Bruises and Hickies, Stitches and Scars
by ElisAttack

Summary

“You’re my lawyer, Derek. What are you going to do, draft up a contract for yourself?”

Or the one where Stiles is a professional dominant, Derek is his lawyer, and their professional relationship suddenly becomes not so professional.

Also, faeries.

Notes

This is my Sterek BDSM Modern Faerie AU that I've been working on for a month. Originally, I planned on posting it all at once, but it's getting really long, so I decided to chapter it instead. I'm posting the 30k I've written so far as I edit it, after that updates will up up once a week. I've made six pieces of art for this, but will probably make more...

This story involves versatile Sterek, because that is my head cannon forever into eternity. Both Stiles and Derek bottom, but Stiles is always the dominant.
The depression, homophobia and alcoholism tags do not make up the majority of the fic, this isn't a fic about someone fighting a raging battle with the bottle, I just tagged it in case someone would be triggered. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me on tumblr, here.

And if you're a lawyer, I apologize for inaccuracies.

Oh, and the title is from Queens of the Stone Age's Smooth Sailing

See the end of the work for more notes.
"I need your sperm." Lydia announces striding into the office with flourish, and Derek spews a mouthful of his morning coffee over the papers piling on his desk.

"What the ever-living fuck, Lyds?" He wipes his chin of dripping coffee, grimacing at the stickiness in his beard.

"There aren't any fae sperm banks, and we need our kid to be fae." She brusquely plops down in one of the seats opposite him, a scone in hand, scattering crumbs all over his paperwork. "Allison and I don't want to outlive our child if it's human."

"Then post an add on Craigslist." Derek grumbles pulling tissues out of the dispenser, trying to sop up as much of the mess as he can, hoping to salvage all the work he's done.

She raises her brow disbelievingly. "You must be joking."

He just glares at her, like what do you think?

Lydia sighs, picking at the pieces of her scone until Derek feels like he pops a blood vessel glaring at it so hard, and she eventually puts it down. "I was going to ask Danny, but-"

"So ask Danny." He growls. Great, the paper's completely stained, he angrily tosses the tissues in the waste bin.

She tuts, tongue clicking. "He's already planning on starting a family with Ethan..."

"So?" Derek remarks, distracted, glancing over the paperwork, hoping no ink is blurred from the coffee.

"Sooo." Lydia plucks the papers out of his hand, tossing them back on the desk, and Derek frowns even harder. "He doesn't want to explain to his future children why aunty Ally and Lyd's kid have
their adorable dimples and buggy Menehune eyes."

"You do realize this is all dependant on whether I want children too?" Derek smugly leans back in his chair, arms crossed.

Lydia snorts, raising a brow. "I know for a fact that you don't want kids."

He sighs, long and drawn out, just so Lydia knows exactly how inconvenient this is for him. "Fine. Give me whatever you need to give me, and I'll get back to you on my final decision." He doesn't want to be saddled with a child on the off chance Lydia and Allison both die. Sometimes he wouldn't mind offing his partner himself. It's no wonder Stiles calls him a bucketful of sunshine.

He has nothing against Allison, really. She's a wonderful nereid, hair tentacles and all. Lydia on the other hand... Occasionally he wonders why he thought it would be a good idea to start a law firm with her when they were still interns selling their souls, raising middle fingers behind their backs to the big man in the sky. The CEO of the biggest firm in the country, Allison's great-great-great etc. grandfather, almighty Poseidon, also known as, Gerard.

'God' of the fucking sea, a few thousand years old, douchebag extraordinaire, and yet the human name he chooses to go by is Gerard.

The Old Ones hate humans and yet they are so morbidly fascinated with them. They love using human names. In fact, he thinks Wōden goes by Tony now.

Lydia grins like Derek just signed his soul over to her. She rummages around in the massive purse she carries, pulling out a stack of papers thicker than the Oxford dictionary, and drops it on his desk with a resounding thump. Derek stares in shock at the stack, contemplating retracting his offer, but knowing he could never do something like that to her. Wonderful. His bleeding heart strikes again.

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"Here," the nurse hands him a jar. "Do your business in this." She bodily turns him around, grips him by the shoulders, and manhandles him into the rather large and opulent room. As one of New York's premier clinics, the expensive decor makes sense, but he thinks the grinning golden cherubs decorating the fucking crown moulding should have been left out of the design plans. They have these knowing grins on their little round faces, like they know what everyone who comes into this room does. Twinkles in their eyes and all.

Derek's tempted to snap at the nurse's fingers with his sharp incisors, and would have if she wasn't very human and blissfully unaware of the fae world. The nurse sits him down in the chair, and grabs a remote from her pocket, turning on the massive flat screen television opposite his seat. It's bigger than the one he has at home which is saying something considering his house is one Erica chooses to invade every year during the Super Bowl.

"You look like a breast man." The nurse states abruptly. Smirking, her lips stretch over lipstick stained teeth, and Derek absolutely does not know how to reply to that. Well, ma'am, here's the thing, I used to be, but now I'm kind of leaning towards the penis side of things on account of my boss and my very fluid sexuality, thank you very much.

"Okay, I'll leave you to it." She pats him on the shoulder and departs, closing the door with a click, taking the fucking remote with her.

Derek's mutters very unflattering things under his breath when stereotypical porn music blares through the surround sound speakers, all *boom chicka wow wow*. The screen fills with a badly lit
close up of fake breasts the size of watermelons, defying gravity simply by existing. He grimaces.

Derek tries to drown out the tacky music with his own thoughts, so of course they automatically drift to his favourite fantasy. He curses his errant brain, but unzips his pants regardless, pulling out his dick, wondering how Lydia managed to talk him into this. But they want a child, and he's reluctant to deny his partner anything she truly wants, so he gets down to business, thoughts full of pale, mole spotted flesh, and glowing amber eyes consuming his fantasy.

Five minutes later Derek hands the nurse the clear jar full to the brim with Derek's sharp toothed little swimmers. He's trying not to meet her wide eyes stare, but it's just his luck when they lock eyes. She looks shell shocked. He has textbook knowledge that werewolves produce more sperm than normal humans, but it shouldn't be that much more than normal. The look on her face says otherwise.

He's just glad he doesn't have to worry about DNA analysis and the like, one of Allison's cousins works in the clinic and he's handling the rest of the procedure. They don't want a human doctor freaking out after analyzing Derek's sperm, finding out he's not so human as he claims.

"Thank you, Sir." She finally stutters, and Derek winces as she gawks at the jar, holding it up to the light like inside rests fucking manna from heaven and not copious amounts of his sperm. Her eyes finally tear away from the jar, meeting his. "Would you be interested in donating for us outside of this case? I can say, with absolute certainty, that you must have an impressive sperm count."

"No." He huffs, marching over to the closet and pulling his leather jacket out, wincing at the overpowering scent of lavender and mothballs. Wonderful, now he has to make time for a trip to the cleaners.

"Sir!" Derek ignores the nurse calling for him, walking to the door. "Sir, wait!" Derek grumbles, turning around expectant, tapping his foot impatiently. She holds a clipboard and pen in her hand. "How would you rate your experience with us? From one, meaning worst? To ten, meaning best?" Derek doesn't know what he's supposed to compare it to, it's not like he's donated sperm before.

"One." He finally settles on. "The cherubs are creepy, and you need to provide a porn option for other sexualities."

He's an ass man after all.

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"Stop staring at your client's ass." Lydia whispers in his ear, elbowing him in the side. Derek reluctantly drags his eyes away from Stiles' denim clad bottom where he's bending over, rummaging around in the filing cabinet in his office.

"Here you go." Stiles hands over a stack of applications and Derek sighs, he hates paperwork like it's an annoying mosquito buzzing around on a perfect summer's day. Don't get him wrong, he loves his career. He loves arguing law, it's why he became a lawyer in the first place. But the fucking paperwork...

Stiles leans against his desk, grinning. "So wonderful to see you again, Lydia." He winks, and Lydia rolls her eyes, but she wears a fond expression regardless.

Lydia and Stiles grew up together. Their mothers were friends, and Lydia claims Stiles used to have the biggest crush on her when they were little. He apparently grew out of it, the same time she grew out of pretending she liked dick. She likes to say Stiles annoys her, but more often than not if she
doesn't have any appointments she tags along when Derek goes to Stiles' penthouse.

"I know I'm not supposed to talk about clients with anyone but Derek," Stiles whispers eagerly, "but guess who just applied for a trial session?" Derek peeks at the applications, and raises his brow at the first name he sees. "One of those politicians you hate so much."

Lydia leans forward in interest. "Really?" There's a hint of something mischievous in her eye, but Derek kicks her in the leg, dismissing whatever plans she has in store for the senator. He couldn't care less about the man, but if anything mysterious happens to him while he's in Stiles' care, Stiles is the one who will get fucked over.

Lydia is a very avid supporter of women's rights, she grew up during the Suffragette movement in the early twentieth century, and marched with those same women through the streets of New York, demanding equal voting rights, equal fucking everything. She never really got over her justified hate of misogynistic politicians. And after living through all four waves of feminism, it seems only logical.

She used to carry signs and march in protests, trying to bring awareness to the general public, and when she felt like that wasn't working as well as it should have, she went and got herself a degree in law. Derek imagines that fifty years in the future she'll get on the political gravy train and try to enact some change from within.

"Can't say who, but he's willing to give me a fucking lot of money to have unmentionable things done to him."

Lydia lets out an amused snort. "Not tax payer money I hope?"

Stiles laughs. "Nah, I had Danny check, it's as squeaky clean as the alimony he should be paying his third ex-wife." Stiles shrugs dismissively. "He smelled desperate. But I'm not taking him on, wouldn't want to inspire him to do something republican."

Lydia winks, and Stiles smiles fondly at her, before turning back to Derek, smile still curling at the edges of his mouth.

"Everything good, Der?"

Derek flips through all the applications, frowning when he sees them all marked with small red strokes at the bottom. "You're not considering any of these?" Derek glances up, gesturing at all the rejections, concerned, wondering why Stiles isn't accepting anyone.

Stiles' face clouds over for a second, before a smile wipes it all away, but it's a bit too fake in Derek's opinion. "I don't really want to take on any new clients right now."

Derek furrows his brow. "But you just dropped the Gonzalez contract."

"Derek." Stiles interrupts, his smile strained. "Please let it go."

Derek wants to do no such thing, but he relents. "Fine." Tucking the papers into his estate bag, he rises from his seat, putting his hand out for Stiles to shake, a routine they established a few years ago when Stiles, the city's most infamous pro dom, hired Derek, a relatively unestablished lawyer to handle all his contracts.

Now, he's one of the top lawyers in the city, and it's all because Stiles gave him a chance, recommending him to friends in the higher circles he frequents when Derek pulled through for him. He owes Stiles his livelihood and they have a fulfilling professional relationship and a solid
friendship. It's only recently that Derek started wanting more.

Stiles takes his hand, his skin just on the side of too cool, shaking it, long fingers lingering just a second too long on his pulse, as he meets Derek's eyes. "See you around, Derek." Stiles' eyes flash a bright amber, and he smirks, letting go, moving to pull Lydia into a hug.

Derek shows himself out of Stiles' penthouse, taking the private elevator down. He waits for Lydia on one of the opulent couches decorating the lobby of the Greenwich Village low rise Stiles has lived in as long as Derek's known him, longer than Derek's been alive. It belonged to Stiles' mother in the twenties, and Stiles once told him she used to throw the most opulent bashes, where flappers and young stylish men would come and dance the night away, and Stiles' father, a police chief, could let go, just for the night.

Derek can vividly picture a ten year old Stiles twirling around with his mother, a record playing on the gramophone in the background, while his father claps his hands to the beat, laughing along. Derek knows Stiles misses his parents, the air is almost palpable whenever he looks at the black and white photograph of them he keeps in his desk. A faint smile quirking his beautiful mouth.

Stiles claims he hasn't changed the decor much in the penthouse, except for the hundreds of paintings and prints decorating the walls, souvenirs of all the different artists he's met through the years. Some of the them he even inspired as a muse.

Stiles' leanan sídhe heritage gives artists that final kick to complete their life's work, or just create something that's been lingering on the edge of their mind for so long but never knew how to accomplish. It's why he's so picky with his clients, giving inspiration to the wrong person, is just a disaster waiting to happen.

Lydia walks out of the elevator, a smile on her face. "We're invited to a party." She waves a heavy envelope between her fingers. Derek nods to the concierge as they leave, and he smiles back, recognizing Derek from the hundreds of times he's come here on business.

"Which court?" Derek parked the Camaro a street away since all the spots in front of the building were occupied. The air's a bit chill now that it's autumn, and the wind blows through his hair, tickling a few strands along his forehead. The leaves are beginning to turn colours and before he knows it, he'll have to dust off his winter coat.

"Neutral, actually." Derek raises a brow. New York City is Seelie territory. Any fae not belonging to their court needs to present boatloads of paperwork and recommendations to the King, and even then, they're unlikely to be allowed in. The Unseelie control Las Vegas and Derek figures it's fair enough. They get slot machines and a burgeoning porn industry, he gets fucking brilliant pizza.

The party is most likely going to be held outside the city, maybe Upstate.

"It's in a mansion up in Connecticut." Lydia reads, and Derek pulls into the Holland Tunnel, crossing the Hudson into New Jersey, driving to their firm situated only a block away from Derek's house. It sits right above a fairly popular cafe, and in the morning the whole office smells like freshly baked Danishes and roasted organic coffee. Derek has no complaints.

"I'm surprised my mother hasn't sent me an invitation yet." He drums fingers against the wheel, they're caught in traffic, a hazard of living in the city.

Lydia hums thoughtfully. "Strange, considering she's the King's partner. Maybe she just didn't want you to embarrass her, it is a high class affair after all."
Derek growls in indignation. "I'm not embarrassing."

"If Stiles didn't graciously inform you about the sin of wearing brown shoes with a black suit, you'd still look like a fool."

Derek makes an offended noise. "Fashion is very complicated, and this is Stiles, okay? Have you seen the size of his closet?"

Lydia chuckles. "If given a choice you'd show up to work in a henley and full beard."

"I'm a werewolf." He declares as if that explains everything, even though his own half brother, Isaac, wears fashionable scarves like they're going out of style, and can't grow anything but a scraggly mess to save his life. "And I shaved yesterday." He self-consciously scratches the thick growth of stubble on his chin. If he doesn't shave for a week, he grows a full beard, and taking care of it quickly becomes tiresome. Derek usually lets it grow until it's long and silky before taking a razor to it.

Don't even get him started on his chest hair. In college when he just started dating Braeden he would get waxed every few weeks. For years he kept himself smooth like a swimmer, until Braeden left him the day after their honeymoon to join the Marines. He never picked up a wax strip again. He didn't see the point, she liked him smooth, and he only endured it because he loved her. And look where that got him. Manscaping is just too much trouble than it's worth. It's not like he's getting laid anyway.

"Your mother is a werewolf, I don't see her wearing plaid. You aren't all lumberjacks."

"But a significant portion of the population is."

"No it's not." Lydia scoffs. "So your species likes the fresh air? Doesn't mean you all like chopping down forests, you much prefer running amongst them."

"I can't run amongst the trees very effectively wearing a suit, we werewolves much prefer going skyclad for our full moon runs." Derek sends her a sharp grin, showing just a bit of fang. "Besides, as much as Stiles likes to pretend he only wears designer clothes, I've seen him in a pair of ratty plaid sweats."

And does Derek ever remember those sweats, specifically the way they hung off Stiles' hips, so loose, even a small tug would send them fluttering to the ground.

"Oh really?" Lydia exclaims, her voice mischievous. "And when was this?"

Derek blushes, mumbling. "He called me over when a leg on his sawhorse broke."

"He called you to fix his bondage equipment?" She raises a tiny eyebrow. "You. Not a specialized carpenter?"

Derek shrugs nonchalant, like he always does menial chores for the client he's paid to provide with legal services. "I told him I knew how to whittle."

She scoffs. "Yeah. When you were in the boy scouts, twenty or so years ago."

"Well I still fixed it..." He whines softly in protest.

"And how many hours did you spend online figuring out what a sawhorse was before you fixed it?"
Derek says nothing, he just frowns, staring out the window into traffic.

"I thought so."

Thing is, he knew what a sawhorse was long before Stiles asked him to fix his, but he doesn't want to tell Lydia that, so he lets her make her own assumptions. Derek would rather his kinks stay very far away from Lydia's devious mind, lest she do something like laugh at him.

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When he gets home that night he calls his mother.

The phone rings for a few seconds before Talia Hale picks up with an exclaimed, "Derek, what a pleasant surprise!"

"Why didn't you tell me about the party?" He asks bluntly.

"Oh honey..."

"If you're ashamed of me, I get it. You can't have your ridiculous son embarrassing you in front of the King. But I wish you told me."

"Derek, I'm not ashamed of you." She says quietly after a long silence.

"Sure seems like you are." He grumbles, petulant.

She sighs. "Your father was invited."

Derek freezes. "And you're still going?" He gapes, falling down on the couch in shock.

"I have to, you know that."

"Mom," Derek says massaging his forehead, "he tried to kill you."

She chuckled, and he can almost picture her waving her painted manicure, like it's nothing that her mate of three hundred years tried to decapitate her when she told him she was leaving him. "That's water under the bridge, I'm sure Malcolm is over it by now."

"He tried to kill you." He repeats slowly, emphasizing the kill part.

"I'll be fine," she tries to reassure him unsuccessfullly, "and if you're so worried, you can come along, I'll send you an invitation."

Derek exhales a long and frustrated breath. It seems his mother's mind is made up. "Stiles already gave one to Lydia."

Talia's voice turns sly, and Derek can almost picture her teasing grin. "Speaking of Stiles, how is your lovely leanan sídhe?"

Derek rises from the couch, pacing around the room in circles. "Well first of all, he isn't mine."

His mother snickers like the big know it all she is. "You tell yourself that, honey, especially if it makes you feel better."

Derek ignores that, fingering the soft wool of his pants, wondering just how he's supposed to address what's on his mind. "I think something is bothering him."
When Derek reached the office and Lydia left to fetch them dinner, he looked through the applications, staring shocked at them. Derek could understand why Stiles rejected some of them, but others, he couldn't even wrap his mind around. A brilliant composer from Iceland, a famous Silesian chef, and a fucking ballet choreographer. Stiles loves inspiring people in the creative field, he used to take on anyone who even expressed a hint of artists block. It's inconceivable that he would reject these people.

His mother stops laughing, and the line is silent for a few seconds. When she speaks again, her voice is serious, tinged with Alpha authority. She knows how much Stiles means to Derek, and because Derek is a member of her immediate family, Stiles' well being is something she takes seriously. "Tell me." She asks. "And I'll see if I can help."

"But the old ones..." Talia trails off, her voice worried.

"He's still letting them go before the madness takes hold, but he isn't replacing them." His fingers itch to hold something other than wool, something glass and smooth, something that burns as it goes down.

"Oh dear."

"And what do you mean by that?" He demands, body tense. He released his hold on the fabric and gives his body what it wants. Walking over to his liquor cabinet, he pulls out a bottle of wolfsbane bourbon and a venetian glass tumbler. Stiles bought the neon multicoloured set for him as a joke last Christmas, expecting Derek to throw out the garishly colourful tumblers. Little does he know he kept them, tucked away from prying eyes. Derek couldn't bear to get rid of them. Even if they are ugly as fuck.

"How old is Stiles?" She asks, delicately, like she's afraid of his answer.

"He's still really young." Derek holds the phone against his shoulder and ear, while pouring himself a glass, full right to the brim. He just hopes his mother assumes the pouring sound is coffee. Derek likes to call himself a functioning alcoholic, he knows his mother wouldn't agree. "Only a hundred and three. Why?"

Derek is very young compared to some fae. Births are few and far between amongst the more longed lived species. In fact, he thinks there's only been five or six births since his own. Stiles and Lydia are only a decade or so apart in age but are the only fae in the state in their early hundreds. Once, Erica thought it would be funny to order a custom cake for Lydia's birthday, wishing her a happy hundred and fifteenth making Derek pick it up. The expressions on the faces of the employees in the bakery are ones he'll never forget. One of them even asked if Lydia was his great-grandmother. Derek sometimes forgets how short the human lifespan is.

"It means he isn't dying of old age."

Derek coughs, liquor burning as it goes down the wrong pipe. He mutes the phone, and hacks up a lung. Clearing his throat a few times he unmutes the phone, growling. "What?"
"Stiles feeds off his clients, and if he's not feeding, he's not eating. He can't be sick, leanen sídhé don't have any natural diseases. So, if he isn't losing his desire for food because he's dying of old age or disease, what does it mean?"

"That he's starving himself." Derek breathes, shocked that he didn't see it earlier.

"Exactly."

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Derek's curled up on his couch, wrapped in a fluffy Snuggie covered in little cartoon wolves, another gift from Stiles. This time given out of nowhere, Stiles' only reasoning being he saw it and thought of Derek. He holds the garish tumbler full of bourbon in hand, half empty bottle sitting in front of him.

He's drunk as fuck. Whatever, it's not like he can actually kill his liver.

He's a twenty-nine year old divorcee with no mortgage and limited social life. He's pretty fucking boring, and can admit to that. At least that's what Braeden said to him when she presented him with the paperwork for their divorce.

They married right after university. A big, fat American wedding. Lots of family he's never even heard of before, in-laws that would smile to his face, but then talk shit about him the moment he turned his back. Braeden hated it, and so did he, but they went through the whole fanfare because her mother wanted the sky and beyond for her daughter.

His own wedding was worst day of his life, and the day he discovered grey hair scattered among the jet black. Derek's a werewolf with greying hair before he's even reached three hundred, it's unheard of, and yet he looks in the mirror every morning and there they are, mocking him.

