise of surprise, but presses back against him eagerly, showing his dedication to the oath. Derek doesn’t remember anyone ever having made a promise seal with more than just their faces but Stiles seems to have wrapped an arm around his waist and aligning their bodies closer. It feels good, in a way Derek has never felt before, not in any of his bodies-- the heat of Stiles’ body pressed up against his, the wetness of his mouth against Derek’s own.

Derek gasps when Stiles’ tongue slips inside his own mouth to tangle hotly with his own, and he pulls back, confused.

Stiles is blushing, looking up at him sheepishly. “I, uh, sorry, too soon?”

“Promise seals normally don’t last longer than ten seconds,” Derek says. He gets the feeling he was enjoying it more than he should have.

“Wait-- what?”

Derek gestures between them. “You offered me an oath and I accepted it. I thought you were approaching me for a traditional seal, as is common among my people. We press the faces of our forms together. I wasn’t sure which parts went where but I think we figured it out.”

Derek smiles at him, but the smile isn’t returned. Instead, Stiles’ eyes go a little wide, and he nods awkwardly, stepping back. “Yeah, yeah, uh-- sealing the promise, that’s what. I-- fuck.”

He sinks back into his chair, legs splayed out, and Derek is curious to see that his pants are tented, like Derek’s was this morning. Was Stiles’ form changing for some reason?
“Are you okay?” Derek asks with concern.

“Yeah, I just. Great. Yeah. My first kiss and it’s not even a kiss. Way to go, Stiles, thinking you’d be into me like that, I just-- I just--” Stiles closes his eyes, and the scent of sharp misery wafts towards Derek. “I knew it was too good to be true.”

Derek knows if he shifted back to his true form he could eat the emotion hanging in the air now, fresh from the source, but he gets the feeling it would be bitter tasting. He moves around it, crouching down in front of Stiles.

“I don’t understand. Did I upset you?”

“Again, Derek, it’s not your fault,” Stiles huffs. “Um-- it’s a human thing. What we just did, touching mouths, it’s what we do to show affection. Intimacy.”

“Oh,” Derek says, suddenly horrified. “I am so sorry, I didn’t know. Please forgive me. I would never want to--” he would never want to hurt Stiles, to touch him in a way he didn’t want, and Derek wants to make this absolutely clear to him--

“I get it. You would never.” Stiles says flatly. “Can we not talk about the kissing? We’ve got work to do.”

Derek feels terrible, but Stiles is right. They have better things to do.

Stiles smells a bit unhappy, but Derek doesn’t want to bring up the incident anymore for fear of upsetting his friend. They do make a lot of progress, though, and Derek translates the rest of the book and Stiles manages to locate a book of folk tales that references a similar story that could be about the creation of the boundaries between the humans and the bogeys. “There’s a copy at the public library,” Stiles says, relieved. “Did you figure out any more about the spark?”

“Only that it’s a rare talent in humans. It would have been hereditary, though. I don’t know the first place we would look for the descendants of--” Derek looks back at his notes. “I think I spelled this wrong. Here, this is the name of the spark who created the original spell.”

Stiles leans over his shoulder and lets out a sharp laugh. “Well, they were definitely Polish, and you didn’t spell it wrong. Przemysława Ślusarczyk, wrote the treaty with the leader of the bogeys and created the magical barrier, anchoring it to eight points throughout the world.”

Derek blinks. “I didn’t write down eight.”

Stiles shrugs. “Really? Thought I read it in your notes.” He points to Derek’s scattered scribblings, and sure enough, Derek can find his notes on the spell. It does say eight. Stiles must have good eyesight, to have seen this piece from across the room.

“Alright, so all we have to do is track down this, oh God, if she was alive in the year ... guh, that’s like the 1500’s, isn’t it. Hm. Well, I’m sure I could find you some descendants. There’s a really good genealogy section in the library, too, we could go get it all done at once.”

Stiles stands up and rubs his hands together, and Derek follows him downstairs, glad that they’re moving forward with the problem. Stiles seems to be in a better mood, and he smells a lot better, like
curiosity and excitement. Derek thinks about expending the energy to shift forms again, just to see what those emotions would taste like, but decides not to. Who knows when he’ll have time to properly feed again, and if there’s something that’s definitely been drilled into his head by his mother, it’s that they only eat the emotions that come out of Scares-- fear and excitement. Those are the strongest ones, and the ones that have sustained them for hundreds of years.

Now is definitely not the time to experiment.

The front door swings open and another guy walks into the house. “Stiles?” he calls out.

“Scott!” Stiles says happily. “Oh, and this is Derek,” he adds, jerking his head backward. “About ten years too late, but hey. He made it.”

“Derek,” Scott says, wide-eyed. “So you really, wow. I mean, I was kind of skeptical but then Stiles texted me that photo of you-- that was you, right, like there is no way that huge black wolf was possible except for magic. Hi.”

“Hello,” Derek says.

Scott looks around the messy living room, and Derek feels guilty for his excitement earlier when he was looking for food. He’d gone to the kitchen first, yes, but once he had the peanut butter it was difficult to not just bound about excitedly with it. And he has no control over his tail, really.

“Yeah, I should probably clean up before my dad gets home,” Stiles says, rubbing the back of his neck.

“I’ll help,” Scott says brightly. “I brought you your homework too. Oh, and I signed your name in for the attendance sheet during sixth period so you get credit for participation.”

Stiles grins, hugging Scott fondly. “You are the most awesome best friend anyone could ever ask for!”

Scott just laughs, patting Stiles on the back and they start picking up the living room together. Derek tries to help, follow direction, but he feels like he’s getting more in the way than actually be helpful, and eventually he just hangs back awkwardly, watching Stiles and Scott put all the furniture in the living room to rights. They hang the curtain back up, laughing and joking, moving in perfect tandem, and Derek feels like an outsider. Stiles had called Scott his best friend, right? It made sense, of course, that Derek wasn’t special.

He tries to follow the conversation, but it’s mostly in-jokes and talking about people Derek doesn’t know.

“And then Lydia places the apple on her head and yawns, can you believe it, like there’s no big deal with having someone aim a freaking arrow at you, but of course Allison--”

“Yeah, yeah, totally awesome Allison Argent,” Stiles says, teasing. “I’m still amazed the high school let her write off PE credit with her independent study with archery.”

Derek feels like his stomach is suddenly sinking. “Did you say Argent?” he asks. It could be fine, he could have just misheard…

“Yeah, Allison’s awesome,” Stiles says, looking over at Derek.

“Oh yeah, speaking of Allison, remember last week she told me she’s having that huge family dinner and didn’t want to be alone at the country club with no one her own age? She invited us, you know,
and you promised you’d go too, otherwise it’ll just be boring for her, hanging out with all the Argents—” Scott is still talking, but the word Argents reverberates coldly in Derek’s head. How many and why and if she is here--

“I have to go,” Derek says, trying not to panic.

“What? But I thought we were gonna--”

Derek shifts, pulling the energy within himself to shift back into his trueform. His borrowed clothes from Stiles sink to the floor, and Derek floats in the air. He should be feeling more comfortable now that he’s back in his usual body, but he doesn’t.

“Derek, wait, where are you--” Stiles asks.

Derek doesn’t answer because he doesn’t know. He just makes for the open window and flees in a puff of smoke.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter: Argents, Argents, everywhere.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Okay I know I promised Argents in this chapter, but that particular plot point is gonna happen after this chapter. I hope you enjoy!

Stiles races to the window, calling out, “Derek!” but it’s no use. He can’t see anything. Outside is just-- outside, and there are plenty of shadows and places for Derek to hide.

He makes a frustrated gesture, sinking to the floor.

“Is he okay?” Scott asks, concerned.

“I don’t know,” Stiles says. “I don’t know why he would just run off like that, we had a plan to go to the library and look for this spark person that needs to save the world.”

“Maybe he felt weirded out that we weren’t really talking to him,” Scott guesses. “I guess I was kind of gushing about Allison. I feel bad, though, like, I should have asked him about cool monster stuff. And how awesome it must be to see you again, like you guys were super close, right?”

Stiles is still staring out the window, and Scott seems to pick up on his expression.

“Yeah, we were…” Stiles struggles with how to elaborate the simple childhood promise of friends forever, and he supposes he could compare it to what he has with Scott, but it’s totally different. Stiles grew up with Scott, knows him like the back of his hand, and they have an unbreakable bond, but Derek-- Derek just disappeared, and Stiles only now got him back. It’s not like they could just pick up where they left off, playing with Legos and building blanket forts, but it feels like Stiles has been given this great chance to start again with Derek.

“Best friends, right?” Scott suggests. “I’m not jealous, if that’s what you’re wondering, you know. You’re like, super affectionate, bro. I remember you called me your best friend in like the first ten minutes we met. If you were hanging out with Derek for like, months, I can’t believe you weren’t calling him your best friend.” Scott blinks, realization coming into his eyes. “Maybe Derek was jealous! Like he felt uncomfortable because he’s got that mentality that you can’t have more than one best friend and he felt left out or something,” Scott says.

“I don’t think it’s like that,” Stiles says, frowning. “Look, our relationship is totally different--”

“Oh? You think of him in a … different way?” Scott teases, waggling his eyebrows.

Stiles huffs at him. “He kissed me.”

Scott’s eyes light up. “Really? That’s so awesome. I’m happy for you, dude! How was it?”

“Dude, really?” Stiles raises his eyebrow.

“Aw, come on, I tell you all about Allison and me!” Scott says excitedly, and Stiles has to sigh. Scott’s probably been waiting for Stiles to join him on the kissing people front ever since he started dating Allison and felt bad that Stiles didn’t have someone to kiss too.
“There’s nothing to tell,” Stiles says unhappily.

Scott raises his eyebrow, and really, he knows Stiles all too well.

“I mean, like, yeah, we kissed, but Derek didn’t know it was a kiss, okay? To him, it’s like, a promise seal or something. Platonic. Like when I said I would help him find the spark he got all serious and said this thing like ‘I accept your oath’ and then there was mouth touching and… yeah. When I told him what it meant he kinda freaked out and said he never would-- well, let’s just say I’m not exactly the kind of guy people are lining up to kiss.” Stiles slumps dejectedly, leaning into the wall, thinking about his pathetic life and the constant rejection of the people he’s tried to date.

Lydia, who didn’t even notice him until he stopped trying so hard, and then they had that conversation about putting people on pedestals, which was humbling, but necessary. Stiles feels like he learned a lot from that experience. He’s glad they’re friends now, but he still remembers the sting of every ignored glance, the flowers thrown into the garbage-- it’s not a Lydia thing specifically, just the rejection that had hurt like hell.

And then, because Stiles is probably a masochist, when he was figuring out his budding bisexuality he’d gone ahead and asked Danny out, very loudly and publicly after school with a rehearsed poem because he found out Danny liked Pablo Neruda. Danny had been nice, well, too nice, about letting him down easy, and then Stiles had been made fun relentlessly for weeks after that for his attempts at reciting poetry.

Stiles is unkissable. Undateable. Even a guy from a parallel universe would never even think of it, no matter how much he likes Stiles. As a friend. Because that’s what Derek wants.

And a friend to help with something very important, fuck, Stiles can’t believe he’s moping about his love life while there’s impending doom on the horizon.

“Dude, no, you are very kissable,” Scott says.

Stiles gets up off the floor. “Ugh, I don’t wanna talk about it.” He loves Scott’s unwavering optimism, but he’s not in the mood to be cheered up right now, he wants to do something. “Come on, let’s finish cleaning this up.”

They finish putting the living room and kitchen to rights, and Stiles hopes that his dad won’t notice the mostly empty fridge when he gets home from his shift. Scott hands over notes from the day and Stiles explains to him what’s happening with Derek’s people being stuck on the other side of the broken Crossings. Scott is horrified at the idea and immediately agrees to go with Stiles to the library to find any information they can to help.

