Practice Makes Perfect

by cheshirecat101

Summary

Like every other Alpha and Omega his age, Stiles is forced to participate in a "practice heat" exercise before his first heat actually hits. Unfortunately, the exercise doesn't go quite as planned.

Notes

So this started as a tumblr prompt from the lovely mummyholmesisupset, and then it evolved into an actual fic without me realizing it...and then that fic started to have multiple chapters...and then it turned into this. So, enjoy, I suppose?
This was quite possibly the stupidest idea Stiles had ever heard.

A “practice heat” partner? As if he fucking needed someone to guide him through a heat before he even had one. And it wasn’t even really guiding, there were rules to the whole thing—“keep your clothes on at all times” “no biting or bonding marks” “no scent-marking” “this is entirely a theoretical practice and must not actually be used to bond” “if your partner goes into heat during your session, hit the panic button in your room and your adviser will come to help”—all of which were meant to prevent any actual bonding from occurring. This was simply to help the Omegas practice how to handle a heat before they had one, and a guide for Alphas to tell them how to help an Omega through one.

But Stiles really didn’t need to be involved with it. He would be fine once his first heat hit, god knew he’d had enough lessons about it in school, seen enough diagrams and viewed enough videos about anatomy and some that he definitely had not needed to see about the birth process, and really, he was all set. Great, he was an Omega. At some point he was going to go crazy horny and desperate for an Alpha and then that would signal that he could go on suppressants until he found a mate, at which point he was expected to pop out a few babies. Just stellar. Why did he need practice to do that?

This whole process seemed arbitrary anyway. He was certain that Coach directly had it out for him, considering he was one of the organizers of this, the school working with the hospital to organize this whole shindig, and when Stiles had passed him in line he’d whispered something to the nurse next to him, who’d made a note on his clipboard. Unfortunately, Scott’s mom did not appear to be working with the ‘s’ last names, had probably requested to be with the ‘m’s so she could supervise Scott, but then again, maybe she’d rather have nothing to do with her son’s Alpha sex life. That was a definite possibility, considering that Stiles’s dad certainly wanted nothing to do with his, though he still wouldn’t bail Stiles out of doing this. Which meant Stiles was going to be uncooperative as possible about this.

The first Alpha didn’t last very long.

Stiles wasn’t quite sure what it was that made him break, but it was somewhere in between the constant popping of the gum he shouldn’t have had, and the fact that Stiles would laugh every time he touched him, as if he was incredibly ticklish. Only in this case, Stiles was just trying to piss off someone who clearly already had a short temper, and it didn’t take long for the Alpha to snap, hitting the panic button despite the fact that Stiles definitely wasn’t in heat and certainly wasn’t in any danger of going into a premature one due to arousal. The Alpha was an idiot, and Stiles was incredibly turned off by him.

Turned off by most Alphas, actually. The posturing and jealousy just didn’t really do it for him, probably because he’d had to watch Scott slowly come into it and realized that, like Scott, every Alpha was secretly a giant dweeb that happened to be born a gender where they could pretend to not be a giant dweeb. To be something cool, and suave, and ooh, mysterious! But Stiles hadn’t fallen for that ever before, and wouldn’t fall for it now.

The nurse that came running into their room seemed surprised to find them sitting on opposite ends of the bed, the Alpha’s arms crossed as he fumed, and Stiles offered her a big smile and a friendly little wave. She wasn’t quite amused by that.

The second Alpha lasted longer.
He seemed really, really determined to make sure that this exercise went well, despite how much Stiles was clearly trying to derail it. J… John… Jack… Jacob? Yeah. His name was Jacob. Maybe. He really didn’t care enough to remember it after the dude said it, so instead he popped his gum and gave him a grin, hoping that alone would be enough to get the guy to realize what he was messing with. Didn’t seem to work. Instead, the guy resorted to talking to him in a very soft, probably supposed to be calming voice that Stiles found incredibly condescending and immediately wanted to shut up. Forever.

But the guy’s– Jacob’s– idea of getting Stiles to cooperate was using that voice and keeping his movements slow, gentle as they tried to follow the audio and visual instructions they’d been left with. Wasn’t this technically, like, sexual assault, or something? If Stiles didn’t want to be here, and wasn’t interested in a demonstration of something of a sexual nature, didn’t that make everyone who was involved in making him participate complicit in sexual assault? Or maybe not, because he was an Omega and Omegas didn’t have those kinds of rights. Well, okay, that wasn’t entirely fair. They did have rights, and plenty more than they used to. But things were still a little unclear when it came to stuff like this.

And so for a little while, it seemed like Jacob was actually going to be successful in this, and that was a thought that made Stiles more than a little…dismayed. He didn’t want this exercise to be successful at all, and would much rather that the whole thing completely failed so that he didn’t have to go through the full, nearly humiliating process, during which he was reminded of his gender at every turn. Great. Just what he wanted.

So Jacob? Had to go. And this time, Stiles had to be more hands on about it. The last one was easy, a bit younger than Stiles, definitely cocky, and looking to prove something. Jacob, despite his gender, seemed a little bit softer, a little more willing to try to entice Stiles into working with him. He really seemed fixated on making this whole thing work, as if the process wasn’t incredibly simple already. There was a hole. There was also a dick. You put the dick in the hole, and moved it around until you couldn’t anymore. Not rocket science!

But apparently to this kid it was and Stiles decided that fucking with him? Probably the most fun of the options available to him. So every few seconds he’d go, “Ow,” and the kid would look up in complete panic, stopping whatever he was doing to immediately ask if Stiles was okay, and Stiles would give him a thumbs up while making a pained face. Eventually, the kid got so panicked that he hit the button specifically for that purpose, and when the nurse came back in, she was definitely not amused.

Poor, panicked Jacob was led out again, and he winked at her as she left once more, clearly unamused by his antics. But really, what else was he supposed to do? This whole exercise was stupid and he didn’t want to participate, wasn’t interested in being made to basically act out sex with another teenager without the actual benefit of having sex. If he could lose his virginity this way, great, fantastic, Jacob had been pretty good looking, he would have been cool with that.

But no, that wasn’t the point of all this, it was all just a fake shit show that he didn’t want to be involved in anymore.Hadn’t wanted to be involved in in the first place, but it was mandatory for kids his age and he just wanted to get back to Scott and talk about how stupid this all wa–

Oh. Oh no. He was hot.

Stiles looked up as the third Alpha entered the room, and his mouth must have honest to god dropped open a little bit because hot damn. That was one fine-looking man in front of him, and definitely not someone his age. Was this illegal? Did he care right now? No, no, definitely not, not when his new partner was this hot and he had to remember that he was in protest against… the patriarchy, or
So he grinned at his new partner as the nurse left the room with a light, “Play nice,” and popped his gum as soon as she was out of earshot. “Hey, partner,” he said with false cheer, and noted that the man’s expression didn’t change one iota. Still that sullen, eternal grumpiness like a particularly hairy child that had lost his teddy bear. Stiles would never admit that he was even the least bit intimidated by it, though damn, he was. Hard not to be when this guy was several inches taller than him and also looked like he could kill someone with his bare hands. Or had in the past, already.

The guy definitely didn’t seem amused by him, and Stiles shrank back slightly on instinct as he closed in, wondering if he was going to make this extremely difficult for Stiles to wiggle out of. Probably. But the Alpha just extended a hand out, and when Stiles stared at him blankly, growled out, “Gum.”

Stiles reluctantly spit his gum into the man’s hand, feeling like a student that was being chastised by his particularly hot teacher. Yeah, this guy definitely wasn’t a student at his school, and looked old enough to be an Alpha who had actually helped Omegas through real heats before. No wonder they’d paired them together this time around, Stiles had made it obvious that no ordinary Alpha was going to cut it, not when it came to him, and now they’d sent in someone out of the ordinary for him. Just for him. Shit.

It didn’t help that this particular Alpha smelled incredibly amazing to him, a rich, full, earthy scent with a hint of that musk that came from men naturally, that Stiles usually recoiled from with Alphas because he didn’t need someone who was hyper-masculine who postured and posed to win his affection. Not that there was much of that in his life anyway, mostly because he hadn’t had his first heat yet so his scent wasn’t fully developed. Once it was, he was not looking forward to the attention that would follow, because he wasn’t interested in being hounded after by a bunch of horny teenage Alphas. What he really dreaded was the thought of getting his first heat during school, having to rush to the nurse’s office and lock himself in until he could get a ride home. It’d happened before to other Omegas, and it would be even worse if it happened to him because male Omegas were rare and he’d already started to get noticed a bit by older Alphas. Which was, needless to say, creepy.

But this Alpha…well. It was easy to say that Stiles didn’t mind him so far, only minded that he was being forced to participate in this stupid exercise that didn’t have any point when he was sure that he could handle whatever his heat threw at him. The rest of the world didn’t seem to agree, unfortunately.

“So, uh…come here often?” he asked as the Alpha moved to throw his gum away, getting some hand sanitizer from the dispenser on the wall and rubbing it over his hands before returning to Stiles. He didn’t show any reaction to Stiles’s words, and didn’t bother to answer them, simply staring down Stiles again. Great. This was going just fan-freaking-tastic.

“Lie down,” the Alpha commanded, and yep, he was definitely a fully formed Alpha, not like these awkward teenagers at all because there was a layer of command in his voice that Stiles felt he had to comply with, had to obey because Jesus. It was the first time he’d ever wanted to obey an order in his life. That was an odd new experience.

He was halfway to lying down when he realized what he was doing and stopped himself, sitting up again and swinging his legs, giving the guy a, ‘Sorry, buddy’ smile. Making it clear that he wasn’t going to take this that easily, wasn’t going to obey so simply, despite what tone the Alpha used, and swear to god, the man actually looked surprised for a brief second before he went back to stoicism, clearly intent on keeping his mask up for whatever reason.

Bullshit. The entire act was bullshit, Stiles knew because he could bullshit with the best of them. And
this guy wasn’t going to intimidate him, no, he wasn’t going to let that happen. He’d be as difficult as he possibly could because this guy couldn’t do anything to him or Stiles would simply press the panic button and be done with the whole thing. So. They were going to play by his rules, or they weren’t going to play at all.

“Lie down,” the Alpha said again, the words coming out in a commanding near growl this time, and Stiles repressed the shiver that wanted to skitter down his spine.

“No,” he said, crossing his arms against his chest. “This exercise is bullshit, you’re bullshit, and I’m not going to participate.”

Oh no, he was getting closer, and Stiles didn’t move a muscle as the man leaned down, placing his hands on either side of Stiles’s legs on the bed, bringing their faces uncomfortably close together. “You’ve never had a heat before. You don’t know what it’s like.”

“Neither do you,” Stiles said sharply, and there was a flicker of something impressed in the guy’s eyes before it disappeared again.

“No, but I know from experience what it looks like. The desperation, the insatiable need for an Alpha that burns through you and leaves you feeling empty, like nothing can satisfy you. I’ve seen too many unprepared Omegas have their first heat and bond with the first Alpha that decides to take advantage, because they can’t help themselves, don’t know what to do. It doesn’t matter if that Alpha is your classmate, your teacher, or your best friend. You’ll be so delirious that you won’t care until it’s done, and then you’ll regret your bond, hate whoever took advantage of you and forced you into it. I’m doing this for your own goddamn good, Stiles. Now shut up, and lie down.”

Stiles swallowed thickly, those words sending a chill through him because god, that hit home. He didn’t want to be one of those Omegas, didn’t want to bond with the first person he saw during his heat and get trapped in a relationship he didn’t want to be in. He was too young for it, too young to get taken advantage of like that. So, reluctantly, he lay back on the bed, looking at the man with a certain nervousness that he knew was visible.

The man moved to settle in between legs that Stiles reluctantly parted, unsure about all of this and not wanting to do it, but knowing that he really had to, if it was going to help him when he had a real heat. And despite all his bravado and bluff and bluster about being able to handle it on his own, on the inside he was more than a little terrified of it. Of the desperation that would overtake him, each Omega describing it similarly. He didn’t understand why he couldn’t go on heat suppressants ahead of time, avoid this whole mess in the first place. But it would screw with his delicate hormone balance they said, mess him up permanently and even possibly make it so he couldn’t have heats at all. And despite the issues that he may have had with the expectations for his gender, that didn’t mean that he didn’t eventually want to bond with someone.

So he let the man settle between his legs, looking down at him with Bambi brown eyes that were currently steeped in nervousness like tea that’d been left to steep for too long. “Relax,” the Alpha said, and his hands moved to gently stroke Stiles’s sides. Yeah, that definitely wasn’t helping. “The key to all of this is to relax. You can’t handle a heat if you aren’t relaxed. It’ll be difficult, because your whole body will be tense, and natural lubrication can only go so far. You need to calm your body down and remember that you don’t need to bond, don’t need to do anything but ride the heat out. Got it?”

Stiles nodded quickly, nervously, focusing on the fingertips that were gently brushing against his t-shirt. “Good. Now, when you do bond, it’s going to feel strange at first because while you’ll already have had a heat once, it’ll only have been once. So, you’ll feel a lot like you did the first time, but hopefully you’ll be able to take the bond a bit more calmly since you’ll know what to expect.” He
paused a moment, looking up at Stiles with eyes that Stiles couldn’t quite decide the color of. “When you do bond, it’ll probably be quick. Almost a frenzy, at least for the first round. First comes sex, then comes the bonding bite. Most likely around here,” he said, and a hand went up to brush the area by where Stiles’s neck met his shoulder. “Got it so far?”

“Yeah,” Stiles answered, swallowing, focused on those gentle hands on him, the Alpha showing a care with him that he hadn’t really expected, considering how this had all started out. How sullen he’d been when he first came in.

“Once the bite is sealed and you two are sealed together by your Alpha’s knot, you’ll be able to think more again, be calmer, and be able to get to scent-marking and just generally solidifying the bond with your Alpha. Scent-marking usually involves a lot of rubbing your faces against each other and against your neck and chest. Something like this.”

The Alpha leaned in close and suddenly his scent was overwhelming, Stiles accidentally taking a deep breath that he definitely shouldn’t have. He felt strange, suddenly a bit flushed, a bit hotter than usual, and he couldn’t think for a moment as the man rubbed his stubble covered cheek against Stiles’s, not actually scent-marking him, but simply miming the motion. God that felt nice. The stubble gently scraping across his cheek, the scent of the Alpha strong around him, the feeling of his body lightly against Stiles, clearly trying to not make him uncomfortable by putting too much pressure on him.

But right now Stiles felt like that, like he needed the contact, and he shifted underneath the man, trying to get comfortable again, but that was making it worse, every accidental brush of their hips together making something like an electric shock run through him; quick, sharp, and definitely not helping the warmth that was spreading through his body.

“After scent-marking, you’ll probably just do a lot of kissing and touching until you can go at it again. After that, it’s all solidifying the bond, trying to get you pregnant, basically, if you’re ready for it. Even if you’re not, that’s the basic goal of this, simple biology.” The man paused for a moment, opening his mouth to speak again, and then stopped, taking a deep inhale. His brow dropped low over his eyes, and he sniffed again before his eyes went wide and he tried to pull away from Stiles, who instinctually grabbed his arm to hold him in place.

“Stiles,” the Alpha said calmly, stopping in his motions but looking at Stiles like he was ready to pull away at a moment’s notice, “your scent changed. I think you’re going into heat.”

No. No. That couldn’t be. A heated blush unfolded over Stiles’s cheeks as he looked up at the man, hoping that he was wrong. That that wasn’t what was happening right now, though honestly, it really could be. He felt wet, a bit sticky, like he was leaking lubrication and he was already so hot and the Alpha smelled amazing and—shit, he was going into heat.

The man reached to press the panic button but Stiles stopped him, hand gripping his arm with just about as much force as he could muster at the moment. “Please,” he said softly, and for a moment the man looked torn before shaking his head.

“No, Stiles, no. I warned you about this, don’t try to bond with the first Alpha you see. You only want to bond with me because this is your first heat and right now, I probably smell amazing to you.”

Yes, but he’d smelled amazing before Stiles went into heat, and he was still in the beginning stages, not a full-blown heat yet. The Alpha tried to pull away again and Stiles wrapped his legs around him, holding him in place and prompting him to look down at Stiles in exasperation.

“Stiles…” he said softly, and Jesus did that do things to Stiles. Shit. He was not prepared for this but
the man against him felt so good and he just wanted, wanted, wanted—and then the Alpha kissed him, and Stiles forgot how to breathe.

His legs loosened again, dropping back down onto the bed as the Alpha kissed him avidly, stubble scraping slightly against Stiles’s smooth chin and cheeks, and he made a soft noise, kissing back a little desperately and ignoring the fact that this was only his second kiss ever and it was amazing, he needed it, he needed—

And then he heard the click of a button, and realized the man had just been distracting him long enough that he could press the panic button. He pulled back from Stiles, but oh, there it was. He was just as turned on as Stiles was, and the amount of self-control that this must be taking him was truly incredible. He managed to pull away this time, despite how Stiles tried to cling to him, and Stiles let out a panicked, slightly desperate noise as the Alpha stood away from him, Stiles sitting up on the bed.

“Not now,” the man said, and that caused something to spark in Stiles’s chest, a hope he hadn’t even known existed before and didn’t know what to do with now. “Call me when you’re legal.”

He headed for the door, though he paused in the doorway, and Stiles could hear the nurses running down the hall, headed for their room. “I’m Derek, by the way. Derek Hale,” Derek said, and left.

Stiles flopped back on the bed, waiting for the nurses that were in a second later, his heat starting to intensify, thoughts of Derek and that incredible kiss not helping matters. Fuck. He was so fucked.
“Dude, you went into heat?”

Scott’s voice was chock full of amusement as he adjusted his backpack on his shoulders, both hands gripping the straps like the dork he truly was. Again, exactly what every other Alpha was underneath their bluff and bluster. Though it was hard to think of Derek as a dweeb underneath everything, that gruff exterior he presented. Maybe.

“Yeah, why do you think I was out of school for a week?” Stiles asked, giving Scott a look as he pulled a few books out of his locker. A passing Alpha was eyeing him and he was tempted to flip him off or make a snarky comment, but he wasn’t going to. Better to just stare the Alpha down so he realized that he wasn’t about to be tipped over like a normal Omega. Fuck that averting your gaze shit so you didn’t draw attention to yourself, that would just encourage the Alpha, make them think that you were a normal, submissive Omega. Which Stiles was not. “Besides, can’t you tell? Apparently my scent changed.”

“I mean, yeah, but your scent changes a lot, depending on a lot of things,” Scott said as Stiles slammed his locker shut, putting his backpack back on his shoulders. “But really? You? I mean I made my partner go into heat, but—”

Stiles stopped, turning back to look at him. “Seriously? Scott, man, way to go. Who was it?”

“Um…Isaac Lahey.”

Stiles groaned, starting to head down the hallway again, Scott next to him. “What?” Scott asked defensively.

“He’s like the most sarcastic asshole I’ve ever met, and that’s coming from me,” Stiles said. “You really made him go into heat? Did you guys…you know…”

“No, of course not! I pressed the panic button as soon as it happened, and we only got to a little scent marking before the nurses came in. And making out…”

Stiles stuck out his tongue, making a face, and Scott rolled his eyes. “Like you can talk, you went
Someone incredibly hot that he really didn’t have a chance with, not in this life or the next. He still had a while to go until ‘legal’, and that was apparently the only way good guy Derek Hale was going to be interested in him. Well, technically he was already interested, just unwilling to act when Stiles was at such a tender young age, and when it was his first heat and Derek happened to be the Alpha that induced it. But Stiles hadn’t wanted to mate with him just because he was the first Alpha that he saw, he could feel it in his bones. There was something else there, something that he hadn’t been able to put his finger on because he didn’t have a chance to before the heat really set in. He wanted to see Derek again to find out what it was, but that wasn’t really an option right now.

He realized he hadn’t answered Scott’s question and shrugged, searching for the right words. “He wasn’t exactly…a student,” he finally said, and Scott turned to give him a look, brow furrowed over his eyes.

“What do you mean?”

“Welllll…I kinda broke the first two Alphas that they paired me up with,” he said, and Scott exclaimed, “Dude!”

“What? They were both awful and that whole exercise was terrible, it was practically sexual assault,” Stiles said defensively, and Scott made a face of half agreement. “Besides, the first one was a dick, and the second one was really condescending. So what else was I supposed to do, let them put their gross Alpha hands on me? No way, uh-uh. So they sent in the big guns.”

“The big guns being…?”

“This guy, Derek. He was definitely not our age and definitely not…inexperienced,” Stiles finally said, unsure of how else to put it. Derek had definitely been, ah, experienced, to the point that he could scare Stiles into cooperating by telling him stories about other Omegas that’d fallen to worse fates. Then, of course, he’d kissed him, but only long enough to distract him to press the panic button, and Jesus this was not what he should be thinking about in the middle of school. Not now, boner.

“So they sent some older guy to feel you up instead of a younger Alpha? That seems weird,” Scott said, frowning slightly, and Stiles shrugged, knowing why they’d done it.

“I mean, what else were they going to do? I wasn’t cooperating with anyone and this guy actually managed to get me to sit down and shut up. Mostly by being mildly intimidating.”

Scott raised his eyebrows, but dropped them low again as he smirked slightly. “And he put you into heat.”

A lesser man would have blushed—or a lesser Omega—but Stiles simply gave Scott a flat, unamused look, not appreciating the condescension. Well, mostly just harmless teasing, but still. He didn’t need to be reminded of how embarrassing the whole thing was. How much of a teenager he was by going into heat early just because some hot Alpha was showing him the ropes. Ugh. Never going to live that one down.

“Look, you try having a hot Alpha on top of you with a very intense gaze that’s telling you all about how your first heat will feel without going into one. It’s not easy, Scott.”

“Hey, hey, alright,” Scott said, holding up his hands in surrender, thumbs still hooked through the straps of his backpack. “I’m not condemning you, man. I just think it’s funny. We both got reactions
we didn’t expect.”

“Is Isaac even back in school yet?” Stiles asked, brow furrowed slightly, but Scott wasn’t paying attention at all. Instead he was breaking out the charming smile, the ten-thousand-watt/brighter-than-the-sun one that he always used whenever he was trying to get something that he wanted, and that something was in this case apparently Isaac, who was passing him in the hallway. Oh god, that was gross. Isaac grinned back, passing Scott, their eyes lingering on each other before Scott turned around again as Stiles made a retching noise.

“What?” he asked, and Stiles gave him a look.

“Dude, that’s gross. You’re like puppies in love or something.”

“Wouldn’t that be…cute? Like, puppies are cute, and the Lady and the Tramp are cute, and—”

Stiles sighed, letting his neck loosen as he dropped his head back, half feigning his exasperation, because he wasn’t truly exasperated by Scott. Just sometimes, as best friends had a tendency to do. After all, it wasn’t a true friendship if you didn’t at least occasionally try to rip each other’s throats out. And there’d been plenty of that in their youth. Not that they weren’t still young, but Stiles was trying not to think about that considering that reminded him of Derek and that was the last thing he wanted to think about right now.

“Dude, come on, I’m kidding. You’re just upset because this guy—Derek, right?—is too old for you.”