His love for Braeden was the only thing getting him through his wedding day, and the moment the clock struck midnight and they left the banquet hall, catching the plane to Ko Samui, so beginning the second worst day of his life. In only a few short minutes, he discovered something sure to eventually ruin his life.

He's an awful flyer. Derek spent the whole flight locked in the bathroom, and not even for the fun mile high club reason. At least the honeymoon was one of the best two weeks of his life, surpassed only by the day he realized just how deep his feelings for Stiles extended.

Derek figures it's weird he considers the day he signed his divorce papers, freeing Braeden to pursue her career in the Marines, among the good ones, not the bad. It's laughable really, the day he was divorced ranks higher on the happiness scale than the day he was married. But then again, that basically spelled out his whole relationship with Braeden.

You married too young, Laura still says whenever he's in a funk and calls her up. But, no. They didn't marry too young, they shouldn't have married, period. He shouldn't have proposed to Braeden in the first place, not when she had her big dreams to focus on. Her father was a Colonel before he retired, and she grew up wanting to be a General. Big plans.

The day the plane landed, after their honeymoon, Derek was jet lagged, and drunk on about two dozen mini champagne bottles. He's a fucking lawyer, and a damn good one, graduated top of his class, Columbia, 2010. He once talked a dragon into handing over its treasure as evidence in court. Convincing a air hostess he wasn't really drunk: small peas.

We're celebrating, he said to the hostess, swinging the bottle back, while Braeden looked on in
disgust. He landed on American soil, drunk, and hanging off his new wife, begging her not to catch her next flight out to Quantico, to instead come home to the Hoboken brownstone his mother purchased for them as a wedding gift. She pushed him off in the directions of the taxis, pressed a kiss to his cheek, and walked to her next flight, not turning around even once.

Derek can count the number of weeks Braeden slept in that house on two hands in the whole three years of their marriage.

But he doesn't blame her, he doesn't blame her one bit.

He blames himself. He proposed, she had to accept. Braeden is many things; tough, sly, sexy as hell, but she's also is a nice person, and they genuinely loved each other.

Now, she's off in an undisclosed location in the middle of godfuck nowhere, and he's still in New York, unable to ever leave because he hates planes, and is never stepping foot in an airport again so long as he shall live. Which will be a fucking long time, considering werewolves have a lifespan upwards of five hundred years.

So cheers to him. He's living the fucking high life.

Derek downs the bourbon, relishing the burn as it slides down his throat. He throws his head back against the sofa, staring up at the stuccoed ceiling wondering just what he's supposed to do about the situation with Stiles. Derek's in love with him, but they don't talk about Stiles' feeding habits. He tries to avoid it, honestly, mostly because it involves Stiles having sex with other people. People who aren't Derek.

Derek feels a sharp pain on his palm, looking down, puzzled, he finds the glass tumbler cracked. A shard is wedged into his flesh, blood running down his wrist in a stream. Swearing, he slowly opens his palm. Carefully putting the tumbler down, blood smeared all over the pink glass, Derek sighs, pulling the shard out like the pain is nothing, tossing it into the remains of the tumbler with a clink. The wound heals over only a second later.

After washing the blood from his hand in the bathroom sink. Derek searches in the vanity drawers for the small tube of super glue he bought a while ago. He finds it still in its packaging. Usually when he breaks plates or mugs, he tends to toss them in the trash, it's too much of a bother to fix something he could buy from the corner bodega for a buck.

But Stiles gave him this tumbler, he can't just throw it out.

The joint is a bit crooked when he finishes, and Derek hopes it won't leak, but at least it's fixed and there aren't any sharp corners to cut a lip on. But still, he probably won't be able to drink from this one ever again.

Derek doesn't even bother walking up the steep flight of stairs to his bedroom. Wrapping the Snuggie tight around himself, he lies down on the couch. The tumbler sits in front of him on the table, streetlight flooding in from the open window, casting a blood red shadow through the glass on the table.

Derek drifts, the alcohol pushing him into a dreamless slumber.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
He wakes to the shrill screeching of his phone. Thankfully werewolves don't get hangovers or the sound would be horribly painful. Derek picks the phone off the table, not even looking to see who's
calling, just pressing accept. "Yeah?" He answers, voice sleepy and quiet.

"Shit, Der, I need you to come over right away."

"Stiles?" He sits up, suddenly wide awake. "What's wrong?"

"Fucking bastard said he's going to sue me."

"Who?" Derek unravels himself from the Snuggie, pulling it over his head, tossing it to the side.

"Jonathan. For breach of contract, or some shit excuse like that." Stiles hisses. "His fucking time is up and he doesn't like it."

"Mr. Taylor has a few stipulations in his contract with you." Derek states, all business, unbuttoning yesterday’s shirt, tossing it in the hamper, before rummaging in the closet for a wool blend suit. It's getting colder every day.

"I know, restrictions on what I can do with the money he gives me. Blah, blah, blah."

Derek snorts. "And did you violate them?"

"Violate seems like such a harsh word..." Stiles responds innocently.

"Stiles..." Derek trails off, pulling out the paisley green tie Stiles once said matched his eyes.

"He shouldn't have been looking through my things." Stiles states, his voice firm. "He went into my locked private quarters and found some pamphlets from a charity I donate to anonymously."

"What charity?" Derek questions, wondering if he has time for a shower. Sniffing under his armpits, he decides that yes, he does.

"It's for trans teens, and apparently Jonathan," Stiles says the man's name with disdain, "does not agree with my views. I wish I knew that basic rights for all people are not something he agrees with before I took him on."

Derek hums. "Technically he isn't paying you for your services. You are in a physical relationship and he's gifting you money. We'll discuss this further when I come over, but you shouldn't worry. The money becomes yours, free to do with it what you will, once it leaves his hands. Besides, you can always argue that you give other clients' money to the charity, not his."

"So he doesn't have a case then, no matter what the contract says?"

"Not even a little bit."

Stiles lets out a breath of relief. "Thanks Der, you don't have to come by. I was just panicking, you know I do that a lot. Sorry for waking you."

"Actually, Stiles, I was hoping to discus some things with you." Derek thinks of the conversation he had with his mother. What Stiles chooses to do with his life is really none of his business, but he's worried for him and he cares about him, so Derek will make it his business.

"Okay, cool. But bring pastries."

Derek laughs, Stiles and his sweet tooth. It's not like he gets any nutrition from physical food, but he still eats like a horse just because he likes the taste. "Sure. Coffee too?"
"Aww yes, from that little cafe beneath the firm, please."

Derek smiles. "Of course."

They say their goodbyes, and Derek walks into the shower. Grinning from ear to ear, he hums along to the soft rock station he tunes into in the morning. Derek takes his cock in hand, mint body wash slicking the way, as he thinks of abstracts that eventually lead to thoughts of Stiles bending him over, a soft hand on his throat, fucking into him relentlessly. He comes with his head thrown back, a stupid grin still on his face.

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Derek balances a tray of coffee and pastries in hand, estate bag dangling underneath as he unlocks Stiles' door with the key he gave Derek a year ago. He walks into the penthouse, calling out a greeting as he heads to the kitchen, depositing the food on the counter.

"Stiles?" He calls out.

"Just a second!" The man in question yells. "The files from Jonathan's lawyer are in the living room." Derek takes a seat on one of the fancy brocade couches, coffee in hand. Setting it down on the table, he picks up the files, snorting as he reads. If he doubted Mr. Taylor actually had a case, all his doubts are gone now. This is the last desperate struggle of a man trying to keep what he's about to lose. Derek can't blame him, if he was Stiles' client and was just informed he only had one more session left before he could never see him again, Derek would try just about anything to keep him.

He's heard about Stiles' many skills in the bedroom. Derek doubts the praise is embellished.

"Sorry about that." Stiles says, walking into the living room, adjusting the band of a pair of basketball shorts, hair dripping and skin damp. Derek pointedly looks away from his neck where a stray drop of water rolls down a strand of wet hair, collecting in the hollow of his collarbone.

"Coffee?" Derek offers the tray with the last cup.

"Fuck yes." Stiles grabs the coffee. Peeling the lid off, he inhales the scent of the organic cafe au lait, made exactly how Stiles likes it, extra steamed milk and a sprinkling of cinnamon on the top. Stiles takes a sip, making an obscene noise, in zero to sixty he chugs down the drink. Derek smiles, pleased. He picks up the box of pastries next, opening it to Stiles' wide eyed gaze.

"Macarons? Fuck, Der, you're a man after my own heart." His wolf preens at Stiles' praise.

Eventually the box empties, and he didn't even get to taste a bite, he raises a brow at Stiles who just shrugs. "Sorry?" He doesn't look even a little bit sorry.

Derek waves it off. "It's fine, I had a breakfast sandwich in the car."

"Yeah, but you wolves eat a lot, besides I'm itching for something else." Stiles gets this gleam in his eyes, before he pats Derek's knee. "C'mon, up, up."

"We're not all portals to another universe like you. Some of us believe in a little thing called moderation." But Derek still rises, following after Stiles as he walks to the kitchen.

"What do you want?" Stiles calls over his shoulder.
Derek shrugs, conveying that he just doesn't care. "You know me, I'll eat anything."

"I'm not asking you that." Stiles turns around to face Derek, placing a light hand on his chest, one errant finger circling around a button. He looks straight into Derek's eyes, and he swears they flash golden for just a second. "I'm asking you what you want. Not what you will settle for." Stiles says, authority and the knowledge that he's used to being obeyed evident in his tone. Derek swallows slowly, his heart thudding against his chest. "Well?"

"French toast." He offers weakly, and Stiles mouth widens into a grin.

"Good." He releases Derek from the spell, sliding his hand off his chest. Stiles is so naturally compelling. It's how he rose to become the top professional dominant in the whole country. He knows how to take care of people, and has almost eighty years of experience to back it up. Derek licks his lip nervously, watching Stiles get to work, pulling a pan off the hanging rack above the island. "You're in luck, I bought some Texas toast yesterday, be prepared to be amazed." Stiles waves his arms dramatically, tee riding up.

Derek takes a seat at the breakfast bar, loosening the tie around his neck. He's pretty sure Stiles' eyes trace his movements. "Nice tie."

Derek catches his gaze. "I know, you said you liked it."

Stiles makes an affirmative noise, "It matches your eyes." He turns to the fridge, bending over and pulling out eggs. Derek nearly chokes when the silky fabric of the shorts accentuates the rounded curve of Stiles' ass.

"Derek?" He looks up, ears turning red when he notices the smirk on Stiles' face. "I said, sweet?"
Stiles tips his head to the side, gaze sliding over Derek's neck, "Or savoury?"

Derek swallows, and Stiles' eyes follow the bob of his Adam's apple, licking his lips unconsciously. "Savoury." He decides, his voice hoarse.

Stiles smiles mischievously, turning back to the counter, chopping ingredients and adding them to the bowl. "Any plans for the day?" He makes conversation as Derek pulls out his phone going over his calendar.

Derek winces, seeing exactly what he has planned in for the day. He thought the appointment was in a week, but apparently not. "Yeah, Lydia wants me there for the conception of her child."

Derek hears a clatter as Stiles drops the whisk, batter going everywhere, he swears, grabbing a kitchen cloth, wiping up the mess. "You and Lydia?" Stiles' his brow furrows as he scrubs determinedly at the counter, not looking at Derek. "You don't really seem her type."

"What?" Derek scoffs, "No. She's having a baby with Allison, I'm just the sperm donor."

"Whoa." Stiles remarks, eyes wide as he tosses the dirty cloth in the sink. "She asked you?"

"What does that even mean? Are you saying my genes aren't good enough?" Derek folds his arms over his chest and Stiles rolls his eyes. Derek sighs, scrubbing a hand through his beard. "I shouldn't even be telling you this, there's a chance it might not take." Artificial insemination is a very fickle process after all, something he read as he went through the stacks of papers Lydia gave him.

"Then why are you telling me?"

Derek ignores the question, thinking out loud instead. "Honestly I'm surprised she didn't ask you."
Stiles laughs depreciatedly, expression turning stony. "Why the fuck would she do that?" Stiles mutters like he forgot Derek can hear every word he says, throwing the bread into the pan with more force than necessary. Stiles doesn't look at him once. Derek doesn't know what to think about the total 180 in Stiles' mood, somehow it reminds him of the strained smile Stiles wore yesterday when Derek asked why he wasn't taking on any new clients.

Stiles' mood improves by the time he finishes the French toast with flourish, serving it up with a sprinkling of chives, and what looks like hollandaise sauce on the side.

"Impressed?" Stiles asks, smile wry as he waits for Derek to take a bite. He does, and groans at the burst of flavour on his tongue. Closing his eyes, he simply enjoys the taste of the food, wondering if he could invite himself over more often and have Stiles cook for him. Wondering what it would be like to wake up to the smell of food cooking in the morning. He hasn't experienced that since he moved out of his family home so many years ago. To wake up, and plod his way into this kitchen in only his boxers, take a seat at the breakfast bar, and watch Stiles cook, wearing nothing but the Wonder Woman apron he hangs on the hook beside the stove.

His mind strays to what Stiles said just a few minutes earlier and he wonders if it has something to do with why he isn't feeding. How the heck is Derek even supposed to bring up that conversation? He doesn't want to wait for Stiles to come to him, because it's very unlikely he will. Stiles is stubborn like a goat, and very good at keeping secrets, he won't talk about his problems until they blow up in his face.

Stiles slides into the seat beside him, breaking Derek out of his contemplative thoughts. He has a plate of food, and a glass of orange juice in hand and Derek watches him out of the corner of his eye as he eats.

"Dude, stop staring. I made it, means I get to eat it too."

"Why do you even like the taste?" Derek's met only one other fae who feeds on life force instead of physical food. An alp who moved from hotel to hotel, feeding on the nightmares of guests. He went on one horrid date with her a while ago, and she spent the entire dinner urging him to describe his most terrifying nightmares, making disgusted faces every time he took even a bite of food. It's the last date he went on with someone he met on Tinder.

"I'm half human, you know that." Stiles shoves another forkful of food in his mouth before he even finishes swallowing the previous one.

"I thought you didn't need regular food?"

"Nah," Stiles waves his hand vaguely. "I just get these deliberating cravings only food can satisfy."

Derek leans over the counter, elbow braced as he rest his chin on his hand, watching Stiles finish eating. "What?" Stiles questions, his brow adorably furrowed as he chews the last bite.

"Nothing." Derek grins. Rising from his seat, he grabs the empty dishes, taking them to the sink to wash. He's about to turn the tap on and pick up the sponge, when a light hand on his waist stops him and he feels the heat emanating from Stiles' body all along his side, Stiles speaks only inches away from his ear. "Don't, you'll ruin your nice suit."

"But..." He protests. Stiles cooked, Derek should at least clean up.

"Take a seat, Derek. You're my guest." Stiles' fingers press a little more firmly, and Derek relents, moving to the side, Stiles taking his place by the sink. Derek feels like correcting him, but chooses
not to, he doesn't want to remind anyone in the room that he's just Stiles' lawyer.

"When are you meeting Lydia?" Stiles pulls orange gloves on, they have sunflowers all over them, and Derek can't help but think just how Stiles they are. It's like he has a switch he can flip between with ease. One day he's wearing an expensive Kiton suit, the next, ratty sweats he bought from the nearest Target that would make even Derek turn his nose up in disgust, which is saying something, considering Derek would go around in a beater and jeans given half the chance.

Derek leans against the counter, checking the time on the stove. "In two hours."

"Are you free until then?" Stiles turns the off tap and pulls the gloves off, he notices Derek watching and wiggles his fingers. "Gotta keep these puppies smooth for spanking." He winks and Derek turns away, blushing.

He clears his throat, "Yes, why?"

Stiles leans beside him, checking him lightly with his hip. "How do you feel about video games?"

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"Oh come on, that was so easy." Stiles goads, yelling as Derek struggles to press buttons, aiming where Stiles points. "C'mon Derek, it's not that hard." Derek growls, frustrated. He doesn't know how Stiles convinced him to play Portal 2. It would be easier if this was a point and shoot game, he's good at those, but this one is chock full of puzzles, and unless Stiles takes the lead he can't seem to figure out what to do.

"This isn't what I was expecting." He clenches his teeth.

"You're a lawyer Derek, use that big, beautiful brain of yours." Stiles taps a light knuckle against Derek's temple.

"But you're stuck in this fucking portal, how the hell am I supposed to get you out?!" He shouts, just shooting the portal gun in random directions at this point.

"You fire the purple over there!" Stiles exclaims, sitting up straight, violently pointing his finger at a white area.

"It can't be that simple." Derek exclaims in disbelief. Stiles turns his head away from the screen with the most perfect look of sass anyone has ever worn. "Fine." He presses the button, and lo and behold, Stiles' robot flies over the pool of goo. "Oh." Derek remarks.

"Yes, oh." Stiles rolls his eyes.

After what seems like eternity Derek finally admits this video game is just not his thing. He places his controller to the side and leans back on the couch, scratching his chin. Stiles paused the game and checks the time, his eyes widening in shock as he leaps to his feet.

"Shit, it's been three hours! You're late, I'm late, everyone's late!" Stiles exclaims, grabbing Derek's suit jacket and tie off the back of the couch, sprawling over Derek in a tangle of limbs, nearly kneeing him in the junk. He flings the tie around Derek's neck and drapes the jacket around his shoulders, pushing him towards the door. Stiles shoves his estate bag in his hands on the way out. "I'll call you later." Stiles says before closing the door in Derek's face.

Well, okay.
He's leaving the building when a town car pulls up to the front. A woman climbs out, dressed in a fitted pant suit, sunglasses hiding her face, but still Derek recognizes her as one of Stiles' clients. He nods as she strides by, "Mr. Hale." She greets, brushing past him.

Derek walks to his car.

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"Derek, you're not coming into the appointment with us," Lydia pushes him towards away. Stay in the waiting room."

"I don't see why I have to be here at all." Derek mutters.

"Moral support." Lydia deadpans. "Besides, Allison likes you. She finds your sour disposition endearing for some reason."

"You're going to have to get used to it, I doubt the kid will only inherit my eyebrows." And if the kid turns out anything like how he was as a child, Lydia and Allison will have their hands full. He wasn't always the most agreeable of children. He constantly argued with Laura and stole her toy cars just so he could pick a fight with her.

"You're forgetting, I used to babysit Stiles. I can deal with a bratty child. Besides, if you have at least one thing going for you, it's your looks. At least the baby sure to be pretty with a mother and sperm donor so-" She fans herself and bites her bottom lip, winking at Derek.

"Gee thanks." Derek says sarcastically. He takes a seat in the waiting room after Lydia leaves. Derek tries not meeting the eye of the same nurse from a few weeks ago, whispering in the ear of the receptionist about how many gallons of semen he produces, not knowing Derek can hear every single word she says.

It's a curse, really. Especially when they start speculating whether or not he's hung like a horse. Their exact words. Derek scowls at them until, unnerved, the nurse leaves. He pulls out his phone, going through his calendar, making sure he has alerts set up for appointments weeks in advance. Eventually, bored, he brings up the ebook app, and listening around to make sure no one is sitting near him, he pulls up the latest erotica novel he started reading last night.

Bodice rippers are his guilty pleasure and the reason why his ebook app has a sixteen digit unlock code. If anyone finds out, he's sure to spend the next few centuries of his life being laughed at.

After a few years he learned the tough skill of wearing a straight-laced poker face while reading the dirtiest smut in existence, but he still can't read erotica while in the same general area as other werewolves. The scent of arousal is a dead giveaway.

When Derek was still in college, he developed the fantastic ability to perform surgery on books, replacing one cover for another, passing off a bargain bin bodice ripper for Vonnegut. But he still hadn't perfected the poker face. Braeden used to ask him why Vonnegut and the other great writers of the 20th century used to make him look so constipated.

He never did end up telling her about his love of erotica, even after he married her. He guess that goes to show just how doomed their relationship was from the start. Their sex was just so vanilla. Fucking on his study desk was about as far as they would go. Derek used to daydream about Braeden pegging him, but he never ended up asking for it, it seemed too risqué and he was afraid she would reject him.

But then he met Stiles, and Derek found himself doing more and more research of the sexual variety
in the last few years than in his entire teenage experience, and he was the horniest teenager to ever walk the earth. That's saying something, considering he lost his virginity at sixteen to the cute girl in orchestra. In the band room. Only a few minutes after meeting her.

Derek used to go to the corner bodega with his fake ID, buying all the dirty mags he could get away with hiding in the shoebox under his bed. He already had the genetic disposition to grow a convincing, albeit scraggly, beard at a very early age, and Derek easily passed for eighteen.

At least he isn't alone in his love for dirty literature. The last time he got a chance to peek in the small room housing Stiles' extensive library, he found a whole erotica section arranged alphabetically. He recognized a few titles he read and liked, but it was curiosity that made him go home that night with a mental list of the novels with the most worn spines, looking them up and purchasing the ebooks.

It was like Christmas come early, finding out that Stiles shares some of the same tastes at him. Every single one of the books he bought were so hot and steamy, his jerk off fantasies were fuelled with quality material for months.

Stiles' taste is so far from vanilla, understandable, considering what he does to feed and make a living. And he's much more open about it than Derek, the books weren't even tucked away in some corner, they were right beside the reliable tomes full of obscure fae laws Derek likes to consult. After all, the bar only required he learned human law.

Which is how he stumbled upon them in the first place. Stiles graciously lets him use his library, asking for nothing in return, not even a reduction in Derek's retainer fee. It's part of why Derek loves him. Stiles is nothing like some fae.

The humans have their myths, claiming the Seelie court is full of light fae, while the Unseelie are dark and depraved, but it's more complicated than that. Clans, loyalties, and wars, millennia old, divide the courts, it isn't something as binary as good versus evil.

The fae are innately manipulative creatures, both Seelie and Unseelie.