They split up the task of research; Scott looks for any legends or mythologies that revolve around bogeypeople or might reference the Crossings, and Stiles works on looking for a descendant of Ślusarczyk. Hopefully she had a bunch of children and some of them emigrated to America at some point so they don’t have to go all the way over to Europe to find this spark.

Stiles and Scott fill a table with the books they’ve found on the subject, and they both have their laptops open so they can do Internet searches as well. They browse in companionable silence for awhile, the sounds of Stiles’ pen scratching as he makes notes as he pores through the books and Scott typing away.

“Find anything?” Stiles whispers.

Scott makes a face. “Some very weird fairy tales, but nothing that sounds similar at all to the story
you told me. How about you, any luck with the spark?"

Stiles grumbles about all the holes in historical records. “It’s almost fucking impossible,” he says angrily, shutting a book closed with more force than necessary. “Centuries between then and now, and I did figure out that she got married and had like, five kids, because she married this duke or other and there was a huge wedding announcement and ball and stuff, so there was a record, but it didn’t seem like any of the kids did anything interesting so there aren’t many records of them. Plus, it’s hard to track the name since her kids took her husband’s name, and then some of them got married and names changed even more and it’s a nightmare. Here. Look.”

Stiles shows Scott the family tree he drew of Ślusarczyk’s descendants, which is filled with holes and question marks. The only positive thing he can think of is that he knows for sure at least a few of those descendants came over to America, so yay. Kinda. It gets nebulous with the names and, well--

“You’ve got a lot of stick figures there. Are these all possible sparks?”

Stiles makes a noise of affirmation and frustration, and headplants into the table.

“Well, we made a lot of progress, at least,” Scott says.

They gather up their research and head home as the library closes for the night. Stiles drops Scott off at home, says thanks anyways but declines Scott’s offer to come in for dinner.

Stiles drives home in a weary mood, parks the Jeep and ambles back up to his room, setting down the genealogy books he checked out and his laptop. He makes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for dinner, eating it as he gets some actual homework out of the way (way less interesting than the plight of the bogeypeople, but a necessity).

The big grandfather clock downstairs strikes midnight as Stiles is climbing into bed, and he listens to the clock chime twelve times. “Witching hour begins now,” Stiles says listlessly, staring at the ceiling. He wonders if the Crossings weren’t broken there would be bogeypeople streaming into their world now, looking for people to Scare.

Stiles pulls the blanket over himself and turns on his side, staring out the window, wondering where Derek is, when he sees one of the clouds in the night sky start to move alarmingly fast.

He sits up immediately when he sees the glowing eyes suspended in one of the clouds and realizes and leaps out of bed to open his window. Derek floats inside, dark smoky tendrils curling to the floor and forming the wolf again, looking guiltily at the floor.

“Derek,” Stiles says, relieved. “Are you okay? I am so sorry about this afternoon, I didn’t realize, I mean I know I talk a lot, and I don’t really have a brain-to-mouth filter, but you know that best friend doesn’t mean like, there’s only one, right, like I didn’t mean to make you feel bad because of what I said earlier, because I do care about you. A lot.”

Derek looks balefully up at him and licks his cheek hesitantly, and Stiles gives in to the urge to throw his arms around his furry neck. He’s a warm solid comfort in Stiles’ arms, and Derek nuzzles happily back against him.

Stiles runs his hands across Derek’s fur. “Is everything okay? Do you wanna talk about it?”

Derek shakes his head.

“I went to the library to go see if I could find out information on the spark. I didn’t really make a lot of progress, sorry.”
Derek just licks Stiles’ face again, as if to say it’s okay.

“Are you alright, dude? I know you can talk in all your forms,” Stiles says, scratching Derek’s head.

Derek huffs and does what could be the wolf equivalent of a shrug. He still looks unhappy, which Stiles can totally understand not wanting to talk.

“That’s okay. I was just going to sleep, have school tomorrow and all that, but you’re totally welcome to stay.”

Derek walks to a corner of the bedroom and curls up on the floor amongst Stiles’ mess of clothes, comic books, and other random stuff. Stiles climbs back into his bed and watches Derek coil his fluffy tail around himself, and then remembers something from a long time ago.

“You don’t have to sleep on the floor, Derek,” Stiles says, patting the bed next to him.

Derek’s eyes light up and he bounds into the bed in a mass of black fur, and Stiles laughs. They find a comfortable position; it takes a while since Stiles isn’t six years old anymore and Derek is no longer the size of a small puppy, but they make it work, sprawled all over each other, bodies snugly fitting together.

Stiles falls asleep feeling more comfortable than he has in ages.

Waking up is an entirely different story.

For one thing, Derek is human again.

Also naked.
Lovely fanart by yijitumbles! [Rebloggable version here.](#)
Thank you to M and Jay for reading through this chapter, and K for cheering me on.

Also I realize for the last two chapters I keep saying I'm going to get to this Argent thing but I just keep adding more stuff? Soo...

Derek wakes up slowly, warm and comfortable. He stretches a little, trying to get a feel for what body he may have shifted into in his sleep. It takes a moment for him to recognize the heart beating in his chest and the way his limbs are arranged-- he’s in a human body, then. It must be because Derek’s subconscious was thinking a lot about humans in general.

Particularly Stiles.

Derek can’t remember ever waking up feeling like this; his body feels good, skin sensitive to the sensation of cozy covers around him and now that he’s more conscious, more aware of his body, Derek takes note of the solid warmth in his arms, soft and breathing and smelling amazing.

When Derek opens his eyes, and he sees the back of Stiles’ head, soft hair curling at the nape of his neck. Derek leans in and breathes the scent of clean skin and a faintly sweet soap.

Stiles twitches a little, sighs happily, sleepy-heavy eyes blinking wearily as he shuffles backwards. His hips push up against Derek and then Stiles’ firm backside rubs up against Derek’s front, and then the strange thing is happening again.

There’s a small little smile on Stiles’ face, and Derek wonders if he’s dreaming, if it’s a pleasant one, and what its about, and Stiles continues grinding backwards and it feels good. Derek doesn’t know what to do, if this is a human custom or something that friends sleeping together do together, but Stiles seems to be enjoying it, so Derek just watches, fascinated. He feels warm and tingly all over, especially his strange little tentacle between his legs. It’s not so little now, though.

Stiles groans contentedly, and then turns over, and opens his eyes. Derek smiles at him and Stiles’ lips start to quirk up, and then his eyes widen.

Several things happen at once.

Stiles shrieks very loudly, and very high pitched.

Derek is startled, and jumps backward, except he gets tangled in the blankets. The movement jolts Stiles, who is still flailing and somehow falls off the bed with a loud thump.

“Stiles!” Derek calls out in worry. “Are you okay?”

“Naked and hard,” Stiles mutters, staring at Derek. “Oh God, please.”

Derek glances down between his legs and tentatively reaches for the strange tentacle, remembering
what Stiles had said yesterday. “You did say that would make it go away. Is it… this state that’s bothering you? I don’t know why it did this, but if you’ll be more comfortable if it’s gone…”

Before Derek can grasp himself in his hand, Stiles shrieks again, gets up, and runs to his bathroom, slamming the door.

Derek looks quizzically at the closed door. “Stiles? I’m sorry.”

“Can you give me a minute?!?” Stiles calls back, a bit breathlessly.

“Okay,” Derek says hesitantly. He stares at the thing between his legs reproachfully. “This is your fault,” he whispers to the appendage. Obviously his human body is betraying him, shifting and acting on its own, upsetting Stiles and making him run away.

Derek spots the pair of sweatpants Stiles gave him to wear yesterday and tugs them on, remembering that these coverings are important to Stiles, maybe they’ll make him feel better. He sits on the bed and waits, listening to the sound of water running, and it stops after a minute, even though he can still hear Stiles cursing vehemently inside the bathroom.

The door swings open and Stiles, water dripping precariously from his hair and a towel round his hips, chest heaving.

“Stiles, I’m really sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you, I don’t--”

“It’s fine, Derek,” Stiles says, grabbing some clothes out of a drawer and disappearing into the bathroom again. He comes back out dressed, wiping at his hair with a towel, sighing. “It’s not your fault, you just didn’t understand why it’s, um… well, it’s not that I wouldn’t be… but it would be wrong, see, because you don’t understand, um…”

“Explain, please. I feel like everytime my small tentacle does something we have a misunderstanding, and I do not want to upset you.”

“It’s a sex thing.” Stiles’ face is a bright, ruddy pink.

“Oh.” Oh. The strange appendage between Derek’s legs has something to do with how humans have sex with their chosen mates. Stiles has seen Derek’s. Multiple times. And they’ve touched-- “Is that a sex thing too?” Derek blurts, pointing to Stiles’ butt.

Stiles looks at his feet. “Yeah. So you do know what sex--”

Derek nods, feeling the heat rise in his face now. He’s not sure what to do, he never thought he’d find a mate this early in life, but it seems like they’ve unknowingly performed a sex ritual. Do humans have mating rituals that include this? Oh no, Derek did this all wrong. He likes Stiles a lot, but Stiles deserves a real courting, not just a haphazard touching of sex organs and now they’re mated for life.

Derek stands up, suddenly formal. He can’t do the traditional invitation dance in the air since he’s not in his trueform (and would Stiles even like it, Derek wonders), so he improvises, bowing slightly. “I apologize for not courting you properly before we mated, but I hope that I am acceptable to you. I promise I will take care of you and our children and--”

“Children?” Stiles’ eyes go wide. “What are you talking about? I’m not pregnant! Unless there’s something specific about your anatomy you need to tell me-- also tell me why that sounded like wedding vows!?”
Er. Derek hadn’t even thought about anatomies and such, he’d just said the traditional promise when taking a mate. He hasn’t even thought properly about children, he’s still a teenager himself! But they have plenty of time to think about it in the future. What’s important now is that Stiles knows his intentions and Derek plans to honor them.

“Bogeypeople mate for life,” Derek explains. “There is a ritual after many steps of courting, where we touch sexual organs and--”

“Derek, we didn’t have sex, okay,” Stiles says, rubbing his head with exasperation.

“But we--”

“Guh, I guess it depends on your definition, and I’m probably the last person to say penetrative sex is the end all be all but I’m pretty sure we just… that was just like, innocent rubbing, okay? Like it was kinda sexual, but--”

“I kissed you yesterday,” Derek says simply. “You said that’s a human display of intimacy.”

“But you thought it was a promise seal! I don’t think it counts if neither of us were on the same page, okay. And this morning was an accident-- and it was my fault, really, I was the one grinding on you, plus you already apologized so it’s not a big deal anymore, okay? Let’s just move on.”

“You don’t want to be my mate?” Derek asks sadly. The excited, hopeful feeling seeps out of him slowly; he’s never considered anyone for a mate at all before, but he thinks would have been lucky to have Stiles.

Stiles is rejecting his suit, though.

Derek wonders if he had gone about it the right order if he’d be interested.

Stiles’ face falls, and he looks so unhappy with the situation. Derek would probably feel that way if he just found out he was accidentally mated to a pitiful excuse for a bogey like Derek. “Derek, that’s not what I--”

“Stiles! Breakfast is ready!” calls a voice from downstairs.

“Look, it’ll be okay. Are you hungry? You can eat in your smokey shadow form, right?” Stiles asks Derek nods, and transforms, glad to be done with the conversation. It takes a lot more effort than usual, but soon Derek is flicking tendrils of black smoke and following Stiles downstairs, hovering in his shadow, drifting sluggishly behind him.

It is fine if Stiles does not want to be his mate. Humans do things differently, Derek knows. If Stiles finds someone else to love, Derek will be more than happy. That’s all he wants for Stiles. It doesn’t need to be with Derek.