“He’s not too old for me,” Stiles protested, though he wasn’t sure if that was true or not, considering he really wasn’t sure how old Derek was. He could have been anywhere from mid-twenties to early thirties, Stiles had no idea, and that really mattered when talking about teenagers and their possible relationships with older men. Jesus, why wasn’t he eighteen yet? “Look, he’s just…a little out of my reach for now.”

“Dude, come on, I’m kidding. You’re just upset because this guy—Derek, right?—is too old for you.”

“Yeah, for now. It’s not like he’s not interested. He told me to call him when I’m legal. So he’s totally into me.”

“Whatever you say,” Scott said, and the bell rang as they entered their first class.

The first thing that Stiles noticed when he entered the classroom was that he was getting a lot more attention than usual, several Alpha’s eyes on him who previously hadn’t spared him even a glance, and he hitched his backpack a bit more up on his shoulder as he headed towards his seat, Scott in tow. Great. This was exactly what he’d been hoping to avoid, what he’d been hoping wouldn’t happen because he didn’t want all this undue attention and definitely didn’t want to start being an object of interest for Alphas. These guys hadn’t even reached full maturity yet, and yet they expected an Omega who’d just had their first heat to be interested in them? Fuck if that was going to happen.

Besides, Stiles currently had his eyes on someone who was very much mature and very much unattainable, unfortunately. Why was it that he always fell for the unattainable ones? It’d been like that since the very beginning, since Lydia Martin, though everyone had told him that he couldn’t do that anyway because he was an Alpha and she was a Beta. Omegas were supposed to end up with Alphas, were supposed to carry on the bloodline and procreate, unable to do the same with Betas regardless of their gender. So, basically, you were trapped no matter what, destined to be in a relationship with an Alpha even if you fell in love with someone else. Which was kind of tragic, in a way.
“So are you, like, on heat suppressants now?” Scott asked, turning in his seat to look at Stiles as the teacher started getting ready for the class, moving papers on her desk.

“Yeah, since the heat ended. So luckily, that tamps my scent down a little,” Stiles answered, turning his pencil over and over in his hand, trying to ignore the quite obvious looks that he was getting.

“That might be why I couldn’t tell,” Scott offered, and Stiles nodded. “So how was it?”

“How was what?”

“The heat.”

Stiles shrugged, shifting in his seat. “Like what they tell you in the textbooks. Only about ten times worse than that.” It was all kind of a blur, actually, Stiles mostly remembering the feeling of burning out of his skin, his body aching and empty and desperate for something that it couldn’t have, though god did he want it. More than he’d ever wanted anything in his life, and he’d truly felt like he was going to die if he didn’t get it. He’d been too incapacitated to even try to escape or anything, too preoccupied with trying to fill the emptiness himself and failing miserably at it, because that wasn’t what he needed. He knew what he needed, but that wasn’t a goddamn option and both his body and what little was left of his mind hated it. So fucking much.

“Ouch,” Scott said, wincing slightly, but his attention was drawn back to the front of the room as the teacher started speaking.

Yeah, ouch was one way to put it. Another way to put it was that it was some kind of special sexual agony, something that he hadn’t realized would be quite that terrible until he was in the midst of it. And his imagination hadn’t been helpful at all, mostly conjuring images of Derek and remembering that kiss and generally just being way too preoccupied with someone that he’d only met once. But that was kinda how his brain worked, and he couldn’t really change that if he tried. Well, he had tried, but every time his thoughts wandered from Derek, whether in his heat or after it, they always seemed to wander back to the Alpha. Fucking wonderful.

It wasn’t fair, it really wasn’t. Though in a way, it was his own fault. If he’d cooperated with either of the first two Alphas, dickwad or Jacob, he wouldn’t have ended up being in that position with Derek and wouldn’t have gone into heat early. He’d never have known about the mysterious older man, never been stuck lamenting his age for days and weeks to come. Or maybe just forever, considering that his interest in Derek didn’t seem to be going anywhere anytime soon, which brought him back to the unfairness of it all.

Why couldn’t he be an Alpha like Scott? Someone that—at least in theory—had the power in the relationship, the freedom to choose whoever they wanted and not be bogged down by societal conventions on the way there? Well, technically Stiles did have the power in the relationship, and did have the freedom to choose whoever he wanted, now that his first heat was over and he was on the suppressants, able to think again and carefully choose who was and was not a suitable mate. Though considering his age, he was mostly interested in dating, not in actual bonding. But Derek…

No, no, no, this wasn’t helping. He needed to just push him entirely out of mind, not think about him and focus on…what, exactly? The boring schoolwork that he could do in his sleep? Probably that. Jesus this was going to be a long day. Especially when Scott kept smirking at him, reminding him of exactly what he’d done when he was in the practice heat exercise. Though Scott was one to talk, he’d sent his own partner into heat and now they seemed entirely lovey dovey over each other in an entirely sickening way. Blech. He wasn’t looking forward to watching that play out.

But he was going to have to, considering Isaac was in a few of their classes, and in general just went
to the same tiny school as them, so they were bound to run into each other again sometime. Sometime soon. Probably next period, actually, and Jesus, that was probably all that Scott was thinking about considering the dopey doe-eyed look on his face, and Stiles “accidentally” kicked him underneath his desk.

“What?” Scott asked, not fooled by Stiles looking away innocently.

“Dude, you look like Happy and Dopey had a love child,” he responded in a hushed whisper, and Scott gave him a look.

“Come on, I’m just in a good mood today,” he protested.

Stiles raised his eyebrows. “Would Isaac maybe have something to do with this good mood?”

Scott gave him a look, but didn’t deny it, because there was no point. Stiles knew him better than anyone else, and they’d both practically given up on trying to hide anything from each other. There just wasn’t much of a point to it. “Do you really think he’s that terrible?” Scott asked, and there was something plaintive in his expression, as if he was looking for Stiles to revoke his opinion. Jesus he was laying on the puppy dog eyes hard today, and Stiles sighed, tapping his pencil lightly against his notebook.

“Alright fine, he’s not that bad,” he said, and Scott pumped his fist low, where the teacher couldn’t see, saying, “Yessssss!”

“Stilinski! McCall! At least try to pay attention, please,” the teacher said, sounding more than a little exasperated, and they both turned around again with their most innocent expressions. As if anyone was buying that.

By the time lunch rolled around, Stiles was convinced that a) Derek was never going to leave his mind—or his libido—alone, and b) that Scott and Isaac were ready to sneak off into the locker room and bond as soon as they had the opportunity. The two of them seemed already incredibly into each other, and despite all the faux retching Stiles did about it, it was actually good to see. Just nice to see Scott clearly enjoying himself so much, finding himself happy with someone. Though they still didn’t know each other well and if Scott did mention bonding with Isaac now, Stiles would tell him what a terrible idea it was, at least for the immediate future. Considering how young they were, it’d probably only end in tragedy for everyone involved, though Stiles was really one to talk when he was convinced that he could bond with Derek. The brooding older man who was…currently walking into the cafeteria. And looking around. And headed towards him, and—

Derek stopped in front of him, those inscrutable eyes on him as Stiles tried to remember how to function as a normal human being. Breathing, blinking, those sorts of things. “I need to talk to you.”
“Um, okay, I guess—”

Stiles didn’t have much of a chance to finish that sentence, as Derek was already hauling him up and leading him out of the cafeteria, drawing quite a bit of attention to them that Stiles resolutely ignored because he really didn’t want anyone to start asking questions about why a hot older man was bodily hauling him out of the cafeteria, with a look that was like poisonous acid, sure to burn whoever it touched. Everyone averted their eyes as Derek passed with Stiles in tow, one hand gripping the front of his shirt to make absolutely sure that Stiles was following, though really, Stiles would follow Derek anywhere that he wanted Stiles to go. God, he was more than a little bit pathetic, wasn’t he? An infatuated teenager who was in danger of falling harder for someone that was definitely out of reach and would probably remain so. Fan-freaking-tastic.

“Where—” The half-formed question was answered as they stopped in the hallway, empty and devoid of life for the moment because everyone was either in class or in the cafeteria, and another question was on the tip of Stiles’s tongue, making his lips buzz slightly with more words before Derek pressed him back against a locker, and kissed him.

Okay, not how he’d expected this to go. And yet there it was, Derek’s lips pressed firmly against his, with so much force that Stiles had to wonder if he was trying to bruise Stiles’s lips. He made a soft noise, but not one of protest, because god no, how could he protest this when this was what he’d been imagining for days, a week now. Derek’s hands were on his waist, and as Stiles kissed back—at least as much as he could with the force that Derek was using—his own hands slid up Derek’s shoulders so he could wrap his arms around his neck, pull him closer. Though there really wasn’t much closer that he could pull him. Still, he could try, and after a minute, he could feel a tension he hadn’t even known Derek was holding slip out of the Alpha, the kiss getting a bit lighter, easier for Stiles to move in.

Derek didn’t seem to be deepening it, though, and Stiles took the initiative, tongue darting out to brush barely against Derek’s lip, an invitation, a welcome for him. Stiles could feel Derek hesitate, feel that tension return to his shoulders before they dropped, and Stiles parted his lips as Derek took
the invitation. Okay, this was so much better than any kiss Stiles had ever had before, and he was feeling a bit dizzy, every brush of Derek’s tongue against his delightful, prompting soft noises and the rise of his hips to press against Derek’s, though Derek simply pressed him flat against the locker, their bodies completely flush against each other. Jesus.

Eventually, Stiles was going to have to get more air, but he’d rather faint than break off the kiss right now. He didn’t want it to end, didn’t want to stop this careful, but heated exploration of each other, wanted to encourage Derek to keep going, to continue until they both couldn’t breathe and had to break it off, gasping for air. But before they reached that point, Derek drew back, looking at Stiles with eyes that were dark at the moment, pupils just slightly expanded beyond their normal radius. Holy fuck, he was just as turned on as Stiles was. So why had he pulled back?

Derek stared at him for a minute, neither of them speaking, just breathing hard in the silence, and then tore his gaze away, growling out, “Fuck.”

Alright, definitely not the reaction that Stiles wanted, consider Derek seemed incredibly frustrated, mostly with himself. Maybe a little bit with Stiles, but mostly it was directed inward, and Stiles had to wonder why. Had to wonder why Derek had kissed him in the first place, why he had initiated this if it was just going to frustrate him and make him angry at himself. Why?

“O-kay…” Stiles said slowly, the first real sentence that he’d been able to get out around Derek so far today, though it hardly counted as a sentence. Just a confused word, his bewilderment obvious in his expression, clear to Derek, it had to be. But Derek wasn’t looking at him, seemed to be doing it on purpose as he caught his breath, and then those peridot green eyes locked onto him again, and Stiles would swear to god that his heart stopped in his chest, then stuttered back into motion. Jesus, he was already really far gone and he was wondering where the line from lust into something else was and whether he was toeing it or had already crossed. No, no way. He couldn’t be that obsessed this easily. Or he could, considering past obsessions. Fuck.

“You—” Derek started and then stopped, eyes simply on Stiles and Stiles alone and Jesus the look in them was something that Stiles was going to remember forever. A cross between desire and absolute fury, though he knew the fury wasn’t directed at him, but rather at Derek himself. Though he still wasn’t sure why, and wasn’t sure he wanted to ask. Didn’t look like he’d have the opportunity anyway, as Derek was stalking away from him, frustration in his every move, and Stiles missed a beat before he shot after him, grabbing onto his arm. Derek stopped, but didn’t turn to look at him, and Stiles wondered if that would make a difference. Felt that that little detail in Derek’s behavior was important somehow.

“Look, you can’t just come to my school, drag me out of the cafeteria in front of everyone, kiss me, and then just walk away like nothing happened,” he said, a firmness in his tone that he probably wouldn’t be able to have if Derek wasn’t turned away from him now. He turned around now, though, looming slightly over Stiles in a way that Stiles wasn’t about to admit he found incredibly intimidating, despite the fact that this guy had been kissing him not two minutes before.

“I can’t be around you, Stiles. I can’t do this again. This was—” He paused for a moment, sounding frustrated again, and Stiles eyes roamed his face, trying to pick up any details that he could. Anything at all that would help him out here. “This was a mistake,” Derek continued, looking at Stiles with something, oh, there was something there, just a hint of desperation in his gaze, a spark that he quickly snuffed out. But not before Stiles got to see it. “I thought that it would help but it just made everything worse and I can’t do this to you, or to me. It’s not right.”

“Help with what?” Stiles asked, brow furrowing low over citrine eyes. “What, Derek?” he asked again when he didn’t get an answer after a few moments.
“With this,” Derek answered, gesturing between the two of them. “This? Can’t happen. Not until you’re old enough, and—” he said, holding up a hand as Stiles opened his mouth to protest “— you’re definitely not old enough. Not right now. And I—I don’t want to wait a couple years but that’s what I have to do. That or find someone else.”

Simultaneously, hope swept through his chest as something sick twisted in his stomach, a paradox that he could very well explain but didn’t want to. Because god, that wasn’t fair to him. It wasn’t fair for Derek to simultaneously tell him that he wanted to wait for him, but also that he may find someone else. That was…Jesus, why did that hurt in his chest so much? It ached hardcore, and Stiles had to resist the urge to rub at it, to try to erase the feeling with his hand. It wasn’t…it wasn’t fair. Nothing in his life was fair right now.

“So you admit it, then.”

Derek’s brow furrowed over his eyes, confusion present in his expression. “Admit what?” he asked, and Stiles gestured between them, mimicking what Derek had done.

“This. You admit that I went into heat because of you, not just because some hot Alpha was crawling all over me. That’s got to mean something, Derek.”

A heavy silence followed his words, Derek simply looking at him like he desperately wanted to say something, and was holding it back, lips slightly parted in preparation to speak. But after a moment, he shook his head, turning away again. “No, Stiles. It doesn’t mean anything. Just forget about it.”

He pulled his arm out of Stiles’s limp gripped and started walking away again, and Stiles moved once more, grabbing onto his arm as he started, “Derek—”

With a growl, Derek turned around and pinned Stiles to the wall of lockers again, kissing him with a ferocity that Stiles had never experienced in his life and wanted so much more of. There was so much want in this kiss, so much desire bleeding through and he really didn’t care if this was just physical or not for Derek, he just cared that he never stopped kissing him like this. But after a minute, Derek pulled away, and this time, Stiles was too dazed, too stunned to pull him back, and simply watched him walk out of the doors that made up the entrance to the school.

Fuck. Jesus fucking Christ. Stiles didn’t even know what to make of that, what he even could make of that. Because what was he supposed to do? Completely ignore what had happened and just move on with his life, try to forget about Derek? Right now, that seemed like an impossibility, and he really couldn’t imagine that it’d be easy. That he could do it at all, because fuck, Derek clearly wanted this as much as Stiles did, or at least wanted something from him, and god was Stiles prepared to give it to him. Whatever he wanted, whatever he needed, whatever he asked for and shit he was in too deep with this already.

But wasn’t that how it was supposed to be? Wasn’t he supposed to know almost immediately when he found who he wanted to bond with? How many stories had he heard about love at first sight with Omegas and Alphas, sticky sweet tales that he had been covered in sugar and possibly a lie or two, an exaggeration. But maybe it wasn’t an exaggeration. Maybe it was the truth and he’d just fallen hard for Derek from that very first moment in the exercise. When he asked him to spit out his gum, how romantic.

Stiles leaned back against the lockers, breathing a little hard, and dropped his head back against them in something akin to defeat. He definitely wasn’t going to be able to let this go that easily, but what else could he do? Try and pursue someone who was too nice of a guy to actually make a move on him because that just wasn’t what the good guy did? Fuck, he was going to do it, wasn’t he? Because he had been able to feel how desperate Derek was, how much he’d wanted to be able to
write off Stiles and their initial attraction as simply heat-induced, but had realized that it wouldn’t be
that easy. That he might not be able to do it at all, and was trapped just like Stiles was in a situation
that sucked for the both of them. Stiles wasn’t legal, and wouldn’t be for a while, and Derek
wouldn’t act until he was. So what could they do? Wait for each other for as long as it took? Yeah,
because that would be great and wouldn’t put them at all at risk for finding someone else and
bonding with them instead.

There was no easy solution, and Stiles sighed as he heard the bell ring, knowing that he needed to
get moving again and push this out of his mind. A minute later, Scott emerged from the cafeteria,
holding Stiles’s backpack and immediately giving him a questioning look. “Dude, what the hell?”

“I’ll explain later,” Stiles answered, shaking his head, and took the backpack from him, leading the
way to their next class. He still smelled a little bit like Derek, could just barely catch the scent in the
air, and that really wasn’t helping matters whatsoever. Apparently torture was on the menu for today,
and he tried to push everything to the back of his mind as class started, Scott occasionally throwing
him questioning looks that Stiles resolutely ignored because he still wasn’t even sure how to put what
happened into words yet. How was he supposed to explain Derek when he only half understood him
himself?

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“So he kissed you. Twice. But then he disappeared,” Lydia said, and Stiles nodded, folding his legs
underneath himself where he sat on his bed. This was something more in her wheelhouse than in
Scott’s, though Scott was there as well, sitting in Stiles's desk chair and tossing a baseball up and
down, catching it with quick reflexes every time that Stiles envied. He was not made in the same
predatory way that Alphas were, but he’d seen Omegas protecting their children and they were about
ten times scarier than anything an Alpha could ever do. So. He had that to look forward to, at least?

He sighed, leaning his head back against the wall behind himself, and Lydia brushed some of her
hair behind her ear, gaze turning away from him as she thought about it. “Sounds like…well. He’s at
least infatuated with you, if not something more.”

“And he definitely wants to jump your bones,” Scott added, not very helpfully, and Stiles gave him a
look.

“Yeah, thanks, I could tell that already. Judging from how he seemed ready to jump me in the
hallway.”

“Yeah, but why didn’t he?” Scott asked, and Lydia tsked, rolling her eyes.

“Because some people aren’t ruled by their pheromones,” she said, and Scott made a slight face.
“Unlike others of us, who can apparently find our soulmates during an exercise that’s supposed to be
pretend.”

“Hey, I never said he was my soulmate.”

“Yeah, but you already want to bond with him,” Lydia said in her most condescending tone, and
Stiles rolled his eyes.

“Can we focus here?” he asked, and both of them turned back to him. “I’m the one who has an
immediate issue, after all. Though, sidenote, if you bond with him now you’ll regret it forever, Scott.
Just saying.”

Scott threw his hands up, but mercifully didn’t say anything, and Lydia drummed her fingers against
her leg as she thought about it for a minute. “Look,” she said, and Stiles’s eyes were drawn back to her. “What really matters here is how you feel. Because if it’s just physical, then let it go. Don’t bother chasing someone just because you like how they make you feel. Chase someone because they’re worth chasing.”

“That was…really deep,” Scott said, and she smiled, saying, “I know. I do actually know things, you know.”

“Where do you get stuff like that?” Scott asked, and she shrugged.

“I read.”

Stiles tuned out the rest of their conversation, focusing internally as he tried to figure out what to do, what he could do. Lydia was right, and he knew that, it was as deep as Scott had said. *Don’t bother chasing someone just because you like how they make you feel.* Right. But was that how he felt about Derek? He just liked the way that the Alpha made him feel?

But really, how did Derek make him feel? That was the question that Stiles got stuck on as he stared up at his ceiling blankly, not really seeing it at all as his eyes glazed over. The problem was, how was he supposed to know how he felt when he’d only seen Derek twice and both times had only involved physical contact? Though at least this time he’d actually admitted that there was something between them, even if he didn’t know quite how to classify it and didn’t want to admit to Stiles that there was something between them. Didn’t even want to admit it to himself. God, Stiles had been able to feel it in the kiss, in the desperate why that Derek kissed him, as if trying to erase his feelings through the contact between them. And that twisted something in Stiles’s chest, made him feel unbelievably shitty and he wasn’t quite sure why.

Why was that so important to him? Why did it matter that Derek didn’t want to believe that there was anything but physical chemistry between himself and Stiles? Why, why, why was any of this happening, why couldn’t Stiles have just gone through the exercise like everyone else and come out fine on the other side? Instead of this bullshit of going into an early heat and making a connection with someone he couldn’t have and Jesus, both Stiles’s head and chest hurt and he didn’t know how to make it go away. Derek instantly popped into his head, the way that Derek made his chattering mind go quiet when he was kissing him. But was that it? Was it purely physical between them?

No, no it wasn’t. As soon as the question popped into his mind, he knew the answer. Because if it was, then he wouldn’t be so hung up on this, wouldn’t think of Derek every waking moment and be so obsessed with the thought of him. He wouldn’t already be addicted to Derek’s scent, to the way that it felt to be pressed up against him, trapped by him in the best way. He wanted that. Wanted this. And he had to do something to get it instead of just sitting back and waiting for Derek to come to him again, if he even did.

“Okay,” he said after a few minutes, drawing Lydia and Scott’s attention back to him. “I’m gonna do it. I’m gonna go after him.”
Chapter Summary

Stiles definitely doesn't do phone calls well.

Chapter Notes

Eeek you guys continue to amaze me and I'm so happy you're sticking with me so far! This chapter took me a little while because I was also working on other things, so I hope you enjoy it! P.S. in case any of you want to, I take prompts for Teen Wolf, Hannibal, Sherlock, Supernatural, etc. on my tumblr. So if you want to, stop by!

The problem was, like everything else in Stiles’s life, it wasn’t that simple. He knew absolutely nothing about Derek beyond his name, and even though he had his last name, it wasn’t doing him much good. Searches for Derek Hale turned up absolutely nothing, zero, zilch, and he wasn’t really sure where to start when that failed him. How did you find someone who didn’t seem to exist at all? Oh. Oh.

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“Absolutely not,” his dad said, giving him a look as soon as he entered the door and found Stiles waiting on the stairs for him.

“Dad, I didn’t even ask for anything yet,” Stiles said, a little defensive about it, and his dad sighed, heading past him towards the kitchen.

“No, but I can tell you’re going to, and it’s never something good.”

Stiles got up to pursue him, dogged as always. “Look, I just need you to look someone up for me, find out some details. That’s all.”

“Do you know how incredibly illegal it is for me to hand out personal information to someone who’s not on the police force?” his dad asked, casting a glance back at Stiles. “Besides, why do you need information about someone?”

Stiles opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again, realizing that he didn’t really have a good answer for that because he couldn’t very well tell his father that he wanted to pursue a man probably twice his age who was the one that’d put him into an early heat. His dad already knew about that, of course, but Stiles hadn’t told him any specifics, for good reason. So he probably just assumed that some teenage Alpha had done it, or that it’d been due anyway and something just accidentally triggered it a bit earlier. But if Stiles said he wanted to pursue the Alpha that prompted it, for one thing, his dad probably wouldn’t be cool with that, and for another, if he looked up Derek and realized how much older he was, that really wasn’t going to go over well. So. How to answer that question.
“Um. He’s going to be a new teacher at the school and I want to check him out first,” he said, and his father had finally reached the kitchen and turned around to look at him.

“You’re a terrible liar, Stiles, and I know for a fact that there’s no new teachers coming to the school, they would have sent out a notice. So why do you really need to know about him?”