Stiles though, Stiles is just so good. Well, he's a fucking asshole most days, but he says what he means and wants straight to people's faces. He doesn't dress up words, or hide his ugliness behind pretty promises. He doesn't lie, or speak in riddles. If he wants something, he fucking asks for it. Derek supposes it's something he garnered from his human father who just over a hundred years ago fell in love with an aging leanan sídhe when she saved his life, only for him to outlive her by a few years.

It's one of the most romantic stories he's ever heard. Every single fae in New York knows about Claudia and her human, John Stilinski. Over the century, their story has become synonymous with great loves like Tristan and Iseult, Layla and Majnun.

A long lived fae falling in love with a human is usually a very dangerous endeavour. Humans only live for so long, and permission to bring them into awareness about the fae is rarely granted. Derek supposed the only reason why Stiles' parent's relationship didn't fall apart was because Claudia barely had a human lifespan left of time to live, being just under eight hundred when she met John Stilinski.

Fae relationships are rarely so sweet and loving. Take his mother and father for example. Two wolves from rival packs, arranged to be married before they were even born. From the moment they saw each other, nothing but all consuming hate and resentment festered between them, to the point where Derek has quite a few half brothers and sisters born from infidelity. And yet they were forced
to endure a bond neither of them wanted for a few hundred years. That is, until the King of the Seelie took one look at Talia, and fell in love.

Derek doesn't know if his mother actually loves Deaton in return, or if she took up the offer for a relationship, just so he would use his authority as King to break her unwanted mate bond with Derek's father. All he knows is that he was so glad when their bond was shredded, even though it almost resulted in Talia's death by his father's hand.

Malcolm was banished from the Seelie court for attempting to kill the King's partner, shipped off to Fresno, where the air is so polluted it's absolute hell on sensitive fae sinuses. Although, he hears the Mexican food is to die for. Or to develop asthma for, if werewolves can even get asthma. Derek hopes they can, he fucking hates his father.

Derek can say what he wants about his mother's manipulative nature, at least she actually loves her children. His father would hardly even look at his progeny. He wasn't overly fond of the belt, or anything so physical, but he had such a way with words, manipulating them until they bit and stung, able to shrivel a child up on the inside, making them feel like they are worth less than they are.

Once, his father overhead Derek confessing confusion over his sexuality to Laura. He liked a boy in his class, and was hardly able to even talk to him without stumbling over his sentences. He just wanted to ask his big sister for advice, but his father stormed in the room, pointed his finger right between Derek's eyes, until they crossed, and used words no eight year old ever deserves to hear. Derek still shudders anytime someone uses the word faggot, even on television.

Not all fae are so accepting of sexualities different from the heteronormative, just as the same is true for humans.

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It takes them a little over two hours to impregnate Allison, and if Lydia had a dick she could've done it in just under five minutes, but then again she doesn't, and that's the whole reason they're here.

Allison strides into the waiting room, holding hands with Lydia, and her glamour ripples for a second, skin turning slightly blue until it readjusts, fading back to human. Her already brilliant grin widens when she sees Derek, pulling him into a back patting hug. "What are you doing here?" She asks, breaking the hug to look at him. Derek turns to Lydia, lips pursed, unamused. She has the audacity to send him a self-satisfied smirk.

Derek turns back to Allison, smile replacing his frown. "Are you going to name it after me?"

Allison hesitates, before saying slowly. "What if it's a girl?"

"Derek can be a feminine name." He winks and she laughs, patting him on the shoulder.

"Lydia dragged you here, didn't she?"

"Yup." He smacks his lips. "She lives to torture me." He sends a withering glare at Lydia, standing by like they aren't talking about her, examining her perfect manicure with a clinical air.

Lydia links her arm through his and Allison's as they leave the clinic, the receptionist telling them to have a nice day on the way out. Derek shows her his sharp human canines, smirking when she shrivels up in her squishy armchair. "Stop being so dramatic, I just wanted the three of us to go out for lunch, is all."

"I could've met up with you two afterwards." Derek grumbles as Lydia directs them down the street.
to a restaurant only a block away.

"Now, where's the fun in that?"

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A few days later, Derek stands in front of Stiles' door, holding his breath. Lydia's busy, and if he hadn't put off this until the last moment, he would've already had an outfit picked out to wear to the party. But like the big procrastinator he is, he fucked up. Now he has to ask his client if he would be willing to go out with him and pick up a tux.

Derek thinks he probably should've told Stiles he was coming over when he hears, insistent angry voicing coming from inside the penthouse.

Oh shit, what if Stiles is with a client? Heat floods his face. He's torn between knocking anyway, or running away screaming while popping an untimely boner. He strains his ears, listening. What he hears makes him come to the conclusion that Stiles is not in fact arguing with a client, but his girlfriend.

Derek didn't even know Stiles had a girlfriend. But then again that's none of his business, so why would Stiles tell him?

The yelling intensifies and Derek doesn't think he's ever heard Stiles so angry before, usually he's the picture of composure with a whole pint of sarcastic, it must be taking a lot for him to yell like this.

"I am proud of what I do, and if you don't want to tell your family, fair enough, it's none of their business anyway. But don't you fucking dare tell me to lie about who I am! I'm not going to pretend I'm Scott's fucking assistant!" Derek hears an indiscernible female voice shout angrily back at Stiles. The woman is evidently not in the penthouse, but on the phone.

"God, Sophie, you eat from their hands, and you take what they give you and you don't even question it. I am just your dirty little secret. But fuck that, and fuck you!" The woman shouts before the call cuts off abruptly as Stiles undoubtedly end it.

Derek stands awkwardly outside for what seems like hours, deciding whether or not the tux hunting is really necessary when he has so many work suits in his closet, but eventually decides not embarrassing his mother by wearing his business clothes to a formal function wins out over any potential awkwardness with Stiles. He knocks on the door, and Stiles opens it only a few seconds later. He's got a scowl plastered on his face, but it smooths to a smile when he sees Derek standing there.

"Let me guess, you need a tux?" Stiles' mouth quirks.

Derek just nods.

"Cool, let me grab my coat."

Stiles makes him drive to an older building by the Hyde Street Pier. It doesn't bear a sign anywhere on the brick exterior, and Derek wonders just how infamous this tailor must be if he relies on word of mouth alone to promote his business.

A bell rings when Stiles pulls open the door. Walking into the large studio space, Derek feels dwarfed surrounded by floor to ceiling cases full of fine fabrics. Tailor mannequins are scattered around the floor space, and the ones with heads have creepy faces drawn on them with black markers, Derek supposed they could be seen as amusing, but he used to get childhood nightmares
where Cora's dolls would to strangle him in his sleep with their chilling eye crinkled smiles.

A rather young man pokes his head out from behind a towering stack of fabric rolls, smiling in recognition at Stiles. "Stiles, wonderful to see you." The man greets with a warm Nigerian accent, turning curious eyes to Derek.

"Gideon." Stiles smiles brightly. "This is Derek." He steps forward and Gideon shakes his hand, grip firm and true. "He needs a readymade tux for tomorrow's party."

Gideon furrows his brow. "You ask for a lot, Stiles."

"And you always pull through. People don't call you the best stitch witch in New York lightly."

Gideon smiles, looking down at the ground kicking his toe into the ground, darker skin hiding his blush. "Flattery, Stiles, you do it so well. Follow me." Gideon waves his hand, directing them around the crowded floor. They round a cabinet and Derek stares in wonder, watching as a needle moves itself through heavy woollen fabric draped on a mannequin.

"Magic." Stiles whispers in his ear.

Gideon takes them to a large oval room decorated like it's something out of a Victorian palace. Couches sit in the center of the wallpapered room, surrounded by a few scattered floor length mirrors. There's an area sectioned off by a screen, presumably where people get dressed.

"Stand up straight, arms out." Gideon gestures and Derek complies, startling minutely when a tape measure flies out from god knows where, and winds around his bicep, moving to his waist next. He tries to stay as still as possible and not freak out when the tape moves around his neck, but he can't stop his eyes from flashing in displeasure.

When it finishes its job, the tape flows into Gideon's open hand, wrapping itself around his palm a few times. The man takes a deep breath, and closes his eyes, obviously concentrating on the information the tape garnered. Finally, he opens his palm, and the tape releases, flying to drape around his shoulders. "I'll be right back." He promises, disappearing into the stacks.

Derek sits down beside Stiles on one of the brocade couches.

"Don't worry," Stiles pats his knee, "you're in good hands, Gideon is the best at what he does."

Derek's heard of stitch witches before, but he's never had the privilege of meeting one. He's fascinated to see they are as amazing as the history books claim. They used to fashion the clothing of kings, weaving spells and enchantments into the fabric, protecting the wearer from harm. Derek relaxes, closing his eyes, his side pressing lightly into Stiles, even though there is enough room on the couch for them to sit comfortably without touching.

"Soo..." Stiles begins, and Derek blinks his eyes open, looking over at him. He's sitting up straight, hands in his lap, fingers drumming nervously. Derek raises a brow and waits for him to continue.

Stiles swallows. "I'm guessing you heard my conversation with Sophie, then. Exceptional werewolf hearing and all."

Derek sighs, running his hand through his beard nervously. He nods and Stiles takes a deep breath. "So we broke up, and I kind of don't have anyone to go to the party with."

"Why do you even have to go with anyone?" Derek asks, confused. "This isn't the 18th century, and you aren't a damsel in need of an escort."

Stiles chuckles. "Normally I would, but I know a few of my former clients will be there, and well..."
"Say no more." Derek reassures Stiles, patting him on the shoulder, allowing his fingers to linger only a second before pulling away. "Are you okay, though?" He questions, meeting Stiles' gaze. "About the breakup, I mean."

"I'll be fine. God knows I no longer have any expectations when it comes to relationships." He says bitterly, brow furrowing and he looks away from Derek. "Sorry for bothering you with my problems, therapist isn't in the job description."

"Hey." He nudges Stiles' arm with his own. "I was the one who asked you." Stiles smiles fondly for a second before his expression sours.

"Sophie's human, and she doesn't know about the fae. She wanted me to fly down to Vegas to meet her family." Derek purses his lips. "Yeah, you can see where that becomes a problem. I'd have to go through so much bureaucracy to even set a foot in the city, let alone stay there for a week. But I was willing to try, for her." Stiles shakes his head. "And then she had to go and fuck it up. She wanted me to lie for the whole week."

"Stiles, it would be hard for her parents to understand what you do."

"She wanted me to lie about my whole life, tell them I went to vet school with Scott, and now work in his clinic. She invented an entire story for me, that just wasn't, well, me. She created the person she really wanted to date, to bring home to the family. And I couldn't handle that, I am who I am, and if she really respected me, she would've said I worked as a therapist, or at least something close to the truth, not a fucking veterinarian. I faint at the sight of needles, okay. I could never go into medicine."

"And you're a terrible liar." Derek adds.

Stiles points a finger, wagging it. "That too."

Gideon returns then, pulling with him a rack bearing tuxedos of various fabrics and colours. "I'm assuming you are going together?" He asks, and when no one refutes him, Gideon pulls out a navy jacket, white collared shirt, and matching pants, handing them to Derek. He takes the clothes behind the screen, too nervous to undress in front of Stiles.

When he finishes putting on the tux, staring in wonder at how well it fits him, he calls out to Gideon, "you forgot to give me the..." trailing off when Stiles slips behind the screen.

He blushes scarlet as Stiles gives him an appreciative once over, all the way from head to toe. Meeting Derek eyes, he winks and wiggles his hand, holding a long strip of wine red silk Derek assumes is the bow tie. But before Derek can take it from him to put on, Stiles reaches out and flips the small spread collar, placing the tie around Derek's neck.

Derek takes a breath, inhaling the soft smell of verbena and sugar that just seems to be Stiles' natural scent, feeling long fingers touch his skin almost reverently. Normally he would bat away any hand that even goes near his vulnerable neck, but he trust Stiles, and his wolf basks in the contact.

He watches Stiles work. They're crowded together in the small space behind the screen, touching toes they're so close. Stiles has his pink tongue between teeth, the picture of concentration as he performs some sort of witchcraft, tying a fluffy bow in record time. He looks up, meeting Derek's gaze with a grin when he finishes, smoothing out the fabric, finger's ghosting the underside of his chin.

The grin fades the longer Stiles hold's his gaze and Derek finds himself unwilling to look away.
Long fingers fall from his neck, moving to rest on his chest, and Derek feels his heart quicken, and knows Stiles can feel it too, beating beneath his palm.

His feelings must be plastered on his face, because Stiles' eyes widen fractionally, and he licks his lips. Derek's eyes move down to trace the path of his pink tongue, leaving behind moisture on soft flesh, and Derek wants. God, he wants so much. He wants to take Stiles' lips in a ferocious kiss, biting them, sucking them until they're red like the bowtie around his neck. He wants to fall to his knees, and take Stiles into his mouth while Gideon stands only a few feet away. He wants Stiles to thread his long pale fingers through his greying hair, to hold him still and open for him, and just use him in all the ways he dreams about.

Derek's wolf pants and there is such breathless silence in the room, he can practically hear the muscles of his irises contracting, pupils dilating. His feelings for Stiles lay in the open and Derek couldn't give the slightest fuck. He knows now that Stiles wants him too. Derek leans a bit closer until he can smell the scent of watermelon gummy worms coming from Stiles' mouth.

Stiles takes a step back, ripping his gaze away, a look of such blatant horror on his face, Derek feels his insides shrivelling up. His face floods to match his tie in embarrassment as Stiles moves like the wind, leaving Derek behind, alone and cold.

It would feel better if Stiles had simply slapped him with a cold fish. Or shanked him in the gut.

They don't speak as Derek drives Stiles back to his penthouse, the tux sitting in a protective bag hanging in the back of the Camaro. Stiles nods to him, not meeting his eyes as he wishes him a good evening, closing the passenger door as he leaves.

Derek sits in the Camaro, head resting on the wheel, long after Stiles disappeared into the building.

It's like in only a short perfect moment, the flirting, and joking suddenly evolved into something serious.

And apparently Derek isn't someone Stiles wants for something serious.

Chapter End Notes

Will be posting one more chapter today.
Soo, my internet conked out. I'm posting this in the public library... and this kid keeps staring at me like he can read my soul... It's terrifying, like what do you even want, demon child????

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He has to watch a few YouTube videos in order to recreate the bow Stiles fashioned the day before, and even at that, it's a pathetic recreation. He can't get it to sit straight. Figures, he'll be the only one at the party with a crooked bow tie, all the more noticeable since he'll be standing beside the most beautiful, impeccably dressed man there. If Stiles will even want to stay with him, and not just ditch him the first chance he gets for someone less socially awkward.

Someone less infatuated with him.

Derek sighs, fingers dropping from his neck, it's not going to get any straighter but it could get worse, so he leaves it be. Looking over his appearance once more in the mirror before he leaves, he makes sure every stray hair is tucked in place and that he didn't accidentally shave off an eyebrow or something equally ridiculous. Derek looks about ten years younger without his beard, but it beats going to a major social function looking like someone shoved an ape in fancy clothing and tried to give it a degree.

He grabs his keys and definitely doesn't wonder if Stiles is going to think he looks nice in the navy tux.

The sun is just setting on the New York skyline when Derek pulls up to Stiles' condo.
The man in question waits out in front of the building wearing a single breasted plaid tux and navy bowtie, face turned up into the air, enjoying the breeze blowing off the nearby Hudson. The charcoal tux stands in sharp contrast to the wine red silk shirt Stiles wears underneath, and Derek dies a little on the inside as Stiles walks to the car, one hand in his pant pocket, pulling black wayfarers out of his jacket. He balances them on his nose, hiding his beautiful amber eyes from view.

"Hey." Stiles greets cordially as he opens the passenger's door, climbing into the Camaro. Derek grunts, waiting for Stiles to click his seatbelt closed, before gunning the engine. It's an hour long drive up to Greenwich, Connecticut and Derek figures if he drives fast enough he won't have to look at Stiles knowing he can't ever have him.

Stiles breaks the silence first. "Umm... Your beard, what happened to it?"

"It caught on fire." Derek deadpans, staring out the windshield as the buildings fade begin to fade
"What!" Stiles exclaims. "Really?"

"No, of course not." Derek says bitterly.

"You can't just scare me like that, Der." Stiles laughs, and Derek's fingers tighten fractionally on the steering wheel at the familiar nickname. He can feel Stiles' gaze dig into his cheeks, and he resolutely doesn't look at him. Stiles huffs, and Derek smells potent frustration as he turns away. "You looks weird."

"Thanks." Derek says sarcastically.

"But not in a bad way." Stiles rushes. "Younger, I mean. If it wasn't for your hair, I'd think you were still in uni." Derek's hands itch, eager to run through his hair, hiding the grey from view. "Not that I mind the grey." Stiles says hurriedly, before mumbling off to the side. "It's very sexy."

Derek chokes, coughing into his fist.

"Oh shit, I forgot you can hear that." Derek ignores him in favour of turning on the radio, and the car bursts to life with the din of classic rock, loud enough to inhibit conversation. Out of the corner of his eye, Derek watches Stiles slump in the seat, crinkling his suit.

The rest of the drive is silent, awkward, and strange. Stiles has never gone longer than half an hour without talking to him, but now both of them are brewing in this silence.

It feels like something irreparable.

They arrive at the sprawling colonial mansion location on miles upon miles of property by the Long Island Sound. If there's one thing Derek can say about the ancient fae, they throw the biggest, brightest, most opulent bashes. Cars are sprawled along the courtyard driveway lined with glowing lanterns, and Derek can hear the murmuring of conversation and the soft sound of stringed instruments.

Two finely dressed valets open their doors, and Derek eyes them critically before handing his keys and a folded up twenty to the one not staring at the Camaro like it's a piece of meat he wants to rub himself on.

Derek startles when he feels Stiles rest his hand on his elbow, but he doesn't push him away, he's here with Stiles for a reason, and that reason involves sticking close together until Stiles feels comfortable on his own.

A woman greets them at the massive arched door with what looks like nymphs chasing after a satyr engraved into the teak. Derek narrows his eyes, it's very offensive, and he really hopes there aren't any nymphs in attendance today.

With the blatant speciesism in conjunction with the gaudy decor this is already turning out to be way different from his usual scene involving Erica, Boyd, a box of wine, and Netflix. Stiles hands over their invitations and the woman promptly checks their names off a list, wishing them a good evening as they enter the house. It's packed to the brim full of the most important fae in the country and Derek gulps.

Stiles tightens his hand on Derek's elbow, his thumb massaging the stiff muscle until Derek relaxes. "You'll be fine." Stiles whispers, barely audible, knowing Derek will be able to hear it. Stiles steers him deeper into the massive house weaving around the crowds of people with skill as they make
If he thought the entrance was opulent, the ballroom is just plain garish. Stiles snorts, leaning closer, he whispers into Derek’s ear. "Jeez, it's like a colour-blind unicorn decided to take a page from Rococo architects and went to town." There is gilt moulding everywhere, and frankly the light reflecting off of it hurts his sharp eyes. Derek nods in agreement, squeezing Stiles arm until he grins like everything is perfectly normal between them.

A waiter walks by wearing a purple wolfsbane flower in his lapel, carrying flutes of champagne balanced on a gold tray. Derek grabs two, draining them, one after another, putting the empties back on a nearby table. He ignores Stiles' raised brow, grimacing at the bitterness of the wolfsbane ruining what would've been very nice champagne. He'll probably need more than that to get through the night, but it's a nice start.

Casting his gaze around the room, Derek spots the host, Deucalion, standing on a raised platform, people lining up to greet him. They join the line, and Derek's ever grateful for the wolfsbane alcohol working its way through his system, Deucalion is actually wearing breeches and a tailored doublet, clothing straight out of the 18th century.

Finally after what seems like an age, Deucalion welcomes them to his party with a British accent so posh, it sounds like he's trying too hard. No wonder his wife absolutely hates him, and she doesn't try and hide it.

She stands there, looking like she wishes she was anywhere else. Only a second later, Derek understands why.

The man literally cannot stop talking about himself. He greets Stiles and Derek, shaking their hands, then proceeds to tell them, in one short sentence that he is over five thousand years old, is the direct ancestor of a few thousand Grecians, and would've been worshiped as a god if Zeus wasn't so jealous of his ark building skills. Derek doesn't even know how he managed to shove that much information in one long winded sentence, but apparently he's had quite a few millennia to practice his rampant douche-baggery.

His wife sighs in frustration and only then does Deucalion wave his hand over her introducing her as Pyrrha. Smirking, Stiles takes her hand, pressing an open-mouthed kiss to the inside of her palm, followed by a wink that makes her blush to her ears. Deucalion scowls and asks that the next person step forward, verbally dismissing Stiles and Derek. Only when they're a suitable distance away does Stiles roll his eyes and make a gun gesture with his thumb and index, mockingly shooting himself in the head.

Derek is unashamed to admit he snorts loudly at Stiles' very accurate portrayal of what it must be like to be married to that man.

"Ready to schmooze?" Stiles asks, a mischievous glint in his eye. "I bet I can get you more than five new clients tonight."

"Really? What are you willing to bet?" Stiles loves to play this game. Once, they went and got coffee together, and Stiles managed to convince the man ahead of them in line that he should hire Derek to get him out of the plethora of parking tickets Stiles saw sitting on his Jaguar in the parking lot.

Stiles taps a long finger to his chin in thought. "I know how much you like my food, so how about I owe you five meals if I lose, one for each potential client?"
"Deal." Derek agrees a little too eagerly. If Stiles notices, he says nothing. Derek's just happy things aren't so awkward between them anymore. Stiles isn't simply his client, he's Derek's friend, and while Derek might be unrequitedly in love with him, it doesn't mean they have to pretend the other doesn't exist.

"And what do I get if I win?"