Breakfast is eggs and toast, and Derek hides underneath the table, taking the bits of food that Stiles sneaks him. He listens to the conversation, wondering where Stiles’ mother is. He remembers her from that one day he had spent with Stiles outside the witching hour, the way she laughed and made Derek another sandwich without even questioning why.

The food tastes good, but isn’t filling the same way that Derek is used to. He realizes he hasn’t Scared anyone in awhile, which is probably why he’s feeling so strangely weak.

Stiles slips Derek another piece of toast as he tells his father about his week at school. Derek gets the
impression that they don’t often have time to have a meal together, but they seem to be in good spirits.

Stiles’ dad excuses himself from the table to answer a phone call, and Stiles slips Derek another piece of bacon.

“Sorry, son, I know I said we’d watch the game today and hang out, but they need me down at the station.”

“Aw, it’s okay, Dad,” Stiles says.

Derek watches Stiles’ feet tap nervously on the floor, and he slips out a cloudy tendrill to hold it still, squeezing it reassuringly. The other set of feet stand up and step away from the table, and then Derek hears Stiles’ father say goodbye and the door shut.

Stiles peers under the table, hair flopping, an eager grin on his face. “I can keep you company today, then, that’s cool! We’ve got like all day to do whatever, at least until I have to go to that Argent dinner thing with everyone. Hey, do you wanna come? Allison said it’s like really fancy, and they would have lots of good food, it’s just her family and their friends at the country club, but we wouldn’t have to talk to anyone, it would just be keeping her company.”

Derek wants more information about this, but it’s difficult to think, and what little thoughts he has about Argents gives him a sharp spike of anxiety, but he can’t run away again, leave Stiles after all Stiles has done to help him… they’re friends, even mates now, at least for Derek… and he… can’t move…

“Derek? Derek!”

Stiles crawls under the table with him, reaching out hesitantly to pat Derek’s tentacles. “Oh God, oh God, please be okay, you were okay earlier? But maybe you were moving a little slow? Please don’t be sick, I don’t know anything about bogeypeople medicine. Derek? Can you hear me? What do you need? How can I help?”

Derek smells it then, that sharp tang of fear wafting off of Stiles now, and he takes in a deep breath, taking in the emotion from the air, from Stiles.

Maybe because he’s hungry, or that he hasn’t eaten in a long while, but for some reason this particular emotion tastes incredible, and he can feel strength return to his body and his mind begin to clear.

“Derek,” Stiles says again, shaking him.

“I’m fine now,” Derek says. “I, um, I hadn’t Scared anyone in a long while, and I forgot to eat because I was eating your kind of food and didn’t realize it wasn’t nourishing me.”

Stiles pulls him into a hug. It should feel weird with their different forms, but it doesn’t at all. “It’s my fault,” Stiles says, grim. “You totally told me you guys eat like, fear and stuff, and I kept feeding you the wrong--”

“Stiles, don’t worry about it,” Derek says.

“You do look better,” Stiles says, running his hand down one of Derek’s tentacles. The slight touch is enough to turn Derek’s normally dark form a bright, embarrassed violet.

“I, uh…you were Scared,” Derek says awkwardly, not really knowing how to describe how Stiles’
fear had felt different. Usually it’s a reaction for one’s self… but this had been fear for Derek, and the emotion had tasted new and interesting.

Stiles lights up. “Oh! I can totally help you with that! Do you need to like, jump out at me and stuff? Hm, that won’t work, I already know what you look like. Oh! Horror movies! I bet there are a ton on Netflix I haven’t seen yet. Come on! I’m gonna get you all charged up.”

Stiles grabs Derek and full-on picks him up, jumps out from under the table and runs back upstairs with Derek in his arms. Derek can’t remember even when he was a kid spending a lot of time with Stiles in his trueform; he was always shifting into something he thought would be more familiar to Stiles, or the wolf that he was most accustomed to.

Derek bobs solidly up and down as Stiles takes the stairs two at a time, and he curls a few tendrils around Stiles’ waist, holding on tight.

He tries not to wonder what the hope and determination emanating off Stiles now might taste like and shakes the idea off. Bogeypeople have always lived off fear, for hundreds and hundreds of years. Derek’s never even heard of anyone trying to eat other emotions. There’s probably a good reason, too, like maybe it would make them sick or something.

Derek isn’t sure though.

Stiles’ emotions just smell… sweet.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much to everyone who has read and/or kudo'd, commented, and subscribed! It really makes my day and I appreciate all of the support so much. This chapter took awhile to update because of some real life business. Thank you so much to Meeya for helping me with the scary movie bits because I'm too chicken to watch The Conjuring, and also thank you to the awesome people in the sprinter's circle and Jay and K of course. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Watching movies with Derek is hilarious. On one hand, he gets super into the plot of Aliens-- which is more scifi than horror, but it’s an old favorite, so Stiles just had to. And then Derek gets scared during the scene with Newt and the alien sneaking up behind her and jumps a little. Stiles laughs, watching Derek more than the movie. He loves seeing Derek follow the story, how his eyes widen and how he’s gripping his knees in suspense. Stiles feels a little self-conscious when stretching his arms out and letting them linger behind Derek’s shoulders, but is pleasantly surprised when Derek leans right into the touch.

It feels an awful lot like a date, and Stiles is excited about it for a second until he remembers that Derek isn’t interested in him like that, the way he said “I’d never--” and how he must have felt so resigned when he thought they should be mates. Out of obligation. Because Derek thought they had sex, and that bogeys mate for life or something like that.

Still. This could be friendly cuddling, right? Stiles totally knows how to do that. He cuddles with Scott all the time when they watch movies and have sleepovers.

But right now he is hyper aware of how warm Derek’s skin is underneath his fingertips, the softness of Stiles’ own shirt and the muscle of Derek’s shoulder underneath it, and Stiles’ subconscious is just singing a guy I like is wearing my clothes!

Derek sighs happily when the credits start to roll. “This was a good story,” he says. “I’m glad they got away.” He turns to Stiles. “You don’t smell Scared, though, just...happy?”

“Whoops, sorry,” Stiles says, blushing, bringing his arm back. “Guess you can’t eat that, huh. Here, let me find something I haven’t watched. I’ve been saving this for awhile to watch for the first time.” He opens up the Netflix menu and finds The Conjuring, settling back onto his bed, adjusting the angle of the laptop facing him and Derek.

Stiles gets wrapped up in the movie very quickly. At first Stiles thinks the typical family moving into a spooky house plot is cliché, and then he starts getting nervous when the clocks stop. And then when the mom is playing the clapping game and the entity responds, he shudders when the hands come on screen.

“Oh my GOD!” Stiles shrieks when the mom realizes the daughter has been in the other room.

He turns to look at Derek, who is chuckling. “This is funny and smart, it’s a good scare!” he says admiringly. “And you smell good. Scared, I mean,” he adds.
“Oh! Go for it.” Stiles makes a vague encouraging gesture to show he’s ready for it. He isn’t sure what to expect, but Derek closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. It’s subtle, but he can see color start to come back into his cheeks. Derek sits up a little straighter and lets out a little contented sigh.

“Good? You do like need more, right? That was just a little snack? Because there’s like, a ton more of the movie left and I wanna find out what happens.”

Derek nods. “Yes! This story is entertaining as well. It’s always interesting to see talented Scarers at work. My sister had this trick she used to do which was so funny-- she would sit in the bushes very silently in her wolf form, and just rustle a little, make noises, and never really let them see her-- just hints. Maybe a looming shadow here, glowing eyes there.”

“She sounds great,” Stiles says, patting Derek on the arm.

Derek grins at him.

His good mood seems to disappear, though, even as Stiles keeps getting scared by the movie as the story goes on (that moment in the cellar-- just, what even). Derek does seem to be feeding, though, so that’s good, but Stiles can’t figure out what’s bothering him until they finish the movie.

“So! Did you like it? Scary, huh?”

“Yeah, but like… is this what humans think monsters are like?” Derek scrunches up his face. “We don’t hurt people. That’s not what Scaring is about.”

Stiles looks from the credits on the screen and then back to Derek. “Humans don’t think monsters are real anymore, dude. And we come up with all sorts of ideas on how they might act and stuff, but no one really knows. And trust me, from what you’ve told me about Scaring, it just sounds like fun. People like getting scared sometimes, that’s why movies like this exist.”

“You like getting scared?” Derek asks, voice curious.

“I do!” Stiles says. “Love scary movies, haunted houses, it’s just a great little thrill, you know. Makes you feel alive.”

The corners of Derek’s mouth turn up. “Okay.”

Stiles feels like he knows what Derek wants to do now that he’s admitted he likes the thrill, and he opens his mouth to say it probably won’t work since a) he knows Derek is trying to scare him right now and b) he also knows Derek, has known him since he was a kid, knows Derek wouldn’t ever hurt him and Stiles couldn’t possibly be scared of him.

What happens instead is Derek looms over Stiles, practically crawling atop him on his hands and knees, drawing closer. Stiles goes very still, aware of where Derek’s legs brush up against his, his hands pressing the bed down, surrounding Stiles. Derek doesn’t shift, just focuses Stiles with an intense gaze.

Stiles swallows nervously; he’s got nowhere to look but Derek’s green-gray eyes. They’re flecked with gold, bright with excitement, and Derek is so close--

And then Derek’s eyes begin to glow.

They’re luminous and golden now, just like the eyes Stiles saw under his bed, except then he’d been nervous and didn’t know what they were. Now he knows it’s Derek, and he has all these old feelings of friendship and camaraderie and these new feelings of attraction mixing all together, and Stiles just-
- it’s overwhelming, that’s what it is, having Derek inches away from him, knowing what his lips felt like before--

Stiles makes a strangled yelping noise when he realizes his dick is very interested in the current proceedings, and he sits up straight, grabbing a pillow and throwing it across his lap.

Derek gives him a pleased look. “Scary, right? I’m not that good at holding still, but I’ve been practicing. My sister always said the glowing really creeps people out.”


He watches Derek take a deep breath, closing his eyes and concentrating like he did earlier, and Stiles realizes that he’s trying to eat the emotion-- the fear that isn’t there.

Derek’s mouth falls open, and he’s got a bit of a dazed look in his eyes. “That tasted different,” he says, after a long moment.

“Different how?”

Derek’s eyebrows knit together, like he’s trying to puzzle out how to describe it. Stiles is worried-- they smell emotion, right? And eat them? Oh God, what does turned on taste like? Could Derek tell that was what was happening?

“Are you full, though? Should we watch more movies?” Stiles asks, hoping to change the subject.

“No, I feel good. That was different, though. Like… the way some foods don’t taste the same? Like I’ve been used to jelly but this was like peanut butter?” Derek tilts his head a little, and great, now his mouth is just an inch away from Stiles’ own--

“Ah, Derek?” Stiles tries not to let his voice squeak. “You’re still--”

“Oh, right. Sorry.” Derek sits back so he’s not leaning over Stiles anymore.

Stiles pats the pillow gingerly, concentrates, thinking about Coach Finstock’s knobbly knees until he feels like he won’t have have to have another tentacle conversation with Derek again. He breathes a sigh of relief, and flops on his stomach just in case, watching Derek, who is currently lost in thought.

“I don’t think you were scared, Stiles. I know what fear tastes like.”

“Nope, I wasn’t, sorry, but um-- you did say that emotion was kinda satisfying? So like, you can eat other emotions?” Stiles props his chin in his hands and looks at Derek expectantly.

Derek shrugs. “I guess? I mean, I don’t know anyone who has, actually. There’s such a limited amount of time bogeys can spend in the human world and only a few Crossings so I’ve always been taught to focus the one hour we had on Scaring, collecting energy to bring back for those who can’t Scare for themselves.”