Stiles paused, lips parted slightly as he tried to come up with another good excuse, something that would work. His dad was wrong, he was only a terrible liar when it came to lying on the fly, if he rehearsed it, no one would suspect anything. The key to being a good liar was simply believing what you were saying, feeling to your core that it was the truth. And Stiles could very easily fool himself into believing things, whether they were major or minor, as was evidenced by the fact that he had debated with himself for quite a while about Derek, about whether or not it was all physical when he’d known from the beginning that it wasn’t. So, he just needed to convince himself of something, and let it naturally form itself.

“He was one of the people at the hospital when I went into heat. Not one of the nurses, I don’t know what he does there, I don’t know what he does there, but he helped me out when I went into it and I wanted to thank him. But I don’t know anything about him besides his name.”

There. That was true, wasn’t it? Derek had helped him out, had made sure that he was taken care of by the nurses and that no harm came to him from any other Alpha. He’d been the one to make sure that Stiles understood what would happen during his heat, warned him about the dangers inherent in it. Sure, he’d also been the one to put him into heat, but that was a minor detail that his father didn’t need to know. Minor. Yeah right.

His dad looked at him for a minute, seeming to be sizing him up and looking for a hint of dishonesty in his words, but the lie was based in the truth and really, he could use it as an excuse when he did see Derek again. ‘Hey there just wanted to thank you for everything you did and I’m totally not here to try to convince you that we’re meant to be together, not at all’. Yeah, no matter what, Stiles being there wasn’t going to go over well, but the most that Derek could do was shut the door in his face, or hang up if he ended up calling him instead or something. Though the thought of that kind of rejection did sting, it would be worth it to at least try, to see how carefully wound Derek’s self-control really was. After all, it’d been clear that it was slipping when he was around Stiles in the school, when he’d been unable to stop himself from kissing him again even after he claimed that it was a bad idea. Derek could deny the chemistry between them all he liked, that didn’t erase it and it didn’t mean that he was immune to it. And that was what Stiles was counting on.

“How did you want to thank him? Phone call, gift basket, what?” his dad asked, and Stiles had to fight to make sure his shoulders didn’t slump in relief, knowing that his dad was beginning to capitulate, at the very least on the path to thinking about getting Stiles what he needed. And that was a very good sign.

“Um. I’d like to call him first, then see if I could stop by to thank him in person. He’ll probably say it isn’t necessary, but it meant a lot to me. So.”

His dad thought it over for a minute, drumming his fingers against the counter, and Stiles waited with baited breath, his mind saying, please say yes please say yes please say yes please say yes please say yes repeatedly as he waited to hear what his father would say. He needed this. Even if it was just a phone call, just something that he could use to confirm that Derek was interested and he wasn’t wasting his time, though honestly, he’d pretty much confirmed that in the hallway of the school. Still, Stiles didn’t think he was exactly a catch, just some skinny, scrawny kid who was a completely inexperienced Omega that hadn’t even had his first heat before he met Derek. Not exactly the dream mate for most people, though apparently interesting enough to start garnering attention at school. Which he still
wasn’t pleased by.

After a few minutes—breathless ones for Stiles—his dad looked up at him again, hesitance in his expression. “I can get you a phone number, but that’s it. And if I find out that you’re lying about this, heads will roll,” he said, and Stiles had to stop himself from exclaiming ‘YES’ at the top of his lungs.

Instead, he just pointed at his dad with both hands, a wide smile on his lips that was not quite a grin as he said, “You’re the best and I love you and I promise that you won’t regret this!”

He ran off to go back upstairs, barely catching his dad’s words as he said, “You can’t promise that!”

Well, no, Stiles couldn’t, but he could at least pretend to and he was sure that his dad absolutely would regret this if he knew what he was really doing. But his lie had only been half a lie, so it wasn’t that bad, right? Except that the half that was a lie included the fact that he wanted to bond with Derek, a man easily twice his age. Well, probably. He actually had no idea, Derek could also be in his twenties, which would make it more acceptable. Well. Somewhat more acceptable. Not totally.

And wait. Bond. He’d actually thought bond instead of just sleep with. Oh, fuck. No, he wasn’t ready to bond with Derek, that wasn’t what this was about. He just wanted to…what, exactly? Sleep with him, have a relationship with him? Fuck, he hadn’t actually stopped to sit down and think about what he was going to do when he found Derek, when he got into touch with him and maybe convinced him that this was a thing that could work. So…no. He couldn’t bond with him? Right? It was too soon, too early, he was too young. But then what else did he want to do? Just enter the courting phase with him and court until he was legal? Because that sounded absolutely ridiculous and not like something Derek would bite the bait for.

God, he actually had to have a plan with this, had to figure out what the hell he was doing before he got Derek’s number and called. Because if he couldn’t even figure out what he wanted, how was he going to explain it to Derek? Convince him to go along with the plan that Stiles obviously didn’t have. He hadn’t even thought about it at all, too busy trying to figure out whether he even wanted to pursue Derek in the first place or not, but now that that was settled, his mind had forced him to think about it, about what he was even trying to convince Derek to do.

Okay. He had to think about this logically. He’d already decided that what he had with Derek wasn’t just physical, wasn’t just a product of pheromones. So he obviously didn’t want to just sleep with him, though that would admittedly be quite nice and certainly not something that he would turn down. But what else? Where did they go from there? A relationship, just without the bonding aspect of it until Stiles was old enough? Or at least, deemed old enough by Derek (in Stiles’s own opinion, he was ready, could handle it now, and wanted it now. However, everyone around him seemed to disagree, and considering his own advice to Scott about Isaac, he’d seem like a massive hypocrite)?

Fuuuuuuuck. He was about ten minutes into this plan and already hit a roadblock, one that he couldn’t seem to see his way past. Okay. Thinking about it rationally. Right. What had Lydia said? “What really matters here is how you feel about it.” Right, okay, so how did he feel about it? Ideally, what would he want out of all of this?

Stiles paced his room as he thought about it, one arm folded across his chest and his other hand to his chin, tapping his index finger against it. Usually, this was an easy question. Stiles could usually tell what he wanted, whether it was food or crushes or school stuff or whatever, but Derek? Derek threw the whole system off, made it hard for him to think, sometimes even for him to breathe. On one hand that was a good thing; that kiss between them had silenced all of the noise in Stiles’s head, the constant chatter that made him restless and distracted and sleepless. Derek just made it all go away, made Stiles’s noisy brain shut the fuck up for once, which he desperately needed sometimes. But when he was trying to figure out what to do, his brain racing down a million different avenues, he
actually needed to be able to think. And with thoughts of Derek constantly intruding, that wasn’t helping.

He dropped down into a seat on his bed, looking down at his hands for a moment, examining them, every divot, every vein, every hair, every line. His tendons, his knuckles, his nails. It was an exercise he’d learned long ago quieted his brain, made him focus on one thing and one thing alone so he could actually get things done. Actually clear his mind and figure things out. After a few minutes of doing that, he was calm enough to return to it, head a little bit cleared. Only a little bit, but every bit counted.

Okay. Rational. Logical. Right? He closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. When he thought about Derek, what did he see? What did he think about? Did he imagine them just having sex? Them going on dates, doing innocuous couple things, romantic things? Or did he imagine the bonding, the bite that would seal them together forever? Or maybe a bit of all three? The first image that came to mind wasn’t what he expected at all.

It was simply Derek giving him a smile.

That was something that he hadn’t expected, because it was entirely in his imagination. He’d never actually seen Derek smile, never seen him laugh or grin or anything like that, and he wondered what it’d be like. How rewarding it would be to be the source of his joy, the source of his laughter, the source of a smile that was sure to be dazzling and knock Stiles incredibly off balance because Derek seemed to have the ability to do that and Stiles really wasn’t used to it. Not that he had the best mental or emotional balance anyway, but this was different. This was…good, in a way. It meant that he would be on equal footing with Derek, or maybe not, considering he still wasn’t entirely certain of the effect he had on Derek, just knew that he could make him lose a little of his self-control. Which was something, at least.

That was…remarkably innocent though. Just the image of Derek smiling at him, and Stiles realized that he was smiling slightly to himself at the thought, and god, he was already pretty far gone, wasn’t he? If that was where his thoughts went…well, obviously he didn’t just want a physical relationship, though that much had already been established by this point. So, something romantic, then. But just a relationship, or a relationship? That was the real question.

He flopped back to lie on his bed, holding his hands above his head as he examined them again, though his eyes eventually glazed over, not seeing them as he retreated into his own head. He was going to drive himself crazy with this if he didn’t eventually arrive at a conclusion, but what conclusion was there to be drawn, really? How could he entirely know what he wanted with Derek when they knew each other so little?

Oh. Oh, that was it, wasn’t it? That was the answer, that was what he had to tell Derek. How he could convince him to at least give this thing a try, because that was all they needed to do; try it, and see what happened. Yes, okay. He could do this. He knew what to do now.

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His leg jiggled up and down nervously where he sat on the bed, phone pressed to his ear and the piece of paper with the number on it still in his other hand. His stomach was anxiously twisting itself into knots, nausea that he didn’t need making an appearance, and he put the hand with the paper to his stomach, really hoping that he didn’t end up throwing up. Usually he didn’t when it was just anxiety, but you could never be too careful, and he had put his trashcan right by the side of his bed just in case. Hopefully it wouldn’t come down to that, but he never knew with himself.

After what felt like an eternity, the phone was picked up, and someone that definitely had Derek’s
Stiles couldn’t find his voice for a second, figuring it’d died in his throat somewhere along with his courage, and couldn’t do anything but keep his mouth open for a minute, not even able to stammer. Finally, he managed to get out in a rush, “Um hey it’s Stiles I wanted to talk to you.”

The line almost instantly clicked dead and he cursed himself, wondering why this was so hard. Why Derek was so quick to rebuff him when Stiles knew that he felt it too. Shit, he needed to be quicker about this, needed to figure out a way to grab Derek’s attention and hold it. So he called back, waiting anxiously and tapping his fingers against his leg in a meaningless, senseless rhythm, hoping that this time he wouldn’t be dismissed so quickly, so easily.

“What, Stiles?” was the growled response to his call, and Stiles swallowed thickly, that voice doing something funny to his insides.

“Listen, just, listen to me for a minute, alright?” he said quickly, and there was silence from the other end of the line that he assumed was his cue to continue. “Look, I’m not calling to try to get you to bond with me or something, or even date me or have sex with me or whatever. I just…listen.” He’d used listen three times now and it was getting old, but he needed to express himself clearly and was having trouble with that at the moment. “I don’t want any of that. What I want is just to talk. Get to know you. I think that if we’re not going to pursue anything—or maybe are in the future, hey, whatever—we should get to know each other. Right? That makes sense, doesn’t it?”

He bit his lip as he waited for the answer, leg moving up and down nervously again, but he couldn’t help it. He was so anxious, wound so tightly, and he needed to have an answer from Derek. Needed to make sure that this might actually work.

After a minute, there was a heavy sigh from the other end of the line, and Stiles wasn’t sure what that meant. It wasn’t an answer. “This is a terrible idea, Stiles,” Derek said, and Stiles could feel his heart beating fast in his chest, nerves getting to him.

“Yeah, well, I’ve been told that about my ideas before,” he answered, and he could have sworn there was a smile in Derek’s voice when he said, “You should listen when people say that.”

He shrugged though Derek couldn’t see him. “Where’s the fun in life if you’re not reckless once in a while?” Well, it wasn’t exactly reckless, just stupid most of the time. Still, he wasn’t sure if Derek would like hearing that any better, so he stayed silent, toying with his lip with his teeth and waiting for an answer.

“Fine,” Derek said after a few minutes that dragged on forever, and Stiles’s shoulders slumped in relief, a huge breath escaping his lungs as he dropped back on his bed. “But we’re meeting in a public place. The diner. An hour.”

And then the line clicked dead, and Stiles looked at his phone for a moment before dropping it onto the bed, looking up at the ceiling. Shit. He’d actually done it. He had a date with Derek.
This had to be the most nerve-wracking thing he’d ever done in his life, and he’d done plenty of stupid things before. Anxiety was a familiar friend, something that made nausea roil in his gut, taking hold at the base of his skull as well as the bottom of his stomach, making it certain that he felt its presence. But he honestly didn’t need to be reminded of how nervous he was, already well aware of how he felt about waiting for Derek in the diner. He couldn’t help his leg moving up and down quickly, jiggling nervously as he turned his coffee cup in his hand, continuously glancing over his shoulder to see if Derek was coming in. He should have sat facing the door, but he didn’t want to awkwardly change his seat now and he felt that Derek would like to face the door, for some reason. Though really, he didn’t know, knew practically nothing about Derek aside from his name and phone number, but that was what today was all about. Fixing that, getting to know each other in a way that Stiles hoped would bring them closer together and make Derek realize what he was missing. Though he’d noted that Derek was having them meet in a public place, probably so he couldn’t lose his self-control again, which Stiles definitely wanted to encourage him to lose. Because goddamn was it hot when he did.

Though really, he didn’t know, knew practically nothing about Derek aside from his name and phone number, but that was what today was all about. Fixing that, getting to know each other in a way that Stiles hoped would bring them closer together and make Derek realize what he was missing. Though he’d noted that Derek was having them meet in a public place, probably so he couldn’t lose his self-control again, which Stiles definitely wanted to encourage him to lose. Because goddamn was it hot when he did.

Oh no, that wasn’t what he needed to think about right now, just before Derek was set to meet him, but the memory had been stuck in his head for ages now, almost constantly plaguing him—though plaguing wasn’t the right word, was it?—and lending itself to, uh, certain…alone time with himself. Honestly, in general he thought about Derek more than was probably healthy, but he couldn’t help it. There was something there, something so strong that Derek couldn’t help himself around him, despite their age difference, and he knew that they both felt it. The key was just getting Derek to admit it, really.

“You’re here early.”

Stiles jumped as the deep voice sounded right behind him, slightly shaking hands instantly spilling his coffee all over the table, but luckily not onto his lap. He immediately started to clean it up, but held his breath as Derek reached over him to grab some napkins from the dispenser on the table, helping him out. Actually, basically taking over cleaning up the table, and Stiles simply held onto the edge of it, watching him work. Silently admiring, though after a minute he realized he hadn’t answered Derek.

“Oh, yeah, I thought I should get here early. You know. Be on time. I’m usually late for stuff so I
thought I should head out earlier to give myself plenty of time and I definitely did.” He was babbling a bit, but Derek had that effect on him and he wasn’t really sure what he could do about it. Derek in general just made him babble and lose his train of thought so easily, sometimes making him trail off midsentence. Of course, that could also be because one of the last times they’d talked, Derek had been silencing him with kisses that should have been illegal. Technically were, considering his age.

Finally, Derek finished cleaning up the spill and sat across from Stiles, placing the coffee soaked napkins at the end of the table for the waitress to pick up whenever she came around again. Which would probably be soon, considering neither of them had ordered food and Derek had just gotten here. Already, Stiles’s skin was itching crazily, the silence that fell over them getting to him, as well as a need to move move move. He couldn’t stay still for long, had never been able to, but he didn’t want to show Derek how nervous he was. So instead of moving his leg like he’d been doing before, he started tapping his fingers against the table in a nervous rhythm, drumming them a bit against the plastic surface. The silence was just seeming to drag on, and he was beginning to think that this was a bad idea, that he’d already fucked this up and he’d misread everything and Derek wasn’t interested —

Derek’s warm hand closed over Stiles’s, getting him to stop moving his fingers in an instant as he looked at where their hands were together. He expected Derek to remove his hand instantly, nearly recoil from the contact because it could be seen as romantic in nature, but in actuality, Derek left his hand there for a few beats before pulling it back, Stiles’s eyes flicking back to his again.

“Am I making you nervous?” Derek asked, and though his tone was flat, Stiles could detect something in there, a thin thread of emotion. But which emotion, he didn’t know.

“You kind of have that effect on people, in case you didn’t know,” Stiles answered, mouth as smart as always, though he’d been telling himself since entering the diner that he wasn’t going to do that to Derek.

But—was that—yes, it really was. A small smile appeared on Derek’s lips, and Stiles was a bit too stunned by it, amazed that he could produce that so easily. And by being a smartass, no less, though perhaps it was just because he didn’t know Derek that well that he hadn’t expected it. But it made his heart pound in his chest, a rush of blood coming to his cheeks because he really hadn’t expected that and it was just as rewarding as he’d thought it would be. He entirely missed Derek’s next words, heart thudding in his ears so he could only hear his own pulse.

“S-Sorry?” he said, and Derek smiled that little smile again before repeating himself.

“I said your phone’s going off,” he said, Stiles scrambled to get it, looking at the caller ID and seeing Scott’s name. Not something he had to answer now, it was probably just a response to the text he’d sent him earlier saying what his plan was. He declined the call, only to have the phone buzz again a moment later.

“You should probably get that,” Derek said, eyebrows raised, and Stiles resisted the urge to curse under his breath.

“Scuse me,” he said, and pressed the accept button, holding the phone up to his ear as he slid out of the booth to walk a few steps away from it. “What, Scott?”

“Dude, are you seriously on a date with him?”

“Yeah, actually in the middle of it,” Stiles answered, tone slightly sharp. “So I hope this is important.”
"Sorry, I didn’t think you were already there. Call me later, right?” Scott said, and in the background Stiles could hear the rustle of fabric, and then a soft voice that had to be right by Scott’s ear murmured, “Come back to bed.”

Oh no. Oh, he recognized that voice, and Stiles’s mouth dropped open just a bit, a wave of—something hitting him, he didn’t even know what, maybe exasperation? It wasn’t really a surprise, that was for certain, because he’d expected this at some point. He covered his eyes with his hand, massaging his temples for a moment. “Is Isaac with you?”

“Um. No.”

“Are you sure about that?”

“Positive.”

“Hi Isaac,” Stiles said through the phone, a little louder.

A moment later, he heard the response, “Hi Stiles,” though it seemed almost slightly smug. Self-satisfied. Ugh, not what he wanted to hear right now.

“Scott, you better not be bonding, I swear to god,” Stiles said, voice a warning, cautionary.

“No, no, of course not! We’re just…”

Stiles squeezed his eyes shut tightly, shaking his head slightly. “I really don’t need to know. Just…use protection.”

“Dude!”

He hung up at that point, and abruptly realized Derek was looking at him, and had probably heard the whole conversation. An instant blush unfolded over his cheeks, and he moved to sit down again, deciding to turn his phone off for now. That way he didn’t have to deal with Scott’s…activities again. He’d probably be busy anyway. Ew.

“Sorry about that,” he mumbled, taking his seat across from Derek and avoiding his eyes for the moment, completely embarrassed by the whole conversation. Not something he’d wanted Derek to overhear, but it seemed that he was constantly embarrassing himself in front of the other man, and that pattern didn’t seem to be stopping anytime soon. Good job, Stiles.

“It’s fine. It’s important to tell your friends to practice safe sex,” Derek said, and there was amusement in his tone, another small smile on his lips.

Stiles couldn’t even say anything for a minute, not even stammering, and that just seemed to amuse Derek more. Well, at least Derek found his awkwardness…endearing, or something. He really didn’t think it was, but hey, to each their own. And if Derek liked that, all the better for Stiles, because maybe it’d endear Derek to him and make it a bit easier to ‘woo’ him, for lack of a better term. Wasn’t it usually the Alpha who wooed the Omega? Everything was backwards and he really wasn’t sure how to flip it around, or if he even could. But did he need to? If Derek was interested, he was interested. If he wasn’t…well, at least Stiles would have the memory of that incredible kiss, and of the small smiles that Derek had been giving him today, though he had yet to make him laugh or grin or anything. But he really wanted to. And he didn’t want to think too hard about why he wanted to do that, because if he looked at his motivations too closely, he’d probably find something he didn’t want to find. So. None of that.

He took a deep breath, trying to clear his head, trying to calm down the flush in his cheeks that came
with his earlier embarrassment. Okay, he was okay. Derek was amused by him, not put off by his awkwardness and hushed conversation with Scott, who, by the way, was being an idiot, but at least he was being safe about being an idiot. Jesus, he didn’t want to think about that too hard.

“So,” Derek started, and Stiles braced himself, “why did you really call me here, Stiles?”

He could have sworn that those green eyes looked right through him, though he knew that was impossible, that Derek was just incredibly intimidating and could make Stiles a little weak at the knees in an instant. With just a look. That didn’t seem fair at all, somehow. “Um,” he said, swallowing a bit before his eyes darted back up to Derek’s, then abruptly darted away, then returned once more. Shit. “I wasn’t lying, you know. I really do want to get to know you. And thank you for, um. Taking care of me at the hospital. Making sure I was okay.” That wasn’t the only reason, but he had a feeling Derek already knew that, judging from the question. But he didn’t seem upset at all, didn’t seem to be anything, really, as he simply looked at Stiles in silence.

“I mean, it was a good thing that you did. Telling me about what would happen, I mean,” Stiles continued, trying to fill the silence because he really wasn’t sure he could handle the awkwardness that came with it, riding right on its coattails. He was just going to babble if he had to, fill it with whatever he could, but before he could speak again, the waitress mercifully came over to take their order. He hadn’t even looked at the menu, but neither had Derek, and Derek seemed to know exactly what to order, so Stiles looked at the menu while he was speaking and picked the first thing that sounded good. Whatever, he didn’t really care. He wasn’t even sure he could eat with how nervous he felt right now, the anxious nausea eating away at the lining of his stomach. He couldn’t calm it, couldn’t do anything to make it stop, and wondered if this was how he died. Embarrassment and nervousness. Probably, sounded just like him.

The waitress went away far too soon, and Stiles was left across the table from a rather intimidating older man who he was still trying to get a read on, and hadn’t been able to so far. Derek had the best goddamn poker face that Stiles had ever seen, and that really wasn’t helping his already dull detective skills. Well, to be fair to himself, he was pretty good at it when he tried, but he couldn’t really try to do anything smart when he was with Derek, because the man reduced him to a stammering, nervous wreck, and Stiles wondered how that would work if they were actually in a relationship. If that’d somehow even itself out, but he really wasn’t sure. Would Derek continue to find it—or at least seem to find it—endearing, think it was cute or something, or would he get tired of it? Or would Stiles gain some more confidence, be a bit more at ease if he knew Derek better? These were all good questions, the only problem was that Stiles wasn’t very good at answering them, at least not right now. Because he still didn’t know Derek at all.

It took him a minute to realize that Derek was looking at him with his eyebrows raised, as if prompting Stiles to lead the conversation. But while Stiles was good at talking, at babbling incoherently and continuing to speak even when he should have long ago shut up, he wasn’t always very good at making intelligent, coherent conversation. And that was the skill that he needed right now, unfortunately.

“Um. So. How was your day?” Stiles nearly winced at how lame that sounded, but honestly, it was the only question that he could think of right now and it was at least a starting point. A diving board that they could jump from in order to further the conversation. Or at least, he hoped so.

Derek’s eyebrows fell again, but he still didn’t seem amused, and Stiles’s heart sank at that. Maybe this whole thing had been a mistake. Maybe he was just irreversibly embarrassing himself, turning Derek off from the whole thing. Maybe, maybe, maybe. He couldn’t tell yet.