Derek thinks. What does he have that he willing to give up, something Stiles would want? He nearly opens his mouth, suggesting Stiles feeds on him, but shuts it at the last moment. Stiles is no vampire. Feeding for him is no wham bam thank you ma'am experience. Derek only knows the basics of how Stiles feeds: he gives inspiration to his partners, and in return consumes their life force. But it is done through sex. And if Stiles doesn't want to kiss him, he sure as heck doesn't want to fuck him.

"I owe Black Annis a favour, and I could get you a plate of her famous cookies. The cinnamon ones that need to be ordered months in advance."

Stiles stops him with a hand to his chest. "You jest?" He whispers, mouth gaping open. "Her witchy snickerdoodles?"

"The very ones."

Stiles salivates at the mouth, Derek can smell it along with the faint hint of arousal, which is just a tad bit confusing. If he thought even the idea of magical pasties would bring Stiles so much pleasure, he would have cashed in the favour earlier.

"Fuuuck. Now I've gotta win. You are on, big guy. Be prepared to be so busy with clients for the next few months you won't be able to even sleep." Stiles pumps his fist dramatically, startling an unglamoured brownie.

Suddenly the talk in the hall slows to a halt, Derek listens and catches the familiar thump of his mother's heartbeat. The King has finally arrived. Talia sweeps into the hall, the King of the Seelie at her side. He's a relatively nondescript man, easy to award not even a second glance, but there is something about him, the way he carries himself, the way he looks around the hall with a disinterested eye that just spells his age, his wisdom, his power. Deaton is easily the oldest thing in the room, older than the earth, probably even older than time.

Talia, on the other hand, is all flamboyance and charm, smiling at those who greet her, teeth white and sharp, yet still warm and welcoming. Maybe that's why Deaton chose her to be his partner, they both posses a different kind of strength. Separate they are deadly, but together they are fatal.

His mother used to tell him bedtime stories about the Seelie King and Unseelie Queen: twins, two sides of the same coin, different and yet the same, working hard to keep the balance among the courts. No one knows exactly what they are, some call them druids, others say they are everything and nothing. It is all just speculation and children's stories. The only truth is that they're the reason the fae aren't extinct.

Humans like to think of themselves as the only species to destroy the world they live in, slashing and burning, polluting the water and the air they breathe, the land they depend upon for food, shelter, and a home. But they aren't.

The fae transformed their home to a toxic wasteland ages ago, long before sapient species even walked upright.
The Seelie and Unseelie fought an endless bloody war, until the fae realms were salted, dusty, and lifeless. Nothing could grow and no one could live there anymore. Fae died in the thousands, dropping dead after taking one sip of poisoned water, breathing in a lungful of acidic air. And then, only then, did the elders decide peace was critical.

The twins were placed on their thrones and they opened the veil to the human realms. In one fell swoop the entire fae population was introduced to the tool wielding, fire starting archaic humans.

For the first humans, so dependent on a simple life, to suddenly watch thousands of strange and unseen creatures appear from nowhere. It's no wonder they began worshiping the fae as gods. The Fae certainly did nothing to dissuade them from their beliefs. He knows for a fact that Gerard Argent arrogantly keeps an extensive collection of artefacts related to his past identity as Poseidon. Derek's people are vain creatures. He imagines this vanity is the only reason they allowed humans to live on and evolve without exterminating all of them and taking the planet for their own. They needed someone to stroke their egos.

Deucalion slides up to the King a big, bright, fake grin plastered on his features. Deaton looks anything but impressed, and Derek knows from personal experience just how much it takes to make Deaton smile. The King shakes Deucalion's hand and leaves him in the dust, wandering further into the ballroom, Talia still on his arm.

His mother sniffs the air, and she turns, smiling in his direction, her eyes narrowing mischievously when she catches sight of Stiles.

Stiles grins, rubbing his thumb on Derek's elbow attempting to reassure him, but if anything, that just makes his heart thud so much faster, a mixture of nervousness and apprehension. It's not only his mother, with that knowing gleam in her eye making him nervous, Derek never really got the hang of having the ruler of his people as a quazi stepfather, but even though Deaton could be considered anything but conversable, he's yards better than Derek's real father.

"Derek." His mother pulls him in for a hug, briefly rubbing her fingers against the back of his neck, scenting him. He inhales the faint smell of lilac talc lingering on her person and is instantly comforted. The smell reminds him of the good times in his childhood when she would read Laura and him bedtime stories before Cora was born. Strangely enough, most of the stories told of great deeds by her future partner.

"Mom." He greets, scenting her back, before pulling away and shaking Deaton's hand. "My King." Deaton nods in return.

His mother pulls him a few feet away while Stiles bows to the King, and exchanges pleasantries. "Laura won't be coming." She begins. "She got held up at Narita, you know how she is." Talia shakes her head fondly. "She tried to smuggle a few not so legal ingredients out of Japan, and the human authorities are giving her hell about it. But she should be flying out soon when the fae embassy finally decides she's been sweating in a jail cell long enough."

Derek snorts, his big sister and her obsessions. "And Cora?"

"You know she doesn't like these things."

"I don't either." Derek frowns, he was hoping Laura would be here distracting all the attention away from him. He likes keeping a low profile at social functions, Derek never managed to perfect the fine art of schmoozing.

"And yet..." She trails off, mouth quirking as she glances to the side when Stiles is talking rapid fire
"Shut up." Derek mumbles, blushing.

"What I don't get is why you've never told him. It's not like he wouldn't want to feed on you, you're a suitable candidate, and you fulfill all his criteria. Just submit an application for heaven's sake."

Derek looks away from Talia's gaze. "I'm his lawyer, I'm the one who goes through all his applications, doing background checks on them, seeing if they're suitable. I couldn't do that for myself. Besides, I really don't want to talk about my sex life with you." Derek folds his arms, and shuffles his feet uncomfortably.

"Derek, sweetie, you're nearly thirty years old, you're no longer a blushing teenager learning about the birds and the bees, or the bees and the bees in this case. Grow up. You know, Laura tells me everything about what she got up to in Okinawa."

"I really don't want to hear about Laura's sex life either, thank you very much."

Talia smiles fondly, and reaches up thumbing his cheekbone like she used to when he was a child. "It's nice to see you, Derek. You never visit me anymore."

"You're the King's partner, and it's hard to just drop by. They make me set up appointments, can you believe that? Appointments to see my own mother."

"I'll talk to security, sweetie." She pats him lightly on the cheek and the familiarity makes him smile and he presses a soft kiss to her cheek, before whispering in her ear.

"I haven't seen Malcolm yet." There's been no sign of his father since the moment he walked in.

Talia sighs, "Hopefully it stays that way."

"Talia." Deaton interrupts looking as frustrated as physically possible with Stiles grinning beside him. "We still need to go around the hall."

"Please, take her." Derek steps aside, allowing Deaton to take her arm again.

His mother snorts in indignation. "See? This is why Laura is my favourite."

"I'm pretty sure that's just because she buys you nice things."

"Well I never." Talia gasps, her voice light and joking.

Derek grins. "See you later, Mom."

"Do you not buy your mother nice things?" Stiles questions and Derek turns to him.

"No." Derek shakes his head, his voice sarcastic. "Whenever I find something exceedingly shitty or tasteless, it automatically becomes her next birthday gift."

Stiles laughs. "Remind me not to go Christmas shopping with you. But alas, I've still got a bet to win, shall we?" He offers his arm, and Derek rolls his eyes but takes it anyway. He points out a few prospective clients, trying to ignore the way they fit together so perfectly, how warm Stiles is, just what it would be like to press his lips to Stiles' soft, pink mouth. It's a fruitless endeavour.

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Midway through the night finds Derek significantly tipsy, sitting on a chair to the side while he watches Stiles talk to a beautiful blonde woman in a slinky metallic dress. Stiles rests his hand on her arm as they speak, and she leans forward just a bit. She can probably the smell cucumber mint hors d'oeuvres on his breath. He's been snacking on them all night.

Derek wants to rip out her throat.

Instead, he pushes to his feet and tries to find Lydia in the crowd. He spots Allison near the drinks table. She wears a frown while one of the younger lawyers from her grandfather's firm talks at her. The man laughs, inching closer to her, as she visibly backs away, panic and disgust warring for attention on her face.

Derek slides up to them, instituting himself into their one sided conversation. "Hey Ally." He presses a kiss to her temple in greeting. The lawyer scowls at him, visibly upset, eyeing Derek like he's sizing him up as competition. "Excuse me, but we were in the middle of something."

Allison's resulting *bitch please* face gives Stiles a run for his money.

Derek growls at the man, showing fang, and he takes off with a meep. One good thing about being a werewolf, they have the scariest urban legends. Once he heard someone say that he saw a werewolf shred a man to ribbons. It's not like a werewolf couldn't physically do that, but most prefer to take the legal channels for sights against their person, which is why Derek still has a job. Some, on the other hand... Well, maybe the urban legends aren't so unfounded.

"You good?" He asks, nudging Allison with his shoulder.

"Thanks. I was starting to think I'd have to kill myself to get out of that conversation. He's one of those assholes who thinks my marriage to a woman makes our relationship less valid than a *normal* one." She sighs. "Wish I could've shot his ass full of arrows but there are too many witnesses."

Derek pats her shoulder. "I'm sure Lydia would find some way to get you out of murder charges. Speaking of Lydia, where is she?"

"Game room, she's playing billiards with the *lovely* host." Allison rolls her eyes, wordlessly implying *playing* actually means warring. Lydia is ridiculously competitive.

"Hopefully he doesn't get too pissed off when she creams his ass. Actually, I think I would love to see Deucalion pissed off... It's bound to be exceedingly hilarious." Derek laughs. "Care to keep me company while our respective dates keep others company?"

"Please. If I have to hear another man propose a threesome, I will go get my bow out of the trunk."

Derek grins full of mirth. "Have I ever told you how frightening you are?"

"No, but please do." She grabs a glass of punch, sniffing it for alcohol, before declaring it clear, taking a sip. "Punch?" She offers holding up another glass. Derek takes it. "Who's Stiles neglecting you for?"

Derek nods his head over to the corner where Stiles still stands with the same blonde woman.

Allison hums. "That's Heather Ziegler. I've seen her around the office, one of the baby lawyers is handling her contract. Not very successfully I hear."

"Oh." He says simply. Is the flirting Stiles' way of stealing her contract out from under the Argents?
"She's also happily married." Allison smirks knowingly and Derek looks away. "You have no reason to be jealous."

"I'm not jealous."

"Suuure." She takes a sip of her drink, smiling into it.

"I'm not!" He protests, frowning. "Come on." He marches towards Stiles, people parting in his wake, "Let's go talk to them."

Stiles must sense him coming, because he looks up with a wide grin when Derek approaches. "And there he is right now, the man of the hour." He clasps Derek by the shoulder, pulling him closer to his side. "This man here has gotten me out of many a pickle." Stiles pats his suit as Heather looks him over, her gaze calculating. "I'm telling you Heather, he is the best damn lawyer in the whole city, nay, the whole country!" Stiles exclaims and Derek feels his whole face flood with the praise.

Heather just raises her brow, but sticks her hand out anyway. "Stiles says you're taking on new clients."

Turns out Heather's a troll, and one of the bridges she maintains in Brooklyn is scheduled to be demolished by the city. Under fae law she would have an easy win everyone knows not to mess with a troll and their bridge, but it's not like she can argue her troll status in human court. Which is why the Argents are having so much trouble coming up with a good enough reason to keep the bridge, considering the high maintenance fees needed for its upkeep. However, it's a frequently used route for biking commuters, so Derek figures they have the beginnings of a case.

By the end of their conversation, he has an appointment with Heather discussing strategies on Monday, and now processes a newfound respect for trolls. Contrary to popular belief, Heather isn't as concerned with eating people so much as reducing air pollution.

Derek can feel the night drawing to a close, and when he checks his phone it reads four in the morning. He says his goodbyes to his eighth potential client of the night. He'll call up Black Annis after he's had at least twelve hours of sleep. He's in no position to argue on the behalf of snickerdoodles.

At least all the lawyering kept him away from the boozing, and Derek has no doubt Stiles did that on purpose. Derek doesn't like being out of his element, but talking law with people puts him right back in his comfort zone.

"Hey." Derek greets, sliding up to him. "Ready to go?" He asks.

Stiles looks Derek over, noting his rather obvious slump, and constant yawns. "Yikes, I should probably drive. Sorry for keeping you here so long."

Derek shrugs. Digging around in his pocket, he hands over the keys to the Camaro. Stiles is the only person he's willing to trust with his car, and considering he can barely keep his eyes open it's not a hardship to let him take the wheel. Sometimes he wishes he was also a leanan sídhe, it must be nice to not require sleep to function at even a basic level.

"Come on big guy." Stiles wraps his arm around Derek's waist. He's a line of warmth from chest to hip and Derek wants to pull him closer, thrust his face into his mole spotted neck, and just breath in.
Instead, he waves goodbye to Lydia and Allison and lets Stiles lead him out to the car. Talia left much earlier with Deaton, so he doesn't have to bother hunting her down, but he does plan on calling her to ask about Malcolm. His father's not one to ignore a chance to be around his mother, whether it be to try and kill her again, or convince her to go back to him because Malcolm is so old fashioned, he doesn't believe in divorce, no matter how necessary it is. The chances are always fifty/fifty with him.

By the time Stiles buckles him in, pulling out of the tree lined driveway Derek's close to drifting off. He tunes the radio to a station playing soft twenties swing, humming along voice quiet and soothing until Derek finally succumbs to sleep.

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"Derek!  Rise and shine!"  Derek shoots up out of bed, blinking blearily at Stiles standing in the doorway of what he vaguely recognizes as the penthouse's guestroom, wearing his infamous Wonder Woman apron.

He grunts, scrubbing fingers through his overnight, unsurprisingly thick beard as he contemplates falling back into the warm sheets, screw the consequences. Except Stiles is likely to jump on him, he's done it before, and he doesn't want it to happen again for a plethora of reasons. One, because last time Stiles elbowed him in the ribs. Two, he's got a case of morning wood and things are getting better with Stiles after what happened at Gideon's, he doesn't want to fuck up their dynamic anymore than he already has.

"What do you want for breakfast?"  Stiles questions, waving around his spatula dramatically.

Derek knows by now that *anything* is not a good answer, so he scours his mind for breakfast foods. "Eggs Florentine," he settles on, knowing Stiles loves that dish.

"Good choice, mister."  Stiles waves the spatula like it's a wand and skips away down the corridor. Now that he's listening for it he can hear the old gramophone lightly playing some music and the pitter-patter of Stiles' feet as he dances on the hardwood.

Instead of walking to the kitchen only to be faced with that beautiful image, he grabs the sweats and tee Stiles left for him stumbling over to the bathroom, hair mussed, and clothes in disarray. At least Stiles removed his jacket and bowtie and unbuttoned the top few buttons, it would've sucked to choke to death via red silk. Not at all a dignified way for a werewolf to go, or anyone else for that matter. He sighs, turning on the cold spray.

Derek absolutely does not jack off in Stiles' shower.

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He leaves the bathroom wearing clothes that smell faintly of Stiles. Derek rubs a towel through his hair when he hears a familiar ringtone. Pulling out his phone he thumbs the screen.

"Hey Mom."  He says, looking at his reflection in the mirror he pokes at his limp hair, wondering how he's supposed to keep it out of his eyes without gel. Derek frowns, turning away from the mirror when Talia doesn't respond. "Mom?"

"Oh god, Derek!  Alan-"  She cuts off, a flurry of activity sounding in the background.

"Mom!"  He shouts voice panicked, Stiles arrives in the doorway, called by his exclamation, expression worried as Derek listens harder, trying to discern the muffled sounds coming from the
phone. "Mom! What's going on?"

"Someone's poisoned the King!" She howls her voice cracking and Derek nearly loses his grip on the phone, feeling her howl of anguish in his very bones.

Derek stares wide eyed at Stiles as his mother sobs in his ear, Stiles' eyes are just as wide as he holds Derek's gaze, there's no doubt he heard Talia too.

If the King is dead or even dying and he isn't there to keep the balance, it can only mean one thing.

War between the courts.

Chapter End Notes

Might end up posting the next chapter if the internet cooperates later on in the night.
They're investigating everyone who even abstractly knew of Deucalion's party. Apparently a few of the appetizers were poisoned, and Derek shudders to think Stiles could have easily been among the sixteen people who died, all of them fading into a shrivelled corpse before giving up the ghost.

The only reason Deaton is lasting so long is because of his power and age. The last poisoned guest died under an hour ago, but she was a few hundred years old, the second oldest among the sick, counting Deaton. So at least all the doctor's are saying Deaton has time, time to investigate what the poison is and who administered it. The whole catering company was brought in and investigated, and one of the Erinyes was flown in from Greece to weed out the liars from the truth tellers. But even that was useless, no one knows anything. Not the caterers, not the staff, not any of the guests.

Everything is stagnant and there are no revelations. The King lies in his bed, wasting away by the day, his mother sits 24/7 at his bedside, making Derek wonder if she does actually love him as much as she claims. The Unseelie Queen is currently somewhere in the Himalayas driving down from her autumn residence in Ladakh, and it'll be a few more days before she reaches an international airport to fly her to New York.

Derek goes running, and spends his free time, when he isn't working his butt off on cases, questioning the fragility of life.

If a war breaks out between the courts, Derek has no doubt Earth will be reduced to the same wasteland that made the fae so desperate to come here in the first place. The humans have their nuclear weapons, but the fae have magic. And sometimes it's hard to know which is more dangerous.

If the Earth dies, so do the fae with it. They have nowhere else to go this time, and no more twin rulers to open the gates into another realm. If Deaton dies, Morrell does too. They are two sides of the same coin, after all.

So Derek runs and imagines scenarios of what will happen if Deaton succumbs to the poison running through his veins, how quickly age old resentments will arise, how many accusations will be flung, how many people will die now that the twins are no longer there to keep the balance.

He unlocks the door to his brownstone, sweaty as hell and in much need of a shower, only to find, as he walks to the stairs, wiping the sweat from his brow with the bottom of his beater, Erica and Boyd sitting on his living room couch, living in sin all over it.

Erica's shirt is off flung off on one of his mother's tiffany lamp, blood red bra on display as Boyd nestles his head between the two globes said bra exists to accentuate. The whole scene is so startling and ludicrous, Derek rubs his eyes because he thinks he's seeing things.

Erica finally notices him, and tugs on Boyd's ear, getting him to pull off. Derek thinks Boyd might be wearing a blush because he's blinking rabidly, and he only does that when he's embarrassed. Besides, he isn't meeting Derek's eyes. Erica, on the other hand, has no shame whatsoever, and doesn't even bother putting her shirt back on. She just leans back on the sofa, one hand resting on the back, behind Boyd's head, like Derek's sofa is her own personal throne.
"And before you ask, yes, we were planning on having a quickie on your couch before you got home." Erica says, as nonchalant as ever, twirling a blonde stand between her fingers. "And on that topic, you're home early."

Derek can feel his mouth gape open, before slamming it shut. He tosses his sweaty beater at Erica who makes a face of disgust as she catches it instinctively. "No wonder I'm you're only friend. You must be putting off the other suburban wives like the plague." Derek walks to the kitchen and pours himself a glass of water.

"Hey!" She exclaims, indignant. "Nassau isn't suburbia."

Derek just raises a brow as he takes a seat in the armchair opposite them, setting his drink on a little souvenir coaster, a memento brought back from Cora when she went to South America for college.

"Okay, fine it is. But if I get another woman in a fucking visor asking me what my job is in the big city while staring at my breasts with a sneer on her face, I will punch someone and then hand their children pamphlets on how wrong slut shaming is. I almost want to tell them I teach in a highschool, so they'll call up my principal and complain about me and then Soledad can make things difficult for them."

"You moved there just to torture them didn't you?"

"Of course not." Erica snorts as Boyd nods confirming what Derek already knew. Erica grabs Derek's glass off the center table, draining his water all in one gulp, before placing her socked feet in its place. Derek stares at her wiggling toes in disgust. "So now that the world's about to end, Boyd and I thought it appropriate to bring every single apocalyptic movie we own. Then we can place bets, and when the world actually ends whomever was the closest to right gets to be the center of the end of the world cuddle. Deal?"

Derek scratches his hand though his sweaty hair. "Fine." He huffs. "Just let me take a shower first. There's popcorn in the cupboards." When Erica makes to get up and move to the kitchen, Derek grabs her by the waist of her pants, stopping her in her tracks. "Let Boyd make it, last time you tried to cook in my house you set off the fire alarm and made such an astonishing amount of smoke, my neighbour called the fire department."

"Aye, aye captain." She salutes before taking off towards the rec room, a stack of DVDs in hand.

Boyd eyes him, looking him up and down, gaze lingering around the dark circles around his eyes. "I'll make caramel corn." He concludes and if Derek wasn't such a sweaty disgusting mess he would kiss him.

"Make a bit extra, please? I'm meeting Stiles tomorrow, and you know how much he loves your caramel corn." Going by how much of the stuff he ate at the firm's annual Christmas get-together. He consumed everything and anything sweet, and only those who arrived early got a taste of the amazing gingerbread cookies.

Boyd just stares at him with a heavy knowing gaze before smiling with sharp teeth. "Okay, Derek."

After about fivestraight hours of apocalypse films Boyd and Erica are asleep. He finishes brushing his teeth, and grumbles when he sees them curled up on his bed, instead of the one in the guest room, leaving barely enough room for him. But then again, whenever they stay over, they always insist on cuddling. Truth be told, he doesn't mind it so much, but he still makes a show of grouching as he pulls open the blankets. Climbing in, Derek hisses when Erica sticks her cold feet against his legs. Even though he's disgruntled, he tucks his nose into her passion fruit scented hair and drifts off to
sleep. Erica's light snores and Boyd's heavy breaths keeping him company.