Stiles feels a prickling sense of excitement. He loves problem solving. “Alright, Allison’s dinner thing isn’t until five-- we’ve got all this time to figure this out. This is gonna be awesome.”

Stiles holds out his hand for Derek to high five, and Derek smiles warmly at him and just takes it, squeezing it tight.

Heat pools into Stiles’ cheeks because they’re holding hands and Derek just looks so disarmingly cute and pleased with himself for figuring out this human custom. Stiles just squeezes back.
“Okay, what are we going to do?”

Stiles reluctantly lets go of Derek’s hand so he can grab a notebook off his desk. “Science. And the first step of science is to write it down, otherwise it doesn’t count. So. We’ve got Netflix and me, and I am highly responsive to media, right, like I wanna see if you can like, eat laughter or like if it tastes gross if I watch something I’m grossed out by…” Stiles rambles on, and Derek just nods excitedly.

There seem to be an infinite number of stories in Stiles’ magic story box. Stiles keeps diligently writing all afternoon, keeping track in his notebook of how Derek reacts, how he thinks the different emotions taste like. Derek doesn’t really have a frame of reference, really-- he’s grown up with only ever having tasted fear. And yes, there were variations-- sometimes sour, or slightly sweet, or bitter, but fear mostly tastes the same: heavy, metallic, filling. He tries his best to describe how Stiles’ feelings taste, but then it turns into a question of comparing it to food, and Stiles is also hungry, so they end up raiding the kitchen, making an assortment of snacks and climbing back up the stairs to Stiles’ bedroom, where they pile back on the bed and Stiles puts on more things to watch.

Derek enjoys watching the stories-- his family is big on passing down stories, he has lots of fond memories of hearing his mom telling old legends, his sisters jumping in and helping her act out the parts, but he loves watching Stiles more. The way his eyes crinkle up when he laughs, the way his breath hitches in anticipation, and how Stiles in turn, keeps looking back at Derek to see if he’s enjoying himself.

They watch a few comedy sketches for Derek to taste what Stiles’ laughter is like-- airy, savory, easy to imbibe and leaves Derek hungry for more. He doesn’t understand the jokes, but he likes how Stiles laughs with his whole body, shaking with joy and mirth.

And then there’s a fantastic and complicated tale of wars among the stars, and then Stiles has Derek take in his emotions-- it’s a mix of excitement and a familiar contentment, and it tastes like light, sweet. Not the intoxicating headiness from earlier-- but Derek didn’t know what that emotion was. Certainly not fear.

“Star Wars is sweet,” Stiles is murmuring to himself.

“Huh?”

“Nothing, just trying to figure out. Maybe it’s like my reactions? Like I love Star Wars, it always just makes me so pumped up, but you did say it was like… tasting light. Like you feel energetic?”

Derek shrugs.

“Okay, we did comedy, we did action and adventure…” Stiles scrolls through the available Netflix titles, looking at more categories.

“What’s that?” Derek asks, pointing at the section of titles underneath “Top Picks For Stiles.” It reads, “Lighthearted Romances With Happy Endings.”

Stiles laughs nervously and rubs the back of his neck. “Ah, there’s a program or something that picks stuff that you might like based on what you watched before, and last week I was kinda down and
just watched a ton of romantic comedies, so, um...did you want to pick?”

Derek picks a colorful looking title with a man and woman sitting on a beach.

“Oh, that’s a good one,” Stiles says, selecting it. He tilts the screen a little, and settles back against the headboard with Derek.

The bed’s big enough for the two of them to sit comfortably with the laptop resting on a pillow on Stiles’ lap. Derek is a little guilty that he doesn’t speak up that he can see properly already when Stiles nudes closer, but he’s too excited to be near his mate. Derek’s determined to make the most of this as he can; to enjoy their friendship and their closeness while he can. It’s okay that Stiles doesn’t want to be his mate.

Wait, did Stiles say he didn’t want to? Derek had been so exhausted this morning, without having fed in a long while, he vaguely remembers the accidental sex ritual, and Stiles insisting it wasn’t one, Derek’s feeble attempt to declare his intentions and Stiles’ rebuttal. But it hadn’t been a rebuttal, Stiles hadn’t quite answered before they went downstairs--

Derek is jolted out of his thoughts by Stiles laughing, shaking the headboard as he throws his head back. On the screen Lucy and Henry have just agreed to something called a “date,” and are now dancing. Now this is something Derek can relate to-- he thinks the graceful movements are quite fetching; what a great pair these two are, to be courting one another this way.

“This is one of my favorite scenes,” Stiles says, happiness wafting off of him. It smells wonderful, but Derek can’t bring himself to take it in, as he’s been feeding the whole day and he’s quite full right now. He can scent it though, the lustrous waves hanging in the air, velvet-thick and savory.

“Mm,” Derek says, watching the story unfold. Apparently the dance is something of an embarrassment, but Lucy and Henry both find each other’s reactions are amusing.

Stiles blinks at him curiously, noting his confusion. “Oh, that’s dancing, humans do it for fun, or to--”

“Yeah, I know-- well, there are courting rituals,” Derek says. He’s never courted anyone, but he knows the dances, knows that a good dance is paramount to impressing another bogey. “We dance to show we’re interested. It’s part of the courting process.”

“Ooh,” Stiles says, eyes widening in interest. “Can you show me?”

Derek feels heat rushing into his face, wondering if Stiles knows the significance of asking him to dance for him. “Okay.”

He concentrates and transforms back into his trueform, floating in the air. He takes a moment to relish the freedom from the constraints of the human body, how easy it is just to float and flow as he is. Derek flicks out an experimental tendril at Stiles, who laughs and pokes back again.

Stiles grins at him, and then his scent turns excited-sweet again.

Derek’s never had an audience-- he’s practiced the mating dances before, but this is entirely different. Maybe the side-swirl? He feels pretty good about that. Derek takes a deep breath and remembers the intricate dance he’s practiced, falling into the first swirl easily. He circles Stiles as a cloud of light, airy grace. He pours in his hopes and desires into his form, how he feels about Stiles, wants to be a good mate for him, wants to Stiles to choose him. His feelings will color his form, he knows, has seen plenty of mating dances before, spectacular shows of bursting hues and smoke, one bogey laying bare their entirety to another.
Stiles’ amusement gives way to something else, a honeyed, mellow scent-- awe.

Derek transforms back into his human shape, and takes care to grab the clothes that fell to the floor when he took on the smoke form earlier, tugging on the pants again.

Stiles is gaping at him. “Wow, that was amazing. Gorgeous. Like, I didn’t really get it, but I bet you could court any bogey and they’d be like, yes. All about it.”

“I don’t want to court anyone else. I want to court you,” Derek blurts out.

“But I-- ah --” Stiles’ face turns a pleased pink, but then he frowns and he sits up a little straighter, scooting forward to the edge of the bed. “Are you sure?”

“I like you so much. And we’re already friends. I just want to be more, and I know you said it wasn’t sex when I touched you this morning and we don’t have to be mated for life but I want to be! I want it to be you.”

Stiles looks conflicted. “Derek, you’ve only been human for like, two days. What if you’ve like… imprinted on me or something? Like, how old are you?”

“Eighteen.” It’s a good age to start courting your mate.

“Right, like you’re just a teenager, like me! We barely have picked like, our favorite foods, let alone pick someone we want to be with for the rest of our lives. Like, people do the courting thing and relationships for a long while before they ever decide who they want, sometimes trying it with multiple people before they know. And you just-- look, you were calling a dick a tentacle yesterday, okay, and I’m not so sure picking a life partner is the best idea to do on one of the first days you’re trying at being human.” Stiles throws his hands up, his sincerity wafting through the air, like fresh mint, the taste prickling at Derek’s senses.

“I’m not saying no,” Stiles says, in a softer voice. “I mean, I do like you a lot. I just-- you said you had a ‘mate for life’ thing and it was kind of overwhelming.”

Derek looks to the laptop screen, which is still playing the movie. “A date,” he says suddenly, not really sure what it means but knows it was referenced multiple times in the movie. Something two people courting did together, surely.

“A date?”

Derek nods, pleased at how Stiles’ eyes are lighting up. “Not mating for life, just… spending time together, right?”

“I’d like that,” Stiles says.

It feels like a promise, something that can be toasted to, and Derek wants to seal it-- maybe the instinct isn’t to seal the promise, but to do what Stiles called it earlier-- a kiss? Derek hesitates, stepping forward, wondering if it would be too forward. Intimacy. Stiles had called it. Maybe--

Something on the floor buzzes.

Stiles reaches for it, looking through his smaller magic black box. “Oh man, my dad just texted me to remind me not to wear anything embarrassing. Oh, remember I said my friend Allison was going to this dinner party hosted by her family and invited all of us? It’s at this fancy country club and the food is gonna be awesome, but like, her mom is the mayor of Beacon Hills, so my dad is super worried I’m gonna wear like some ratty plaid or something. I mean, what’s wrong with plaid?”
Derek has no idea, just tries his best to look supportive.

“But anyways, um-- date! We’ve kinda already done some date-like stuff, like watch movies together, and that was fun, but like, intent, that’s important, like we both would have to know it’s a date.” Stiles turns a bit red but continues talking steadily on, raising his eyebrows at Derek. “I mean, if you want a challenge you can totally come with me tonight? I mean, it’s like awkward friend’s family, like almost not like meeting the parents but we can work up to that.” He’s babbling now, uncertainty filling the air. “I mean, my dad is gonna be there, since he’s the Sheriff and stuff so you could do that if you wanted to…” Stiles looks down at his feet. “Like, the food is supposed to be really good. What do you think?” Stiles looks hopefully up at him.

If Derek were still in his trueform he would puff up, ready for a challenge, but as it is he settles for just inhaling a little, which just makes his human chest expand slightly. He’s ready to prove just how committed he is to mating-- dating Stiles. Any of the initial misgivings Derek had about the event, even his panic yesterday at hearing the name Argent again, disappears in the face of his excitement of his new courtship. It could be a fairly common name, and the odds are that Stiles’ friend has nothing at all to do with her.

“Sounds great,” Derek says. “I would be honored to be your date.”

Stiles fields at least two Skype calls from Scott, who tried on three different suit-and-tie combinations before he decides on one before he can get dressed himself. Stiles hadn’t planned very much for the event, it wasn’t like it was his girlfriend and family he needed to impress, so he had just planned to wear the old suit he’d trotted out at Homecoming last year. But now that he’s going with Derek he feels like he should put a bit more effort into it and actually tries to iron his shirt.

It doesn’t help that Derek’s just watching him, fascinated.

“You’re taller than me, so my pants probably won’t fit you. I can get you something of my dad’s,” Stiles says, pressing a sleeve.

Derek makes a face. “So many different types of coverings. What’s wrong with what I’m wearing now?”

“As amazing as you look in my sweatpants, the restaurant probably won’t let you in,” Stiles says. He finishes his shirt and then irons the one he’s planning to lend Derek, looking up to watch him every once in awhile.

Derek is clutching one of Stiles’ pillows to his chest, face drawn up in worry at Stiles’ laptop. “Lucy ended their courtship,” he says sadly.

“Hang in there, dude,” Stiles says, smiling to himself.

Shirts done, Stiles raids his dad’s closet for something that will fit Derek and he returns to the sound of the Beach Boy’s “Wouldn’t It Be Nice” playing from the speakers. Derek is sitting on the bed, shaking in distress, mouth drawn out in a frown. He looks up as Stiles steps in the room. “This is awful! He’s being reminded of his love for her right as he leaves! How could he go like that?”

“Exactly,” Stiles says, plopping down on the bed just in time to watch Henry spin the boat around. On impulse Stiles reaches for Derek’s hand and squeezes it, and Derek squeezes back, interlacing
their fingers together.