“Fine,” Derek answered, and Stiles expected him to go on, but he didn’t. Just stopped there, didn’t
continue, and that really wasn’t helping anything at all. If Derek wasn’t going to help fill the silence, Stiles was left on his own, and that was always a bad thing to be. The chatter in his head was getting louder and louder, most of it telling him how stupid he was for initiating this in the first place, how dumb he was to try this at all. He tried to brush it off, tried to push it back, but as the silence dragged on, it only got worse. He had to speak, or risk losing his mind.

“Mine too,” he said abruptly, breaking the quiet that had gone on for just a little bit too long, not a natural pause in the conversation, but an awkward one. Awkward as always, that was just fantastic. “Um, yeah. Saw my dad, called you, talked to Scott…”


“He’s not—well he says he’s not—but I’m not sure how much I believe that. He got this other kid to go into heat early and now they’re all lovey dovey and it’s really kinda gross.” Stiles paused, huffing out a breath. “But apparently he’s just…um. Having fun right now, but I’m expecting them to bond as soon as they feel they can. I’ve never seen him like this.”

Derek nodded, seeming to consider it. “Do you think he actually likes the person he wants to bond with, or is it just something based in pheromones, in the fact that he got him into an early heat?”

“I don’t know,” Stiles said with a shrug. “And that’s what I’m worried about. But Scott…Scott’s usually more careful than that. Though he does have a tendency to always see the best in people, and yeah, we’ve both known this guy for a while, but as far as I know, he wasn’t interested in him before this. So.” He shrugged again. “I don’t know. But really, I can’t stop him from doing anything. And they seem really into each other.”

Derek nodded, and a silence fell over the table again, but this one was a little bit more comfortable, not as awkward since they’d actually managed to talk about something for a few minutes, even if it was about Scott and not getting to know each other any better. That was alright. This was a gateway to other things, and since Scott and Stiles were so close, it was actually important for Derek to know about him. Even if the way he found out about him was somewhat awkward to talk about.

Stiles searched for something, anything else to say, unsure of what was a good subject for getting to know each other. Most things seemed too ordinary, banal, like “what do you do for a living”, and “how many siblings do you have”, “what’s your family like”, “what are your hobbies”. Plus, there was the fact that Stiles hadn’t really ever done this before. He hadn’t dated at any point in his high school career because nobody had seemed interested before now. Once he got his heat, he suddenly got more attention, the majority of it unwanted, but he still didn’t have any experience with this stuff, didn’t know how it went. And Derek probably had tons of experience, had probably done this a dozen times with a dozen Omegas and simply hadn’t wanted to bond with any of them. Which made Stiles wonder why he was even giving Stiles the time of day, why he was here at all right now. Maybe he just wanted to shake Stiles off once and for all, make it clear that there wasn’t going to be anything between them. Maybe. Fuck.

“You have no idea what you’re doing, do you?”

The question came as a surprise, Stiles having been hopeful that Derek wouldn’t take notice of his internal monologue, of how much he was freaking out inwardly. But apparently he was that transparent, and he shrugged, reaching for his coffee cup as a distraction before remembering that he’d spilled the whole thing and it hadn’t been refilled yet. Great.

“Yeah, not really,” he answered, looking at the empty mug anyway, finding that he really didn’t want to look at Derek right now. Not when his hands were shaking under the table and his blood was rushing in his head.
“Stiles,” Derek said, and his voice was remarkably soft, drawing Stiles’s eyes to him. “It’s alright. I promise. You said we’re just getting to know each other, right? So let’s do that. I’ll start. How did your first heat go?”

Shit, that was not the question Stiles had expected, so personal right off the bat, and he really wasn’t sure he wanted to answer. But Derek was probably just asking because he was checking up on him, making sure he was okay after everything that had happened. After he basically did the equivalent of premature ejaculation. Oh, god, that was still incredibly embarrassing, and he rubbed the back of his neck, trying to think of how to put this in safe for work terms. Or rather safe for a small diner where the waitress could be eavesdropping.

“I mean, it was okay,” he said, looking at the coffee mug as he pulled it over to himself, turning it in his hands, then qualified his sentence. “Well, I mean, it was kind of shitty. I discovered that hey, heats aren’t exactly fun! Actually really miserable when you can’t help yourself and feel completely overwhelmed by everything.”

Derek snorted, and Stiles instantly looked up at him, surprised that he’d gotten him to even half laugh. It counted, right? “They’re not supposed to be, unless you’re bonding,” he said, leaning forward to rest his elbows on the table, and Jesus that brought him much more into Stiles’s personal space. He could really smell him now, take in that earthy, intoxicating scent that made his head spin just a little bit. “It’s mostly a biological thing, not a pleasure thing. The only reason it feels so good while bonding is because otherwise, the species would die out.”

“Yeah, I get that, but it puts a lot of pressure on Omegas to mate. Like you said before, they have the urge to mate with the first Alpha they see, pretty much because they’re miserable and needy if they don’t. It’s a sucky system.”

Derek shrugged, gently taking the coffee cup from Stiles’s hands that had been making noise against the plastic surface of the table, and set it where it would be out of the way but still an indicator that the waitress should refill it or get him a new one. Coffee made Stiles jittery, but he also drank like a fish when he was nervous and somehow, the coffee made him feel better. Just also high-strung.

“Again, it’s a survival instinct. It might not be fair to Omegas, but when has anything ever been fair for them?”

Stiles made a face at that, knowing that it was true. Still, things were better now than they had been. “Yeah, I guess,” he said, moving to turn the coffee cup with his hands only to remember that Derek had taken it away. Seemed he was trying to calm Stiles’s fiddling. “Anyway. So yeah, it mostly sucked. I can see why young Omegas have trouble with their first heat and want to bond with anything in sight. I’m just glad I get suppressants now.”

“That’s a shame.”

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“That’s a shame.”

Stiles’s eyes instantly turned back to Derek in surprise, really unsure what that statement meant, what it was about. But Derek seemed amused by his reaction, looking at him with steady eyes. Stiles wasn’t even sure he wanted to ask what he meant, and was saved for a moment by the waitress coming over with their food and depositing it before leaving again. Derek picked up his fork nonchalantly, beginning to eat, but Stiles continued to stare at him until the other man asked, “What?”

“What the hell do you mean?” Stiles asked, brow now furrowed low over his eyes, expression bordering on the edge of shocked.

“Don’t take it the wrong way.” As if Stiles couldn’t. “I just mean that I’m not sure how good suppressants are for Omegas. It changes their pheromones, and definitely changes their scent. You
smell a bit more...tangy now. It’s not quite right.”

There was an unspoken “and I liked it better before” in there, or at least Stiles hoped there was. That seemed to be the direction that Derek was leaning in. He really wasn’t sure what to make of that, and started to pick at his food, realizing that his nausea had gone down with the somewhat easier conversation between them. Though Derek was really very confusing sometimes, he had to say. Or, like, all the time, actually. So many mixed signals and double meanings, each one more confusing than the last. But it wasn’t like he could outright ask if Derek was interested in him, or just trying him on for size as a friend, despite their age difference and seeming lack of common interests. This whole thing was too confusing. And probably had been a bad idea on Stiles’s part.

“So,” Derek said after a few minutes of eating in silence, Stiles’s anxiety returning at top speed, “does your dad know you’re here?”

“Um.”

After a moment, Derek nodded, eyes still on his food as he picked up some egg on his fork. “Does he know about me at all, or did you just make up something so he could get you my number?”

Stiles’s face was heating up and he couldn’t even figure out how to answer, but Derek seemed to draw his own conclusions from that. “So you’re out with a man that you barely know who happens to be several years older than you, and the only person you told was your best friend who’s pretty busy doing something else and also doesn’t know anything about me,” Derek said, and Stiles swallowed thickly, again wondering if this had been a terrible idea.

But instinctually, he knew it wasn’t, not for that reason anyway. Omegas were said to be more intuitive, and so far Stiles had only seen it be true. Sure, some were dumbasses and didn’t know their head from their ass, but most of the time they were smarter than people gave them credit for, and not just emotionally. And Stiles was trusting his instincts on this one. Because somehow, he could feel that Derek wouldn’t hurt him, wouldn’t do anything bad to him, wouldn’t try and take advantage of him, even if Stiles wanted him to a little bit. He had the feeling—and had so far been proven right in that feeling—that Derek would only treat him with the utmost respect. Which was maybe part of the reason he liked him so much. To Derek, he wasn’t just an object to be kept, a prize to be won like a lot of Alphas seemed to think about Omegas. He was a person, and that was important to Derek. His treatment of Stiles only confirmed that.

“Hey man, you’re the one that wanted to meet in a public place. I think if you were a predator, you’d be trying harder. Otherwise, you’d be pretty shitty at this,” Stiles said, and was rewarded by the corners of Derek’s lips lifting into a small smile.

“I am designed to be a predator, though,” he said, taking a bite of his food. “Just not in that way. Maybe once upon a time before Alpha-Omega relationships improved and Omegas actually got a say in things, but not anymore. Now we should be chivalrous and polite.”

And there was good guy Derek Hale again, and Stiles smiled, looking down at his food as he ate. Maybe Derek was just too good for him. “Yeah, well, tell that to the Alphas in my school. Bunch of horny idiots,” he said, looking up at Derek again, and oh. Oh, that was a small flash of...jealousy, in his eyes. If Stiles wasn’t mistaken, that was, but he knew what jealousy looked like, what it felt like. And if Derek was jealous...

“It’s fine,” Stiles said with a shrug. “I’m not interested. They’re all pretty gross and honestly, nooooot mature enough for me.”

“So you instead go after men much older than you,” Derek said, eyebrows raised as he gave Stiles a
look, and Stiles grinned back at him.

“Instead I go after guys who say crap like ‘Now we should be chivalrous and polite’. Not a lot of those around anymore.”

Derek tried and failed to hide his smile at that, and Stiles reciprocated with one of his own, turning back to his food again. Okay. So maybe this hadn’t been a terrible idea. He’d gotten Derek to smile several times, gotten him to half laugh, and had managed to actually carry on with a cogent conversation. So, this was going well, right?

Until Derek looked at him again and said, “We can’t do this again.”
Okay, so maybe Stiles is a little upset.

He was embarrassed—only slightly—that the lyrics were the first thing that went through his mind, but quite honestly, how could they not be? Derek was as changeable as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and more confusing than Inception the first time you watched it. Stiles really wasn’t sure what the fuck to do with that statement, and simply stared at Derek for a solid minute, lips slightly parted in a way that made Derek continually glance back to them again. Okay, that was a good sign. The statement was not.

“You’re kidding,” he managed to get out after a minute, and Derek shook his head, taking a sip of his coffee.

“I wouldn’t screw with you about this,” he said, and Stiles slipped into shock again, and then, surprisingly, into rage.

This wasn’t fair to him. It wasn’t fair for Derek to constantly dangle possibilities over his head and then snatch them away when he reached for them, decide one minute that he wanted to give Stiles a chance and then change his mind just a minute later. Not even a minute. He dragged it out, giving Stiles false hope and making him that he was actually making progress, then turn around and put them both back at square one.

“No,” he said after another minute, and Derek seemed genuinely surprised at the biting tone that Stiles had. “No, you don’t get to do this to me.” He leaned forward, elbows on the table as his voice dropped into a hiss. “Either you’re in or you’re not, Derek, you don’t get to keep changing your mind every time I see you and tell me conflicting things. I’m not gonna do it. I want to get to know you. I don’t care if it doesn’t lead anywhere, I just wanna see what you’re like. If it’s worth it to even try to strike up a friendship. If you don’t want that, fine. Walk away. I don’t care. But if you do, then say it, and mean it. Commit to actually getting to know me, to being—I don’t know, something with me, maybe just friends, that’s okay, but don’t string me along and make me think I actually have a chance when I clearly don’t. Not if you keep pulling this shit. So make a goddamn decision, or I’ll

"Cause you're hot then you're cold, you're yes then you're no, you're in then you're out, you're up then you're down, you're wrong when it's right, it's black and it's white, we fight, we break up, we kiss, we make up."
cut you out of my life first.”

He leaned back again, his speech done, though he wasn’t surprised that he’d said that much. Rambling. Rambling was what he was good at, so it wasn’t a surprise that he’d been able to do it so well, finally get out the anger that he now knew had been steadily burning underneath his skin, bubbling until it boiled over, scalding everyone in its path. Which right now, just happened to be Derek.

But honestly, he deserved a tongue-lashing and a half, and this was really just the start. If he made a decision and then wavered again, pulling this same shit, Stiles was absolutely going to call him on it. He was serious about his threat, and wouldn’t hesitate to cut Derek out of his life, as much as that would royally suck. He didn’t want to have to do it, but honestly, he might have to. This wasn’t fair to him, and he wasn’t the type of Omega that made heart eyes and took whatever shit Alphas gave them because they were addicted to the attention and affection and safety the Alphas gave them when they weren’t being assholes to them. Stiles had never been like that, and he never intended to be. So either Derek was going to make a goddamn decision, or Stiles was going to make one for him.

He crossed his arms, leaning back in the booth as he waited for Derek to speak. When he didn’t, even after a few minutes, Stiles began to eat again, viciously stabbing into his hashbrowns because he was still irritated and not happy about the whole situation. And why should he be? He had no reasonable explanation for Derek’s behavior, aside from the fact that he seemed torn, self-control slipping when he was around Stiles and making a mess for them both that Stiles couldn’t clean up on his own. But that was half Derek’s fault, and Stiles wasn’t going to take the blame for being ‘too tempting’ or some such bullshit. It was Derek’s self-control, not his, and though he’d encouraged the older man, that didn’t mean that he was entirely to blame. It was still Derek’s decision whether or not to pursue. Stiles had made his own position clear.

“Stiles, this is a very bad idea,” Derek said after a minute, and Stiles looked up from his plate of food. “If we…if we get too close, bad things could happen.”

“Bad things according to you, or according to me? I’m not looking to bond with you this second, Derek. Right now I’m just proposing getting to know each other. If you can’t control yourself around me, that’s not my fault. But if you honestly think that you won’t be able to for long enough for us to become closer, then fine, walk away. I won’t stop you. But don’t try and pin this on me. Yeah, it’s my idea, but it takes two to tango, and if you really thought this was a bad idea, you shouldn’t have come here in the first place. It’s not fair to me.”

Derek seemed to weigh that heavily, eyes looking away from Stiles again because he knew that Stiles was right, and Stiles knew it too. If Derek really felt that way, he shouldn’t have come in the first place, should have flatly turned Stiles down when he proposed it. Yeah, Stiles probably would have tried to weasel his way around it anyway, but that was a natural response, and Derek would have held fast in his decision until Stiles knew he couldn’t push it further and gave up. So, they could have avoided this whole sorry affair and saved each other a lot of trouble, especially Stiles.

After a few more minutes of silence, Stiles sighed, pulling some money out of his wallet, enough to cover his meal, and started to stand up. “Fine, whatever,” he mumbled, and just as he was turning to leave, Derek grabbed his wrist, and Stiles sighed through his nose before turning back to him.

“What?” he asked, tone accidentally a bit sharp, and Derek looked at him for a moment with eyes that actually seemed apologetic. That was a new emotion to see.

“I’m sorry,” Derek said after a moment, a beat or two of Stiles’s heart. Or rather, a beat and a skip. “I know, it’s not fair to you. I’m just worried about what will happen if we spend more time together.
It’s not…it’s not right for me to hang around you when we both know what could happen if one of us can’t take it anymore.”

So he admitted it, then. That there was something bigger between them that wasn’t just physical, a connection that they couldn’t break if they wanted to, at least not right now. But him admitting it didn’t make anything better, because he still hadn’t actually answered Stiles’s request for making a choice. So Stiles was still angry, but at least he sat down again, pulling his wrist out of Derek’s grip because he didn’t want him to be able to feel his racing pulse, half from anger, half from anxiety about the situation at hand. God he had so much anxiety about everything, but Derek only seemed to make it worse. Unless they were kissing. At that point, Stiles’s mind went absolutely quiet, focused on sensation and lost in it for the moment. The only redeeming quality to his heat had been that it did the same, his brain focused on his body and absolutely nothing else, unable to break through the heated haze that surrounded it, and him in general. God, he wanted to return to that quiet, thoughts so loud that he nearly covered his ears with his hands in an effort to get it all to shut up. But he restrained himself, intertwining his fingers with themselves and resting them against the table to stop himself. Great. This was going swimmingly.

“Yeah, well, you still have to decide if it’s worth it,” Stiles said, tone still a little pointed. He wasn’t very pleased at the moment, and it was obvious that Derek could tell. Good, he wanted him to know. “Aren’t you the one that said Alphas should be chivalrous and polite? Can’t you try to do that?”

There was a light silence, then he continued. “Look, how about this? If we can’t control ourselves and one of slips up, even just a little, we can call the whole thing off. I doubt that we’ll both lose all of our self-control at once and climb all over each other.”

Actually, he wasn’t certain about that at all, unsure of whether he and Derek would really be able to control themselves if one of them suddenly couldn’t resist the urges anymore. But as long as Derek believed it, bought into the half-lie, then it didn’t matter what Stiles said. And though Derek seemed conflicted, hesitant, and even skeptical, after a minute he nodded, and for a moment Stiles felt like he was doing the wrong thing. Like he was taking advantage of Derek somehow, making him feel shitty and conflicted all the time, preying on his feelings for Stiles. And yet, he couldn’t stop himself, couldn’t resist. And he had thought that Derek was the one with spotty self-control…

“We’ll break it off immediately, though,” Derek clarified, and Stiles nodded, trying not to jump for joy, as hard as that was, because yes, something was finally going his way. When was the last time that had happened?

“Ohay,” Stiles said, leaning back in the booth again. “So. I guess this means that I actually have to start a conversation now.”

Derek’s voice was slightly amused as he said, “And make it cogent somehow.”

“Babbling, that, well, I can do that really crazy well. But actually holding a conversation? Not really my forte.”

“I’ve noticed.” There was that same amusement in Derek’s voice, but there was something different about it. It was a touch…warmer? Yeah, that was it. Derek’s voice was warmer, like he was settling into this, into Stiles. Woah, he meant their conversation. Yeah. Derek was settling into the conversation with Stiles. And that was a nice thing to see.

Stiles dropped his hand back to the table, looking at his food for a moment before deciding that he was done with it for now and really didn’t want any more. Derek was still slowly working on his own, and raised his eyebrows when Stiles pushed his plate away from himself.
“Not going to finish?” he asked, and Stiles shook his head.

“Nah, I’m good. Maybe later.” After all, he had an incredible metabolism, mostly because of his age, and had to eat multiple meals multiple times a day. But right now, his nervousness was still settling down, threatening to strike at a moment’s notice, at a single cue from Derek. So no, no more food for him right this moment. Later, though. “I’ll have them pack it up for me. It’ll make a good snack.” He said while half of his plate was still full. That could be considered a snack, in his world.

Derek raised his eyebrows again but didn’t say anything, continuing to eat at a slow, but thorough pace, and Stiles’s mind wandered as he tried to think of a way to keep the conversation going. How could he ever have a relationship with Derek if he couldn’t even hold a conversation with him? Again, something that he had to hope would ease as time went on, though right now, he wasn’t holding out much hope. To be fair, though, Derek wasn’t pulling his share of the weight, doing just about nothing to help the conversation along. So Stiles was left on his own for the most part, and that was why he was internally flailing, brain losing itself for a minute as it flicked through subjects in his head.

“Hey.”

Stiles realized his eyes had shut and he opened them again, looking at Derek, whose green eyes were locked on him, an expression in them that Stiles couldn’t read. “You okay over there?” Derek asked, and Stiles nodded, resting his elbows on his tables and folding his hands together, tapping them lightly against the table in a nervous rhythm. At a look from Derek, though, he stopped, and looked down at his half-full plate, anxiety twisting in his stomach again.

“Sorry, I just…have trouble staying out of my head sometimes,” he said, eyes moving back up to Derek’s.

“Didn’t seem like you were going anywhere good.”

Yeah, well, he didn’t usually, not often letting his mind wander because it could always lead him somewhere he didn’t want to be. But in this case, it hadn’t gone too far afield, simply falling into the worry again that he was going to bore Derek or continue to be awkward with him forever. Which seemed like a likely possibility, but he didn’t want to consider it.

“Um, well, yeah, sometimes,” he answered, rubbing at the back of his neck, then threw a smile in Derek’s direction. “But really, I wasn’t going anywhere bad, promise.”

Derek studied his features for a moment, seeming to size him up, and then nodded, satisfied enough. “Good,” he said, scooping up some more of his eggs with his fork, and Stiles dropped his hand away from the back of his neck, leaning back in the booth.

“Sooooo…any hobbies?” Stiles asked after a minute, awkwardly as usual, and Derek gave him a look that Stiles assumed meant he wasn’t going to answer.

After a minute, though, he said, “Clearly my hobbies include putting teenage boys into heat early and then meeting up to be friends with them even though it’s a terrible idea.”

Stiles partially choked on his coffee, putting it down and coughing for a minute before he was alright, Derek raising his eyebrows at him, unimpressed. Though oh, there was that secret little smile, like he’d been trying to hold it back but hadn’t been able to. Stiles loved that little smile.

“Um, yeah, clearly,” he managed to answer when he could breathe again, reminding himself not to abuse his airways again. “And mine include chasing after older men and embarrassing myself at every opportunity.”
“At least most opportunities,” Derek said, sounding amused, and took a last bite of his food before pushing his plate away from himself. Thank god Derek was just amused by it, not irritated or annoyed like some people tended to be. Which was part of the reason why Stiles honestly didn’t believe he’d be able to date anyone in his school. He already knew most of them, knew what their dispositions were like, and they wouldn’t be able to handle his awkwardness and generally flailing personality like Derek seemed to be able to. Most of them wouldn’t be able to stand it, and would probably resort to their Alpha voices just to get him to shut up. Not that that had really worked in the past. Case in point, Derek, when he tried to get him to sit down and shut up so he could train him for his heat.

“What can I say, I have a winning personality and charming good looks. You’ve got to choose two, and the third option is being a good conversationalist.”

“And which two did I choose?”

Oh, that wasn’t a fair question, and Derek knew it, judging by the little smirk he was sporting. Not fair, definitely not fair, but while Stiles lied about so many things, he wasn’t about to do that to Derek. One, because he’d probably be able to tell, and two, because if he started that with Derek, he probably wouldn’t be able to stop. Lying was an addiction that Stiles was constantly jonesing for.

“The first two,” he said, looking directly at Derek. “No offense, but you’re not exactly the greatest conversationalist unless I pick a topic. And even then, you have a tendency to trail off and not try to keep the conversation alive.”

Derek laughed. Oh man, he’d actually laughed at something Stiles said, and Stiles was having a little trouble believing that, head reeling a bit at the fact that he’d actually gotten Derek to laugh at something, and how pleasant that had been. What a nice sound, honestly. He wanted more of it, and realized he was grinning like an idiot about it, not exactly the most suave reaction to have. Still, he didn’t particularly care, because Derek had laughed and it’d caused a rush of warm pleasure in Stiles’s chest, and yeah, okay, he probably looked stupid.

But when Derek looked at him again, about to say something, it was clear that the words had died on his lips, and honestly, he looked almost…dazzled. Like Stiles’s smile was just that incredible. Well, no, it wasn’t but if he wanted to see it that way, he definitely wasn’t going to disavow him of that notion. Fuck, the way that Derek was looking at him right now…Stiles realized that he was quite suddenly flushed, and moved his hands up to feel his heated cheeks for a moment. Oh no, he was really blushing. Shit.