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Derek's meeting with Stiles is in the evening, but he drops into the office, hoping to sort through some petitions he suggested Heather distribute to the people living in her community, asking that the bridge not be demolished.

He's checking the fax machine when his cell phone rings.

"Derek, I need you to do something for me." His mother says the moment Derek picks up. She sounds stronger than the last time Derek talked to her, and her voice is steady like she hasn't cried in a while. This ordeal is taking its toll on everyone, and he's just glad she's pulling through. Laura finally arrived a day ago and is spending most of her time with Talia, making sure she doesn't wear herself thin.

"Can you talk to Satomi? Ask if the seer has seen anything about Alan?" Derek's eyes widen, he completely forgot about the seer.

Derek quickly agrees, but chooses to grab a cab, the last time he went to Chinatown with the Camaro a man tried to sell him misspelled Gucci decals to paste on his car, and Derek nearly bought them before Lydia wacked him on the head, releasing him from the salesman's siren thrall. Sirens have to make their living somehow, if they can't legally eat unsuspecting sailors anymore without suffering ramifications from the King, they need money to buy meat. Derek has nothing against sirens, but if Lydia hadn't released him, he would have ended up with a tacky, ugly, and all around horrifying 'Gucchi' decal on his hood, and someone would've ended up dead.

The cab drops him off right in front of Satomi's salon. The neon sign bears the very ironic Satomi's Claws which always tickles Derek's funny bone when he sees it. It's hard to believe the stoic woman who owns the shop, and most of the shops around here has a sense of humour. She's the Alpha of much of Lower Manhattan, but prefers to spend most of her days working in her salon.

Derek opens the store to Satomi yelling. "I'm Japanese, you fucks, not Chinese!" A couple of men in suits run past Derek like there's a hellhound snapping at their heels, and Derek can't blame them, Satomi looks like she has smoke viably pouring from her ears. "Fucking idiots. Can you imagine?" She addresses Derek, her eyes flashing red for a brief second. "They think all east Asians look the same. It's like they don't even see their own homogeneity in all aspects of everything, they fucking think salt is a spice. Goddamn racist fucks." She growls showing teeth. It's shocking in comparison to her updo and clothes of the perpetual stereotypical fifties housewife.

Derek imagines it's how she lowers her opponent's guard. She distracts them with her small and dainty appearance and then that's when the sharp teeth come in.

"They're trying to buy your property?" Satomi's owned most of the property in Chinatown since she first set foot on New York soil during Prohibition. As Alpha to nearly a hundred fae and humans in the know, she takes her responsibilities seriously.

"They want to gentrify us, whatever the fuck that means. All I know is that'll put families on the street, families I'm supposed to protect. They can shove their millions up their fucking asses."

"If you need our help, you know where we are located." Derek offers, and Satomi smirks, looking at him with an amused grin, pointedly ignoring his offer.

"I'm guessing you're here because you want to speak with him?"
Derek nods.

"Of course." She says sarcastically, "Why else would he visit his own godmother, the ungrateful fuck, acting like Talia didn't even raise him right." Derek rolls his eyes. "Well, come on then, the girls are doing his nails."

"Wait," He places a hand on her arm, "Which persona is he this month?"

She laughs. "The Duke. Just started pulling his blackest clothes out of the closet this morning in fact."

Derek makes a face, the Thin White Duke is the most difficult persona to work with.

Derek walks into the back where the salon chairs sit to find the man in question dressed in a black vest and slacks over a frilly white shirt. A fedora is balanced delicately on his head strategically hiding his eyes from view as he smokes a menthol cigarette like he's making love to it. One of Satomi's daughters sits on a stool at his feet, painting his toenails a lurid shade of hot pink, while the other paints his fingernails a more composed black. Seems like the Duke's partiality for muted colours has yet to reach his feet.

Considering, that last month he went by Ziggy, it makes perfect sense.

The girls leave them to their business, but one of them sends Derek a leering look, making him feel very uncomfortable.

In the early eighties the seer pissed off the fae lord, David Bowie, and was cursed to spend the rest of eternity badly imitating the Lord of all Goblins and master of glam rock. It sounds like the beginning of a bad sitcom, and Derek thinks if the seer wanted to, he could probably have his own show on the comedy network. The poor man's life is a joke. All because the seer saw one of Bowie's future personas in a vision and stole it, wearing it while performing his own music. When Bowie found out, he cursed him to high heaven and back. It's rumoured the stolen persona was going to be even bigger than Ziggy Stardust.

The seer tilts his head, the hat shifting as he stares up at Derek with one eye. And almost like he controls the lighting in the room, which he probably does, the shadows shift hiding most of his face from view. Derek's impressed, it's very dramatic. The last time he saw the seer, he was donning the Pierott clown persona, and had tugged on Derek's ears before giggling, and running away to his own magical laugh track.

Derek's always been amazed at the detail of this curse. Bowie must have been so fucking pissed. Still is, because thirty or so years later he still refuses to release it. One thing about the fae, they sure know how to hold a ridiculous grudge, because anything and everything that pours from of the seer's mouth is translated into Bowie's lyrics, one line at a time.

"Talia sent me." Derek explains as the seer blows a ring of smoke right into Derek's face. "It's about the King." He says waving the smoke away, it smells like a disgusting mixture of mint and sweaty socks, and he's obviously not smoking any form of tobacco Derek's heard of.

"Oh don't lean on me man, cause you can't afford the ticket." The seer sings, voice tinged with frustration like he hates having to predict the future for people.

"She'll wire you any amount you want." Derek pauses. "Within reason."

The seer makes a come here gesture with his free finger, and Derek inches closer, leaning so he can sing right into Derek's ear. "Lord, I think you'd overdose if you knew what's going down."
"So, you know what happened to Deaton?" Derek questions hopefully, but the seer just shakes his head shuddering slightly as he swallows heavily, something like fear flashing through his eyes.

"When I looked in her eyes they were blue but nobody home."

"What does that even mean?" Derek questions. He knows the seer is limited by Bowie's lyrics, but the goblin lord has a four decade long discography, there must be something there the man can use.

The seer leans back in his seat, crossing his legs. "We are the dead." He sings simply.

Well, Derek's never heard a better synonym for 'we're all fucked.' This man is just an absolute bucketful of sunshine.

Derek sighs, and pulls up a chair. This is going to be a long afternoon.

One hour later, and Derek still has nothing. Scratching his head, an idea flows through his mind, it's a personal matter relating to Stiles and he knows he shouldn't ask, but he really can't resist knowing. Derek thinks his relationship with Stiles has gone back to normal, but they haven't been flirting as much as before, and he wants to know if that teasing aspect of their relationship is gone forever.

"Umm, do you mind taking a peek into my future? Mostly the future having to do with a leanan sídhe named Stiles." The seer just sighs, and closes his eyes, grabbing hold of Derek's hand as Derek watches his eyes move beneath the lids, scanning his future.

After a while he blink his eyes open and clear, leering at Derek before smirking. "Taste the whip and love might given likely."

Needless to say, Derek's face floods.

Satomi strides into the room, saving Derek a world of future embarrassment. He thanks the seer, shaking his hand, ignoring the scowl on the man's face and runs past Satomi, muttering excuses, hoping she doesn't smell the faint thrums of arousal running through Derek's body at even the thought of Stiles with a whip.

Before he opens the front door he hears the seer singing to Satomi, admiration and love running through his voice as he belts out the lyrics to a song Satomi is sure to not appreciate.

"Oh, oh, oh, my little China girl."

"I'm Japanese, you fuck." Derek laughs.

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Derek calls his mother in the cab and describes what the seer said, unfortunately she too doesn't understand his words, meaning they're back to ground zero. Derek can tell Talia was bunking all her hope on the seer's information, and now she had nothing. They're at a standstill, while the King wastes away. They'll just have to wait for the Unseelie Queen.

All the apocalyptic talk is making him braver than he usually would be, especially considering the seer's vision for him. He finally decides to take his mother's advice and submit an application to Stiles, and if he really doesn't want Derek, Stiles can throw it out and pretend the whole thing never happened.

Derek sits in a coffee shop a few blocks away from Stiles' apartment, staring blankly at his CV. He hasn't glanced at it in years, ever since he applied for a construction job in his second year at
Columbia. Back then he wanted to be more independent which equalled accepting no allowance from his mother. That particular fit of rebellion didn't work out so well, the job paid shit, and he was eating nothing but cheap ramen for months before he finally learned how to shop for deals at farmer's markets and quit his expensive whisky addiction. Having to drink nothing but shitty Jack Daniel's was the only thing he really regretted that year.

Stiles never even asked for his CV when he hired him. Derek met Stiles at one of his mother's dinner parties and they got to talking. Somehow Stiles became Martin and Hale's first client by the end of that night. Derek thinks it was because Stiles knew Lydia growing up, not because he managed to persuade Stiles to put him on retainer. For heaven's sake, the only things they talked about were the Mets which eventually segwayed into a whole discussion on women's leagues, which somehow turned into a conversation about female representation in professional sports. It was easily the most interesting conversation he'd had in years and Derek still remembers it to this day.

So Derek stares at the screen and wonders just how he's supposed to ask a man he already knows so well to tie him up and dominate him. He thumps his head on the table, rattling his empty coffee cup.

Finally, with only ten minutes until his meeting with Stiles, Derek goes to the copy shop a block over and prints a sheet with his name, address, and basic information. The man working the counter raises an eyebrow at the title. Derek admits *Application for Domination* is not very subtle, but the man doesn't look as scandalized as he should be, he's probably seen worse things working this job.

Derek looks down at the sheet with only a few lines of text on it. Stiles already knows everything about him at this point. Right now, it's just a matter of yes or no.

It's going to go swimmingly.

Derek knock on Stiles' door with the intention of asking the man to do an immeasurable amount of sinful things to him. So understandably, when Stiles opens the door holding a flogger of the most supple black leather, Derek cannot be blamed for his reaction.

"Oh shit, Der!" Stiles exclaims, grabbing him the biceps and hauling him to his feet. Derek notes that he has thankfully put the flogger down. "Are you okay?" Stiles asks, gently wiping away the blood from Derek's face, as his nose heals. "I'm supposed to be the clumsy one, silly goose, not you."

Derek's eyes automatically shift to the flogger, and Stiles' face floods fire-engine red as he sputters.

"I was cooking-"

"With that!?" Derek interrupts, eyes wide as he eyes the flogger even more cautiously, wondering how the heck Stiles can use it in the kitchen. Tenderizing meat, maybe? Well, that's an image he never thought could be arousing...

Stiles shakes his head so fast he looks like he's seconds away from pulling something. "No! It just came in the mail, I was opening the package when you knocked. My toys go nowhere near the
kitchen, I use a separate sink for washing them, I promise."

And now Derek’s picturing Stiles, elbow deep in soapy water meticulously scrubbing a variety of dildos and butt plugs, humming along to his favourite twenties swing. Derek goes a bit cross eyed at the image.

"I want you to stay for dinner." Derek tunes back in just as Stiles speaks, bending down to pick up the flogger. "We can discuss business with a plateful of food in hand, just let me go put this away." Stiles awkwardly points his thumb over his shoulder, taking off as Derek nods.

Derek thinks the image of Stiles with his thin fingers curled lightly around the handle of the flogger is going to fuel his masturbatory fantasies for ages to come.

Derek waits for Stiles in the kitchen, peeking into the oven at the food cooking away, licking his lips at the smell of spices and meat in the air. "What is it?" He asks, sensing Stiles coming up behind him.

"Tagine." Stiles lightly hip checks him away, putting on some mitts, he pulls out the steaming Dutch oven. "It's not as good as the neighbourhood Berber restaurant, but I try." Derek's stomach growls loud, and Stiles laughs as Derek looks away in embarrassment. "Looks like your tummy would disagree." Stiles slaps a hand against his belly with a resounding smack, and walks the dish over to the dining room.

"How was your day?" Stiles talks around a mouthful of food after they've settled down, sitting across from each other. It feels so domestic, like this is something they could easily do every day. Instead of waiting for his reply, Stiles rambles on. "I had an awesome day, Scott's kids came over and we played some video games. He hardly has any days off now, especially now that he's trying to juggle his own practice, and three screaming kids. Kira's in London on a business trip, and Scott hates leaving them with the sitter, so he just brought them over here and we had a ball."

"I didn't know you liked kids."

Stiles waves his hand. "I don't, Scotty's spawn are my exception, they're smart and don't break things. It's awesome, and thankfully they got that from their mother."

"Just wait until they become teenagers. I've heard absolute horror stories from Erica." Stiles shifts in his seat, interested, leaning closer. "One of the seniors thought it would be okay to bring her miniature poodle to class, and then let it shit on Erica's desk."

"Oh shit." Stiles giggles. "Literally."

"But that was at her old job in a private school in the Upper East Side, she works in Brooklyn now and absolutely loves it." He leans back in his seat remembering all the stories Erica tells about her kids, and how fucked up the system is. She's seen brilliant kids, stomped down into the dust and denied scholarships just because of their skin colour or family situation.

Her old principal was horrified when she revealed where she was working, but all it did was make Erica more determined. She grew up with Boyd in one of the toughest neighbourhoods in Brooklyn, and she just wants these kids to have the same chance she did. "She supervises an afterschool art program, and they're running a show and auction in a few weeks, I could send you the address if you want to make an appearance, maybe check it out." Derek shrugs. "I'll be there." He adds casually.

Stiles grins wide, his eyes crinkling. "I'd fucking love to go. I think my walls could use some more art, don't you think?"
Derek glances around the room, the walls are completely covered in canvases and prints from local artists around the state, and Derek knows for a fact that Stiles has a vault full of more, switching them out based upon his mood. Derek grins. "I'm sure they could."

By the time they finish, they haven't once discussed the business Stiles called him over for. And Derek finds he doesn't mind even a little bit as they settle on the couch in the dark room, bowls of vanilla ice cream sprinkled with Boyd's caramel corn in their laps. *Gattaca* plays in the background as Stiles talks about a documentary he watched the other day.

Derek rests his arm on the back of the sofa, his head leaning comfortably against it as he watches Stiles talk. Stiles' whole body is turned fully to face him, one leg tucked underneath his butt as his hands move all over the place, gesturing and talking with his whole body. Derek's eyes never leave him, and eventually the man slows his speech to a halt, meeting Derek's gaze head on.

The TV suddenly crackles with the sound of a woman's laugh, and Derek reaches over to grab the remote between them. He turns off the screen and the moonlit room is filled with an empty silence, broken only by their breathing, and the noises coming from outside. Derek leaves his hand on the remote and Stiles gently picks it up by his wrist, pulling Derek's hand into his lap.

Derek feels Stiles thumb stroke against his pulse, inadvertently scent marking him as he smiles warmly, body swaying slightly like it always does. Stiles just being Stiles, unable to keep completely still for even a moment.

"Derek, what is this?" Stiles looks up from the paper, mouth gaping open ever so slightly, eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

"It's my application," he taps on the sheet where his name is printed out, "for you to, to dominate me." He finally looks up into Stiles' eyes, and finds an unreadable expression within their depths.

"But why?" Stiles asks quietly after a long moment of drawn out silence.

"Because sometimes I want to let go of my control." *And I love you, and would trust only you with the task.* He thinks as he watches for Stiles' reaction to his words.

Stiles' eyes soften as he looks at him. “But you’re my lawyer, Derek. What are you going to do, draft up a contract for yourself?” He appears amused, brow quirking, and Derek feels like getting up and dancing, because it means that Stiles is actually considering this insane proposition of his.

"I could arrange for to Lydia handle our contract if you'd prefer?" Derek offers, but Stiles shakes his head, smiling, golden eyes glowing under the light of the moon.

"You can do it, but Lydia will have to witness." Stiles picks at a fraying string at the hem of Derek's sleeve.

Holy shit, Stiles just agreed. Derek wants to pull him into a hug and kiss the living daylights out of him. He wants to rest his head on Stiles' lap and just let this man take care of him, keeping him safe and warm, but before that can happen they have to sign a contract. Derek already knows by heart Stiles' most important stipulations. The client cannot be with anyone else sexually or romantically from session one to the end. The client must be sound of mind and body. And most importantly, the
client cannot have more than ten sessions with Stiles.

Those rules are in place to protect the client from what happens when Stiles' feeds on their lifeforce. Legends portray Leanan sídhe as the deadly muse. A creature who provides an artist with inspiration, but slowly and steadily drives them mad. And for the most part, the legends are true.

Stiles would eventually drive his subs insane. That's why the number of sessions are limited, and why the client cannot be involved with anyone else. It isn't because of disease, Stiles is immune and cannot pass on anything humans or fae carry. It's because the madness progresses even faster if the client is emotionally invested in another person besides Stiles.

So to ensure the mental health of Stiles' clients, of himself Derek thinks, this arrangement has a deadline, one neither of them can extend, no matter how much he wants to.

Derek figures it's pretty self destructive, knowing that he's going to fall even deeper in love with Stiles in the upcoming weeks, only to never be with him again after that tenth session. He can practically hear the universe screaming at him, hollering that this is a monumentally bad idea.

But it's better than never having Stiles at all.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter five's a mess right now, and I don't really like it, so I'm going to revamp everything, but there will be porn. It'll be up in a few days.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Sorry the chapter is late, but it's been a very hectic week, I went to Niagara for a few days to see my girlfriend, and came back home with an offer to show some of my oils in a gallery, so I've been busy like heck trying to update my portfolio... But yeah, weekly updates after this :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The King's mansion in SoHo is ridiculous. It's a five story converted apartment building stretching all along one block, and if Deaton purchased it in the current market he would've probably had to sell his soul to pay for it. As it is, most of the King's properties were purchased in the early thirties when he first came to America and gentrification was something that only happened in the urban centers of Europe.

"I don't understand why humans are so obsessed with reproduction, there's more to life than populating the planet and spreading one's genes." Derek says to Laura as they walk into the lobby of the building. A security guard asks for their IDs, and after determining they are who they say they are, makes them step through a shimmering blue weapon detection barrier. Derek passes through followed by Laura without a beep.

"Most wouldn't agree, that's why there's seven billion of them." Laura presses the button, calling the elevator. "It's because their lives are so short. Ever read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*? Enkidu is made a mockery of because he never had children, so who is there to remember him?"

As an anthropologist, Laura's built a career studying the strange enigma known as humanity. Derek never understood why she chose to go down that path, just as she never understood why he decided to study something as 'boring' as law.

Derek snorts. "His deeds should've been enough."

"Apparently not."

"Look at Lydia, she wants a kid for all the right reasons, not just because she's expected to have one." Derek argues. "It's completely different from our father. He was in love with the idea of a child, but when you popped out of our mother, he didn't care enough for your reality to be a permanent fixture in our lives."

"So that's why you're so angry." Laura observes just as the elevator arrives with a ding.

"I'm not angry, I'm fucking pissed." Derek prods at the fifth floor button, pressing it slightly harder than necessary.

Laura raises a brow. "Because your client isn't getting custody of his daughter."

"It's fucking ridiculous. His ex wife has all the fucking money in the world, can support their daughter's every want and need, but doesn't care enough about her child to come home for dinner, and yet she's still getting full custody."
"But you said your client doesn't have a job right now. How's he supposed to take care of her?"

"Her mother doesn't even want her, we both know all too well what it feels like to be an unwanted child, and I'd rather be poor."

The elevator arrives at the fifth floor, opening to a massive living area decorated in a minimalist fashion, sometimes Derek wonders how the King lived before he discovered the wonders of minimalism. He can just imagine how the Rococo period went over for him, garish colours and ridiculousness galore.

They walk over to a set of couches, and Derek can smell saltwater in the air from an open window bringing in drafts from the pool on the roof.

"But you weren't. We grew up privileged, we don't know what it's like to live pay check to pay check."

"Your client will get back on his feet, and when that happens, he'll file for custody again."

Laura crosses her legs and pulls her phone from her purse. "God, Laur, this case is really messing with me. I thought Lydia and I were supposed to be taking on these lower income cases, now that we can afford it, to be good lawyers so these people can win their goddamn cases."

"No, the sonofabitch hasn't, thankfully."

"About a month ago. No. Longer than that."

"When was the last time his father actually called? He usually tries once every few weeks, leaving Derek messages, begging for money, or for Derek to talk to the King so he can move away from Fresno. Derek always ignores the messages."

"About two months, mid July I believe."

"He was supposed to show up at Deucalion's party, but never did."

"Maybe you should call up Cora, and see if he's phoned her because he hasn't tried calling me in months either."

"Yeah." Derek nods, distracted. "He hasn't broken his parole, the watchers would've noticed and contacted us."

"Hale?" Derek looks up as an older woman in a professional fitted pantsuit walks up to them. She has a katana strapped to her side and rests a hand upon its pommel. Derek nods, and she gestures with her head. "Come with me."

The woman who smells slightly of sparks and electricity, and ever so faintly of woodland fox, leads them through the corridors. Derek doesn't recognize her, so she must be one of the newer guards brought in to protect the King, even though she smells anything but new.

"Thank you Miss...?"

"Yukimura."

Laura frowns. "When was the last time he tried?"

"Mom." Derek presses a kiss to the side of her head before pulling up a chair. "How is he?"

"Stable, but still fading according to the doctors." She snorts mockingly. "It's like they don't even know the definition of 'stable.'" Laura pats her shoulder before taking a seat at Talia's other side.
They all sit for a moment, staring down at the man lying prone on the bed, tubes down his throat, needles in his veins, as he wastes away, cheeks sunken in. This does not look like the same man who's ruled the Seelie for millennia upon millennia. This looks like a corpse breathing its last. 

Derek clears his throat, awkwardly looking away from Deaton, choosing to instead watch his mother and the myriad of expressions that flirt across her face as she stares at her partner. 