They watch the grand reunion and Stiles swears Derek lets out a happy sniff when the couple kiss. “That was a good story,” Derek says, not taking his eyes off the screen.

They get changed with minimal fuss, and Derek even thoughtfully waits for Stiles to leave the room before he gets undressed.

Stiles comes out of the bathroom, adjusting his tie, doing a double take when he sees Derek in a neat dark blue button-up and navy slacks. “Wow,” Stiles says.

Derek smiles at him. “Your coverings look nice too,” he says.

Stiles swallows down his nervousness. “Here, let me do you-- I mean your tie.” He knots it up quickly, stepping back before he can do something dumb like kiss Derek or something-- after all, Stiles was the one who wanted to go slow.

“Oh, we’re ready,” Stiles says. “Let’s go.” He offers Derek his hand, and Derek takes it with a warm smile. He doesn’t let go even when they get to the Jeep, until Stiles laughs and reminds him he’ll need it to drive.

They get to the Beacon Hills Country Club early, but Stiles can already hear the tinkling music of a live orchestra playing to welcome the guests. The reception area is filled with people he doesn’t know, all adults, some teenagers, children probably of the other Argent families. Cousins? Stiles has no idea. Allison doesn’t talk about her extended family much, just that some of them seem particularly into hunting game or something, but everyone has their hobbies, Stiles supposes.

The ballroom area isn’t open yet so everyone is just mingling in the main area, enjoying the music and talking to one another, the air filled with excited voices. Waiters are walking around with hor d’oeuvres and drinks, and Stiles spots in the corner a nervous looking Scott standing with Allison, talking with her parents.

Stiles catches his eye and gives him a huge thumbs up of support, and Scott nods nervously back at him, then raises his eyebrow and jerks his head slightly to his right in question.

Stiles resists the urge to fist pump and shout out “Yeah! I brought Derek with me as my date!” and instead just nods eagerly back at Scott.

Scott beams and gives Stiles a thumbs up back, and then mouths sorry, turning his attention back to Allison’s dad.

“That’s Allison, I’ll introduce you later,” Stiles says to Derek. “And her parents-- her mom’s the mayor of the town, kinda scary but don’t tell her I said that, and her dad can be intense too, but he’s pretty cool, like-- oh! I just remembered from that one time I was at their house, they have this really old library and collection of books? Maybe Allison might know something that could be helpful there?”

“Sure, it wouldn’t hurt to ask,” Derek says.

Stiles sees a waiter pass by with a very interesting tray of something and drags Derek with him to follow the guy as he goes and restocks his tray. They end up in a nice spot in the corner where all the waiters seem to be emerging from so they can get at the food first. Most of the crowd ignores them, just like Allison said they would.

Derek is too full from their movie-feelings-marathon but Stiles has lots of fun trying each and every
one of the foods offered-- a duck and prosciutto crostini, a skewer of roasted bell peppers sprinkled with some fancy herb he can’t pronounce, a mouthwatering bruschetta, a parmesan stuffed mushroom.

Finally Scott and Allison break free from their conversation with her parents and meet up with them. “Haven’t spotted Lydia yet,” Allison says, looking resplendent in a plum colored dress. “Then again, she did say the lighting in this room would be terrible for her outfit and wanted only to arrive for dinner-- oh, hello! I don’t think I’ve met you before.”

“Allison-- this is Derek,” Stiles says.

“Oh!” Allison’s eyes dancing with amusement, darting between them.

“Hello,” Derek says, standing a little closer to Stiles.

Scott and Allison both give Stiles suggestive looks, which makes him blush a little, but Stiles if not for anything is totally capable of impromptu explanations. “Um, Derek is-- we just met in person for the first time, but we actually know each other from my MMORPG, like we’re totally raiding buddies and have been talking forever--”

“Stiles has been crushing on him ever since Derek spent a month building him this Ultimate Sword of Ultimate Destiny thing,” Scott says, stepping in to support the explanation. Although if Scott actually played the game he would know that name is totally ridiculous, but Allison doesn’t seem to catch it.

“Oh, I’m very happy for you,” Allison says. “Where are you--”

At the front of the room a glass is being tapped, chiming until the room quiets. A spotlight shines on the center, where Victoria Argent and Chris Argent stand, looking picture perfect in their matching power-suits. Victoria is holding her wine glass aloft. Her smile is filled with even, white teeth and she fixes the crowd with an even stare. “Welcome, everyone, to our little soirée to celebrate not only my first year as mayor of this fair town but also the incredible strides my husband has made at Argent Arms International this year.”

A polite applause sounds from the room.

“Thank you, thank you. Of course I don’t want to bore you all with business details, but my sister Kate in special mergers and acquisitions has some exciting news for you all before we sit down for dinner.” Chris gestures towards an attractive woman in a blue silk dress, striding confidently towards the spotlight.

Allison cheers, clapping enthusiastically, along with a few members of the audience who seem to be particularly excited for Kate’s introduction. Other employees from her department, Stiles guesses.

Kate claps Chris on the shoulder. “Aw, thanks for the intro.” She grins at the audience, eyes glittering. “What my big brother is truly, truly understating is that what we’ve done this year isn’t just exciting-- it’s a breakthrough. It’s innovative and will change the world as we know it.” She winks at the audience, and an excited murmur starts to rush through the crowd, like a wave.

In front of them, two men that Stiles thought were bouncers of some kind-- heavily muscled, their thick arms straining the sleeves of their suits-- start grinning and nudging each other. “That’s fuckin’ right,” one says.

“No more bump in the night,” the other replies, and then the two of them laugh at the unintended rhyme.
Stiles freezes, and beside him he’s noticed that Derek has gone unnaturally still, the color draining from his face.

The crowd is shifting, moving, as the doors open and people start milling towards the ballroom, and Allison is waving someone over. In the rush of noise Stiles takes Derek’s hand and pulls him back a few steps, away from everyone.

“Derek?”

“It’s her,” Derek says hoarsely. “That ‘breakthrough’ she’s talking about, it’s the closing of the Crossings, she did it, and she’s proud-- this whole event, Stiles-- these people, they must be all--”

“All what?”

“All hunters,” Derek whispers.

Stiles doesn’t know what to do for the moment, so he just settles for standing in front of Derek, shielding him from the crowd-- he has to come up with some excuse so they can leave, so Derek can feel safe. “I need to get you out of here, what if they recognize you--”

“They won’t, no one knows my human form, but--”

“Why hello,” a syrupy voice says behind them. “I’m so excited to meet my favorite niece’s friends. Her boyfriend is just so adorable I bet all of her friends are just as cute.”

Stiles whirls around. Kate is standing there with his friends-- an arm around Allison, who is looking at her admiringly, and Scott, who looks somewhat nervous about the arm around his own shoulders.

“This is my aunt Kate,” Allison says. “My friend Stiles and his date, um-- sorry, I forgot your name-- Dylan? Darren? No, wait, it’s Derek!” Allison says, laughing a little at herself at her memory.

“Oh, that is a lovely name,” Kate says, eyes narrowing. “I knew someone with that name, actually. He was very generous with his information, helped me take down this...ah… rival company, so to speak.”

Derek stiffens and barely manages a nod.

Allison starts walking towards the ballroom doors. “C’mon, let’s sit down. Lydia says she’s almost here, she just wants to walk into the ballroom at the right moment and I’m on Instagram duty, so we should get a table with a view of the stairs. This is gonna be so awesome!”


Chapter End Notes

Next chapter: Kate lets slip more of the hunters’ plan for the bogeys, and they need to find the spark, and find out who it is now.

Also:

John blinks. "Son. Please tell me you're being safe."
"What? Dad, we're not--"
"Stiles, he's wearing my pants. What happened to his own? You know what, I don't want to know."
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

It's been awhile! Thank you for all the lovely comments and kudos and subscriptions, I am very appreciative that you all have been encouraging the continuation of the fic.

Derek had taken the coward’s way out yesterday, when he ran away at the first mention of Argents. He’s scared right now, but he’s not going to leave Stiles and his friends alone here. He silently follows Stiles to a table and sits down with them, watching as Kate takes the stage.

“Welcome, everyone, to the annual Argent Arms International...Select Shareholders Gala.” She smiles at the crowd, who clap and cheer enthusiastically. “It’s been a fantastic year for us…”

Derek doesn’t understand what she’s saying next, and it seems like no one else at their table does either. Stiles’ eyes glaze over a little bit, and Scott and Allison look wrapped up in a silent conversation with each other. Derek doesn’t know anyone else at the table, but the other teenagers aren’t paying attention.

Stiles catches Derek’s eye and takes his hand, squeezing it slightly and leans over to whisper in his ear. “Are you okay? We’ll get out of here when they finish the speeches and start serving the food.”

Derek grits his teeth. “Thanks, but it wouldn’t be possible for any of them to find out who I am as long as I stay in my human form,” he whispers back.

He’s not going to run away.

Yesterday Derek had panicked and fled Stiles’ home. He’d wandered back towards the lumbering forest at the edge of town, where he could go unnoticed in the shadows, and there he was alone with his thoughts.

Derek had been lonely, in France, and years of learning to Scare properly, with limited interactions with humans. His mother had regarded him carefully after his friendship with Stiles, and was careful to never let him linger long in the human world. It was the witching hour, and that was it, for years and years.

And then there was Kate. Derek had thought they were friends. He’d tried to Scare her, one evening in Paris, and she’d laughed and asked him to come out of the shadows.

“Bogeyman,” Kate had said, lip curling with interest. “You can’t Scare me, but I’d be happy to walk with you for awhile.”

Derek had always insisted that the correct term was bogeyperson, but Kate had laughed at that, and after awhile he gave up on trying to correct her. She was fun and interesting, and somehow constantly around near the Crossing in Paris, easily found during the witching hour, always up for a chat. She knew of Derek’s obvious interest in the human world, fed him fantastic stories about the machines the humans built to fly, their own brand of magical signals, the different sights she’s seen in her travels.

Derek was always careful to get his requisite amount of Scaring done, to take a good amount of
energy back through the Crossings to help feed the bogeypeople unable to Scare—the young, the
sick, and the elderly. He then found time to steal away at least for a few minutes or so to meet Kate,
hear her stories. Sometimes Derek shared with her stories of his own, and Kate always listened
intently, asked questions. She was so curious about bogeypeople, and it flattered Derek to be able to
help her understand about their particular kind of magic.

Derek knows now in retrospect that glint in her eye wasn’t mere curiosity, and the memory of them
sitting by the Seine is tainted now, knowing that she had been planning this all along. Then Derek
had thought it was fun, two friends talking about their families, Kate skipping a rock daintily in the
river as Derek floated beside her, eagerly telling her all about Scaring and how it worked.

“And if you don’t Scare, what happens?”

“Starve, I guess,” Derek says, laughing. “Not that it would ever happen. We take good care of all the
bogeypeople on the other side of the Crossings, even if they can’t Scare for themselves. Plus there
are always those of us bringing extra energy back for others.”

“Hmm,” Kate had said thoughtfully.

And then one night Kate had said nonchalantly, “You seemed very open to befriending a human.”

“Oh! I’ve had a human friend before,” Derek said excitedly. He told her all about his amazing friend
back in Beacon Hills, and how they were best friends forever, but when Derek asked to stay past the
witching hour, his mother had deemed it too risky.

“You do seem like one to manage your risks well,” Kate said. “You took a chance on me, after all.”

Kate explained to him this great idea; she could help him go back to Beacon Hills—outside of the
witching hour. All he had to do was on the next full moon, instead of using the Crossings that led to
Paris, travel through the Beacon Hills one instead, and wait on the other side.