He cleared his throat, looking back down at the table, and that seemed to break the spell between them. After a moment, Derek said, “I can’t exactly deny that. Then again, I’m not used to making conversation with teenagers.”

“And you’re used to making conversation with adults? What, do you guys talk about taxes and W2’s and politics? You realize that anything you can talk about with adults, you can talk about with teenagers, right?” Stiles said, daring to look up at Derek again. Oh Jesus, he was actually blushing a bit too, almost imperceptibly. How had Stiles managed that? “We’re not like a completely different breed just because we’re younger. And it’s not like I’m far away from being an adult anyway.”

Though currently, the distance seemed impossible, his next birthday so far away that he couldn’t even begin to think about it. About making that step towards 18, towards Derek. Ugh, he hated all of this, hated that his age was the gap that separated them. If he was just older, this wouldn’t have happened, and he could just try out things with Derek, see where it went. Well. That was basically what he was doing right now, he just wasn’t framing it that way for Derek, though he was sure that the older man wasn’t fooled at all. Still, somehow he was still here, so that was worth something.
“Alright, fine, we can talk about taxes if you’d like,” Derek said, pushing his plate out of the way and resting his elbows on the table. It was always dangerous when he got this close to Stiles. “Do you even have a job?”

“Well…not exactly. Does unofficially and unwelcomely consulting on my dad’s cases count?”

Derek snorted at that, and Stiles managed to not smile like a dork this time. “I don’t think that quite counts. Until you’re getting paid for it, not a job. Are you thinking about going into law enforcement?” he asked, and Stiles wrinkled his nose. “I take that as a no.”

“I’m just not really interested,” Stiles said with a shrug. “I’ve seen my dad do it for years, and it seems like a really thankless job. Sure, you get to help people, but you also might have to kill them, and what about the ones you can’t save? It’s just like being an EMT. I can’t imagine the guilt that comes with that.”

“So what do you want to do, then?”

Stiles paused at the question, trying to figure out an answer that wouldn’t suck because anything he could think of did, and after a minute he shrugged again. “I don’t know. Hopefully I’ll figure it out soon.”

Derek looked like he was about to speak again when the waitress came over with the bill, taking their plates away with a promise to wrap up Stiles’s food for him. “Alright, Even Stevens,” Stiles said, taking the bills he’d thrown down onto the table earlier and placing them on the check, but Derek waved him off. “Come on, man.”

“I actually have a job, unlike you,” Derek said, and Stiles knew he was messing with him but appreciated it all the same. That poker face stoic demeanor wasn’t as good as when Derek was actually smiling and joking with him. Derek pulled a crisp twenty out of his wallet, placing it on the check, and then looked at Stiles again, gaze inscrutable as always.

“Besides, you’re probably going to be in college for ten years trying to figure out what you want to do, so you’ll need to save your money,” he continued, and Stiles snorted softly, taking his money and putting it back into his rather beat-up wallet that Derek raised his eyebrows at, but didn’t comment on.

“Yeah, we’ll see about that. Maybe I could just become like you, I’m sure there are plenty of classes on being dark and brooding and stoic,” Stiles said, tone slightly sarcastic, but he really couldn’t help it. It just came naturally to him.

The waitress came back over with the box and took the check, Derek saying he didn’t need any change, and Stiles’s heart sank as he realized this was the end of the quasi-date. Which was confirmed as Derek stood, Stiles standing a moment later as well and picking up his box of food.

“So…” he said after a moment, and Derek held his hand out, apparently for a handshake. Stiles raised his eyebrows but accepted it, shaking his hand a little loosely.

“Another time, Stiles,” Derek said, and headed out the door, leaving Stiles to simply look after him and wonder what the hell the two of them were doing. What they were. The handshake had been a surprise, and not a pleasant one, but hey, at least he’d gotten Derek to choose. And he’d chosen Stiles.
Chapter Summary

Really, going into school with a boner is not on his agenda for today.

Chapter Notes

Ahhhh, sorry this took me so long, guys! It seems that the new season happened and Steo took over my life, plus a ton of tumblr prompts, so I had to temporarily put this on hold. But I'm back now, and hopefully better than ever. :) Hope you enjoy!

_The heated press of skin against skin, a hand sliding along his back to settle on the small of it, pulling him in closer. His lips parted for a gasp as lips continued to lavish his neck with attention, a prelude, an imitation of what was to come later. A tongue lathed over the spot on his neck that would become vital then, and he shivered as he was preliminarily marked by it, nails digging gently into broad shoulders._

_The fire that was burning underneath his skin was still at a steady simmer, a steamy fog covering his brain as he tried to remember how to breathe, how to blink, how to swallow, how to function. Those didn’t seem to be coming easily to him at the moment, hadn’t been since the heat started, and wouldn’t until it was over and somehow, impossibly, his body was sated. That felt like such an impossibility at the moment, a herculean task, but oh, as those hands slid along him, the flames licking at him from the inside out, he could believe it. This wasn’t like the first time. This time he wasn’t alone, this time he actually had a shot at making the burning, mindless fever abate. And Derek was going to help him do it._

_A murmured, “Stiles,” that made his already uneven heart skip another few beats, and he couldn’t respond with anything but a soft, needy whine, searching for Derek’s mouth with his eyes closed, pressing their lips together when he found it. He felt like things were moving slowly but sweetly, like they were both stuck in warm molasses and fighting against them to reach and touch each other. But he didn’t want slow, he wanted everything now. The careful, sensuous exploration between lovers could wait until he was satisfied for now, until the first wave had passed and he’d recovered something of his mind. Right now, he was nearly pawing at Derek, desperation making him bold, and he was rewarded first with a warm chuckle, then a low growl as the pawing continued._

_Suddenly, he was pressed down into the bed by Derek’s warm, solid weight, hands gently pinned on either side of his head as lips were pressed to his own, a smoldering kiss that he avidly returned, Derek’s facial hair scratching lightly against his smooth skin in a not unpleasant way. Just unfamiliar. The feeling of the other man against him was unfamiliar, but he wanted to get accustomed to it, wanted to imprint the feeling of Derek into his mind so much that he felt him even in his sleep. Okay, that was definitely the heat talking, but it was the only thing he could think about right now and he just wanted, wanted, wanted everything right now, right here, with Derek. Was that so much to ask for?_
Hands were sliding along his waist again and Stiles gave a small, desperate rock of his hips, not even a request at this point, but rather a demand. Another low growl and one of those broad hands was slipping down, down, down and—oh. Oh. The rocks of his hips increased in desperation at the finger that Derek had so easily slid inside of him, preparation unnecessary at this point though this seemed like it was less meant to prepare and more meant to tease. But teasing wasn’t necessary either, he didn’t need a prelude to what they were doing because his heat had already provided him with all the tools he needed to avoid that. And now he was swimming in desire, ready to drown in sensation as soon as Derek let him. That was the key; Derek had to let him.

He made a soft, needy noise, taking hold of Derek’s hand and—

“Stiles!”

Stiles flailed up in bed, nearly falling to the floor as he was jerked out of the oh so pleasant dream that he’d been having, the evidence of it still tenting the front of his sweatpants. It took him a minute to regain himself, pull his head back out of the rather steamy places it’d decided to go as he tried to focus on the real world, not the phantom sensation of Derek’s hands on him.

“Stiles! Time for school!”

“Yeah, Dad, I hear you!” he called back, heart still beating fast in his chest, and when there were no further calls, he dropped back down against the bed, huffing out a frustrated breath. Just when it’d been getting to the good part, huh? He wouldn’t have time to take care of this…situation in before he had to leave for school, so it looked like he’d need to find a way to calm down and resist the urge to touch himself because god had that been hot. So hot that it burned him, scalding to the touch. Jesus, he’d only seen Derek just yesterday and already his brain had gone haywire with fantasies about where it could go. Then again, he’d already been concocting some of those since the very first time he met Derek, gone into that premature heat, so it wasn’t really a surprise that his brain was just going into overdrive now that it at least thought he had a chance with Derek. A tiny little chance, but a chance all the same.

He sighed, knowing that he had to get up soon, and reluctantly rolled out of bed, ignoring the hard-on that he was sporting so flagrantly and starting to get ready. By the time that he was actually ready for school, it had faded enough to be hidden, so that was good at least. Still, he had a feeling that it was going to haunt him throughout the day, return at the most inconvenient moments and assault him with the feelings that he’d had in the middle of it. Not just the lust but the…he wasn’t sure what to call it. Affection? Desire for something more? It wasn’t just physical in the dream. There was a connection there, something deeper than just lust and longing. And of course, since the dream was an ideal, he had been able to tell that Derek had felt it too. That he’d wanted it as much as Stiles did. Ugh, god, he was already in pretty deep, wasn’t he? He’d never felt like this with Lydia, he’d never felt like this with anyone, and it was…worrisome. Of course, just his luck that he’d started falling for someone that he almost definitely couldn’t have, despite being determined to have him. Ohhh, just how screwed was he?

That was a question for later. Right now, the actual question was when he was going to see Derek again, and what was going to happen in the meantime. Would they text, would they have calls, would they simply only talk when they were face to face? He really wasn’t sure, but he did know that he wanted to talk more often than whenever they happened to meet up again. As long as Derek held up his promise, that was. Because Stiles really wasn’t going to take his shit if he tried to back out again, fully prepared to chastise him thoroughly, then cut off all contact, as much as that would suck.
So maybe he could do something in the meantime. He doubted that Derek would initiate anything of his own accord, so it was up to Stiles to make contact. Maybe an innocent text? That could work.
Something simple, something easy. He hesitated when he was in the doorway to his bedroom, looking down at his phone, a blank draft staring back up at him. Something simple… after a moment he typed out a short message, then slipped the phone back into his pocket, heading downstairs. He’d have to see how that went over.

*Hey.*

Lame, he knew that, but he wasn’t sure what else to say. What did you say to the older guy that you were quietly trying to court without making him notice that you were courting him? ‘Hey’ seemed like an alright starter, even though Derek might not know it was him at first. That was alright. He’d figure it out, or could just ask.

He said goodbye to his dad, who was in a rush anyways to get ready, and headed out to his jeep, twirling his keys in his hands. His phone buzzed just as he was getting into the car, and he fumbled with it for a moment, nearly dropping it in his excitement before he managed to actually look at it. Aaaaaand it was Scott. Great. He cursed and responded to the text, putting the phone in the cup holder before shoving his keys into the ignition of the car and starting it up.

There was a strict policy of no texting while driving in his house, but he wouldn’t have done it even if his father wasn’t the sheriff. It was just a stupid thing to do, and he didn’t want to risk his own life or the lives of others, even if it meant that he could see if he had a message from Derek. Even at stop signs, he resisted the urge to pick up the phone, waiting until he’d actually pulled into the school parking lot and parked to check. And there was a lovely little new message waiting for him, and he smiled as he read it, glad to see that Derek wasn’t outright ignoring him or dismissing him.

*Shouldn’t you be in school?*

There was a hint of humor in that text, or at least, Stiles hoped that there was. Derek could genuinely be asking, but that just didn’t seem right. Seemed more that he was a bit amused to find Stiles texting him when he was supposed to be in school, and for a minute Stiles let himself wonder what Derek was doing right now. Probably working out. Shirtless. Those muscles that rippled underneath his shirt slickened with sweat now, moving and clenching as he—woah, okay, the last thing he needed was to go into first period with a boner. That was not going to happen. He just needed to keep it together, hold it all in and avoid thinking about things like…that. And everything to do with Derek, actually. Why had he even bothered texting him in the first place? This had been a terrible idea.

*I’m heading in now. Thought I’d see what you were up to.*

He sent the message and got out of the jeep, grabbing his backpack and heading into the school, phone in hand because his whole body was buzzing with excited tension, an eager anticipation that was going to make it hard to focus if he wanted to actually try and pay attention in school. Which he
didn’t really need to, but there was at least the appearance of paying attention that he needed to keep up, lest he be singled out by his teachers and his phone taken away or something equally as terrible. That’d be a super start to the day, really. Just like walking in with a hard on would have been. Speaking of…his phone buzzed, and he nearly choked as he read it.

*Trying to work out, but my pushups keep getting interrupted by my phone buzzing. Go to school, Stiles.*

Great. So he was working out, no doubt all slick and sweaty, just like he’d been in Stiles’s dream—Stiles nearly slapped himself in the face, instead mentally slapping the shit out of his brain to get it into gear and make sure that it didn’t make his body react. No. No, he wasn’t going to think about this in a public place, least of all the school that was crawling with Alphas who could scent Omega arousal from a mile away and would hone in on it like particularly horny hawks. He was getting enough attention from Alphas, he didn’t need to give them an excuse to try to hit on him more. Though, so far, few had actually approached him, most had just stared, as if with enough concentrated power of will they could get him to come over to them instead. Yeah, right, like that was happening. He already had his eyes set on someone, that someone just happened to be a liiiiiittle out of reach right now. A little. Sure.

*I am at school. Just waiting for class to start.*

He wondered how long he could milk that one for, how far he’d get through first period before Derek cut him off completely and stopped buying the ‘but school hasn’t started yet!’ excuse. Maybe the whole thing? Nah, definitely not. He’d be lucky if he got halfway through before Derek came back with a ‘sorry, not buying that’. For now, though, it’d work, because it was true. The first bell hadn’t rung yet, and he still had time to go to his locker and pick out books.

Scott was glaringly absent right now, though, and after a minute of wondering where the hell he was, Stiles remembered the text from him this morning that’d said he was sick and not coming in. Which meant that Stiles was on his own today, no big bad Alpha to prevent other Alphas from coming up and talking to him, come what may from it. It also meant that Isaac was alone and vulnerable, though vulnerable wasn’t really a word Stiles would ascribe to either himself or Isaac. They could both handle themselves and maybe…maybe it’d actually be better if they stuck together.

He shut his locker door and jumped as he found Isaac on the other side of it, who looked a lot less like a puppy when Scott wasn’t there. Lot more like a full grown dog that was stuck in a constant growl and prepared to bite at any moment. Honestly, Stiles didn’t blame him for having that look; he had his own resting bitch face to make sure that he wasn’t bothered by anyone, especially Alphas, especially on days when Scott was notably absent from school and couldn’t do the whole big bad Alpha routine if anyone so much as looked like they were going to move in on Stiles. Which happened rarely anyway, or at least, hadn’t so far.

“You’re thinking it too,” Isaac said, and Stiles made a slight face at being read like that, not liking that he was that transparent. Though maybe Isaac was just good at reading people. Or maybe he was so desperate for an ally that he jumped to thinking that Stiles was going to be one for him.
“Yeah, yeah,” Stiles muttered, though, not bothering to deny it, because there was no point. They’d end up in the same place anyway. “We should stick together today.”

Isaac nodded, looking a bit relieved, and for a moment Stiles felt a brief flash of sympathy, wondering if he’d already been bothered this morning and if so, who’d been bothering him. Scott wouldn’t be pleased if he found out, that was for certain, but it was hard to see that precious cinnamon roll taking it out of other Alphas who’d gotten near his territory. Then again, all bets were off when it came to an Alpha’s Omega, even though that technically wasn’t what Isaac was yet. Still, it seemed like they were everything but mated, and all in the space of a couple of weeks. That was kind of crazy, but at the same time, wasn’t Stiles a bit jealous? Wasn’t that what he wanted with Derek, what he’d have if he could simply get it? Ugh, probably. Jealousy sucked, that much was a given, and he checked his phone again as he and Isaac began walking to class, a silence falling between them. Just because they were sticking by each other, didn’t really mean they had to talk. After all, what did they really have to talk about?

A new text from Derek was waiting, one that simply said; School. Then flirting.

A blush unfolded over his cheeks at that, wishing again that he wasn’t so goddamn transparent when it came to Derek. It was like the other man could see right through him, always figuring out his real intentions when he was trying to hide them. In a way, it was a good thing, because it meant that if they did get involved in any kind of relationship, it would be harder for Stiles to lie to him, and considering Stiles was nearly pathological about that, maybe it was a good thing for Derek to be able to call him on it easily. Maybe. Right now it just kind of sucked more than anything, made it harder for him to be stealthy about his intentions. Though he had pretty much given up that game by now.

_Told you, school hasn’t started yet. This is perfectly acceptable. How’s your workout?_ he typed back, not bothering to deny the flirting thing because it’d just result in embarrassment for him most likely. And he had enough of that to deal with in his daily life, thank you very much.

“When do you think Scott will be back?” Isaac asked as they sat down, and Stiles sent the text off before turning to look at him.

“I dunno, probably a day or two. He never gets sick for very long,” Stiles answered, and noted how Isaac was tapping his pencil against his paper in a nervous rhythm. “Why?”

Isaac didn’t speak for a moment, looking around the room, and Stiles’s eyes followed his, noting the attention from several Alphas that had focused on them. “I just don’t like it without him here,” Isaac said after a minute, and Stiles’s gaze returned to him, ears picking up the slight worry in his tone, threadbare, but there all the same.

“You guys are really attached already, huh?” Stiles said, and for once there wasn’t a judgment in his tone, just an honesty, a genuine question that was mirrored in his eyes, and Isaac seemed surprised to hear it, his own eyes returning to Stiles.

“Yeah,” he answered, and smirked a little bit in true Isaac fashion, something that made Stiles want to roll his eyes, but he was listening all the same, because that smirk wasn’t entirely a smirk, holding something softer in it. “I really like him, Stiles. And I know you’re inclined to believe that it’ll pass because he’s your best friend and you’re just protecting him and we’re young and whatever, but I really don’t think it will. I’ve heard of Omegas and Alphas finding each other much younger. Childhood soulmates.”

Yeah, Stiles had heard of them too, but that didn’t mean that they were actually real. He usually dismissed them as flights of fancy, ridiculous stories told to children to romanticize the bonding between Alphas and Omegas and get them to socialize with each other. But maybe Isaac and Scott
were something similar, able to find each other at such a young age. After all, wasn’t that what Stiles was trying to claim had happened with Derek, kinda sorta maybe? Ugh, okay, he was tired of being a hypocrite.

“Good.” Isaac seemed surprised at that answer, but Stiles wasn’t looking at him, he was simply assuming surprise. “I’m happy for you two.” And a bit jealous, but whatever. That couldn’t be avoided when Scott and Isaac were getting everything that he wanted to have with Derek, and couldn’t right now.

His phone was silent for the rest of the day.
But Who's Flying the Plane?

Chapter Summary

Derek takes a turn at the wheel.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry that this is a short chapter, but the next one's gonna be much longer, promise. I've got some big things in store. ;)

This was wrong. Derek knew it was wrong, but that didn’t mean that he could help himself.

Told you, school hasn’t started yet. This is perfectly acceptable. How’s your workout?

He read the text from Stiles over and didn’t answer, setting his phone aside on the ground and returning to his pushups, bending one arm behind his back to make it a bit harder for himself. Really, if he just wanted to make it harder for himself, he should have set his phone underneath himself with the text from Stiles up, because already, it was hard enough to resist the urge to text the scrawny, speckled Omega back, as much as he knew that it was bad for him to engage in anything with Stiles. He never should have made that deal with him in the diner, should have just hung up on him again from the very beginning and never given him a chance to worm his way any closer to Derek. But it seemed that Stiles was Derek’s weakness. The one thing that tipped him into bad behavior, despite Derek’s usually flawless self-control.

Stiles’s lips against his in that school hallway, the desperate way that he’d kissed back as if he was drowning and Derek was his only source of air—

The hand Derek had been holding behind his back smacked against the ground as he nearly fell out of his pushup, and he growled lightly at himself, a reminder to keep it together, as hard as that was right now. As hard as that always seemed to be when Stiles was involved. What was it about that kid that got him so—so—out of control? And he was a kid, as Derek reminded himself multiple times a day. Too young for this to be okay, and yet here he was, texting someone young enough to be his little sibling. Well. At least he wasn’t old enough to be Stiles’s parent or something, that probably would have been worse. As it stood, Derek was only in his early twenties, and Stiles was nearly seventeen. Sometimes, when the mood caught him just right, Derek could justify it to himself, but most of the time, he looked at those earnest brown eyes and felt like he
was taking advantage. And he hated feeling like that. Like he was anything like Kate.

But it was entirely different, and he knew that. Kate had been a female Alpha with a penchant for other Alphas, and he’d been too young to understand that she was luring him into something he shouldn’t have been engaged in, wasn’t ready for. And it’d been brief, all things considered, but had still left lasting scars, and he didn’t want to do anything remotely similar to Stiles, as much as he knew Stiles wasn’t like him and would end things if they even remotely resembled how things had been with Kate. Stiles may have been what was considered the “weaker sex”, but that didn’t mean that he wasn’t capable of handling himself when it came to relationships, but still…there was always that worry that Derek would be taking advantage of his age somehow. Using him. And yet…

Stiles’s body pressed up against his, arms wrapped around his neck to pull him in closer and encourage him on and on and on—

Abruptly, Derek tore himself away from the ground, getting back to his feet and rolling his shoulders, swinging his arms a bit as he stretched them out, trying to get his head into a different space. A better one, one that didn’t involve Stiles’s and his stupid pink lips and that perfect cupid’s bow and that surprisingly talented tongue—shit. Derek dropped his head down, chin nearly to his chest as he simply breathed for a minute, trying to figure out how to get rid of the images that had apparently made their home in his head. He was an Alpha, goddamnit. He was supposed to have more control than this, was supposed to be able to regulate his thoughts just as much as he regulated the rest of his life.

But, he thought as he got back to work, moving towards the weights in the corner, wasn’t the whole point of Omegas to throw off Alphas as much as possible? If an Alpha remained entirely unaffected and immune to every Omega’s charms, then there would never be any advancement of the species. And that was the whole point of their biology, after all. This was all about biology, really, and thinking about it that way almost made it a bit easier. Because biologically, of course he was attracted to Stiles. He was a young, healthy, newly ready to be bred Omega who oozed fertility and therefore, sex appeal. Derek was by no means old, but he was at an age where, naturally, his biology told him to find a mate and settle down, and Stiles’s age didn’t matter to the Alpha in his brain. All that mattered was that he was available, willing, and hot as all hell. And as a result, the Alpha in Derek told him to take him before anyone else did.

Though honestly, the more rational part of Derek told him that too. Stiles was young, and no doubt his interest would wane over time and flicker over to someone else, someone closer to his own age who shared more of his interests. After all, he’d just barely gotten his first heat, and for sure he suddenly had an uptick of Alphas interested in him that he probably didn’t have the first clue what to do with. But once he figured it out, and realized he could use it to his advantage, bye-bye Derek. What use would he have for an older Alpha when there were younger options available?

At least, that was what he told himself as some sort of perverse deterrent to keep himself away from Stiles, because clearly that had worked out so well for him so far. He glanced over at his phone, the black screen seeming to mock him as it looked back. That was ridiculous, his phone wasn’t mocking him and he definitely wasn’t going to text Stiles back, at least not while the teen was still in school and had to actually pay attention. Derek wasn’t going to be the reason he stopped paying attention or got his phone taken away from him or something. That’d be something fun for Stiles to explain. “Oh no, I was just texting this older Alpha because I’m not old enough to realize that this is a dangerous game for both of us to play. But really, it’s totally okay even though my father—who’s the sheriff—
doesn’t know and would probably kill both of us if he did.”