Talia breaks the silence first. "I know Malcolm had something to do with this and I intend to find the bastard and make him pay." She states simply, rubbing her thumb against Deaton's knuckles. 

Laura sends a worried look Derek's way before resting a hand on their mother's shoulder in comfort. "Mom, Malcolm's in Fresno, and he hasn't left in months."

She snorts. "He's gone, I got the call this morning."

"What?" Derek drops his jaw in disbelief, "What do you mean by gone?"

"I called up his fucking useless landlord an hour ago. He said Malcolm hasn't paid his rent in two whole months, and when I asked why he hadn't reported him missing he said that was his family's job."

"But the spell-"

"Never indicated him missing. They're thinking he had some outside help, someone who can work high level magic, a witch or mage of some kind, we're not entirely sure. All they know is that the proximity alarms surrounding Fresno never went off when he left the city. And the scans they ran say he isn't inside its limits."

"He could be dead for all they know." Laura says easily and Derek knows she won't be even slightly broken up if that's the truth. Derek won't either, that's for sure. 

"They scanned for his body too, but nothing."

Derek crumples back in his seat. "He did this?" Derek says in disbelief. "For what? Revenge? He'll kill us all because you chose to unbind yourself from him?"

"You know your father, Derek. Now, isn't that an easy enough answer to your question?"

"Shit." Laura remarks.

Shit indeed. 

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Lydia witnesses the contract signing with no comment but a raised eyebrow directed towards Derek. 

When they finish, she takes a copy back to the office to be filed among all of Stiles' other contracts. Derek tries not to think too hard on the fact that he's just one of hundreds of people Stiles has dominated before, a minuscule amount compared to the people he will scene with in the future. 

Almost all of Deaton's investigators have flown down to Fresno trying to figure out how Malcolm beat the system, like the answer will be amongst the trash the landlord tossed out of his apartment. It's like they're all running around like headless chickens without anyone to lead them. Talia's never been good at these sorts of things. Give her politics, parties, places where she can win people's trust through her innate charisma, and she'll do just fine. But investigative work, running a whole court, that's a whole other story.
His mother is Alpha to just under two hundred wolves, humans and fae, in the state, but compared to the millions of fae belonging to the Seelie, spread out worldwide, that's a whole other story. She hasn't even left the country in over a hundred years.

The Unseelie Queen's currently on a one stop nineteen hour flight to JFK after making it out of the Himalayas in record time. Derek hopes she'll be able to take the reins and awaken her twin so the past week can go down in the history books as the time the fae almost fucked everything over again. Hell, there are older fae in New York petitioning to forcibly remove the few Unseelie living in the city. The protests and news of fae riots around the world are growing more and more ridiculous every single day, and he's scared that one day someone with a lot of power, and a lot of magic, is just going to snap from all the built up tension.

But there's nothing he can do about it right now. Derek's a lawyer, he belongs in the courtroom arguing the law. And without any law to argue, he's basically useless. Apparently, the only thing he's good for is his relationship to the number one suspect. Derek's been ordered to keep his phone on him at all times, just in case Malcolm calls, on the small chance he's feeling like contacting his estranged family. But Derek thinks the two months his father spent home-free, without a care in the world, not even bothering to contact his family because he no longer has any use for them, speaks for itself.

Even in the face of the giant tsunami lying in wait off the metaphorical coast that is the future of all fae-kind, or some catastrophic metaphor like that, life goes on.

Right now Derek's sitting in Stiles' living room, a cup of tea in front of him, first few buttons of his shirt undone, while Stiles is curled up on the same couch only a foot away as they discuss what the contract does not happen to cover.

**Kinks.**

"We're just going to talk about what you want from this." Stiles gestures between the two of them. "Basically, if you want sex to be involved." Derek must be making some sort of confused expression because Stiles smiles and reaches out to briefly squeeze his hand. "Yes, we don't have to have sex for me to dominate you. I've had a few straight clients over the years, some of them just wanted to be tied up artfully, some wanted to be whipped. Sex isn't something that has to go hand in hand with a BDSM arrangement."

Derek furrows his brow. "But you feed off sex..."

"I feed off the trust my subs put in me, these people rely on me to care for them and give them a good time. A leanan sídh'e's relationship with their food source is mutualistic, compared to say... a parasitic vampire. We both will benefit from it, I give inspiration when I dominate, and you feed me your lifeforce in return." Stiles stares off into the distance for just a moment, before his eyes flash and he looks back at Derek. "Sex doesn't always need to be involved."

"I want sex." Derek says abruptly, and blushes when Stiles laughs.

"I know the things you read, I'm sure you do." Derek stares at Stiles. "Oh don't look at me like that, I've seen you eye my erotica collection on more than one occasion, now's not the time to be shy. Now's the time to tell me what you want. So, Derek..." Stiles untangles his feet from underneath himself. Stretching a leg out, he rests his calf on Derek's thigh and runs his big toe ever so lightly along the inseam of his pants. "What do you want?" Derek swallows hard as Stiles cradles his head in hand bracing an elbow against the back rest of the sofa as he waits for Derek to answer.
Derek blinks and springing to action, reaches over to the side and grabs his bag. Pulling out his Moleskine, Derek flips though a few pages, "I have a list of things I'm interested in trying." He finds the page and smoothing the paper out before handing it over to Stiles.

Stiles takes the book and scans the page, looking it over with an almost clinical air, before glancing up and meeting Derek's eyes with a grin. "You've really done your research, I appreciate it." Stiles presses his toe against Derek's thigh just a little bit firmer before retracting his leg and scooting closer. Reading off the page, his grin widens the further he goes. Stiles must find something really interesting, because he stops and glances up at Derek, eyes hooded.

"I love shibari," he breathes, "god, Der, I just can't wait to tie you up and mark you all over. You'll be able to suppress your healing for me, won't you?"

Jesus, Derek knows he mentioned everything Stiles just said as a kink on his list, but hearing it come from his mouth like that, well, he can't wait to get to the less clothed portion of the night.

He nods, not trusting his voice at the moment. Derek learned how to stop wounds from healing when he was but a child. It was necessary if he fell and injured himself on the playground, as it's very difficult to explain away blood but no wound to human teachers.

Stiles runs the knuckle of a finger along Derek's bicep, all the way down to his wrist, and Derek can't help the way his muscles flex in response. He watches Stiles' eyes darken, following the movement of the muscles, before he looks up, meeting Derek's eyes. Stiles' pupils dilate, irises glowing a deep vibrant gold like a solar eclipse. Derek can't help but stare, until Stiles blinks and the vibrancy fades back his normal whisky brown. He smiles sheepishly and looks back down at the page.

"These are your hard limits then?" He asks, a long finger trailing over the paper.

Derek clears his throat. "Yes. I'm not interested in humiliation, and bloodplay or watersports of any kind, basically anything involving bodily fluids that aren't semen or spit."

"Awesome. Soft limits?" Stiles questions, and at Derek's puzzled expression he explains. "Anything you're curious about, but wouldn't want to try without some more knowledge or experience."

Derek thinks and Stiles waits patiently, rubbing his thumbs lightly against Derek's pulse point, soothing him and ridding him of any nervousness. "Sensory deprivation." Derek settles on. "I would like to try it, but... You get why I'm nervous, right?"

"Werewolf." Stiles states and Derek nods. Werewolves are more dependent on their senses than any other fae because they've evolved to be honed and sharp. To suddenly have them taken away would be incredibly disconcerting.

"Maybe ease me into it?" Derek suggests.

"I can definitely do that." Stiles lifts his hand, running soft fingers through Derek's hair, he closes his eyes in pleasure, feeling Stiles lightly scratch at his scalp. "We can try a light blindfold you can see lights and shadows out of, then maybe move up to using one in conjunction with restraints, then earplugs if you want. And if everything is good with you I have some wolfsbane incense we can burn to deaden your sense of smell."

Derek can feel the stirrings of arousal, but also the beginnings of uncertainty, he doesn't know how he feels about giving up that level of control. It's not just about trusting Stiles at this point, because he would trust Stiles with his life. There are so many other factors to take into account. What if, god
forbid, someone tries to burst into the penthouse when Derek's at his most vulnerable? He wouldn't be able to protect himself or Stiles if he can't even sense them coming. Logically he knows that's unlikely to happen, but his wolf disagrees. Derek's wolf is always alert, keeping him and the people he cares about safe.

But, another aspect of him says, isn't that why he's coming to Stiles? To let Stiles take the metaphorical wheel, just for a little while, so he can let go of the build of up stress in his life. Stress over the shit that's going on with the King, his cases, thoughts about how the fuck he wants to spend his life, his divorce and what it means for his future, worry over what this is all doing to his mother's health: basically things he normally allows the bottle to take care of.

Derek knows drinking so much because he doesn't have a liver he can kill isn't the healthiest of coping mechanisms. Maybe it's this knowledge that had him set sensory deprivation as a soft limit and not something he's completely opposed to.

Derek shifts closer to Stiles, and when the man doesn't move, he rests his head carefully on Stiles' shoulder like he's afraid Stiles might pull away at any second, but Stiles just wraps an arm around his shoulder, pulling him closer, allowing Derek to bury his nose in his neck, inhaling the scent of lemon verbena and sugar on his skin. Stiles rubs his thumb behind Derek's ear and he finds himself relaxing into the embrace.

"It's normal to be nervous about these things, Der." Stiles murmurs reassuringly. "I will never pressure you into doing something you don't want, ever. And if you aren't enjoying something, you just have to safeword and I will always stop, no matter what. So don't worry and let me take care of you." Stiles drags his lips against Derek's temple and he shivers in reaction. "But now that we're on the subject of safewords, what are you comfortable with?"

"I've read about the stoplight system..." Derek trails off.

"Red for stop, green for full speed ahead, yellow for slow down and discuss. It's a good system, much better than having only one word. I also like to add another colour, and you can tell me if you're okay with it." Stiles quirks a brow, moving his finger down the back of Derek's neck resting on the first knob of his spine, finger twirling around the bone.

"Blue, for harder, rougher." Stiles smirks, watching the way Derek's throat bobs as he swallows. "And if you're gagged I'll make sure you're always able to snap your fingers, after which I will remove the gag so we can talk. Good?"

"Perfect." Derek smiles, leaning away from Stiles, allowing the man to rise to his feet and clap his hands together.

"If you're comfortable enough, do you want to try a scene?" He offers a hand, silently asking Derek to take it. He does, and Stiles pulls him to his feet. Gripping Derek's hand in his, he leads them away from the sitting room, deeper into the penthouse.

"Here's where the magic happens." Stiles announces pulling open a nondescript door, opposite from his bedroom. Flicking the switch on, the room floods with light from rows of spotlights above. It even has a massive bow window, stretching from floor to ceiling, and Derek can see the lit up Hoboken skyline clear across the Hudson. The view is incredible at night.

If it wasn't for the multitude of heavy duty hooks in the ceiling, the cupboards and drawers no doubt full of Stiles' toys and gears, the fucking exact same sawhorse he repaired a lifetime ago, this would look like every other room in Stiles' penthouse. Like it stepped right out from the roaring twenties.
Derek's eyes zoom in on a counter in a far corner of the room, next to what appears to be a fridge.

"Why do you have a kettle?" Because somehow the fridge makes perfect sense, but the kettle, not even a lick.

Stiles rolls his eyes. "To heat water." The *obviously* implicit in his tone.

"And why would you need to heat water?"

Stiles smirks playfully, "If you're good you'll find out."

Derek glances around, trying to take it all in. He's been in every single room in Stiles' penthouse but this one, and honestly, he was expecting something totally different. Something with more leather, and strangely enough, stone walls. Derek just has this image of a castle dungeon in his head, and he knows that is a stereotype, but a lot of period bodice rippers take place in cold, damp castles. It's nice to see his assumption finally proven wrong. He knows just how shitty sex in a dark place can be. Braeden loved to turn the lights off, and sometimes simple fucking was like trying to thread a needle; when the thread goes everywhere but in the hole. Derek has enhanced eyesight, but even he needs a little bit of light to make out anything.

"So..." Stiles begins, bringing Derek out of his thoughts, "I was thinking we could start out small, no penetrative sex or blindfolds for our first time together. Instead I'm thinking light restraints and some minor temperature play since you seemed to be very interested in that, I will also ask you to close your eyes." Stiles cocks his head, studying Derek's reaction. "Colour?"

"Green." He states quickly and eagerly.

"Awesome." Stiles smiles, pulling Derek even further into the room, moving them to stand over a plush rug, soft beneath his feet. Stiles looks him in the eye and must see something he likes because he gently slides his hand up Derek's neck, fingers tangling in his hair. He pulls Derek into a chaste kiss lasting only a second. Too short for how Derek dreamt their first kiss would go, he always imagined panting and tangled tongues, not something that could be considered a kiss between friends.

"What are you doing?" Derek asks after Stiles pulls away.

"I'm kissing you, obviously." Stiles replies, an adorable eyebrow raised.

"You kiss clients?"

"Of course. This isn't Pretty Woman." Stiles stops, looking almost disappointed. "Unless of course you don't want me to kiss you."

Derek shakes his head. "I want you to kiss me."

"Good." Stiles grins wickedly, letting his hand drop from Derek's neck. He mourns the loss of skin contact as Stiles steps back, eyeing Derek over from top to bottom slowly and surely.

"Take off your clothes, and place them over there." Stiles nods to a rectangular ottoman at the foot of the bed.

All of a sudden, Derek feels nervous. He knows he has a good body, and he keeps himself in shape, but fuck if he isn't worried about how Stiles will react to the copious amounts of his body hair. Stiles must sense how he feels because he smiles softly. "Remember, Der, I will take care of you." He meets Derek's eyes, reassuring him with his gaze, and Derek's heart swells with the amount of love
he feels for Stiles.

He reaches for the first button. He can tell Stiles doesn't expect a strip tease, so he efficiently removes his clothing, one piece at a time, until he's left standing in nothing but black boxer briefs.

Derek hesitates, fingers dipping under the waistband, wondering if Stiles also wants him to take off his underwear.

"Yes, those too." Stiles says from where he stands to the side, watching Derek undress.

Derek nods and hooks his fingers, pulling down the underwear. His cock is already starting to swell, just from the way Stiles is looking at him: not critical like Braeden did if he missed a waxing appointment, but like he's beautiful, from the few grey hairs scattered among the black, to the whorls on his chest, to his uncut cock. Derek smiles, blushing softly as he picks up his discarded clothes, and places them on the ottoman.

Derek startles when a light finger traces the three fold spiral of the triskelion tattoo.

"Kneel for me." Stiles says softly and simply. Derek drops, the plush rug cushioning him from the hardwood floor. Stiles' hand remains on the tattoo, and Derek can sense his presence against his back. "Close your eyes." And Derek does, breathing evenly through his nose as Stiles' hand moves over his back oh so slowly, fingers ghosting against his skin.

Derek feels the shift in the air as Stiles moves to his front, bending down until he's only a few short inches from Derek's face, sharing breaths.

A hand makes its way into his hair, tickling his scalp as another rests on his chest, fingers twirling in the hair, thumb slightly ghosting over his nipple in a way that makes Derek concentrate extra hard on the sensation. Now that his eyes are closed, all his other senses seem to be multiplied tricefold, and Derek thinks he wouldn't mind a blindfold if it will feel like this, especially since the temptation to open his eyes and look at Stiles is so strong.

"Do you trust me, Der?"

Derek's so absorbed by the touch of Stiles' skin against his, he forgets to answer. Stiles' hand trails up his neck, gripping his cheek. "Answer me, Derek."
"Yes." He breathes.

"Then open your eyes and go lie on the bed." Stiles' fingers slowly leave his skin as Derek blinks, adjusting to the light. He watches Stiles walk over to the counter near the fridge, shirt off, pale skin glowing in the city light coming in from the window. Derek moves to do as Stiles asks, settling comfortably on clean white sheets smelling faintly of the light chemical tang of unscented detergent.

Resting his head on the soft pillow, he closes his eyes again, finding comfort in listening to what Stiles is doing: the sound of water being poured from a jug, the click of a kettle as water simmers, the clink of ice cubes in a mug. Soon Stiles is standing near the bed again. He touches Derek's face lightly, and he opens his eyes.

"Hey," Stiles whispers. "I'm going to tie your wrists to the headboard with rope, it's not wolfsbane laced so you'll be able to snap it if you want, after that we are going to try temperature play with hot and cold water on your cock. Colour?"

"Green."

Derek's cock is fully hard by now, just from Stiles' intimate touches and the scent of his skin, so when Stiles moves his hands holding them over his head as he loops soft ropes around his wrists, tying what must be a beautiful knot, Derek's dick jumps in anticipation. The bed dips as Stiles settles
at his side, a mug in hand.

"Eyes, Derek." Stiles asks and Derek obeys. "Good boy." It's like he's floating on clouds, the moment Stiles praises him.

Stiles takes his cock in hand, tugging the foreskin over the head, stroking him once, twice. The skin of his hand is soft but his grip firm, and Derek moans in abject pleasure, enjoying the welcome sensation on his neglected cock.

When Derek feels the chill of ice water surrounding his cock, a tongue nudging the underside, he's completely unprepared, and his hips rabbit up, pushing his cock down Stiles' throat, but he just takes it moaning, clever tongue tracing the veins. Derek thrusts up again only to have Stiles pull away, leaving him whining.

When Stiles said temperature play, Derek stupidly thought Stiles was going to place ice cubes on his dick. This, however, is so much better.

This time when Stiles' mouth returns to Derek's cock, warm water engulfs it, and the contrast with the cold from before is electrifying.

"Fuck, Stiles, Fuck," Derek gasps, aching to piston his hips as Stiles sucks his cock. If his eyes were open he has no doubt he'd be coming just from the image of Stiles with hallowed cheeks, lips wrapped red and obscene around his cock.

Stiles pulls away, and Derek groans in frustration, feeling Stiles run fingers through his treasure trail, firmly resting a hand just under his belly button.

"Don't move an inch, Der," and Stiles takes him down to the root, cold water startling and maddening. The pressure increases as Derek's whines, biting his lip, legs spasming, but he holds back from thrusting up into Stiles mouth. The presence of a hand on his belly, a constant reminder. Stiles would never be able to physically hold him down, and it takes all of Derek's self control to not move his hips.

This time when Stiles pulls away, he strokes Derek's cock, licking and sucking at his balls, taking them into his mouth, one after the other. "Look at me." Stiles commands, voice calm and collected, the total opposite of how Derek feels. He blinks down blearily at the image of Stiles sitting between his widely spread legs, eyes hooded and lips smeared red and wet with precome and spit. Derek can just make out the head of his hard dick peeking out of the red underwear showing between unbuttoned slacks.

"Fuck." Derek sighs, eyes wide open as he stares at the debauched sight before him.

He swallows heavily when Stiles' eyes meet his and holding his gaze, Stiles sinks a long, pale finger into his red mouth. Spit trails as he pulls the finger out only a second later, crooking it and sliding it down between Derek's ass cheeks. Rubbing the finger against his hole, Stiles massages it without pressing inside as he bends over and takes Derek back in his mouth. Only a minute passes before Derek is coming with a loud shout, hands tugging at the restraints so hard the bed creaks dangerously. His eyes flash beta yellow as Stiles' transform from whiskey to golden.

Sparks run down his body as Stiles feeds on him, heart rabbiting and limbs shivering. Goosebumps decorate his skin as the pleasure sweeps through his body and his nipples pebble. Derek tenses for a long moment, back curving away from the bed as Stiles continues to swallow him down as he comes until the sensitivity becomes too much to stand, only then does Stiles pull away, eyes fading back to normal.
That was, without a doubt, the most intense orgasm he's ever had. Derek gasps for air, breathing heavily, chest moving up and down with effort.

Stiles is the first to break the silence, reaching over to undo the ropes with just a short tug. "God, Derek, you look so beautiful undone."

He can do nothing but whimper as Stiles massages his wrists, the rope marks healing only a second later. "You are so good for me," Stiles whispers as he lays beside him, thigh touching Derek's own, fingers threading through the hairs on his chest as Derek stares helplessly at him.

That's when he feels it.

At first Derek thinks it's heartburn like when he eats food too fast or drinks too much, but when it lasts longer than a few seconds, he knows something is wrong.

Stiles rolls away from the bed, walking over to the fridge in the corner of the room, pulling out two Gatorades. "You like the blue one, right?" Derek nods distractedly at Stiles' question. Shakily, he places a hand over his heart, feeling it beat normally, but with the sharp edge of something else, something with potential, and that's when he knows.

The bond. The bond that ruined his mother's life, the one that made his father into a murderous, possessive beast, it's developing between Stiles and him. Robotically, Derek rises from the bed and walks over to the ottoman.

He's pulling up his pants, buttoning them, when Stiles climbs back into the bed, soft cashmere blankets and bottles in hand as he stares up at Derek curiously. He pats the bed beside him, but Derek ignores the clear invitation, throwing on his shirt and doing up the buttons as quickly as he can.

"What are you doing?" Stiles questions, voice confused. Derek can't even look at him, he's panicking and can't let Stiles see.

"I have to go." He answers coldly, and the last thing he sees before he leaves is Stiles' shocked face, a look of such desperate vulnerability clouding it. Derek doesn't look back.

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Derek drives like a madman, shortening the hour long drive to Nassau by fifteen minutes. He is hot, sweaty and desperate, and can still feel the fucking bond beating away in his heart. Derek wants to rip out the organ and toss it from the fucking window so it doesn't have to ache like this.

He has a goddamn business arrangement with Stiles, and no matter how much Derek loves him, he cannot forcibly thrust him into a fucking bond. It's disgusting and inhumane.

Look at his parents for fuck's sake. No matter what all the stories say, bonds are revolting, they keep two people shackled together even if they no longer love each other, or even if they didn't love each other to begin with. Not everyone is as lucky as Talia to love a King powerful enough to break her previous bond.