She handed him a bronze pendant, tinted green with age, etched with strange runes. Derek
recognizes the shape: it’s a triskelion, a symbol for the Hale bloodline. He isn’t sure when it dates
back to, but knows it’s been their mark for centuries. It’s heavy, weighed down by the rubies
embedded in the swirls. Derek tilted it, and the pendant catches the scant light from the crescent
moon.

“This will allow you to use the Crossings at any time of day. You don’t have to wait for the witching
hour!”

“How did you…”

Kate waved him off. “It’s an old legend. I’ve done some research.”

“How will I know it will work?”

Kate winked at him. “Well, you’ll be back in Beacon Hills with your friend, won’t you?”

Derek had listened on the instructions, to wait for the full moon. He took the pendant home to the
other side, hid it with his things, and waited, calculating when everyone would be busy travelling
through the Paris Crossing.

The other ones were still locked, but Derek wandered through the shifting smoky passage that held
the Crossings on the North American continent, searching until he sees the familiar Beacon Hills
one.
Each Crossing was different, looks different to every bogeyperson. Today, like most of the other days when Derek walked pass this Crossing, looking longingly at it, this one looked like the front door to Stiles’ home, and Derek felt an excited rush of joy course through him. He was going to see Stiles again. He’d brought some gifts from his home world to share with him— he knew Stiles had always been curious— a book of history, some toys he used to play with as a child, that he’d talked to Stiles about. But Stiles would be older now, would he be still interested in these type of games? Eventually Derek decided just to bring the book. It was interesting enough.

He hung the pendant around the doorknob, and it falls from its cord, seeming to be heavier than it looks, emanating some heavy metallic scent. It must have been the magic; Derek ignored and just tried the door. It yielded to his touch easily, and Derek opened it, stepping through to the crisp air of the forest. In the distance, through the trees, he saw the lights of Beacon Hills shining below. He turned around and grinned, wondering if he should pick the pendant up and return it to Kate when he meets her, but he couldn’t seem to remove it from the doorknob. Derek struggled with it for at least an hour, changing shapes to various animals with more strength, tugging in worry.

And then Kate had shown up.

“Thank you so much, Derek,” she said, as Derek shifted back into his smoke form.

“I can’t get your magic thing back,” Derek said, worried. “I’m sorry.”

“Not to worry at all,” she said, grinning. “That piece is meant to stay on the monster side. I’ve got the other one right here.” She pulled out a matching pendant from her pocket and holds it up to see in the moonlight.

It’s late evening here, past the witching hour but not quite sunrise, and Derek stumbled back, reeling from— Kate had just called him a monster.

It's not that Derek hasn't used the word himself, or the equivalent in his own language, but it's always just meant different from human, those that Scare. The way Kate's saying it now is like it's disgusting, something vile that needs to be gotten rid of.

“What’s happening? What’s going on?”

“Don’t worry,” Kate had said. “You’ll have all the time in the world to spend with your little friend. Forever, in fact. You should thank me. No one is ever going to use these damn Crossings ever again, and the lot of you on the other side are just gonna starve to death.”

“No,” Derek said, horrified.

Kate shrugged. “It’s a done deal, sweetie. This kind of magic is irreversible. No more sparks left in the world, we hunted down all the bloodlines. Just like we’re gonna do to the rest of the bogeys trapped on this side.” She smiled then, baring her teeth, and Derek had always thought before, the friendly, curious smile— now predatory, vicious.

And there had been a brilliant, dazzling light when Kate touched one of the runes on the pendant, and the door— the Crossing had just shattered into pieces, and was gone, and all Derek had remembered was her high, shrill laughter, and then running away, trailing down the treeline, feeling for the first time what his own fear tasted like.

A gentle pressure on his hand pulls him out of his thoughts, and Derek looks up to see Stiles’ worried eyes, his fingers interlaced with Derek’s own. Stiles. Stiles, who he found again. Stiles, who promised to help him fix this mistake.
He knew it was a shot in the dark, looking for a spark, but he had the history book with him, and translating it and working with Stiles—there was hope, wasn’t there?

Derek squeezes Stiles’ hand back.

Derek seemed pretty out of it during the speeches, but finally the last speaker finishes talking something about stocks and waiters are now rushing around delivering food to the tables.

“C’mon, they’re serving the first course, let’s get out of here,” Stiles whispers. He takes Derek’s hand and stands up from the table.

“Leaving already?” Lydia asks, shaking out her napkin.

“Yeah, you were really excited about the five course dinner,” Scott says.

“Uh—Derek has uh, food poisoning, from our lunch, earlier, I’m gonna take him home,” Stiles says hastily.

Derek nods in agreement.

The rest of the table looks concerned but seems to readily accept this excuse, and they say their goodbyes.

Stiles leads Derek out of the ballroom but in the lobby he falters, seeing a familiar sight walking towards them. “Oh shit, it’s my dad.”

“Hey, son. I just got here, they start serving the food already?” John adjusts the bow tie he’s wearing.

“Uh—I’m actually about to, uh—this is Derek—”

Derek holds out his hand politely. “Sheriff Stilinski,” he says.

Stiles wonders if Derek remembered that from his visits long ago. He doesn’t have much time to dwell on how cute that is when his dad raises his eyebrows and looks from him to Derek.

“So you did end up bringing a date to this thing,” John says after shaking Derek’s hand. “It’s nice to meet you, Derek.” He narrows his eyes and then places a hand on Stiles’ shoulder. “Stiles, can I talk to you for a moment?”

“Yeah, Dad, sure, um, I was just—we were gonna leave early, Derek has food poisoning—”

Stiles lets his dad steer him aside a few steps, and then his dad looks at Derek, and then back at him. John blinks. “Son. Please tell me you’re being safe.”

“What? Dad, we’re not—”

“Stiles, he’s wearing my pants. What happened to his own? You know what, I don’t want to know.” Stiles can’t help the blush that starts in his cheeks. “Um—we’re gonna go—“

“Remember, be safe!” his dad calls after him.
“Did you tell your fathers about the dangers that face us?” Derek asks as Stiles pulls him towards the door.

“What? Er, no, he was talking about something else.” Stiles changes the subject quickly before he has to explain about sex and stuff anymore, they’ve had quite enough embarrassing conversations as it is. They walk into the parking lot, hurrying into the Jeep. Stiles turns the keys and pauses, putting his hands on the steering wheel and trying to parse out what he got out of Kate’s speech. “But, uh, I was trying to read between the lines at what Kate was saying during her speech, like when she said that thing about ‘stragglers,’ like, do you think there are more bogeys like you who are stuck in the human world? When the Crossings closed, you think? Like they’re gonna try and find them and hurt them…”

Derek frowns. “I wasn’t paying attention during the speech, but I do think that’s one of their plans, yes. We need to— we’ve gotten distracted. We need to find the spark.”

Distracted, yes. Stiles feels momentarily guilty for spending so much time just fooling around, watching movies and stuff; but then he’d gotten Derek all fed full of emotions, and he wasn’t in danger of fatigue anymore, so that was good. But they really should get back to it.

Back at the house, they get right back into the pile of books and the translated pages Derek had made. They’ve gone all through this before, and Stiles can’t help but feel a little hopeless.

“I just— I remembered something, too,” Derek says, after a moment of looking at a family tree Stiles had found online. “The hunters— I think they may have tried to wipe out the different bloodlines of the sparks.”

“Aw, shit, really?” Stiles frowns. “Hey, what are those symbols?” He points at a page at the swirls. They look just like the ones on Derek’s back.

“This is my family symbol. We all have one. I think the sparks used symbols for their families as well. These are the ones we know about.”

Stiles studies Derek’s careful rendition, wondering where he’s seen this particular symbol before. It looks like some sort of Celtic knot, almost like the three spirals on Derek’s back but more angular, and formed into a triangle. It is familiar…

Stiles wracks his brain, wondering where oh where… Oh! Deaton’s storage room. He’d been helping Scott organize stuff at his work one afternoon, and there had been a shelf with a bunch of boxes, and Stiles could have sworn this symbol was on one of them. “Dude, I’ve seen this before. And Deaton! He’s very vague and cryptic, for a vet. I mean, Scott’s worked for him for like, three years and everytime I go there he’s always Obi Wan-ing him…”

“This man you know is Obi Wan from your movie?”

“Yes! I mean, figuratively? That means Scott’s Luke, yeah, definitely. Which makes me Han Solo. And you’re Leia, I guess, which works, because we’re gonna go see him and be like, Obi Wan, you’re my only hope.”

Derek looks a bit confused but he nods, ready for the plan.

They get back in the Jeep and head towards the vet’s clinic, which is closed, but Stiles knows where the spare key is, tucked under the fake brick by the front entrance. He figures they should check and see if the box actually had that symbol or not before they bother Deaton, who lives upstairs, and is probably enjoying a quiet dinner right now.
“C’mon,” Stiles whispers, unlocking the door and heading inside. He steps across the floor and lifts up the partition to enter the “Employees Only” area.

Derek’s only a few steps behind and barely touches the thing to lift it when there’s a flash of bluish white light and Derek is flung backwards, stumbling until he catches himself, dazed.

“What?!” Stiles rushes forward, flipping the partition thing open and letting it fall shut behind him. “Derek, are you okay?”

“I don’t know, what just— that was— that was exactly like what happens if you try to use a Crossing outside the witching hour!” Derek says, shocked. “How could—?”

A voice speaks up behind them. “What’s more importantly, is what I would like to know, of the many supernatural creatures that roam our world and the next, what kind are you, Derek?”

Stiles gulps, and turns around to face Deaton, who is wearing the sternest expression Stiles has ever seen.
Derek is immediately shocked, and then fear starts to set in. Who is this man, this Obi Wan of Stiles, who apparently keeps bogey relics in his home, who knows formidable magics, enough to duplicate the effects of the Crossings barrier? Derek realizes with horror that he can’t get to Stiles through the barrier, if this Deaton decides to hurt him.

Stiles makes a gasp of surprise, but he recovers quickly, tone turning accusatory. “You— you’re magic!? You made this barrier thing! Who are you?”

“I believe I asked the question first, Mr. Stilinski,” Deaton says calmly, folding his arms. “And the two of you are breaking into my clinic. I think I have the right to a few answers, here.”

Derek growls, shifting into the form he’s feels most capable in, strong and fierce. The wolf takes shape easily, and he looms over them, large and hulking, and threatening, he hopes.

“Ah, an original shifter,” Deaton says, watching with interest.

Derek can’t get even a whiff of fear from him.

“How curious,” Deaton says, looking from Derek to Stiles. “Now tell me, how is it that you are in Beacon Hills? When the Crossings shut down, it wasn’t the witching hour, and the next closest Crossings is in Wyoming. Quite a distance, for such a short amount of time.”

Derek stares. “You— know?”

“How of course I know. I’m a druid. I’ve lived here for many years, watching after this particular Crossing as my mother did before I, and the generation before that and before that.” Deaton studies Derek intently. “A powerful bit of magic, breaking down the link between worlds. Something I know could only be done if the spell had an anchor on both sides.”

Derek feels his insides turn cold again. It’s his fault, it’s all his fault, and all the bogeys are going to starve to death or turn into rabid, uncontrollable killers, and it’s—

“Hey, don’t look at him like that! It’s not his fault,” Stiles snaps at Deaton. “He was already on this side!”

Derek slinks back until he hits the wall, cowering in guilt. The emotion makes him lose control of his form, and he’s back in his trueform again, all swirling smoke and unhappiness.

“Derek?” Stiles races — across the barrier, safe from the mysterious Deaton— and reaches for him in worry.

Derek curls a tendril around his hand, miserably sinking to the ground in a dejected swirl. “It is my fault,” he says, in a small whisper.
“Derek?” Stiles’ eyes are wide, disbelieving. “You told me you were already on this side, and you wanted me to help you fix it.”