Derek groaned, leaning his forehead against one of the posts in the main area of his loft, thumping his head against it gently in an even rhythm as he tried to think his way out of this situation that he’d gotten himself into. And he had gotten himself into it, that much was obvious. No one else was to blame, not even Stiles. Derek was the one who had volunteered that day at the hospital when they were running the exercise, and he was the one who had offered to take on Stiles after Stiles scared away the second Alpha. He’d thought that he was doing something good, helping out kids who would otherwise be totally unprepared for what was going to happen to them, when he’d come across Stiles and things had just sort of…taken off. And now they were flying in some unknown direction and Derek really wasn’t sure who was captaining this ship anymore.

Really, it should have been him. He was the adult here, he should have been the one to call the shots and say what was and wasn’t okay, when really Stiles seemed to be the one taking the initiative to do everything, telling Derek how it was going to be and offering up ultimatums that Derek should have simply dismissed instead of giving in to as he always seemed to. What was wrong with him? Why was he so bad at saying no to Stiles?

Maybe because there was something there. Something that Derek didn’t want to admit to, but felt all the same, knew existed and didn’t want to acknowledge. But he had to, because if he just continued to deny it, continued trying to repress what was really going on…well, Alphas didn’t do great when they bottled everything up and just ignored everything, pretended they didn’t have feelings. Obviously, on the outside, that was what every Alpha was supposed to do. Pretend to be strong, stoic creatures who didn’t have any feelings and could handle anything and anyone at any given time. But then when they were alone with their Omegas…that was where their outlet was supposed to be, in that bond between the two of them, the “fiercer” gender and the “gentler” gender (which was all a somewhat bullshit description anyway, but that was a topic for another day). But currently, Derek didn’t have that. So he had to start by admitting things to himself, first and foremost.

So. What did he have to admit?

He pushed away from the post, stretching his arms again by swinging them and planning on getting back to his workout, needing something to do with his body while his mind decided to go through…whatever it was going through right now. New files that needed to be sorted through, rather than shoved back into the filing cabinets of his mind without any actual consideration. No, Derek prided himself on not running from things, and here he was, running from the thought of some nearly 17 year-old kid just because he couldn’t handle the implications there. That wasn’t okay. It was time to stop running.

He picked up his weights, and started another rep.

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Stiles definitely wasn’t sulking. No, that definitely wasn’t how he was spending his final period of school, doodling in the margins of his notebook instead of paying attention and surreptitiously checking his phone every few minutes just to make sure that Derek, really, truly, absolutely still hadn’t texted him back. For sure. Unfortunately, he really hadn’t, and Stiles was stuck in a class that couldn’t hold his attention, sulking about someone who he didn’t have a chance with anyway.

At least Scott wasn’t here to make his sympathetic puppy dog eyes, though Isaac wasn’t a great substitute either, as he kept asking, “Has that older guy you can’t have texted you back yet?” as Stiles had been forced to explain the situation to him at lunch, though Isaac already knew most of it from Scott. Who Stiles was going to kill for sharing the details of Stiles’s love life with someone that Scott wasn’t even officially dating yet. Though he could always just get back at him by explaining to
Mrs. McCall what was really going on with her son and Isaac, though he had the feeling that she already knew. Nothing got past that woman.

But Isaac hadn’t bothered Stiles about Derek in a little while and Stiles was somewhat enjoying the peace, though mostly sulking because Derek still hadn’t texted him back and it was almost the end of the day and Derek had to know that, right? Most people had a vague idea of when school ended, at least, and ugh, why wasn’t he texting back??? Stiles was nearly vibrating at his desk by the time the final bell rang for the day, and he bolted out of his seat, Isaac hurrying to catch up with him because they weren’t going to separate until the last possible moment, just in case. It wasn’t like something horrible would happen to one of them if they separated, but something still could, and the last thing Stiles wanted was to be considered responsible in Scott’s eyes for letting some greasy Alpha put his hands on Isaac or something. Nor did he want to be the one getting felt up.

“Fuuuuuck,” he said, mostly to himself, but Isaac turned back to him, giving him a questioning look. “Older dude.”

“Why don’t you just find someone your age?” Isaac asked, leaning against the wall of lockers next to Stiles’s, where he was haphazardly pulling out books and shoving them into his bag, hardly paying attention to what he put in. Clearly Derek wasn’t doing anything for his academic career. “There are plenty of Alphas here who would date you.”

The look of disgust that Stiles gave him must have been stronger than Stiles meant for it to be because Isaac put his hands up, taking a step back from him as if to defend himself from the sheer amount of venom in it. Stiles cleared his expression as he turned back to his locker, slamming it shut and looking at Isaac again.

“Ready to go?”

Five minutes later and he was in his jeep, staring at his phone again as he waited for some of the after school traffic to clear out so that he could leave and head home, which wasn’t exactly where he wanted to be right now, but that was what he had at the moment. “Why, were would you rather be?” he asked himself a bit sarcastically, looking at the blank phone screen that seemed to be mocking him. “Wrapped up in Derek’s big manly Alpha arms?”

That irritated him more than he’d expected it to, and he tossed his phone onto the passenger’s seat and started up the jeep, muttering to himself as he pulled out of his parking spot. He was being ridiculous, acting like some middle school girl with a crush, and might as well have been doodling Derek’s names with hearts on his binder. Jesus. Only…well. This was a bit more serious than that considering the fact that he was actually looking at Derek as a potential mate, as someone to bond with for the rest of his life, however long that may be, but still. He was acting like a child about it, and if it was obvious enough for him to determine that, then it would be even more blatant to Derek, and wasn’t the whole point of this trying to prove how mature and ready for a relationship he was? Great. He was doing so super on that front.

He was so busy berating himself that he almost missed the screen of his phone lighting up with a call, and he pressed the green call button without having had a chance to see who it was. It was probably just his dad, anyway. “Hello?” he said a little grumpily, and nearly slammed on his brakes when he heard Derek’s amused voice saying, “Bad day at school?”

“Uh, um, uh, no, fine day at school. I guess. Not really. I don’t know,” he babbled in quick succession, shifting unconsciously to sit a bit straighter in his seat, make himself appear a bit taller. And perhaps older.

There was a chuckle from the other end of the line, and despite the phone doing its damnedest to
make it sound cold, it sounded unbelievably warm. “Remember how you told me to talk to you just like I would talk to any other adult, and how teenagers aren’t a different breed? Yeah, no need to have an aneurysm every time you talk to me, Stiles.”

“It’s kinda hard not to when you do that whole—” Stiles coughed “—thing you do with your voice.”

“What thing?”

“That thing. The Alpha thing. Never mind, is there a reason you’re calling or were you just looking for an opportunity to make fun of me?”

There was a slight pause on the other end of the line, and Stiles got the distinct feeling that Derek was struggling not to laugh at him before finally, he spoke. “What are you doing this afternoon?” he asked, and Stiles felt his heart stop. Was Derek…was Derek actually initiating hanging out? So soon after their time at the diner? Oh, his beating heart wouldn’t be still.

“Um,” he nearly bit through his own lip, he had to stop using that stupid filler word, “nothing, currently. Scott’s sick, so. Yeah. I’m free.”

“Could you come over to my place? I need to talk to you.”

Okay, that sounded resoundingly ominous and that wasn’t what Stiles needed in his life right now, eyes narrowing slightly as he tried to determine if this was Derek trying to back out of their deal. Well, if it was, at least he had the decency to try and do it in person. Shit. Stiles was going to go no matter what anyway, wasn’t he?

“Yeah, okay. What’s your address?”
The building was ominous looking as fuck, and that really wasn’t doing anything to settle Stiles’s nerves at the moment. He parked in front, right by a big black SUV that he recognized as Derek’s from surreptitiously watching him leave the diner yesterday, not in a creepy way but rather an… observant way. Yeah. That. He double checked the address on the front of the building and got out, making sure to lock the car despite the fact that he really doubted anyone was going to be interested in his piece of shit jeep that was mostly held together with spit, duct tape, and prayers, and headed into the building, feeling distinctly keyed-up. Like the feeling when a thunderstorm was coming and you could smell it in the air, feel it in the hairs standing up on the back of your neck. He wasn’t sure why he felt like that, why it increased the closer he got to the loft at the top of the building, until he knocked on the door, and it was opened.

“Oh,” he said, taking a step back as he looked at the man in the doorway who was definitely not Derek, though he was definitely an Alpha. He exuded a quiet, albeit somewhat…darker sense of control, something about his scent making Stiles’s skin prickle with a kind of foreboding anticipation. This was the source of the thunderstorm heavy sensations that he was experiencing, and when he opened his mouth to speak again, he automatically faltered, the words stumbling in his throat as if they were afraid to disturb the suddenly tense air. “I—I must have the wrong address, you’re not Derek.”

“Ah,” the man said, though it was more the purr of a big cat than anything, low and dangerous, and Stiles felt the distinct urge to step away again (especially when those blue eyes swept over him, taking him in in a way that definitely made him feel like there should be a wall between them) but stuck his ground because he wasn’t about to be intimidated by some strange Alpha he didn’t even know. He never yielded ground to anyone, if he could help it. “You must be looking for my nephew, Derek!” he turned to call back into the apartment. “Your rent boy is here! And looks delicious, I must say,” he said as he turned back around to face Stiles, giving him a smile that definitely belonged on the face of a shark and not a person, even if that person was an Alpha. Jesus.

Stiles flushed, but it wasn’t because of being called a rent boy or anything that stupid, but rather because the way the man was looking at him was enough to make anyone blush and his body was reacting to what it perceived as danger, because this man certainly seemed to exude it. And he was Derek’s uncle?

“Peter Hale,” the Alpha said, extending a hand, and Stiles looked at it a moment before deciding no,
he wasn’t going to risk a limb just to be polite. And that was what it felt like; like if he took Peter’s hand, he’d lose his entire arm, get it swallowed up whole by the Alpha who was giving off threatening vibes that had Stiles’s usually impeccable instincts screaming at him to run before the cat caught him in its claws.

“Yeah, nice to meet you. Derek’s in there?” he asked, pointing past Peter into the loft that he could only see part of right now.

Peter smiled at him, and Stiles fancied he saw a hint of fang in it. Oh, to have an overactive imagination. “Yep.”

“Are you going to let me in, or…?” Stiles let the question trail off, looking at Peter with slightly squinted eyes, a question in them that Peter seemed intent on not answering.

A smirk. “I’m not in your way, am I? Oh well, you’ll just have to push past me;” Peter said, and okay, this guy was definitely skeezy. And there was no way that Stiles was coming even close to touching him right now, that just wasn’t happening, nope, no way in hell.

Luckily; “Peter, stop being a creeper and let Stiles come in,” Derek said, appearing behind Peter, who offered Stiles a final, smoldering smirk before turning to face his nephew and feigning a pout.

“I was just being friendly,” he countered as he moved past Derek, back into the loft, and Stiles resisted the urge to shiver, instead focusing on Derek as the Alpha—who was shirtless, he was just noticing, holy god, that wasn’t fair—rolled his eyes, then looked at Stiles. And smiled. While shirtless. Shit. Sometimes Stiles really wished that he didn’t have the teenage mind that he did when it came to sex, because honestly, being around Derek just made it incredibly hard not to pop a boner every few minutes. Lacrosse. Yeah, it was time to think about lacrosse instead.

“So. You live with your creepy uncle in the murder building. Yeah, now I’m starting to get the predator vibe,” Stiles said, and Derek snorted, pulling on the shirt Stiles hadn’t even realized he’d had in his hands. He was supposed to be more observant than this, get it together.

“You’ll have to forgive Peter, he’s not as…well-trained as the rest of us,” Derek answered, and pulled the door open a bit wider, stepping aside to let Stiles past. “Come on in.”

Stiles felt that this moment should be accompanied by harps and trumpets or something, some form of classical music as he stepped into Derek’s loft for the first time. Ode to Joy. Pachelbel’s Canon in D, perhaps? Something to indicate just how important this moment was, that he was actually stepping into the living space of the Alpha that he had his sights set on. That he was starting to think could be something very important to him. Leave it to him to get it bad for someone that he couldn’t have. Well. Potentially couldn’t have. That remained to be seen, really.

He took a look around as he entered the apartment, admiring the wide open space, currently well-lit by the large window that occupied the wall opposite the door. It was a nice place, if a bit sparse when it came to decorations, though honestly, that really seemed to suit Derek’s personality, so he couldn’t say that he was surprised at all. He was more surprised by the unexpected roommate in the form of Peter, who it seemed had disappeared again, much to Stiles’s relief. The last thing he wanted was to run into that guy again, or have him listen in on his conversation with Derek. Which was about…what, again?

“So…” He turned to face Derek again, turning his back to the wall of windows behind him that it’d be all too easy to get distracted by, which was about the last thing that he wanted. He was already resisting the urge to fidget with his hands, wringing them slightly before he dropped his wrists, forcing himself to relax, though that was difficult when his eyes now had to stay on Derek,
who was dressed in a t-shirt and sweatpants, so domestic, so casual, with bare feet. That was inexplicably adorable, and he was trying not to think about it. Or anything, really, and how was that working out?

Derek slipped his hands into the pockets of his sweatpants, turning those forest green eyes on Stiles, and Stiles forced himself to remember how to breathe. He was inexplicably—okay, maybe inexplicably…no, that wasn’t a word was it? He was getting distracted, the point was it made sense—anxious, and his conversation with Peter had only made him feel worse, thunderstorms of worry making their home in his gut. Was Derek going to tell him to stay away again? Was he going to try to back out of what they’d started before it barely even got off the ground? That wouldn’t be fair, and honestly, if Derek even tried, Stiles was going to flip his shit because he’d jerked him around enough. It wasn’t going to be pretty if that was what Derek said.

So Stiles braced himself, taking a deep breath as he looked at Derek, who seemed to see that he was squaring himself up and paused. Come on. Just lay it on. Stiles could handle it, even if handling it meant flipping out because Derek was going to be his good guy self and cut things off. But please God let it not be that, Stiles didn’t want to have that argument again today, not after a day without Scott at school where he and Isaac had had to cling to each other just to stay safe when they mainly tolerated each other and nothing more. Right now, he just wanted to maybe spend some time with Derek, relax, and whether or not he could do that entirely depended upon Derek.

Who was currently looking at him with a little bit of—was that trepidation, in his gaze? It certainly looked like it, and Stiles really wasn’t sure what Derek had to be nervous about. After all, this was Stiles. What did Derek have to fear from him?

“Okay, this silence is getting awkward,” Stiles said, when it had dragged on for a few minutes more, too long to be comfortable. Not that it had started out comfortable, really, but this was getting into nerve-wracking territory, and he wondered if Derek could smell his anxiety. Probably, honestly.

“Sorry, I know that I must be making you nervous,” Derek said, but that wasn’t really an answer, was it? That wasn’t getting to the point, that was avoiding it, in fact, and Stiles’s heartbeat was quickening in his chest, feeling strangled by anxiety currently. This was worse than during his conversation with Peter, honestly.

“Yeah, nervous is one way to put it,” Stiles said, and there was something almost pointed in his tone. An implied “get on with it”.

Derek nodded, looking at Stiles still, his eyes seeming to be searching Stiles’s face for something, and Stiles swallowed thickly, nervously. “I think…you should tell your dad about us.”

Stiles nearly slumped in relief at the same time that he tensed up, because that statement was both good and terrible. Good, because it meant that Derek wasn’t trying to back out of this, was still planning on continuing as they’d agreed, but terrible because Jesus, he didn’t want to tell his dad. That was not something that he’d planned on at all, though he had thought about it before. About what would happen if his dad found out what he was doing, or rather what he was trying to do with Derek. He was certain that his father wouldn’t agree with him on being old enough to bond, least of all to someone who was at least in his early twenties. It was honestly really hard to gauge Derek’s actual age and that was a little bit frustrating, but Stiles was almost afraid of asking and also didn’t want to remind Derek of the difference between them. That was about the last thing he wanted.

“Ah…what do you mean?” he asked, eyes narrowed slightly in confusion as he looked at Derek. “We’re just…friends, right? Sort of? So why does he have to know?”

Derek raised his eyebrows at that, and Stiles knew he wasn’t winning this argument, but let Derek
tell him that anyway. Only that wasn’t quite what Derek said. “Because if this does…become something else, then he needs to know,” he said, and Stiles nearly choked on his own tongue.

If this became something else? Was Derek actually admitting that they had a chance here? Oh god, Stiles could hardly believe it, and he leaned back against the edge of the table behind him, gripping the edge because he needed a little support at the moment and he wasn’t sure he could rely on Derek for that. Not when Derek was avoiding looking at him, still clearly having trouble with the decision that he’d come to, despite the fact that he’d come to it of his own accord with only some urging from Stiles. And Stiles really had to wonder what had flipped the switch, but he certainly wasn’t about to ask.

“Um. Right. In case…yeah.” Stiles was tripping over his own tongue and landing hard, each fall leaving a mental scrape that would sting for a while when remembering this later. But it didn’t matter. Derek was admitting that they had a chance here, and that was really all that Stiles needed. Though that wouldn’t make it any easier to tell his dad about all of this. “Um. Yeah. Okay. I can—” he cleared his throat “—I can do that.”

“I mean it, Stiles. He has to know that you’re hanging out with me, or we’re going to stop completely until you tell him. Understood?”

Unfortunately, yes. “Yeah,” Stiles said with a quick dip of his head, and Derek looked at him again, seeming to relax a touch.

“Good,” he said, and uncrossed his arms from his chest. “Alright. Well, you can stay here for a little while if you want, I don’t have anywhere to be.”

Was that…was that an invitation to hang out, or was Derek just being polite? Either way, Stiles was taking advantage, nodding as he looked back at Derek. “Yeah, okay. I’ll stay for a little while.”
Netflix and Chill

Chapter Summary

Unfortunately with Derek, that's NOT a euphemism.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry it's been so long, writer's block hit me like a train and I've also been participating in some projects and contests and stuff, so I haven't had much time. But here's the next chapter, hope you enjoy!

“So…you live with your uncle?”

Derek seemed to be resisting the urge to sigh heavily, and Stiles really couldn’t blame him. If he had a creepy uncle who lived with him, he wouldn’t want to own up to it either, especially not to a young Omega who he’d just admitted that he might have some kind of future with. Which was a fact that Stiles was still reeling over, but that wasn’t something that he could think about right now, because if he did he’d start freaking out a little bit and it was better to do internal backflips than actually attempt one in Derek’s loft. That wouldn’t go over well at all, nor would he be able to actually do it.

“Peter is…temporarily relocating. And using my apartment as a pit stop,” Derek said after a minute, leaning back against the couch that they’d settled on, the TV on in front of them as Derek flipped through channels to find something to watch. They’d both stood around in silence for a little while before Derek had made the suggestion to watch something, and Stiles had eagerly seized it because hey, it was something to do that didn’t involve standing around staring at each other, and besides, it was a small couch and maybe that meant that he could sneak a little closer to Derek when the Alpha wasn’t paying attention. That plan had quickly been vetoed, considering that the second he even shifted in his seat—just barely—Derek’s eyes had gone to him and looked at him for an uncomfortable moment before turning back to the screen. So maybe that one was a no-go.

Stiles nodded, figuring that that was a legit reason and at least it meant that Peter would only temporarily be here, and there would come a day when Stiles arrived and wasn’t sexually harassed. Once was enough for him. Though he had the feeling that if he continued to meet up with Derek here, that particular pattern would continue, and he was not about that. Not even a little bit. But for now Peter had slunk off somewhere, no doubt to plan something evil and rub his hands together like a super villain while he contemplated kidnapping teenage boys. At least, that was what Stiles assumed he was doing; in truth, he really didn’t want to know, as long as Peter wasn’t within earshot and didn’t come back out to bother him and Derek.

Because finally, finally, he had some time with him to himself, some time to just relax and chill and hang out. Sure, they’d done this yesterday at the diner, and that had been quite a large amount of quality time then, but this was different. This was Derek’s space. This was his home, and he’d not only invited Stiles in but also let him stay for a while, given him the opportunity to relax with him. Bond with him in the most platonic sense of the word, honestly. Ah, fuck, he was too excited and he
was going to blow this somehow. Most likely by making Derek realize exactly how lame he was. As long as it wasn’t how young he was.

“So how long is that relocation going to take…?” Stiles asked, and Derek seemed to repress a sigh, exhaling slowly through his nose. Great. That was a great answer. “Okay then…”

Derek shook his head, continuing to flip through channels until Stiles said, hitting his arm excitedly, “Dude, dude, stop, that’s the best show ever!”

Derek raised his eyebrows, turning to look at Stiles with such a look of disapproval that Stiles felt for a moment like he had personally insulted his honor or something, rather than just having pointed out a show. “Really? This is what you enjoy watching? ‘The Alpha Diaries’? You know how ridiculous this thing is?”

“Yeah, I know. It’s all about jacked up hyper-masculinity and Alphas with no filters left. It’s totally ridiculous, but it’s fun,” Stiles said, and was caught off guard when he turned to look at Derek again and saw a distinctly different look in his eyes, one that he couldn’t quite put a name on. It was almost…fuck, what was the word he was looking for? It was almost…affectionate, in a way. Like Derek thought that Stiles was ridiculous, but found it cute all the same. Suddenly Stiles could feel the warm heat of blood pooling in his cheeks, and quickly looked away from those soft eyes, thinking that he was probably going to do something stupid if he didn’t. Like kiss Derek, and while that had already happened before—in fantastic fashion, no less—that didn’t mean that it was okay for it to happen again. Not when they were trying cautiously to be friends. God, but he wanted to jump about five dozen steps forward and not go back.

He risked a glance over as Derek cleared his throat, and saw his Adam’s apple moving in his throat, all of which was covered in a layer of scruff that he just wanted to—woah, okay, no, he’d been dreaming about this this morning and the last thing he needed was to go back to that. The very last thing he needed was to get aroused around Derek, because who knew what would happen then. Especially if creeper uncle Peter was around, who Stiles looked around for now, suspicious and feeling like somehow, despite his absence, he’d pop out of the woodwork at the exact wrong moment without even needing to be asked. While he didn’t have much experience with creepy uncles, his mind was unequivocally telling him that this one was trouble, no matter what. And he needed to be careful around him.

“Something wrong?” Derek asked, and Stiles realized that, like an idiot, he’d rather obviously been turning his head to examine every dark corner of the apartment, of which there were several. As if Peter would just pop out of one with jazz hands and go, “Gotcha!” Actually, Stiles wouldn’t put it past him right now.

“No, everything’s fine,” Stiles murmured, not seeing a sign of him anywhere, and nearly jumped out of his skin when Derek’s hand landed on his shoulder, warm and reassuring. And Jesus were those green eyes big.

All the better to see you with, my dear...

Derek’s voice was soft too when he spoke, a layer of velvet covering his words in a reassuring way. “If you need to leave or just want to go somewhere else, we can,” he said, and Stiles felt his heart flutter at the care that he was being shown right now. Already, Derek seemed to care so much, and Stiles really wasn’t sure how he’d gotten him this involved this easily. Unless, of course, Derek had been lying from day one about the connection between them. Which Stiles was still pretty sure of.