Derek guns the engine, and crosses his fingers hoping he doesn't get pulled over tonight, he doesn't know what he might do if he does. Start a high speed chase seems likely.

Luckily he makes it to Erica and Boyd's house without incident.

His heart must be beating so erratically because the moment he steps on the porch the door swings
open to reveal Erica in nothing but a towel and bunny slippers. He drops to his knees, feeling tears streaming down his face and Erica, bless her soul, drops down beside him, uncaring of the gossip it will no doubt instigate in her neighbourhood, and wraps her arms tight around him, anchoring him when he feels like he's about to float away at any second. Derek senses the presence of another body at his back as Boyd also wraps his arms around Derek's body.

Somehow he ends up in their bedroom as Erica wipes a damp cloth over the sticky tear tracks on his face and Boyd presses the full length of his body against Derek's back. He falls asleep warm, comforted, and safe.

***

"Hey, how are you feeling?" Erica asks, setting a plateful of Boyd's famous buttermilk pancakes in front of Derek as he comes down for breakfast, taking a seat at the round breakfast table with her own plate and coffee.

"Really shitty." Derek answers plucking at the collar of one of Boyd's plain tees, still feeling the thrums of the bond beat in his heart.

"Last night I smelled Stiles on you." Derek scrunches up his nose at Boyd's tone as he joins them at the table, setting a bottle of maple syrup in the center, staring at Derek with a knowing look in his eye.

"I had sex with him." He admits reluctantly.

Erica smiles for a brief second before her expression fades into one of pure confusion. "But why are you here? You should be with him..."

Derek cuts into a pancake and takes a bite, not enjoying it like he should. It's tastes like dust on his dry tongue and he feels so empty for running away from Stiles like that. He swallows, thinking of what he can say without bringing to light his insecurities regarding bonds.

"The bond. I forced the bond on him." He finally says, staring down at his plate waiting for the accusations, the words of disgust to fly, for the screaming, for his best friends to kick him from their house forever because he is a revolting excuse of a person to do something like that to the man he loves.

"Derek, you poor, poor idiot."

Well, he wasn't expecting that. He looks up at Erica as she wears an expression of concern, her eyes soft as she gazes at him. "Both participants need to consent to the bond, and if one of them doesn't, it won't take. I'm not even a werewolf and I bloody well know that."

"I haven't forced him?"

"You can't force a bond." She says simply.

Pure, unadulterated relief runs through his body and he slumps back in his seat like tonnes of pressure has suddenly lifted from his shoulders.

Erica smirks. "You should probably call Stiles and get this whole misunderstanding sorted out, don't you think?"

Almost like she's psychic, Derek's phone rings in the pocket of his pants where they lie with the rest of his clothes on the couch. Walking over and checking the caller ID, he sees Stiles' name and a
"You fucking asshole. What gives you the right?" A voice shouts over the line, furious and snarling.

Derek raises his eyebrows. "Who the hell is this? Where's Stiles?" He demands, confused. This is Stiles' number but this is obviously not Stiles.

"I'm Scott McCall, and I may be as human as human goes, but if you ever come near Stiles again I will rip off your fucking head, shove your body cavity full of wolfsbane, and send you off to a taxidermist to be stuf-" Derek hears a shout coming from the other end of the line, followed by the sound of a struggle, and the oof of someone getting elbowed in the ribs.

"Derek?" Stiles asks, out of breath as he comes on the line.

Derek takes a deep breath, "I'm sorry for leaving like that last night, I promise it won't happen again."

The line is silent for a few moment before Stiles says quietly, soft enough that Derek almost can't hear it. "I'm not going to scene with you again."

"But-"

"No," Stiles states resolutely, "you broke our contract. Aftercare is an important part of the scene, and you just left."

"But I'm fine," Derek pleads. "I went to Erica and Boyd's after, they helped me through the night."

Stiles scoffs, his voice bitter and biting. "You were fine, but I wasn't. Aftercare exists for you as much as me, and when you left with no words, no fucking explanation, I felt guilty as fuck, wondering if I did something wrong, if I hurt you, if I wasn't able to satisfy you the way you wanted. You left me actually questioning if I'm a fucking good Dom or not. So no, Derek, never again. You broke my trust." Stiles hangs up without another word.

At the dial tone, all Derek can think of is Stiles' words last night as he knelt at Stiles' feet. _Do you trust me, Der?_

Derek sinks down on the couch, and only a second later feels Erica's fingers comb questioningly through his hair, he grabs her by the waist and buries his face in her stomach, tears running silently down his cheeks. Isn't that just typical? Trust is something that goes both ways, and Derek may trust Stiles with his life, but now Stiles doesn't feel safe enough to put the same amount of faith back in him.

***

That night he goes out drinking with Lydia. They take a taxi to a fancy bar in Tribeca with an impeccable selection of beers on tap. It's probably Lydia's Irish heritage speaking, but she adores a good malt.

They sit in a corner booth: Lydia cradling a pint of dark as Derek sips his whiskey, laced with the wolfsbane Lydia pulled out of in a sandwich bag in her purse.

Her eyes are slightly sunken in and rimmed red like she's been crying for a while before they met up. He knows she's been having trouble with Allison, going by the way she hardly smells like her wife anymore, and Derek's afraid to ask. He's not very good at helping people with their troubles,
considering he chooses to drink away his own.

Halfway through her second pint Lydia rubs at her eyes, smearing her makeup across her face, and Derek stares, worried.

"She blames me, I know she does." Lydia sputters out, taking another long gulp from her glass, and Derek can think of only one reason why they're fighting.

"Does she not want the child anymore?"

Lydia laughs, "She wants it, but I know she wishes I could've carried it. Why couldn't I carry it, Derek? She is supposed to be focusing on her career in archery. You know they invited her to the Rio Olympics? Right? God, I'm so fucking proud of her... But now she'll be eight months gone by the time she has to compete."

Derek grabs a few napkins from the dispenser, wiping away the tears trailing down her cheeks, but all it does is smear her make up even worse.

The problem is that Lydia can't carry children, even if she wanted to. Banshee aren't born from other banshee. Lydia's mother and father are Leshii, woodland sprites, and she would've been too if her heart hadn't stopped beating in the womb. Banshee are created when a fae child dies before being born, and somehow is revived. Nobody knows exactly how it happens, just that it occurs when there isn't another banshee living in the same territory. Derek figures it's the universe's way of keeping the balance, making sure there's a symbol, a harbinger of death anytime there is a large population of people.

Lydia's body is just not made to give life, but Allison knows this, and Derek highly doubts she blames Lydia for not being able to do what she can. No, this is Lydia blaming herself, thinking she's ruining Allison's life, her career. So Derek does all he can do, he wipes away Lydia's tears, stops her from buying another beer, and calls Allison to come and pick her up.

They really are such complete opposites and yet, they suit each other.

Allison arrives looking as vibrant as ever and pulls Lydia into a tight embrace, reassuring her, saying she doesn't blame her for anything.

Derek stands numbly to the side, waving them off as Allison's SUV drives off around the corner. She offered him a ride, but he chose to stay behind. Derek walks back into the bar and orders another whiskey. He has his own demons to deal with.

Time flies like it always does when he drinks and before he knows it, it's four in the morning and he's leaning against the side of the bar after being kicked out after last call. He can't walk straight and whenever he tries, the world just starts spinning around and around. Derek doesn't think he's ever let himself go this far before.

Fumbling into his pocket he pulls out his cell and scrolls though his contacts until he finds the one he's looking for, pressing connect.

"Can you come pick me up?" He asks in a quiet voice, "Please, Stiles?" All the cabs he tried to signal drove right past, not wanting him to either puke or die from blood poisoning in their back seat.

Stiles sighs, and Derek can almost imagine him scratching his soft brown hair until it sticks up in all
directions. "Where are you?" Derek feels like breaking down and sobbing in relief as he rattles off the street he's on and the name of the bar. "I'll be there in twenty," Stiles says shortly before hanging up.

Derek's sitting on the curb with his head between his legs, staring down at a rusted storm drain, wondering if there really are alligators in the sewers of New York, when he feels a light, and soothingly cool hand run through his hair. Looking up blearily, he sees Stiles crouched in front of him, old Jeep idling only a few feet away. "Come on, don't make me carry you, I think you'd crush me." Stiles pulls on his arm, and Derek goes with the motion, rising to his feet and almost falling back again when vertigo spins the world around, but Stiles grounds him with a tight arm around his waist as he marches Derek over to the Jeep. Opening the passenger's door and making sure he's all buckled in, Stiles closes it with a snap.

He only vaguely remembers the drive and riding the elevator up to Stiles' penthouse. He must black out after Stiles opens the door because Derek wakes to a blinding strip of light across his face. His mouth is dry like something died in it and his eyes are crusted shut. Rubbing them, he realizes he's not in the guest bedroom, but Stiles' own, with sheets that smell like him. He's been stripped down to his underwear and strangely enough his socks.

Sitting up and leaning against the headboard, he stares down at his feet, wiggling his covered toes wondering why Stiles left those on.

"Hey." Stiles says and Derek looks up to see him leaning in the doorway. He's dressed in business casual, wearing a fitted v neck sweater over a shirt and tie with what appears to be little golden snitches on it. The look is anything but unappealing in a hipster sort of way that just goes with everything Stiles is.

"You know," Derek croaks, clearing his throat a few times, he tries again. "Thank you for... you know, for picking me up."

Stiles purses his lips, staring at Derek stumbling over his words, lithe but strong arms crossed in front of a lean chest.

"We need to talk." Stiles strides into the room, sitting on the edge of the bed.

Derek slumps, glaring down at his hands as they fist the sheets covering his lap. This is where Stiles fires him for being unprofessional, for being a fucking idiot who does nothing but screw up over and over again.

A finger touches the bottom of his chin, and he looks up, meeting Stiles' concerned gaze.

"You need to stop this."

Derek closes his eyes, "I know."

Arms wrap around his body and he sighs when Stiles grips the back of his neck like a lifeline, keeping him steady.

"I'm going to give our arrangement another chance because I think we were doing good up until you left." Derek's throat clicks at Stiles' words, and he buries his face in Stiles' neck, inhaling the scent of his skin, while Stiles slowly strokes his back giving him the comfort and relief he craves so dearly.
"Thank you," he whispers.

Chapter End Notes

I happen to know someone who's been sceneing for years with her husband, so in terms of kinks and technical aspects, I've done my research. She gave me a few reputable blogs to look through and allowed me to ask lots of questions, and she's kinda amazing with ideas. Basically, this fic would be really shitty without her.
Damn this was sooo close to being posted on the 13th, but eh, close enough... Late by only one day and a few minutes, whoo!

Note the new tags peeps. There won't be any xeno in this fic, but I like the idea of werewolves being able to transform into a full wolf, even betas.

Black Annis granted him one favour the day he won a long battle against her insurance company a mere seven years after Hurricane Katrina destroyed her home and business in New Orleans. Derek was still an intern at the time, working for the Argents, and they only gave him the case because Black Annis didn't have the money to afford a more experienced lawyer after so many years of legal expenses.

He worked hard on that case in an effort to prove, not only to his family, but to himself that he could be a good lawyer. Derek weeks spent digging around, calling other victims of the same company and making inquiries. In the end, he managed to single-handily discover and expose corruption within the company's highest shareholders. People were arrested, and around two hundred Louisianans had their long lost policies fulfilled.

It was a wonderful day for everyone involved, except the corrupt CEO of course. He lost everything and also magically contracted an itchy form of herpes Black Annis assured would never truly go away.

She truly is a remarkable woman.

Back in New Orleans, before Katrina, Black Annis was very well known. People all over the Parishes would buy magical services from her, things from good luck charms to pest warding spells. She's considered a witch in the larger community, but still prefers to use the derogatory 'hag' even though such words were culturally banned from the vernacular.

She never wants to forget where she began: a misunderstood, scorned figure in fae history. Humans still tell fairy tales about her, the crone with iron claws and a taste for the flesh of small children. None of the stories are true, and though Black Annis never cared much for children and their 'incessant screaming,' she would never eat them. In fact, she used to jokingly say they were too boney.

After Katrina, she moved up north, requesting permission from Deaton to settle in the city as an unaligned fae, and now runs a very profitable bakery in front of her lesser known occult shop. Here, people flock to her for the pastries.

The bakery smells like cinnamon and arsenic, which could just be the scent of almond extract, but knowing Black Annis the more sinister ingredient is probably the truth. Besides, there are many spells which require arsenic as an ingredient. Just not in a bakery. It's a good thing fae are unaffected by arsenic, humans on the other hand...

Well, Derek just hopes she doesn't cater to them.
There's a human teenager working the counter in full goth attire, wearing what appears to be a hairnet fashioned to look like cobwebs. Stiles would love that, and Derek half wants to ask the girl where she got it, it would make an excellent gag gift on Halloween. He walks up to the counter and greets the girl with a nod of his head.

"Bonjour!" She smiles, "Hale, yeah? I got ya order right here." The girl says in a twangy New Orleans dialect, pulling out a massive box from underneath the counter.

"Thanks." He pulls out his wallet, but the girl stops him with a raised hand.

"Annis says dem cookies are free, ya don't go giving me money." The girl wags her finger.

"But..." He protests.

"Free, chér." She emphasizes, thrusting the box into his arms. "Now, scat."

Derek leaves the bakery feeling like a scolded child. But at least he has the cookies he owes Stiles. The waiting list for Black Annis' magic snickerdoodles is miles long, and it would've been months before he could get any if the famous baker herself hadn't owed Derek a favour.

Stiles' relationship with these particular cookies are well known. If Stiles was allowed to place an order more than once a year, he would eat nothing but the delicious pastries. Derek knows for a fact that Stiles rents a freezer unit where he keep approximately two hundred boxes of girl scout thin mints, like the psychotic cookie monster he is.

He's absolutely sure Stiles will appreciate these.

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"Holy shit, when you said you could get me these snickerdoodles, I honestly thought you were joking." Stiles stares in wonder at the box in his hand where a cartoon witch flies around on a broomstick around a moon designed to look like a snickerdoodle, Derek finds it very amusing.

"I keep my bets." Derek smiles, resting his crossed arms on the counter as he watches Stiles carefully open the box, like he's handling a precious ancient artefact.

"Fuck, Der." Stiles moans around a mouthful cinnamon cookie. "You know, she magics these so they're always fresh from the oven, right? Even in my belly I can feel their warmth." Stiles closes his eyes and rubs his stomach and Derek watches amused. At least that explains the arsenic. It's often used in warming spells and isn't very human friendly.

Stiles groans as Derek stares, watching him lick his lips and saying, "Sheesh, I'm going to plan something extra special for you during our next session."

Derek ducks his head, blushing. "I look forward to it." He says, tracing the veins of the marble countertop with a pinkie.

Their next session is in a few days, and so far Stiles has only hinted that it will involve a thin silk blindfold. He hadn't revealed anything else after Derek gave his consent to the minor sight deprivation, but he did explain the importance of aftercare for both members in a scene the night he accepted Derek back.

Derek was an idiot for leaving Stiles alone that night, and he thankfully said the dom drop wasn't so bad because he hadn't been doing anything to really hurt Derek, just sensation play. If they had stepped right into the heavy stuff like suspension, pain, or even wax play, Stiles said he would've
never been able to look at Derek again.

He feels like he dodged a bullet that should've never been fired in the first place.

Subs need aftercare to be brought out of subspace. To emerge from the scene, and to be reassured they did a good job. Doms need aftercare because of guilt. To be reassured they did not harm their subs during the scene. Without it, the guilt would eat away at them until they drop. Like Stiles did.

He had to call Scott over to cuddle with him and make him feel better after Derek left. And that alone makes Derek feel like a horrible person. He should have been the one to do that for Stiles, not his friend, who had to leave his children with a neighbour and come over in the middle of the night.

Stiles may be providing what people would assume is a service, but it isn't all give and take, their arrangement truly is a two way street, and Derek needs to prevent his insecurities from unintentionally hurting the man he loves.

Besides, the bond is lying dormant. Derek can still feel it, and sometimes when he's around Stiles his heart starts breathing erratically like it wants him to open up, tell him how he feels, and complete the joining.

If Derek doesn't concentrate on the thrumming he can thankfully ignore it.

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Derek gets the call at three in the morning. By the time he arrives at Deaton's home in SoHo, it's four, and he's dead on his feet, clutching an extra, extra large cup of exceedingly shitty cold coffee from a 24 hour bodega. The man behind the counter didn't even have change on him so the cup of exceedingly shitty coffee cost a grand total of twenty dollars, the only bill Derek had on him at the time. He didn't want to risk going into this situation with anything less than a mind hyped up on caffeine so the coffee was reluctantly paid for, and now here he is.

"It's like he appeared out of nowhere." Parrish, one of Deaton's guards explains as he leads Derek through the heavily warded holding area underneath the King's building.

"So you're saying my father has absolutely no memory of how he got broke into Chicago's Art Institute after hours and fell asleep in front of a Francis Bacon painting? He fucking hates Francis Bacon." Hell, his father hates art in general. Especially 'homosexual art,' as he derogatorily calls it.

"He says the last thing he remembers is spreading pâté on a piece of toast three months ago. Mr. Orrin has no idea how he placed an extremely powerful concealment charm on himself, traveled from Fresno to Chicago, and then somehow decided to take a trip to the Art Institute to lie down in front of Figure with Meat and then, only then, lift the charm. We'll have to wait for the Erinyes to arrive from his hotel before he can tell if your father's telling the truth."

Derek scoffs, sipping his cup of coffee, making a face at the burnt taste. "Malcolm's obviously lying. I mean come on, amnesia? What a flimsy excuse."

"I don't know, Derek." Parrish says, entering a access code into a door panel before it slides open with a pneumatic hiss. "I think he really doesn't have a clue. You'll see what I mean when you take a look at him. He's messed up."

Derek just raises his eyebrows.

A guard waits outside the door and nods to Parrish as they walk past him into the holding area.
Malcolm Orrin sits slumped on a chair behind a few solid inches of bullet and magic proof glass, looking like he's been through a meat grinder only to be shoved into a sausage casing after.

"Jesus..." Derek mutters under his breath. "What the fuck happened to him?"

His father is covered from head to toe with sharp lacerations. Only a few of the larger ones are bandaged, but the smaller ones still bleed steadily. His head is caked with sweat and mud, and he has what looks to be leaves and nettles embedded fully in the strands.

"Why isn't he healing?" Derek asks, stepping closer to the glass, resting his hand on the cool surface as he studies his father and the thousand yard expression he wears.

"We don't know." Parrish shrugs, moving to the side before pulling out his cell phone and typing into it. "He's getting worse. When he first landed in New York he was talking fine, explaining where he was months ago. Now, he's not even speaking in complete sentences. It's like his brain is frying even as we speak."

Derek looks back into the cell, and startles when he finds his father gazing past him like he isn't even there. "Can I talk to him?" He asks.

Parrish laughs quietly. "Why do you think you're even here? We were hoping you would jog a memory or something." He walks over to the guard console and Derek moves to the side as the glass slides open, Derek steps through, and it slides back closed again.

Derek rests the cup of coffee on the interview table and walks carefully up to his father. "Malcolm?" He asks, crouching down so he's eye level. "Hey?" He carefully touches his father's knee and Malcolm's eyes slide to meet his. They look duller than they used to. Derek has the exact same eyes as his father, but he inherited his mother's colouring. Malcolm's eyes don't look as sea green as they did before. They're grey, like all the colour has been washed from their depths, leaving an unfathomable emptiness behind.

Derek swallows, "It's me, your son." He says staring into cold, unfocused eyes.

"Knnnnr..." Malcolm groans and Derek startles. Turning to look at Parrish, he finds the man staring right back at him, eyes wide. His father makes another indiscernible noise and Derek turns back to him.

"What are you trying to say?" He asks carefully.

"Knnnnock..." Malcolm's eyes roll back in his head like the effort to say one word nearly turns him catatonic.

"Knock?" Derek questions.

"Knnnock, knnnock..." Malcolm slurs.

"What?" Derek furrows his brow, frustrated. He's half tempted to knock his knuckles against his father's temple, petty revenge for the years of abuse he put Derek and his siblings through.

"Knock, knock." Malcolm repeats.

In what must have been a sudden fit of insanity Derek mockingly asks, "Who's there?"

Malcolm shoots out of the chair faster than the speed of light and grabs him around the throat, pushing him to the ground. Derek's head cracks painfully against the concrete, and he can barely
hear the sound of Parrish shouting on the other side of the glass. Malcolm straddles him and Derek struggles to draw in a panicked breath as his father's closed wounds open and blood trickles down his arm, dripping warm on Derek's neck, fingers wrapping tighter around his throat. Derek stares up in shock at Malcolm's flashing ice blue eyes, he leans closer until Derek can feel frosty, dry breath on the skin of his cheek.

"Nobody's home."  Malcolm whispers just as Parrish bodily kicks him off Derek and shoots a taser into his torso. Malcolm's body jolts for a long moment, seizing, legs kicking, knocking the chair over until his limbs lay still like death.

Parrish moves to check his pulse and obviously finds something startling because he sits back on his haunches in shock.  "He's dead."  Parrish spits out.

Derek draws in a breath and gags when the smell of decomposition suddenly fills the holding area. Turning on his side, he hurls bile and coffee onto the concrete. Derek glances over at Malcolm. His father's rapidly decomposing corpse stares back at him, eyes sunken in and skin bruised blue.

"What the fuck is going on?"  Parrish chokes, sleeve covering his nose.

That's what Derek wants to know.

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Talia taps her claws against the conference table before rising to her feet. It's a full moon night and Derek is finding it extremely difficult to not react to his Alpha flaunting her claws so dramatically even though they're painted a vibrant magenta with rhinestones on the ends. No doubt Satomi's work.