“Fix it because I broke it,” Derek says, shrinking back into himself until he’s no bigger than a mouse. “I was the one who brought that magic thing to the bogey world. I helped her, Stiles. Kate— I met her in Paris, and I was lonely; I thought she was my friend, and she knew about bogeys and wasn’t scared and I told her all about our world and then she— she told me there was a way I could come visit Beacon Hills again without anyone knowing, visit when it wasn’t the witching hour, and I just wanted to see you so badly—”

“Hey, hey, it’s okay. She tricked you. It’s not your fault,” Stiles says gently. He reaches out his hand, like he’s unsure, and Derek doesn’t feel good enough to take any other form just yet, but he swirls up Stiles’ arm. Stiles tentatively runs a hand through his tendrils, and it’s comforting. Safe.

Deaton is still standing there, face impassive, but if Derek isn’t mistaken, his expression has softened.

“Scott tells me quite often I can be intimidating to those who don’t know me,” Deaton says. “I apologize if you thought I meant you harm. It is my family’s duty— my duty, now— to guard this Crossing. I can help you.”

In Deaton’s office, settled on his comfortable armchair, Derek and Stiles tell him everything, starting from the beginning. It’s Derek’s story, but he falters, still caught up in guilt at what he’s done, but Stiles is a huge support, filling in the gaps where Derek falters, telling Deaton all about their research into looking for a descendant from the spark who created the spell the first place.

Derek has transformed back into his wolf form, now that he’s more comfortable, sprawled out in Stiles’ lap. Stiles is absentmindedly stroking his fur, and it feels nice. Derek almost wants to relax and fall asleep in his arms, but the urgency of the situation keeps him alert and paying attention.

“This is actually better than I had hoped,” Deaton says, when they’ve finished.

“What are you talking about? We’re talking about like, the end of the world here!” Stiles says, gesturing angrily.

“Well, I didn’t know we had a shifter left on this side,” Deaton says calmly. “One that would know the exact details of the situation and could describe to me the specific runes used on the amulet for the spell, and now I can locate in the correct counterspell in my archives. With the spark we can easily rectify this, I say, before the witching hour tonight.”

There’s a long silence before Derek breaks it with a surprised, “You have… you know a spark? Closeby where we could get them to help tonight?”

“We’ve been trying to figure this out the whole time and you knew! Who is it? How do we get them?” Stiles demands.

Derek leaps off his lap, standing on the floor in an alert, ready position. They’ll need to be nice to the spark, whoever it is, hope that they’ll be sympathetic to the cause and want to do the spell in the first place— oh no, didn’t Kate say the hunters have been working to wipe out all the bloodlines? What if they’re in danger? No, no Deaton said he knows them, he wouldn’t be so confident if he didn’t…
Deaton is smiling.

“Come along, Mr. Stilinski. You’ll need to help me with these archives. I’m an old man, my eyesight isn’t so perfect anymore.”

“Look, that’s not very efficient, just tell me and Derek who it is, and we’ll go out in town—assuming they’re close by—and get them! You can look for your spell in the meantime.”

“That won’t be necessary. Come along.”

“Like Stiles said, it’s a better use of our time if we split up,” Derek says.

“We already have the spark,” Deaton says, getting up and heading for the door.

Derek and Stiles exchanged confused looks, and Stiles dashes after him, grabbing the door before it shuts. “No we don’t, what are you talking about—”

Deaton reaches into his pocket and tosses something at Stiles before he slips through the door and it shuts. Stiles, who catches it in his hands, startled. “What, what is this, dirt? Why are you throwing dirt at me?”

He tosses it over his shoulder in frustration as he follows Deaton out the door.

The dark powder scatters as Stiles throws it, forming a misshapen line across the threshold. Derek eyes it curiously and his instinct is that it's best not to touch it, so he ambles neatly across it.

Or well, he tries to.

It’s like trying to nudge a very thick curtain. A barrier, of sorts, like the one he faced earlier, except this one doesn’t throw him back, it just gently...nudges him.

“Stiles!” Derek calls out in alarm. “I can’t—I can’t get through the door!”

“What?” Stiles comes back down the hallway in concern. “Another one of those barrier things? Weird, you got in the office just fine.” He bends down to peer at the black dust. “Deaton! Come fix this! Derek can’t get through!”

There’s no answer from the hall.

“Aw, shit.” Stiles glares at the powder, waving his hands at it. “Stop doing that and let Derek through, you weird magic stuff.”

The powder shifts and the line disintegrates. Derek and Stiles’ eyes meet, and Stiles mouth falls open. “Did that just happen?” Stiles asks.

Derek looks back at the now-clear doorway and steps forward, joining Stiles in the hallway. He sits back on his haunches, tail wagging thoughtfully. “I think so,” he says. “Stiles, did you know you could do magic?”

“Whoa, whoa whoa, look, it was a fluke. There’s no way I waved my hand at the thing and told it what to do and it actually did it, okay. I’m not magic. I would have known?”

But Stiles’ voice is hesitant, thoughtful. He considers, then shakes his head. “No way, it must be...well it’s obviously something different than the stuff he was using in the other room, and probably anyone yelling at it would make it fall apart. Or it was the wind. Definitely the wind.”
Derek’s about to mention that they’re inside the building, and none of the windows are open when Deaton’s voice sounds at the end of the hallway.

“You’re quite mistaken,” Deaton says. He walks back to them, carrying a heavy box, striding towards them. “Only a druid who has trained for at least twenty years would be able to command mountain ash like that, and yes, it’s the same material that was used in the other room to create a barrier.”

“But—”

Deaton hands Stiles the box, who gasps and struggles with the weight of it. “What did I say about interrupting, Mr. Stilinski? As I was saying, only a trained druid or someone who is magic, generates their own magical energy on their own, would have the natural affinity for raw magic like that. In other words, a spark.”

Stiles stares at him, holding the box. He looks down at the books inside, and Derek is trying to process the information.

Stiles is a spark. They’ve been looking all this time and he’s been right here—

“Come along. We have a entire basement full of spells we need to look through. I daresay finding it before midnight tonight is ambitious, but not impossible.” Deaton pulls another box off a shelf and looks pointedly at Derek, holding out the box.

Derek shapeshifts into his human form and takes the box, following them down the hallway. It looks like they have a long night ahead of them, but for the first time since Crossings have been destroyed, Derek feels hopeful.

He hurries, stepping ahead of Stiles.

“Derek!” Stiles hisses, his face bright red.

“What?”

“Pants!”
Deaton produces a pair of pants from somewhere. They’re twill and boring and very much old man pants, except Derek’s butt still somehow looks good. And the fact that Stiles has seen it in all its bare, naked glory, does little to stop him from imagining it again underneath that fabric.

And there weren’t extra shirts, except for a questionably-stained pair of scrubs in the dirty laundry that Derek made gagging noises at, so Derek works shirtless, sifting through Deaton’s seemingly never ending boxes of files and books with them in the back room.

Stiles is amazed that this room even exists. By all means, it shouldn’t, because it doesn’t make sense. He knows how big this building is, and this room… should be in the middle of the parking lot or something. But it’s not.

Stiles casts a nervous eye at Derek, who looks unfairly adorable, surrounded by books, a thoughtful expression on his face.

“So how long have you known I was a spark?” Stiles asks, sidling up to Deaton.

Deaton makes a noncommittal noise and turns the page. “Well, I’ve suspected since you were born, especially with your heritage and all. I didn’t confirm that you had inherited the trait until say, a few years ago, when Scott first started working here. You came in one afternoon was helping him put away boxes and quite a few of the magical supplies I had in them just… went inert.”

Stiles snaps the book he’s holding shut. “Why didn’t you tell me then!? You could have been the Giles to my Buffy, dude! Training me and stuff.”

Deaton chuckles. “You are no Buffy, Mr. Stilinski.”

“I could be Buffy,” Stiles insists.

“Yeah, he can be Buffy,” Derek says supportively from the other side of the room.

Stiles grins at him, and Derek smiles back, and it makes Stiles’ stomach flutter a little bit. He’s just so...Derek and he’s here and he’s Stiles…. what, his date? It counted, right, the dinner? And Derek totally met his dad, that’s cool. So they’re dating, right? Derek is his… something.

“Check this box,” Deaton says, handing him another one.

Stiles sinks to the floor with it, coughing as the dust flies into the air. He starts scanning for the runes Deaton told them to look for, thinking about random stuff, turning Deaton’s words over in his head, when something occurs to him. “Wait, my heritage? Is my dad magic, or something?”

“Hmm, no. Claudia Stilinski, she could have been a formidable spark, if she ever wanted to hone her abilities, but she never manifested. It was for the best, too, as I tried to keep her existence— and later yours— quiet, safe from those who would harvest a spark’s energy or kill them.” Deaton hums to himself, walking to another shelf, browsing, leaving Stiles alone with this new piece of information about his mom.

“Oh my God, you are Obi Wan Kenobi,” Stiles blurts out, thinking about how Deaton knew this
information about him and kept it secret, to protect him.

Deaton sighs and rubs his temples. “If you must insist on applying metaphors to describe the relationship between us, I feel compelled to inform you that you are also not Luke Skywalker.”

“No, that’s Scott! Who you’re preparing for an epic destiny! Saving puppies and stuff. That’s not magic. But probably more important.”

“Hmm, yes, Scott *is* going to be a fantastic veterinarian,” Deaton muses. “You, on the other hand, I hear need to apply yourself more in school.”

“He’s Han Solo!” Derek says loudly, grinning fondly at Stiles. “And I’m Princess Leia.”

Deaton blinks, looking blankly between the two of them.

Stiles grins, staring at Derek, who just returns the smile, and now Stiles is thinking about kissing him, and other things…

Deaton coughs. “Well, that was enlightening. Please, let’s keep the Star Wars references to a minimum, we have to avert the plausible destruction of our worlds.”

“The Death Star,” Stiles says, nodding.

Deaton shuts his book with a sigh. “And luckily I’ve found the correct spell, so I don’t have to hear more of this.” He gestures for the two of them to follow him, and a bookshelf disappears in favor of a staircase leading down into darkness.

Stiles is half expecting torches to magically light as they walk into the dungeon basement, but instead Deaton flicks a switch and then they’re walking into another storage room, this one filled with boxes and jars and bottles of strange material.

“Don’t touch anything,” Deaton warns Stiles. He hands him the book. “You can read me the ingredients and Derek and I will collect them.”

Something crashes behind them; a box filled with some sort of dried mushrooms is spilling out on the floor.

“Correction,” Deaton says. “I will collect the ingredients and you two will stay here. Away from everything.”

Derek glances at Stiles, who just chuckles and says, “It was your butt, wasn’t it.”

“I’m sorry!”

“Quite all right, Derek. It’s difficult to use a form you’re not accustomed to.”

Deaton hums to himself and then Stiles finds himself reading names of things of familiar things like rosemary, thyme and the somewhat familiar like lotus root, but then there are phrases like *egg of a griffin, laid at midnight* and *dragon’s breath* that makes him pause.

“Are there really dragons?”

“Of course,” Deaton says. “There are many strange and wondrous things in this world, fantastic creatures that are descendants of the original shifters who settled here long ago when the worlds were divided.”
“You mean— all supernatural things are bogeys?”

Deaton passes Stiles and heads up the stairs, arms full of jars and bottles, a pained expression on his face. “I imagine it would be extremely tedious if I were to be your Giles, but I suppose proper training is in order. A druid and a spark working together can be extremely useful. But that raw, innate magic must be controlled, Stiles. We’ll start with magical history and meditation, once this whole Crossings business is complete.”

“I will take that backhanded compliment,” Stiles says giddily. He’s going to learn magic and it’s going to be awesome. “But first we have to destroy the Death Star.”

“I’m Princess Leia,” Derek says.

Deaton and Stiles turn to look at him.