Focus. “Sorry, just…your uncle freaked me out a bit,” he said, figuring that was close enough to the truth to be passable as not a lie. Even though it sort of was, because really he was just paranoid about Peter showing up at the wrong moment, rather than being bothered by what he’d said before. Though, honestly, that hadn’t been much better… “I’m…” He rubbed at the back of his neck. “I’m
not entirely used to attention from Alphas, you know? And he’s, like, old enough to be my dad. Or at least I assume he is,” he said with a frown. What was it with the Hale family and their seemingly undefinable ages? Stiles was usually pretty good at guessing people’s ages, but that went out the window when these guys were involved.

Derek was nodding, Stiles was just now noticing, brow puckered in a slight concern that actually didn’t seem that slight, and Stiles swallowed, watching as Derek’s eyes subtly drifted to follow the motion. He was tired of trying to interpret every signal sent his way, so he didn’t bother with this one.

“I’m pretty sure he’s just reading upstairs, but I can check, if you’d like?” Derek offered, and oh, that was so nice of him that Stiles wasn’t sure he wanted to take him up on it. The more Peter was left to himself, the more likely it was that he would forget about the two of them entirely, but at the same time, he really did want to know. So he nodded, and Derek quickly got up, stretching an amazing musculature before heading up a spiral staircase that Stiles hadn’t even realized was there.

Stiles waited anxiously, eyes flickering between the TV and his own hands as he picked at his nails, a nervous habit he’d never really been able to shake. He wasn’t sure what it was about Peter that made him so nervous, but he also really didn’t want to look too deeply into it. Because what he’d told Derek was partially true; he wasn’t used to the Alpha attention, and Peter was significantly older than him, but that wasn’t really it, was it? Because Derek was several years older than him, and an Alpha, and Stiles didn’t mind his attention in the slightest, was only nervous around him because of his feelings for him. So what was it about the other, older, shark-like Alpha that made him feel like he was itching out of his skin? Maybe it was just that undefinable predatory quality that Peter so clearly had about him. That danger that never truly seemed to go away, following like a shadow at his heels.

Abruptly, Stiles tore too hard on a hangnail and started bleeding, cursing softly before putting his finger into his mouth, sucking on it to sterilize it and clean the blood off. He looked up, digit still hanging out of his mouth as Derek came back, saying, “Looks like—”

He stopped abruptly upon seeing Stiles, and then slowly started again, clearing his throat slightly as he looked away from him, a faint pink appearing on his cheeks. “Looks like Peter headed out for the evening. I can’t find him anywhere. You, um. You have some blood…”

Stiles looked up at him, oblivious to where and what he meant, and Derek looked down at him again, then gently leaned over him, bracing his hand against the back of the couch so he could brush his free thumb over Stiles’s lip. It came away with a small amount of blood, and Stiles was filled with the inexplicable desire to suck the blood off of Derek’s finger, but figured that’d be frowned upon. Okay, that’d definitely be frowned upon, but right now he was caught up in a trance and it was hard to avoid, his own finger dropping from his mouth, lips parting as he looked at Derek, still hanging over him, so close. Close enough that he could breathe in his scent, and judging from the dilation of Derek’s pupils, Derek could scent him as well. It’d be so easy to just lean in close, press his wetted lips to Derek’s, or maybe just lift his hand and take his bloody thumb into his mouth, suck the crimson off of it and watch as Derek’s pupils blew wide.

But he couldn’t do either of those things. He’d promised Derek, and right now, it was up to Derek if he wanted to initiate anything. Stiles wouldn’t stop him—god, how could he stop him?—but he couldn’t start anything either. And he could see it oh so well, the war wagging in Derek’s eyes, the trouble he was having when it came to controlling himself around Stiles. Any other day—okay, a bit today too—Stiles would have been proud of himself for so easily being able to wreak havoc on someone’s willpower, especially someone as strong-willed as Derek, someone with a will of steel and iron, who should have been easily able to resist a young Omega that he was uncertain about,
who still hadn’t told his dad about them, who was so young that he even had to tell his dad about them. And yet, here they were. Derek opening his mouth just a bit, as if to speak, and Stiles answering with the wet slide of his tongue over his own lips, which suddenly felt incredibly dry.

“Nephew, I’m off on an apartment search, don’t wait up for me!”

Derek jerked back from Stiles, turning to look in a slight daze at Peter, who had apparently not left the loft yet, despite Derek’s assurances that he had. And the bastard even looked smug about interrupting, god, Stiles had known he’d come in at the exactly wrong moment. “I thought you’d already left,” Derek said, and Stiles finished it with a, Wish you had, in his head.

Peter gave his nephew a faux sympathetic look. “I wasn’t even trying to hide, Derek, I’m beginning to worry your senses are lapsing. And so young, too, what a shame that is,” he said, and turned his gaze to Stiles for an uncomfortable second before looking back at Derek. “I’ll see you later. Try not to break your rent boy, it already looks like he’s bleeding.”

And with that, he swept out the door in an obscenely deep v-neck shirt, and Stiles thumped his head back against the couch, sexually frustrated and actually just plain frustrated with his life at the moment. Derek was refusing to look at him, so Stiles looked down at his hand instead, seeing that the hangnail was still bleeding pretty freely, but not quite enough for him to get squeamish yet. Still, “Do you have any Band-Aids?” he asked, and Derek nodded, shuffling off to the kitchen and beckoning for Stiles to follow. Still not a word. That was a great sign.

So Derek bandaged Stiles’s hand for him, all sexual tension having effectively dissipated because of one annoying uncle, even as Derek softly and gently maneuvered Stiles’s fingers around so he could properly put the Band-Aid over the injury. He was so gentle when Stiles expected him to have no finesse, and somehow he was always surprised by that. He wasn’t sure how, considering how Derek had acted the first time they met, using a no-nonsense tone but actually handling Stiles gently, carefully, like he was liable to break if dropped too hard. And usually Stiles resented being treated like that, like a lot of people viewed his gender, but with Derek, he could tell there was no underlying “you’re an Omega, me Alpha, must protect” going on. Which was a relief. And also actually explained why Isaac was so into Scott, considering Scott never acted that way either, had never handled Omegas in a different way than any other person. Probably because he’d grown up with Stiles, the two of them bouncing around and hitting off of each other all the time.

“All set,” Derek said, releasing Stiles’s hand, and went to the sink to wash his hands, the slight bit of blood that had caused such tension just a few minutes ago disappearing down the drain, along with said tension. Stiles huffed out a breath that Derek wouldn’t hear over the water and leaned back against the nearest surface, one of the many columns in the loft. Truth be told, it was easier for him when they were suffused in sexual tension and had nothing else to focus on. Because then he didn’t have to worry about making a good impression, or reminding Derek how young he was, or impressing the Alpha with things that weren’t his usual awkward ramblings, even though Derek seemed to enjoy them. It was easier if he just let himself get lost in tension, in the narrow silences and the space between his eyes and Derek’s lips, but he couldn’t live like that forever. If he actually wanted to bond with him, they needed to, you know, bond. Get to know each other beyond the surface of the usual pleasantries. And beyond the physical chemistry they so obviously had.

“Why did you leave Beacon Hills?”

The question was asked quietly, carefully, like Stiles knew that there was a heavy weight behind it that he didn’t want to just be swinging around like it was nothing, and, indeed, it seemed to hit Derek like a ton of bricks, whose back hunched slightly where he was washing his hands in the sink. It didn’t quite straighten either, when he turned the water off, reaching for a dish towel and then turning
to look at Stiles, green eyes more guarded than Stiles had seen them yet.

“Why?” he asked simply, and Stiles nodded, then realized that Derek was asking a question, not seeking clarification, and instantly tripped over his own tongue trying to speak.

“Um, I— I mean yeah. I mean, it’s—I want to know. I think it’s important,” he finally managed to get out, and Derek was looking at him so seriously and oh, he shouldn’t have asked this, should he? There was something else going on here, something more serious that he’d barely scratched the surface of.

But it was too late to take the words back. They wouldn’t roll back into his mouth, his tongue couldn’t speak in reverse, and he wasn’t sure he wanted it to anyway. He needed to know this, he felt that now, the pressure that meant that he was right, that something important was about to happen, if Derek answered truthfully. He could always lie, but somehow Stiles felt that wasn’t about to happen. No, with the tension currently crackling in the air, he was going to get the truth. As long as Derek could actually speak, which he seemed to be having trouble with at the moment.

“I left… because of a bad relationship,” he said, and Stiles nodded, waiting for him to continue. With a slightly pained look—just a flash of it, barely there, crossing his face briefly—he did. “I dated this… Alpha. Kate. And I was young at the time and didn’t realize that she was bad news. So after that…I had to leave for a little while.”

A little while being several years, and that told Stiles all he needed to know about the relationship. He felt something burning inside of him, a sort of jealous anger that refused to be pushed down because despite the lack of details, he didn’t really need them to tell how bad it’d been. If it’d made Derek flee the town for that long, simply because of one person…it must have been bad. Really bad, and Stiles suddenly couldn’t feel past that blinding, raging angry jealousy, a combination of regret over the hurts of the past and anger at how someone, anyone could have treated Derek like that. He didn’t have a right to feel this way. Derek wasn’t his. And yet…

“Stiles?”

“Thanks,” Stiles blurted out, not wanting to deal with the concern in Derek’s voice. “For telling me, I mean. That sounds… that sounds like it sucks.” It was the simplest, most teenage way he could have put it, but right now he didn’t care because he felt like he was choking on rage, and wanted to find this Kate and tear her apart. But that wasn’t an option right now.

A soft touch to his arm and Stiles yanked himself out of the trance he’d fallen into, the anger subsiding a bit as he turned to Derek, who was looking at him with soft, slightly confused eyes. Like he didn’t understand why Stiles was acting like this, and Stiles realized he had to look like an idiot to an outside observer. Angry about nothing, practically spitting with it, and for little reason. Derek wasn’t his. This wasn’t his right to be upset. So why was he?

“Sorry,” he said, brushing back the hatred that’d been blooming in the back of his mind like a particularly poisonous tree. “Just got a bit caught up.”

“It’s okay,” Derek said, and Stiles pulled out his phone to avoid speaking, heart sinking as he saw a missed call from his dad. No doubt wondering why he wasn’t home from school yet.

“Listen, I um, I have to go. My dad’s looking for me. But I’ll see you soon, yeah?”

Derek’s hand dropped from his arm and Stiles’s tightened a bit around his phone, missing the contact as soon as it was gone. “Of course. Just don’t text me during school hours,” Derek said with a slight smile, and Stiles laughed, shaking his head.
“Yeah, no promises about that, big guy,” he said, and smiled at Derek before deciding he had to leave now before he did something stupid. “I’ll uh. I’ll see you soon.”
So There's This Guy...

Chapter Summary

The conversation doesn't go...exactly as planned. And who the fuck asked you, Peter?

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I know this chapter's a bit short, but that's only because I'm setting up for some big things in the future, and I couldn't resist just a bit of a cliffhanger, quite honestly. I'm a little bit of a sadist, just a little bit. Anyway, I hope you enjoy it no matter what, and know more is coming soon!

Also, friendly reminder that I do commissions, message me at the email address on my profile if you’re interested! I also take short prompts on my tumblr, so if you wanna head over there, feel free to! <3

How the conversation should have gone:

“Hey Dad so I’ve been hanging out with the Alpha who helped me through my first heat recently and he’s a really cool guy so we’re gonna keep hanging out, kay? Kay.”

How the conversation actually went:

“You did what with who?”

Stiles bit back a sigh, setting his fork down—well, nearly dropping it—as he looked at his father, who was looking at him with a combination of anxiety, concern, and disapproval, in that alphabetical order. “I said that I went to thank the Alpha who helped me through my heat and he seems chill so we’re hanging out a bit. No need to have a heart attack.”

It probably wasn’t possible for his dad’s eyebrows to go any further into his hairline. “You’re telling me that you, an underage Omega, are hanging out with some Alpha of indeterminate age just because he ‘seems chill’?” His father put down his fork. “I really am going to have a heart attack.”

“We agreed, not until your sixties,” Stiles said, hoping to lighten the mood, but it was simply earning him a stern look from his father that he didn’t know what to do with. Great.

“Stiles, this is a big deal.”

“It’s not! You hang out with your younger deputies all the time, how is this any different from you getting a beer with Parrish?”

“The difference is that Parrish is legally an adult, something which you won’t be for another two years—”

“Year and a bit.”
“—and he is not an Omega that is susceptible to gaining attention from older Alphas. What do you even know about this guy aside from that he ‘seems chill’?”

Really seemed to be having trouble with that phrasing. “I know he was part of the exercise at the hospital, or he wouldn’t have even been allowed in my room,” Stiles said. “And since he wasn’t a nurse, that meant he volunteered to help because he knew some stupid little arrogant kid like me would get in too deep. He’s a good guy, Dad, not every Alpha is a predator.”

“That’s what they’re literally designed to be!” his father exclaimed, and this time Stiles really did sigh, right before shoving some pasta into his mouth. He still needed to eat, after all, though perhaps a hunger strike would end this conversation. Too late, he’d already chewed and swallowed.

“But this one’s—”

“Different? That’s what every single love-struck teen has said, right before a psychopathic Alpha mauls them into little tiny pieces that my department is left to clean up. Don’t roll your eyes at me. Do you know the kind of statistics that exist on this? Young Omegas, brutally murdered by jealous older partners or suitors who couldn’t keep their hands to themselves and things went too far. This—this guy—”

“Derek.”

“This Derek—wait, you don’t mean Derek Hale, do you?”

Stiles was blanking on why that’d be a bad thing, why the Hale name would be bad, and burst out, “Why?”

“Stiles. Have you been hanging out with Derek Hale?”

“So what if I have?” Stiles asked, slipping into defensive mode instantly, and noted how his dad’s eyes strayed first towards the ceiling, then towards the liquor cabinet. That was a bad sign. “He’s harmless, Dad. He’s a good guy.”

“He’s a good guy who disappeared for years and just now fortuitously showed back up in town after how long? Just in time for your heat?”

“Okay, now you’re sounding like a conspiracy theorist,” Stiles said slowly, and his dad huffed, picking up his fork from where he’d set it down, then immediately setting it back down again, clearly unable to decide if he was too offended to eat or not. Stiles took the pause to eat some more pasta, letting his dad process his words because he seemed to be having trouble with that right now and Stiles needed him to be okay with it. This had to go well, or all chances of him bonding with Derek went out the window, never mind even just being able to hang out with him.

“It just seems suspicious, is all,” his dad eventually said, and it was Stiles’s turn to raise his eyebrows.

“Really, Dad? You’re telling me that somehow, Derek Hale, who I had never met before this, not only knew who I was, but knew I was an Omega and lay in wait at the hospital for me to go into heat so he could insert himself into my life? Yeah, because that doesn’t sound crazy at all.”

His dad seemed at a loss for words for a minute, frowning to himself, and Stiles considered that a small victory, but he wasn’t about to do victory laps over it. After all, the verdict hadn’t changed, as far as he could tell; his dad didn’t trust Derek, and while Stiles understood his reasoning and protective Papa Bear instincts, it didn’t change the fact that he needed him to change his mind. And now. Or bye-bye Derek.
“I don’t trust him,” his dad finally conceded, and Stiles had to fight not to sit up straighter, knowing he was close to an actual verdict here, and possibly the one that he wanted.

“You don’t have to trust him. I do,” Stiles said, and his dad opened his mouth to protest, but Stiles headed him off at the pass with, “Listen, would it make you feel better if you met him? He’s totally down for that.”

Lies, he had no idea if Derek was down for meeting his dad at all, but if they were going to continue this thing, it was probably going to happen at some point anyway. So why not get it out of the way now?

His father was regarding him with no small amount of suspicion, and Stiles fought hard not to gulp, knowing that he had to look totally level-headed and not at all like he had an ulterior motive in this. He had to be careful here, because one single tip of his expression could destroy what he’d already built. Though god, this was all a whole fucking lot of work and he had to wonder if it was all worth it. But the simple thought of Derek standing in his kitchen, looking so lost as he explained the barest minimum about Kate—who still set Stiles’s blood boiling like nothing else could, even though he’d had knowledge of her for approximately two hours—made him realize that yes, this was worth it, if only because he needed to fix that look. Soothe it, make it better, kiss Derek softly and remind him that he was—loved. That someone appreciated him in the way he had a feeling that woman never had.

“I don’t like it,” broke the silence and Stiles’s concentration, and his eyes unglazed, realizing that he had sort of drifted off while waiting for an answer from his dad, but luckily it seemed that the absence wasn’t noted. At least, he hoped it wasn’t.

That wasn’t a no, either. “I know,” Stiles answered, and his dad’s eyes drifted up his face to his brown eyes, seeming to assess him a bit.

“I don’t trust him.”

“I do.” It was immediate and just barely slow enough, not too quick to be suspicious. “And you don’t have to. You just have to trust me.”

And maybe that was a tad bit manipulative, but Stiles knew that this was the easiest way to convince him that this was okay, but he knew it was more a matter of convincing him it was okay for now. Until he actually met Derek, and Stiles really hadn’t thought it out much farther than that. Hopefully they’d hit it off and magically all the planets of his life would align and it wouldn’t equal the Apocalypse or a revenge plan from Hercules, but rather a bond. The only bond he cared about.

Was that creepy? Was he being too obsessive here? Stiles had always thrown himself into every one of his interests without knowing the meaning of the word ‘casual’, and that included people. Lydia had been like that, and now here was Derek. Perhaps he was too young, and this was all just an adolescent infatuation, and one day he’d wake up and be over the whole thing.

Fucking ow. His heart clenched so tightly at that thought that he nearly dropped his fork, which in this moment would have been bad. Still, his hand was halfway to his heart before he realized what he was doing and stopped himself, shaking it off as he looked back at his dad evenly, who was now examining him carefully. Like he knew there was something just under the surface here, but couldn’t figure out just quite what it was. And Stiles intended to keep it that way.

“Fine,” he finally said, and Jesus it was hard not to breathe a huge sigh of relief at that. “But I want to meet him.” No sigh of relief, then.
Stiles dipped his head in a nod, and they went back to eating, a more companionable silence falling over the table. One step down, so many more to go.

***

*So don’t freak out, but my dad kind of wants to meet you.*

Don’t freak out, the text said. As if the thought of meeting anyone’s parents, let alone the law enforcement parent of an underage Omega who he was ~kinda~ courting wasn’t something to freak out about. Oh, Stiles.

Derek felt a kind of weary affection upon reading the text, exasperated with Stiles but still looking on him fondly, despite what he did. Seemed to always do. Stiles wasn’t good with confrontation, Derek had already noticed that, but then again, he’d been bold enough to directly ask about Kate and face the answer, as much as it had seemed to...affect him. And Derek still wasn’t sure why. Was he just angry at the thought of Derek being with someone else? Jealous? A flattered little flutter went through Derek’s stomach at that, but he knew that it wasn’t as simple as that. Stiles had seemed truly, deeply angry, like he was personally offended by Kate hurting Derek, and god, when was the last time someone cared that much about Derek that wasn’t related to him?

“Did your hired boy go home?”

Speak of the Devil.

“Hired for what, Peter? I’m not desperate enough to pay for company. Unlike some people I know,” Derek said calmly, flipping a page in his book and ignoring Peter’s eyes narrowing in on him. Honing, as it was. “Did you find anything?”

Peter’s gaze broke off as he huffed, setting a plastic shopping bag down on the coffee table. “I swear that this town was livable, once upon a time.” He sniffed. “Then the Betas moved in.”

Derek resisted the urge to roll his eyes, knowing just looking at Peter would provide some sort of satisfaction to him. Recognition. There was nothing worse to the attention-seeking Alpha than being ignored. “Don’t start with that classist bullshit. I don’t want it in my apartment,” he said, and Peter sighed dramatically, sweeping off in the direction of his bedroom upstairs as Derek finally peeked over the edge of the book, wondering what was in the bag. Probably his dinner, but he could never really be sure with Peter. Possibly condoms. Possibly something much worse that he didn’t want to know about, quite honestly.

“I didn’t realize that you were entertaining such...vulnerable company or I would have left earlier. Tell me, did you make him bleed or is he just a nervous ball of energy naturally?” came drifting down the stairs, and Derek felt his hand clench on the hardcover he was holding. His eyes flicked to the plastic bag again, curiosity itching at the back of his brain, and he scooted forward, getting closer to the bag.

“He was just a bit anxious. You have that effect on people,” he called back, and gently hooked a finger on the side of the bag, pulling it so he could peek in, brow immediately furrowing.

Peter snorted, loud enough that Derek could hear it, which meant he was coming back down the stairs, and Derek quickly sat back. “Please, he was tripping over himself every time he talked to you. You could cut the tension with a knife, and not a very sharp one. He’s already *involved* with you,”
he said, and Derek gave him a look, asking, “What do you mean by involved?”

“I mean he is one hundred percent head over heels for you and is simply waiting for you to consummate that.” He paused, picking up the plastic bag again; he’d changed into an oatmeal colored V-neck while upstairs. “I remember when I had barely legal Omegas fawning over me.”

Only Stiles wasn’t legal. And Derek couldn’t have Peter knowing that, but it seemed that Peter read something in his silence, because his smirk turned back into a smile, something a touch incredulous in it. “Oh, so he’s not,” he said casually, and Derek’s heart sank into his stomach. This was just about the last person in the world that he wanted to know that. Not that he thought Peter would do anything about it, but still. Peter could be…unpredictable. And dangerous. “How young?”

Derek struggled for an answer, and Peter’s smile only seemed to get even more delighted. “Fifteen? Sixteen? Oh, don’t tell me younger,” he said, and Derek shook his head. “Well, it’s not seventeen because then you’d be a bit more serious about him, and not quite so reluctant to tell me. Fifteen it is.”

“He’s sixteen,” Derek said, the words physically paining him, and Peter’s smile turned smug, knowing he’d successfully gotten the answer he was looking for. But Derek didn’t know how to avoid giving it to him. “And we’re not ‘involved’. I helped him and he’s trying to repay me.”

“Helped him how?” Peter asked, and it was a low purr, not sexual in nature but simply dangerous, the low growl of a big cat before it pounced. He was already playing with Derek’s heart between his paws, now was the time when he decided whether to eat it or let it run free again.

Derek didn’t answer, and Peter tapped a finger against his lips, pretending to think about it as he looked at him. “This wouldn’t have anything to do with that awful little exercise you volunteered for at the hospital, would it?”

The silence was all the confirmation he needed, and Peter nearly crowed in victory, instead tilting his head and giving Derek a ‘really now?’ look, like that was the most fascinating thing in the world. And perhaps to Peter, ever nosy, ever involved Peter, it was. But to Derek, this was turning into dangerous territory, and he stood, snapping his book shut. Peter nearly pouted.

“Oh, are we done?” he asked almost pleasantly, and Derek didn’t answer, moving past him to head towards his bed. “That’s a shame. And here I was thinking I had some information that might be relevant to you.”

And he slowed, and he stopped. And Peter smiled, even though Derek didn’t see it. He didn’t have to see it to know it happened, he could hear it in his voice as he said, “Something about your new friend that I happened to find out today on my usual rounds…but of course, you wouldn’t be interested. You don’t operate on rumors. Though it’s not quite a rumor…”

Derek turned to look at him again, and Peter didn’t even have the decency to wipe the smirk off his face. He didn’t speak, simply cocking an eyebrow at his uncle, who smiled, smiled, like he’d just eaten somebody’s grandmother. No wonder Stiles had seemed so freaked out by him. It was said that Omegas had better natural instincts about people than even Alphas did, and Stiles certainly seemed intuitive.

“Well?” he said after a minute of silence, and Peter’s smile widened.

“I saw Stiles later, after he left,” he said, and paused as Derek waited for more, for whatever would come next that Peter had already deemed so terrible. And here it came, Peter looking up at him with dangerous blue eyes. “With Kate.”
And just like that, Derek’s entire world dropped from underneath his feet.
A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Chapter Summary

Kate?? Kate. KaTe?? Kate!!

Chapter Notes

Woo, so, thanks for everyone bearing with me on this so far, I know updates have been few and far between and I have a whole host of excuses for that, but bear with me, please. As per usual, this chapter is short and late, but next one's going to be real juicy, I promise. After all, it has to be if Kate's involved, no? (And hey maybe it'll finally earn it's nsfw stripes at some point oops)

As a reminder, I do fic commissions, message me at the email address on my profile if you're interested, or you can contact me on my tumblr. Thanks, and enjoy!

4:22pm

Stiles left Derek’s apartment in relatively high spirits, though that anxious nausea was quickly settling into his stomach, signaling to him that he was going to have to do something big very soon. In this case, telling his dad about Derek, a task that he was beyond dreading. Did it count as simply dread if his hands were shaking at the thought and he was breaking out in a cold sweat? God, you would have thought he was staring down the barrel of a gun.

4:36pm

Stiles stopped to gas up the jeep, nearly able to hear his bank account groaning as he used his debit card to fill up the car. As he waited a bit impatiently (though when did he ever do things patiently), his eyes roamed the faded stickers and advertisements on the pump, including a relatively new one for slushies. Blue raspberry, holy shit, that was like the holy grail. So he filled the tank up halfway and gave up after that (he’d borrow his dad’s credit card at some point and fill it up the rest) (maybe), heading into the store in search of the holy grail.

It was when he was scrounging his coins out of his pocket at checkout that he first felt it, that prickly hot feeling of eyes on the back of his neck, and turned to find the woman behind him in line nearly staring at him. It didn't help that she was attractive in an intimidating, definitely female Alpha way, and abruptly, his hand spasmed and coins went everywhere, a few quarters and dimes rolling onto the floor as he simply tried to find enough for the 99 cent drink.

“Here,” he heard in a far too smooth voice, so smooth it was devoid of any inflection, stripped of real
emotion, and suddenly a crisp twenty was on the counter in front of him and the woman was pulling her hand back, her wallet in her other hand.

Don’t take it. His brain was nearly screaming it at him, telling him that if he owed this woman anything, even 99 cents, it’d be a horrible mistake. So instead, he bent down to pick up the coins, quickly counted out four quarters, mumbled, “Keep the change,” and swept back out with slushie in hand, leaving the twenty on the counter for whatever it was that the woman was looking to buy.

Only, as far as he could tell, she didn’t buy anything, because before he could even get into his car, there was a hand on his shoulder that felt more like talons, and when he whipped around, there she was, keys in hand. “Sorry, I feel like we got off on the wrong foot,” she said, that voice still too smooth, too even. Hiding something, he felt like, though with her next words, he had to wonder what; “I’m Rachel. I’m one of your dad’s new deputies.”

Oh, right. That was a thing that was happening. His dad had mentioned a few new hires, something over breakfast a couple days ago that Stiles had forgotten in the midst of this whole thing with Derek. “O-Oh. Right,” he said, still put off by her air, by her altogether too artificial voice and smile. That smile that honestly looked like she’d just caught a mouse in her claws. And Stiles knew he was the mouse in this scenario.

“Nice to meet you,” he said, putting on an equally artificial smile, and her eyes narrowed on him, just for a split second, but he caught it all the same. Like she was sizing him up to see if she could reasonably unhinge her jaw and swallow him whole.

“It’s a pleasure,” she replied, and they both cautiously shook hands with each other, Stiles’s cold from the drink he was holding, and hers much cooler than any Alpha’s hand he’d ever shaken. Than Derek’s.

“Um. I really gotta get going, my dad’s looking for me to be home,” he said, and she nodded, smiling again as she took a step back from him. A breath of relief.

“Of course. Don’t let me keep you. Though I’m sure I’ll be seeing you around, Stiles.”

He didn’t bother to waste time with a polite goodbye, instead getting into his jeep and hightailing it home, slushie melting, forgotten, in his cupholder. By the time he’d gotten home, though, Derek was so firmly ingrained in his brain that he’d almost entirely forgotten about the weird run in, and it was time to face down his dad.

“So…”

6:13pm

So don’t freak out, but my dad kind of wants to meet you.

The text was sent, and now it was just a matter of Derek responding, getting back to him and letting him know that everything was going to be okay, or mostly okay. Because a lot hinged on this meeting between Derek and Stiles’s dad, a lot more than Stiles was comfortable with. If even one thing about Derek said ‘predator’, that was it, it was over, everything was done. Because if there was one thing Papa Stilinski cared about, it was protecting his son who had big ideas and a bigger mouth,
liable to get himself into all kinds of trouble if left to his own devices. Which he so often was.

But Derek wasn’t trouble, and Stiles simply had to get his dad to understand that. Just simply get that Derek was more of a saint than a sinner, a paradigm of self-control when Stiles was constantly, gently needling him into more. Not that Sheriff Stilinski needed to know that Stiles wanted more, was angling for more, or that Derek had just agreed that there could be more.

Holy shit, Derek had just agreed that there could be more.

Somehow, that fact still hadn’t quite sunk in yet, and Stiles flopped down on his bed as he tried to let it sink in now. No, still not happening. Holy shit. Holy hell, holy hell, holy hell—

He glanced at his phone as it buzzed, but it was just Scott, asking about what homework he had missed today. Nothing exciting, Stiles assured him, and updated him on the day with Isaac constantly on his tail. Not that he entirely minded, considering it had let both of them go through the day unmolested, or relatively so. He’d never really realized how much they both counted on Scott being there until he was gone, honestly, and wondered if it was one of those platonic bonds they talked about sometimes. Whispered about was more like. A bond never sealed with a bite, but there all the same, intangible, influential, inimitable. Maybe. It’d make sense, but he doubted that Isaac would care for the thought, so maybe it was best not to mention it to Scott at all. And Stiles may have had a big mouth, but it was a careful one too. Well. Sometimes.

8:43pm

Okay, Derek still hadn’t texted back and this was getting a bit concerning. Now he was pacing circles in his bedroom, sweatpants and a t-shirt on, hoodie discarded by his desk because he was getting too hot with it on. And honestly, it was just another layer that was itching at his skin, making him go a little crazy. Some people had speculated that he was on some kind of spectrum because of how his mind could get overloaded, focus too much on sensation and shut down as a result. But that was just how he was. He was easy to distract, unless he was hyperfocused on something. Always on one extreme or the other, and that applied to his relationships as well. Apathy wasn’t an emotion he knew well. And right now, he was driving himself crazy thinking of all the reasons why Derek wouldn’t have texted him back by now, why he was avoiding him (possibly), or avoiding the text (definitely), or both.

Fuck.

9:51pm

You okay?

11:06pm
Finally, he went to bed. There was nothing else to be done, at this point. Well, he could call Derek, but that’d be pushing it and if Derek really wanted to be left alone…well. It wasn’t his place to bother him right now, was it?

***

Kate. Kate was back in town. And worse than that, she’d gotten to Stiles. What had she told him? What had they talked about? Why had she approached him in the first place? Was she intent on destroying not only Derek’s past but his future as well?

He hadn’t asked for enough details from Peter, but then again, knowing Peter, he wouldn’t have many he’d be willing to give. Besides, this all sounded like it’d been seen from afar, and Peter didn’t actually have much of a better idea than Derek. God. Why now? Why ever? Couldn’t she have stayed in her icy corner of Hell, down with the Devil where she belonged? She’d gone to Europe, he’d gone to Canada. An effort to stay far away from each other that was mostly led by him because after the damage she’d done…He was still technically recovering, as little as he tried to show it.

But it did show. In the little things, like how cautious he was with Stiles in every way. Especially the ways that concerned his age, the gap between them that Derek wanted to ignore but was incapable of ignoring when Kate had done so much with it before. He didn’t want to be a predator. He didn’t want to be her.

And while Stiles had never once seemed like he viewed Derek that way, had actually acted completely the opposite of that, and while Derek knew he wasn’t Kate—knew it with every aching fiber of his being—he couldn’t shake the feeling that if he took things too far, too fast, too much with Stiles, he would be. It was unthinkable. He remembered how Kate had left him feeling, both the highs and the lows, and it seemed so…terrible. To do the same to Stiles. The easiest way to destroy someone was through love, Derek had learned that the hard way, and it still hurt to this day. Despite the years. Despite the time. Despite the distance. That Kate had now effectively wiped away.

He hadn’t realized how long he’d been silent with Stiles until the second text came in, a simple, You okay? But he couldn’t bring himself to pick up the phone and answer. It felt like everything was spiraling down rapidly and it wasn’t fair, it wasn’t fucking fair that she had this effect on him still, even now.

But Stiles had more of one, didn’t he? Or was it too early to fold like that, too early to give him that much power? And oh, Derek was so afraid of giving away that much power. But Stiles…

You okay?

Stiles may have been complicated, but he was simple at the same time, in the way that Derek couldn’t bring himself to view anything he did as a bad thing. Clearly Stiles wasn’t affected by this run-in with Kate, or at least not enough to stop worrying about Derek, and god, that was sweet. Too sweet. Too cute. And just like that, Derek was back to suspecting a trap, falling back into old paranoia and suspicions.

So he turned his phone off, and went to bed.
Abandon All Fluff, Ye Who Enter Here

Chapter Summary

You didn't think the whole fic would be warm and fluffy, did you? Or; the shit finally hits the fan.

Chapter Notes

Heyyyyy guys. So guess who finally managed to update? Don't worry, though, we're closing in on the last few chapters so they will be coming out more quickly until we reach the end. You guys ready? Hold on to your seats, because it's gonna be a bumpy ride.

It’d been a week without a word. Stiles had given up on texting, given up on calling, and now was beyond worry into desperation. It wasn’t right. Something wasn’t right, and he didn’t want to intrude on Derek’s life if he wasn’t welcome, but at the same time what if something had happened? What if Derek was in trouble, what if—no one would be able to contact him. He didn’t know anyone else who knew Derek, aside from Peter, but creeper uncle didn’t have Stiles’s number—god, he hoped he didn’t, at least—but he wouldn’t think to contact him either in an emergency.

Did Stiles even warrant being contacted in an emergency? It wasn’t like he and Derek were…bonded or anything. They were friends at most, and barely at that. They hardly knew each other, when it really came down to it. How many times had they hung out? How much did they know about each other? Arguably, Stiles knew more, but that was mostly because his life was boring and he was too young to have a lot of history. And beyond that, he sort of kind of maybe had police resources at his disposal? If he found the right way to ask, at least.

But in actuality…he really didn’t have much of a right to information about Derek’s wellbeing, honestly. And that bothered him more than he was willing to admit, because, well…because if something had happened, and Derek thought he wasn’t there for him…No, that sounded selfish. Maybe it was selfish. After all, that’s what Stiles was, in a lot of ways. He always wanted what he wanted, got so fixated on it that he wouldn’t waver in his interests and would do whatever it took to get it. Just another one of those little tics that was cute when he was a child and startling as a teenager.

But was this really selfish? He just wanted to know that Derek was okay. That nothing bad had happened, though at this point he was almost hoping something had because the alternative was—the alternative was that Derek simply didn’t want to talk to him. Didn’t want to see him, despite how well they’d left things last time. Despite what Derek had said and Stiles agreed to. No, something had to be wrong. Right?

And if it wasn’t…then Stiles was going into this ready to risk a fragile heart in the hands of someone he’d thought was careful enough to trust with it. But there was still the possibility that it was going to be shattered beyond repair. And that was a terrifying thought…
…that stopped him for about five seconds before he was out the door and down the stairs, firing up the jeep that desperately needed a new battery before he was headed off to Derek’s apartment.

Knock knock knock. A few minutes without an answer, and Stiles was starting to worry Derek wasn’t home. “Derek,” he called through the door, biting his lip as he waited for an answer, chewing on already torn skin. A bad habit, a nervous habit. He had an excuse for both right now.

“Derek.” Knock knock knock.

A minute more, and the door slid open a fraction so Stiles could see Peter, who pressed a finger to his lips to be quiet. Stiles’s brow furrowed over Bambi brown eyes, but he complied, closing his mouth, and Peter slid the door open enough to let him inside.

Voices. He could hear two voices; one was distinctly Derek’s, that grumbling baritone that he knew so well, that he felt in every fiber of his being depending on the circumstances and its tone. The other, though…the other sounded familiar, but he couldn’t quite place it, and was definitely female. Slowly, he followed the voices to their source, in towards the back of the loft, and stopped when he saw Derek arguing passionately with the woman from the gas station. The woman who had made him so distinctly uneasy, who’d told him she was part of the new force. Rachel, right? Or something like that.

Stiles glanced behind himself as he heard the door shut, seeing Peter position himself by it, and when he turned back to Derek and the woman, it seemed that the noise had caught their attention as well, as both were looking at him. Derek seemed caught, like he couldn’t decide whether to be surprised or upset, and the woman simply looked annoyed, like Stiles was an unwanted intruder on this conversation. And meanwhile Stiles was still trying to add everything up.

The silence that followed was so unbearable that Stiles immediately spilled over with words, stammering and stumbling as he tried to explain himself. “I—you didn’t—I tried calling—you never—you didn’t answer so I—I thought maybe—did something happen? I’m sorry—but—what is she doing here?” he finally managed to get out, and the woman was the first to respond, taking a step towards him in that uncoiling way that predators had, like a jaguar stalking prey through the jungle.

She held out a hand to him, giving him the most patronizing smile he was pretty sure he’d ever seen, and said, “I think we met already. Stiles, right? I’m Kate Argent.”

Kate.

“Stiles.”

Blood was rushing in his ears, making his brain thrum with a kind of energy he hadn’t felt in a while. Not like this. Anger was a well-known emotion, but with this anger came a kind of jealousy that was more dangerous than the anger itself. It wasn’t like he was jealous of what Kate had done to Derek, of their relationship; he was just jealous that they’d ever gotten that close. And then, on top of that, he was angry with her, so goddamn angry for what she’d done to Derek, the damage she’d inflicted that made him as cautious and closed off as he was now. Stiles could imagine what Derek had been like before Kate had gotten to him, and that thought made his blood boil at the same time as it made everything hurt. He couldn’t believe it. He couldn’t believe that she had the nerve to do this to Derek. Again.

“Stiles.”

Kate.
And the worst part? Was that Derek had let her in. Derek had let her in to the apartment and was talking to her, even though she’d destroyed his youth. Oh god. What if he was—no. Stiles wasn’t even going to consider it right now. He couldn’t. He had to stay focused.

Kate.

“Stiles, please.”

Stiles broke out of his own thoughts, turning to look at Derek, who had apparently been so carefully, so pleadingly calling his name. Only it hadn’t been pleadingly at all. It had been all hard edges and no emotion showing through, all his walls up because if he let himself be himself around Kate, who knew how she could use it against him. And that broke Stiles’s heart in a way that he hadn’t been prepared for.

Slowly, Stiles turned to look at Kate again, who had rescinded her hand, but was still smiling at him as if daring him to say anything, do anything, make any kind of move. She had her claws out, and was ready to move in for the kill. But she was also underestimating Stiles in this, discounting what he was willing to do to protect Derek from her. And even Stiles was surprised at how much he was already psyching himself up to do.

“You need to leave.”

That was Derek again and Stiles’s eyes flicked to him, seeing just a flash of desperation there before it was carefully covered up again. Didn’t matter. Kate’s eyes seemed to be fixed on Stiles, and his mostly on her, the two of them knowing that while this was about Derek, he wasn’t about to be able to stop it. He was too emotionally compromised to properly interfere, at least for now. And of course, Peter was the lone spectator in the stands.

“No, I think she needs to leave,” Stiles said, and he was surprised at how strong his voice sounded, how steady. So even it could almost be mistaken for certainty, and about this, he was certain. He was not the one who needed to go. She was.

Kate’s eyes narrowed in on him.

“No, Stiles. I’m asking you to leave,” Derek said in that horribly flat voice, and Stiles looked at him again, brow furrowing as his eyes darted over his features, trying to find a sign of something, anything. But Derek had always had a good poker face—because of her—and now Stiles couldn’t tell what he was thinking. What he was trying to do.

And normally, he would have trusted Derek with it. Normally, he would have believed that Derek was an adult capable of making informed decisions about his own wellbeing, but when she came into this…everything was out the window. So no. He wasn’t going to leave, even if Derek begged him to. This wasn’t okay. Derek wasn’t okay. And that was the most important thing right now.

“Yeah, Stiles. Why don’t you leave and let the adults do the talking?” Kate said, something incredibly smug in her tone, and Derek closed his eyes like that had hurt but Stiles wasn’t sure why it would have.

“Why don’t you shut the fuck up?” he came back with, and Derek’s eyes flew back open, their beautiful green tones clearly unsure of where to focus; on her or on Stiles, on the hurt or the surprise that was probably Stiles nearly spitting with anger, hissing with it like a very small cat met with a
very big predator. Prepared to puff up to three times his size just so he could fight, because he wasn’t letting this one go down without a battle. Knockdown, drag out fight, something that Stiles wasn’t exactly experienced with but was willing to do all the same. Because that hatred had been blooming at the back of his mind ever since he learned about Kate, and now it had an outlet.

He could hear Peter laughing to himself from the back of the room, but it didn’t bother him because he was entirely fixed on Kate, who was still smiling at him, still smug about it. Like she’d scored a point and he hadn’t yet. Only he was pretty positive that they were on even footing right now.

“Stiles, I—”

“No, come on, Derek. Let him talk,” Kate said, her tone amused. “Kids do always say the darnedest things, don’t they?”

“Fuck you,” Stiles shot back, eyes narrowing in on her. “I’m not a kid, and I’m sure I have a hell of a lot more important things to say than you do.”

She arched an eyebrow. “Oh really?” came out in a purr as she took a step closer to him, Derek watching them both with something akin to terror woven into the fabric of his expression. Hidden threads that glinted when they hit the light. “And why is that, Stiles? What could you possibly have to say that’s so important?” She smirked at him, a hand on her hip as she stared him down. “Let me guess…first you’re going to tell me about how bad I am for Derek. How awful it is for me to come back here, when you know the bare basics of the situation and tried to deduce the rest like a third rate Sherlock Holmes because poor Derek here is too worried about hurting your feelings to tell you the whole of it. Then you’re going to tell me that I should get out of the apartment, get out of town, get out of his life again. You’re going to finish it off by telling me that he’s moved on, with you of all people, when really you barely know each other and don’t even have the basic foundations of a bond.” She tilted her head, smiling at him. “Is that about right, dearest? I thought so. Now get out, so we can have an adult discussion without annoying children interrupting.”

Stiles wasn’t quite sure what happened. Somewhere in between the start and the finish of Kate’s little speech, he’d shut down, the blood starting to rush in his head again and making it hard to hear, hard to speak, hard to breathe.

*Thrum thrum thrum.*

Kate.

*Thrum thrum thrum.*

He came to just as Derek was separating them, and Stiles realized that there was blood under his nails and Kate’s face was scratched up and his own face was pounding right by his right eye and oh god oh god Derek looked so upset and he was pushing him out and he’d done something terrible and oh no please no Derek—

Stiles took off running. Peter smoothly opening the door for him so he could get through, and trembled his way down the stairs, spilling out onto the pavement in front of Derek’s building. He dropped his keys the first three times he tried to hold them, finally clutching them so tightly that the alarm started going off, panic button accidentally crushed by his palm. He quickly unlocked the jeep, climbed in, and tore out of the parking lot as fast as he could, making it halfway home before he had to pull over, tears blurring his vision so badly he couldn’t drive.

So. That was Kate.
There was only a second after Stiles left where Derek could make his decision, and he made it quickly. He’d tend to Kate first, then go after Stiles. After all, Stiles had seemed so goddamned panicked when he ran out, he probably wouldn’t be in great shape to talk to just yet. Not that Kate was doing much better, honestly.

He set the first aid kit down on the table for her, but didn’t offer to help her tend to the scratches, his arms crossed against his chest. He wasn’t going to make things any easier for her, because while, yes, she had just been attacked, she had provoked Stiles. Not to mention their shared history.

They didn’t speak for a minute, Kate tending to her injuries and Derek to his own internal ones. Finally, she spoke. “It’s a rush, isn’t it?” She didn’t look up at him as she spoke, instead still staring at her reflection in the compact mirror she’d pulled from her bag.

Derek’s eyes narrowed, always expecting another trick, another hit from her. “What is?” he asked, voice cautious, careful in this minefield.

“The control. The fact that he would hurt someone else just for you, even if it goes against what he normally does, what he’s told to do, what he thinks he should do. Young minds are so easy to mold, aren’t they?” Her eyes flashed up to his, a smile playing on familiar lips, and that was it. He’d had enough.

“Get out, Kate,” he said, surprisingly calmly. “Get out of my apartment, out of town, out of my life. You did get one thing right. I’m sure that’s exactly what he was going to say, so since you took that opportunity away from him, I’m going to say it to you instead.”

“Oh, come on, Derek,” she said, pouting at him, and he resisted the urge to growl. “Your jailbait Omega is rubbing off on you. Where’s the Alpha we all know and love? The one that used to be so devoted to me? Or, oh, is that it? You’ve decided to be on the other end of the rope? Found your own little toy to play with, someone young and fresh and easy to mold?” She laughed, and it wasn’t a pretty sound. “Cute.”

She snapped her compact shut, tucking it back into her bag, and stood, smiling at him. “I’ll leave, then, Derek. I’ll get out of your life. But only because I finally have respect for you if you’re doing this to him. Turning an ex into an opportunity. Clever boy.”

Belatedly, he batted her hand away as she pinched his cheek condescendingly, and with a smile and a lingering hint of her perfume and pheromones, she left the loft, Peter sliding the door shut behind her.

“Oh, dear nephew,” Peter said, something terribly, superficially sympathetic in his tone, “it seems you’ve gotten yourself into quite the situation. And here I thought I was the only one with these sort of entanglements.”

“Peter, kindly shut the fuck up.” Derek said, but it lacked his usual venom towards his uncle, something tired in his tone. Something weary. He was tired. He wanted to go after Stiles, but he was tired and weary and knew somewhere, deep down, that Kate had at least been right about one thing. He was just as bad as she was if he pursued Stiles, because Stiles was too young and god, Derek didn’t want to hurt anyone the way Kate had hurt him. But already, he had, hadn’t he? Considering how Stiles had just acted. What he’d just done. And all for Derek.

Fuck.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!