“Sorry, I thought we were doing Star Wars references again.” He looks so sheepish and adorable Stiles just wants to kiss all over his cute face.

“Yeah, you are!” Stiles says, pumping his fist into air.

Deaton takes a step back. “Be careful, Stiles. If you as much as touch any of these things before they’re ready for the spell they’ll be useless! Do you know how hard it is to harvest dragon’s breath? And that’s the last griffin egg, too. Literally the last one in the world.”

“Sorry, dude.”

They follow Deaton into another room where Stiles laughs because there is honestly a cauldron sitting in a corner of the room, just like he's at Hogwarts or something.

"Oh man, this is too much. Are you going to make a big bad potion that will save the world?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Stiles," Deaton says, rolling his eyes. "That is my slow cooker. It's making my mother's award winning chili recipe that I will be enjoying later. I will be working the tangible parts of the spell here." He gestures towards another corner which looks more like a much better version of the chemistry lab at school.

Deaton sets the ingredients down and gets to work. It's alarming how efficient he is, putting together ingredients in a process that Stiles' can't explain. Well, technically he should be able to but he's not doing so great in chemistry now. Deaton's distilling some of this and making a solution out of that and combining it all together until he's got a viscous fluid frothing around in a Erlenmeyer flask that seems to change color. One second it's a bright iridescent green and the next it's dark blue, like a stormy ocean caught in a glass.

It seems alive. The liquid seems to strain against the edge of the glass flask when Deaton walks past them, gesturing for them to follow.

“Is that it?” Stiles asks. Surely there’s more to magic than just mixing things.

“It’s a foundation,” Deaton says. “Now we must go to the Crossings and finish this.”

The woods are dark, more foreboding than Stiles has ever remembered. Not that he makes it a habit
to wander around in the Preserve at night, but it’s never felt this ominous before. Even the few parties he’s tried to go to it’s always seemed mysterious and strange from the bonfire but never like this— almost its own entity.

Maybe it’s the spell, called into tangibility, sloshing around in Deaton’s flask like it’s eager to escape. Stiles can feel something when he gets too close to it— something awakening inside him that wants to manipulate it to his will, to call it to power, to do an infinite number of things, possibilities he has no name for— and a myriad of thoughts that flash through his mind, each one more unexplainable than the next.

Stiles wants to ask Deaton about being a spark, what it means, why his touch would make the unmixed ingredients useless. Something about having his own innate magic, a raw energy consuming the power in those vessels, maybe?

Stiles has no idea how he knows that. Maybe he read it somewhere.

Derek looks nervous as they follow him down the trail. He knows where he’s going, but with every step that draws deeper into the wood Derek gets more unsure, more unsettled. Stiles reaches out for his hand and squeezes it. “It wasn’t your fault,” he says again. “You were tricked. And we’re setting it right.”

Derek nods, swallowing.

The moonlight casts odd, twisted shadows, and even Deaton seems apprehensive. “We need to get this done before the witching hour. It is almost time.”

Derek picks up the pace and the three of them make good time through the Preserve. They end up off trail, through a copse of trees Stiles has never seen before and end up in a small clearing.

“Here,” Derek says, breathing heavily. “It was here.”

The air feels heavier somehow, and Stiles is frightfully aware that even though the night is clear, he feels like he’s standing in a thick fog. The weight of it lingers on his skin, thick with some potential.

Stiles watches as Deaton and Derek work out a particular place on the ground. Their voices drop to a whisper, as though there’s an unseen audience. The trees rustle in the wind, and after Derek paces back and forth with Deaton, they seem to come to an agreement. Deaton traces a line in the ground with his foot and Derek nods.

“Alright, Stiles,” Deaton says, firmly. “Once I lay down the foundation for the new Crossings, there will be no turning back. We only have one chance at this.”

Stiles throws his arms in the air. “What happened to, ‘oh, we can fix that, I have just the spell, it’ll be easy we can do it all before witching hour tonight!’?”

Deaton is completely unfazed. “I never said it was easy, I said it would be possible. And besides, the last griffin died a hundred years ago, and it will be impossible to get another egg. But luckily the most difficult components of the spell—a spark and an original shifter are present, so we have that in our favor.”

Deaton guides Stiles and Derek by the shoulder to the line on the ground, placing one on each side. Stiles looks up at Derek; they’re still holding hands, their clasped fingers hovering above the division.

Deaton is still talking, an even cadence, almost storylike. “In fact, you told me earlier you were
breaking into my clinic to look for items with Derek’s family mark. A mark that I know well—as it’s very well ingrained in bogey history.”

Deaton looks up at the moon, studying it, and then returns his gaze to the two of them after he’s satisfied with the time.

“While the druids have a simpler version that we perform every hundred years or so to reinforce the boundaries between worlds, we just needed any shifter and any person with magical aptitude. But to pull back into existence the heart of the spell, we need a descendant of the two who made the original treaty. Przemysława Ślusarczyk and an original shifter named Rincon, of the Hale family, forged this treaty and promised to honor the agreement and the other party’s terms, that the two worlds would exist in balance.”

“A promise,” Derek says, eyes shining. “And Stiles and I—we just have to seal it?”

“Once I lay down the foundation, yes,” Deaton says.

“Oh,” Stiles says. “It can’t be as simple as that.”

“It’s not,” Deaton says. “Once the foundation of the spell is laid, it will call back the heart of the magic used in the original treaty. Words are not important here, but emotion is. Bogey tradition to seal a promise is an touch—you’re holding hands now, but it needs to be more intimate. Foreheads, noses, cheek to cheek, something like that. Follow your instinct.”

Stiles swallows, thinking of the last time Derek sealed a promise to him. It’s unlikely that it’ll be a kiss again, now that Derek knows what it means.

“You have to feel it in your heart and be sincere. Any doubt will cause the spell to fail—you must want with your entire being to honor and protect the other party.”

Stiles turns to look at Derek, and where their hands are joined. His touch is warm. Steady.

“Yes.”

“Absolutely.”

Stiles doesn’t know who says what, but Deaton appears to be satisfied, because he then pours the entire flask on the ground. It leaps down the drawn line and then springs up in a riot of flames, and Stiles nearly yelps and steps backward, but he keeps holding onto Derek’s hand. The flames shoot high into the sky, dancing in a violent tumble of green and blue and purple, a dizzying kaleidoscope of colors. It burns—not hot, but Stiles’ arm is in pain, like pins and needles magnified to a thousand, but he holds on.

He can feel it. Centuries of the Crossings, watching and waiting, alive and writhing, holding their two worlds together, veil thinning in select places for people to travel between. I had a purpose, a voice says in Stiles’ mind, like a million voices speaking together at once in a million tongues but somehow he understands it. Hardly anyone ever visited from your side of the world. Really boring, to have a door open only one way. I didn’t like the one who smelled of metal. She broke me.

Hi? Stiles manages. It’s like trying to hold his ground as a river rushes through him, he can barely think, let alone direct a thought. He hopes this is working.

Hello, sparkling. Do you have something for me?

There’s too much going on, too much light and movement and he can’t even tell he’s in a forest
anymore, but he knows Derek is on the other side of the flames, and he’s still holding Derek’s hand. Stiles can’t think or speak now, but he can feel.

Emotion. This is what he has, and he lets go without abandon, every hope and yearning he has for Derek, how he wants to fix the Crossings, bring back the original treaty and restore the two worlds, make things right again. He thinks of all the starving bogeypeople on the other side and that they deserve to live, thinks of the innocent humans on this side and how no one needs a supernatural war, a bloodbath, lives lost because of a broken barrier. Stiles pours every bit of affection he has, every bit of his being; a vow to protect the treaty, to honor it.

Affection and— love.

Stiles loves Derek.

He gives the Crossings this too; the breadth and width of his feeling for Derek and how he’s making this promise to Derek, not just reenacting some treaty from long ago of people long dead.

Stiles can see Derek now, through the flames. He looks as beautiful as he does when Stiles saw him the first time; he looks almost translucent, like he’s shifted into that shapeless, smokey form again, wavering in the flames, both human and bogey at once, but he’s still Derek.

Derek leans forward, and Stiles meets him halfway. It’s nearly impossible to move, like he has a great weight bearing down on him, but Stiles does, heart pounding in anticipation. This is it. They need to seal the promise— touch foreheads maybe, or rub noses, whatever Derek wants—

Stiles glances at Derek’s lips and Derek is only an inch away. He’s so close. Stiles can count his eyelashes, see every dark swoop of them on his skin, the lovely green-gray color of his eyes, the curve of his jaw.

Derek’s lips part.

Oh, fuck it.

Stiles doesn’t remember who moves first but then he knows Derek’s lips are on his and it’s like he’s being consumed, in the very best way. The kiss is long and insistent, and it’s like Stiles is breaking and being made whole again at the same time. The fire burns all around them but Stiles forgets it; he takes Derek’s lower lip into his mouth, sucking and he can feel Derek groan, a deep noise that makes Stiles want more, so he deepens the kiss, and Derek gives back just as much; it’s a mess of desperate, yearning tongue and lips and—

“Good job, boys.”

Stiles blinks.

The fire is gone. He steps back, dropping Derek’s hand. The heavy weight in the air is still there, but it feels different, and the expression on Derek’s face says it all— relief, awe, and exhilaration all at once.

Deaton regards them with raised eyebrow and a smirk. “Just in time. In a few minutes this particular Crossings will be ready, and I imagine there will be some bogeys eager to get through and see you, Derek.”

Derek nods and wraps Stiles in a hug. “We did it! Thank you so much for your help.”

“Of course,” Stiles says, patting Derek on the back. His mind is already rapidly going through all the
possibilities— what this means now. Derek’s quest is over, they saved the world. Are they still kinda dating? Will Derek just go back and be with all the other bogeys?

Deaton is already starting down the trail. “I’ll see you two around. Derek, it was nice to meet you. Stiles— I expect to see you soon for training.”

And then it’s just them and the forest, and the prickling sense of the Crossings, still lingering.

“So, that was a real promise seal, huh?” Stiles says lightly, laughing sheepishly at himself. “It was really something.”

“Yeah,” Derek agrees, and he steps closer, reaching out to touch Stiles’ cheek. It’s a slow, tender movement that makes Stiles’ heart skip a beat. “Do you want to do it again?”

“Another promise?” Stiles asks.

Derek smiles. “Sure, if you want. I was thinking about just a kiss, though.”

“Oh. Yes. We can do that. Absolutely do that, like forever—” Stiles tends to babble when he’s nervous, and there’s a part of him that’s just singing yes Derek wants to kiss me and then he’s just talking, talking, and Derek’s kissing him again.

Stiles can feel the curve of his smile into the kiss, falls right into the feeling, and holds onto Derek for all he’s worth. It’s wonderful.

The forest seems to move around them, and someone is… laughing?

They break apart and Derek makes an annoyed face, looking around them. “Really? You couldn’t have waited another minute?”

Stiles then notices that they’re surrounded by inky black smoke figures, and more seem to be coming out of nowhere, dark shadows circling and unfolding from the depths of the trees and from the air above them. They rustle and flicker in movement, and then one by one gleaming eyes start to form in the shapes, and they bob about, amused.

Derek takes a deep breath. “Stiles, I want you to meet my family. I hope you like them; I think they’re very excited to meet you. I um, I have to warn you, they probably think that we’re mates.”

Stiles takes his hand and squeezes. “Good.”

He thinks so too.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so, so much for reading! A huge thank you as well to everyone who kudo’d and commented and sent me encouraging messages to continue with the fic, and to everyone who's just reading as well! I wouldn't have been able to finish without you. Whether you've been patiently reading from the start or just started and finished, I'm
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You're welcome to say hi to me on tumblr if you like! \(^_^)/

End Notes

Thank you for reading! You can find me on tumblr here.

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