The council of elders had called a meeting to question Derek about what he saw in the cell with Malcolm. His mother was there for legal reasons: an Alpha must always be present for any betas going through a tribunal. Or something like that, since they had reassured Derek that this was not in fact a tribunal, but more of a Q&A, where he told them what they want to hear, and they didn't rip his face off.

Or something.

Derek thinks it went well, he had explained exactly what he saw and what happened, trying to ignore the firm grip the Erinyes had on his hand, weeding out lies from truths with closed eyes. Then after they milked him for every drop of information he had, they said their condolences to Talia and left without even a goodbye to Derek. He knows he's young, but being treated like humans treat their toddlers is not great for the self esteem.

They leave the room and head to the elevators. Derek presses the button for the lobby while discretely looking his mother over. She doesn't seem even slightly broken up about Malcolm's death, in face she looks a little bit happier, with a slight smirk on her face. Derek can't blame her, he would have been worried if she was sad about it.

Cora had received the news with sombre silence, while Laura cheered. Isaac had been completely indifferent, and honestly, Derek doesn't even know his other half siblings that well to contact them and ask their opinion on a man they no doubt hated.

Malcolm Orrin was never a well liked man, and anyone who's ever met him would agree that he got what was coming.
Now with his father dead, they're back to square one.

The Queen locked herself in the room with Deaton the moment she arrived from JFK with a massive retinue, and she's not taking any messages. The floors above and below her have been sealed off while she works her magic. Derek's just crossing his fingers hoping she can remedy this.

Nobody knows what was wrong with Malcolm, the autopsy revealed nil, and any magical scans came back negative. The strangest thing is that Malcolm was basically human when he died. There was not even a hint of magic in his cells when they scanned him, and even though werewolves don't possess enough magic to perform spells, they have just enough of a spark for it to show up on scans. So it's a huge mystery why there was nothing in Malcolm.

Derek drives his mother back to her home and can't help but think of what happened. He read the coroner's report, and even with basic medical knowledge he understands that something is really wrong with how Malcolm died. The coroner even put some of her own notes down, *It's like something fed on him and sucked out all his mojo.*

Derek remembers reading that and feeling a foreboding chill run through his body. Even if the Queen manages to wake her twin, they still have to figure out who wanted him dead, and by extension the rest of fae civilization.

Derek parks in front of the sprawling mansion on 5th Avenue where he grew up. It's located only a few feet from central park, where the Hale pack comes to run on full moon nights. Most of the wolves chose to run outside of the city, but the inner pack, the family related by blood, has been running in Central Park for decades. It's tradition.

When Derek was young, and unable to control himself, his mother used to send him off with Satomi's pack to run in one of New Jersey's many reserves. He hated it. Not only was he away from his Alpha and siblings, but Satomi was not always the most tolerant of Alphas. She used to bite at his haunches when he couldn't run fast enough, making him yelp in fear. Maybe that's why, out of all of his siblings, Derek is the fastest in both wolf and human form.

Crushing childhood trauma: always a good way to find motivation.

The Hale family usually eats a big dinner before crossing the street and shedding all their clothes, tucking them away in a little maintenance shed before transforming. Talia usually hires a caterer to deliver because the whole family is the exact same in the kitchen... Liable to burn salad.

When Derek steps into the house he sees Talia chose to go in a different direction this time.

Derek stops in his tracks sniffing the air, catching the scent of verbena and sugar. He grabs his mother's arm as she goes to put her jacket in the closet.

"Why is Stiles here?" He whispers furiously.

Talia smirks, unimpressed. "Derek, I felt your bond develop."

"Ew." He makes a face, dropping her arm.

"Oh, don't be such a sourpuss-"

"Sourwolf!" Laura yells from the dining room, and Derek feels like burying his head in the dirt like an ostrich.

Talia chuckles. "It's not like I knew what you two were getting up to, I could just feel the potential
for a bond forming." She smirks, "Except we all know that only happens through sex."

Derek keeps his voice low so even Laura with her sharp ears can't hear it. "It's not like that between us. We have a professional relationship."

"Derek, you're fucking. No matter what you call it, that fact still remains true." She says simply. "And if I happen to want to know who my baby boy's been getting down with, as you kids say nowadays, there's nothing wrong with that."

He growls. "You and I both know it's not about us fucking." Derek runs after Talia as she walks through the foyer, heels clicking. "You wouldn't have mentioned the bond if it was." He grabs his mother's wrist, stopping her in her tracks.

"Let go." She says quietly.

"You are not forcing him to bond with me." He hisses.

Talia flashes her eyes, and Derek drops her arm like it's on fire. "I would never force anyone in a bond. How can you even say that, with what I've gone through with your father? I finally have this weight lifted off my shoulders now that he's dead, and you think I want to subject you to the same shit?"

"You've never invited Stiles over before." Derek says coldly.

"You weren't screwing him before." She retorts. "Now, you will sit down, eat your dinner, and I will make pleasant conversation with the man to whom I'm entrusting my child. Understand?"

Derek adverts his eyes and lets go of his mother's elbow. "Fine." He mutters.

Talia huffs, before striding off, Derek following after, dejectedly.

"Derek!" Stiles exclaims as he walks into the dining room. Stiles stands behind Isaac, serving him green beans. The look of absolute horror on Isaac's face as he stares down at the ever growing pile of green, is comedic enough to almost allow Derek to forget the fight he just had with his mother. Almost.

Derek takes a seat and grabs the plate of what smells like mashed parsnips and celeriac. "Sit down," he says to Stiles. "This idiot can serve himself."

Stiles rolls his eyes, "I know, but," He grabs Isaac's ear much to his displeasure. "This one won't eat his vegetables.

Isaac bats away Stiles hands as he goes in to pinch his cheeks. "I'm older than you." He whines.

"With that baby face?" Stiles says skeptically.

Derek laughs into his hand, covering it up with a cough, Isaac sends him a scowl, "I don't know why you aren't complaining, he's going to make you eat them too."

Derek shrugs. He has no complaints. "Don't knock it till you've try it." Derek takes the platter of green beans from Stiles' hand, smelling the hint of prosciutto and grinning. Stiles grips him by the shoulder in thanks before sitting down at his side.

"I think you'll like the chops, I put in a little extra somethin' somethin'," Stiles wiggles in his chair, and Derek chuckles. He grabs a pork chop next and starts cutting into it, taking a bite.
"Fucking yum!" Laura exclaims as she chews along with Derek and Stiles grins like the sun.

"It's not that great." Isaac mutters around a mouthful of food, even as his steak knife saws away at another piece.

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks." Stiles winks as Isaac growls, showing fang. "Hey, I can't change what the great Shakespeare wrote, he said lady, I also have to."

"Shut up and eat your food." Cora says, no nonsense.

Talia clears her throat, embarrassed. "So tell me, Stiles, how's business?"

Derek coughs, choking on a piece of meat going down the wrong pipe. Stiles helpfully hits him on the back until it passes, and Derek sends him a relieved smile.

"Did I say something wrong?" Talia asks innocently. Derek glares at her, but that just seems to make her more determined as she turns to Stiles smiling pleasantly. Derek eyes the bottle of wine sitting in the middle of the table.

"Oh it's fine." Stiles says just as Derek reaches out and pours wine into his empty stem glass.

Just as he's about to take a sip, Stiles takes the glass out of his hand, placing it next to his own plate. "I'm collecting some more local art now, although I really cannot resist the call of academies all over the world." He says as he pours Derek a glass of water, replacing the wine. "But it's good to support local endeavours." He smiles cordially at Talia as Derek stares dejectedly at the glass of water. Crossing his fingers, he hopes it will turn back into wine at any second.

"I heard you're planning on opening a gallery." Cora says.

Stiles grins bright. "Yeah! I just figured I have all this amazing art but it's sitting in a vault far from the light of day. It would be great to bring it out in the open, you know? It would advertise a few lesser known artists, get people talking about their work, give them exposure."

"You know," Laura grins mischievously, "Isaac makes lithographs when he's not selling his soul to a nine to fiver."

"Laura!" Isaac hisses, blushing down to his toes. "Shut up."

The rest of the dinner is filled with light banter and prods, mostly Laura and Isaac butting heads, but in the end Isaac promises to show Stiles his gorgeous prints after Stiles flashes his famous pout and everyone in the room melts. Stiles could probably convince the Queen of England to give him the crown jewels with that pout. It's that fucking adorable.

Derek's at the door, contemplating on bringing his jacket for the two minute walk to Central Park, when Stiles reaches past him into the closet, pulling out his own light coat. Derek turns and frowns when he sees Stiles changed into running shoes and sweats.

"What the hell?" Derek asks, brows furrowed.

Stiles quirks his mouth as he slides on the coat. "Oh, didn't your mother tell you? I'm running with you guys."

"No you're not." Derek says firmly.

Stiles snorts, buttoning up the coat, "Um, yeah I am." He says, pushing past Derek and walking out
the door, joining the rest of the family,

"It's not safe." Derek calls, striding after him, "You could get hurt." He says, catching up to Stiles' long strides.

"You all have impeccable control I'm sure."

Derek runs a hand through his hair, frustrated. "It's not about that. There are so many pitfalls, and boulders. We're not running on the path, Stiles. It's going to be dark, and you will fall and hurt yourself."

Stiles flashes his eyes discretely but powerfully. "I can see just as well in the dark as you can when I'm not glamoured, and I can work a partial shift so you don't have to worry about my wings coming out and getting caught on anything. Besides, I go hiking with Scott every once in a while." He brushes his fingers lightly against Derek's hand. "I can take care of myself." He says, squeezing lightly, before taking off and jumping on Laura's back with no warning. Instead of dumping him off, she grabs Stiles around the thighs and laughs madly, running across the street. Stiles whooping and cheering as she gives him a very enthusiastic piggyback ride. They've really become close after only one dinner.

Derek rolls his eyes and walks into the park.

He's pulling his shirt over his head when he sees a pair of glowing golden eyes watching him. Folding the shirt and laying it on a rock while his fingers reach for his belt, he quirks an eyebrow at Stiles where he sits on nearby boulder watching Derek undress, totally unashamed. Derek's tempted to shake his ass a bit for show, and the only thing stopping him is the rest of his family undressing a few feet away. Any sexual overtones would just be awkward as fuck.

Stiles pouts when Derek glares at him, and even though Stiles looks away, his mouth stays quirked, amused.

After tucking his clothes into the shed, Derek shakes out his limbs, getting ready to transform. Werewolves are slightly bigger than regular wolves in full shift, but only slightly. So even if they stumble upon a rare night jogger, they're unlikely to call the National Enquirer. At the most, the park rangers would look for wolves, and finding nothing, say the jogger was seeing things. Besides, there's not nearly enough deer to sustain even a meagre population of wolves.

He stretches out his calves, winking at Stiles who crosses his arms, grumbling, before joining Derek in his stretches. Derek watches the way the sweats cup Stiles ass when he bends over. It would be very unfortunate to pop a boner when he's naked, so Derek pointedly turns away when he feels the stirrings of arousal.

Talia laughs then, throwing her head back and howling into the night sky. Derek feels the shift hit him, his bones rearranging. A layer of black fur flows over his skin, tickling and coarse, as he falls onto four legs. Shaking out his coat, he blinks, trying to get used to this form after a long month without it. Everything feels more intense, his vision is yards better and his sense of smell, well... He takes a huge sniff of the air and smells the greenness of the trees, his family, and the scent of familiarity.

Finger tangle in the scruff of his neck and Derek's tongue drops out as they scratch at his skin.

"Sheesh, you're just a big puppy aren't you?" Stiles smiles, and Derek shakes him off, nipping playfully at fingers. Stiles startles, and nearly falls back on his ass. "Yeah, laugh now, just wait until I tie you..." He trails off, eyes wide, as if just remembering where he is. Derek chortles in
Talia's eyes flash red as she sends Stiles a big wolf grin, taking off into the trees. His siblings chase after her, and Derek nods his head at Stiles, urging him to follow.

Talia's wolf exclaims excitedly as Derek snuffles at the throat bared for him. The man, no, Stiles, laughs heartedly, wrestling with him.

"I win." He declares and Derek sniffs in agreement. They rearrange themselves so Derek lays his head down on Stiles' lap, sighing happily as he starts combing fingers through his fur. "You're so beautiful, you know that right?" Stiles says, his voice full of wonder as he gently touches Derek's delicate ears.

"Oh wow." Stiles remarks, closing his eyes. "This is like wearing those really fuzzy socks that always pill after the first wash. I bet you pill after washing too." Stiles goes back to scratching him behind the ear and Derek rumbles. "I wonder." Stiles hums, long fingers searching through his fur. "Do you matt? Do you have to get people to brush your fur for you? Oh my god, Derek, do you have to go to the doggy salon?"

Derek growls when Stiles' fingers tug on a knot and he turns his head around, snapping at fingers.

"Jeez! I'm taking my hands off." He exclaims laughing, but Stiles doesn't, he just goes back to scratching his ears.

Eventually Laura shows up and lies down fully on Stiles. Derek growls into her ear, but she nips
him, snuggling closer onto Stiles as he strokes her fur with the hand not tangled in Derek's scruff. It's almost terrifying how close they've become after just one night. Even scarier, Derek's finds it so easy to imagine what his life would be like if Stiles was a permanent fixture in it.

The rest of the pack joins them then. Cora and Isaac bounding over playfully and lying at Stiles' other side. Talia huffs when she sees them all puppy piled, but curls up at the head of the group, keeping watch as the other wolves play.

Even though they're out of the trees, they're blocked from view by the tall weeds surrounding the banks of the pond. They won't be seen unless someone decides to go night boating, and even if some crazy person decides to take a night cruise in the middle of a chilly autumn night, Talia would be able to hear them miles away.

Derek rests, listening to the sounds of his pack and the soft snoring of his now fast asleep mate.

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A few days later, Derek arrives at the penthouse with an overnight bag on his shoulder, and a grin on his face.

Stiles serves him up a simple dinner and Derek happily watches him shove food down his throat like it could disappear at any second. Derek washes the dishes, and after he lays them out to dry, Stiles takes him by his hand, leading him over to the room.

There's a simple mahogany chair sitting by the bow window, and Derek swallows hard, thinking of all the things Stiles could do to him on it. Is about to do to him on it.

Once again Stiles asks him to take off his clothes and lay them on the ottoman by the bed. But this time, instead of rushing, Derek takes it slow. Smirking at Stiles amused smile, Derek peels out of his clothes, making sure to flex his ass as he bends over pulling his pants down.

"Like what you see?" Derek questions as he stands back up again, turning to face Stiles, his rapidly hardening cock on display.

Stiles runs his tongue slowly over his lower lip. "Yeah, actually." He looks Derek over, top to bottom as he moves to place the folded clothes on the ottoman.

Stiles walks over to one of his cupboards, and Derek watches the way his navy dress pants looks on his ass. Stiles is wearing a three piece suit and a paisley tie, in total contrast to Derek's nudity. He can't help but draw parallels between last time and now. Stiles hadn't gotten off after he went down on Derek. His pants stayed on, and Derek wonders if Stiles is not going to take off anything during this scene too.

Stiles pulls out coils of purple rope and holds them up to Derek with a quirked brow.

"Oh fuck yes." Derek breathes.

Stiles laughs. "I haven't even told you what I want to do."

"I'm probably going to say yes anyway." Derek eyes the rope, wondering what it is going to feel like against his skin.

"What about this?" Stiles asks, pulling out a length of white silk fabric.

Derek walks over, and takes the blindfold in his hands, running his fingers over the slippery fabric.
He holds it up to his eyes and looks through. This must be what Stiles was talking about before. Derek can't see anything solid through it, but he can make out shadows. He gives the fabric back to Stiles and nods, "Yes."

"Impact play?" Stiles questions, pulling out a whip next. "You mentioned in your notebook, wanting to try a single tail whip in combination with your fast healing."

"Yeah." Derek breathes.

Stiles looks him over. "We can try a few strokes, and if you like it we will continue at another date, just in case you change your mind. But today, for the main event, I'm going to tie you up and edge you. Colour?"

"Very green."

Stiles ties the blindfold around his eyes the moment he sits in the chair, and only after Derek gives the go ahead does he prepare the rope. Derek listens to the soft and soothing rasping of the fibres as Stiles unravels the bundles.

Stiles loops it around his torso once and then twice, long fingers adjusting it until it sits right. The rope loops under his pecs, pushing them up. He moans when Stiles runs soft fingers over a nipple, tweaking it for a second before pulling off.

He never imagined shibari to be such a full bodied experience. Stiles touches him constantly, whether it be to adjust the rope or just to run his hands over his body firmly, soothing him.

"Put your hands behind your back."

"Okay." Derek says and moves his arms behind, resting them on the back on the chair as Stiles loops rope around his wrists, tying him firm.
Derek feels Stiles step back for a moment, and he whines from the loss of warm hands touching him. Stiles hands runs up his biceps in apology. "Just admiring how gorgeous you look." He bends over and kisses Derek gently on the lips, nudging his nose against Derek's until he smiles fondly at how affectionate Stiles is acting.

Derek begs for another kiss, and Stiles gives it to him. Mouth devouring, as he spreads Derek's legs wide as they will go. Derek opens his mouth, allowing Stiles to slip his tongue in, deepening the kiss, until Derek can taste Stiles on his tongue. Sugar and lemon, Derek aches for more.

He licks and delves until Stiles breaks the liplock with a pop, his voice noticeably huskier as he pulls back, "Wow, you're a really good kisser." Stiles remarks in wonder, running his thumb along Derek's wet and swollen bottom lip.

Derek smirks, "I'm also an accomplished cocksucker."
Stiles groans.

"I have no doubt, no doubt at all." Stiles snarks and scrapes his nails down Derek's chest in retaliation, he bucks off the chair as they scratch his pebbled nipples.

"Fuck!" He growls and Stiles chuckles.

"Are you going to be a good boy for me?" Stiles teases.

Derek nods his head enthusiastically.

"Good, keep them spread." Stiles says, tapping his thighs. He loops rope around Derek's ankles, tying him firmly to the chair. "I think I'm going to try one stroke with the whip now that you're already so aroused. Colour?" He asks, running a bent knuckle up Derek's dick where it hangs, too heavy and full to lie against his belly.

"Fuck, green." Derek chokes out and Stiles hums, giving him one dry stroke before pulling away. Derek moans in pleasure.

He hears the crack of the bullwhip and feels himself tense in anticipation as Stiles tries it out on the air, getting reacquainted to the weight and wield. Derek read on a BDSM blog that it feels exactly like getting cut with a sharp knife. Derek's never considered himself a masochist before, simply because werewolves heal so fast they don't really feel pain. He's simply curious to feel that one second where the pain will burn bright on his skin, before fading away to nothing.

"I'm fine, Stiles." He says, voice raspy. "Hell I'm better than fine, especially if you could do that again, please?" Stiles laughs, loud and bright, before resting his forehead heavily against Derek's, kissing him softly on the nose.

"Since you've been such a good boy, I think the other thigh should get a matching stroke."

Derek nods enthusiastically. He whimpers Stiles name when the sharp sting blazes across his flesh and he jerks in the chair, ropes straining. He's hard like fucking stone, dripping so much precome it's running down his balls and collecting on the chair.

"Jesus, I bet you don't even need lube." Stiles touches the head of his dick, moving it down and letting it spring back when he removes his finger. "I'm going to edge you now, and you can safeword at any time if it becomes too much."

Stiles wraps his hand firmly around Derek's dick giving him a long stroke, pulling his foreskin right over the head. Derek moans, begging for more, and Stiles shifts his hand down to his balls, rolling them in his palm, pulling off completely the moment Derek jerks forward.

"C'mon!" He growls in frustration as his dick bobs, weeping. Stiles just chuckles.

The teasing goes on for what seems like ages, Stiles always pulling away just before he comes. His head slumps against his chest, and it's only because he's so out of it that he doesn't hear the buzzing before he feels it.

Stiles places a hitachi right under his balls, and Derek nearly tears himself out of the restraints. He feels his nails lengthen and his teeth come out as the vibrations resonate to his very core. "Fuck!
Fuck! Stiles, holy fuck!" He yells, sobbing in pleasure as Stiles pulls back his foreskin with one hand, licking and sucking at the head of his cock.

"Come for me, sweetheart." Stiles breathes hot air over his dick and Derek lets go, slumping over and body going taut as he comes harder than he's even come in his life. Derek moans, feeling the familiar sensation of Stiles feeding on him, setting his skin alight with sensation.

Stiles groans and Derek can just imagine what he looks like with copious amounts of Derek's come striped across his face, connecting his lickable moles like constellations. Derek's wolf growls at the scent, he thinks the only thing that could make it better would be if Stiles' release was also added to the mix.

"Fuck." Derek says as Stiles unties the blindfold, pulling it off and tossing it to the side. He stares into Stiles' eyes for one long minute before Stiles captures his lips in a searing, biting kiss. He can taste himself on Stiles tongue as the kiss deepens, and Derek licks harder, chasing the bitterness. They break apart and Stiles starts peppering his face with soft kisses.

"That. Was. Amazing." Stiles praises in between kisses and Derek feels himself swell with pride for being so good for the man he loves. Stiles presses a smacking kiss to Derek's forehead, before moving behind him and unravelling the rope.

Derek helpfully lifts his arms as Stiles frees his limbs, reverently touching the red indentations on his skin before they quickly fade away. Derek breathes heavily when he sees the expression of wonder on Stiles face, and he cannot wait to try suppressing his healing, letting the marks decorate his skin for hours so Stiles can see them and enjoy.

Stiles helps him up from the chair with an arm around his waist as he carefully walks him over to the bed, lying him down and tucking him under the covers. Derek snuggles into the soft pillows, feet rubbing against the bed, warming it up for when Stiles returns.

"Hey." Stiles says, bracing his head in hand as he looks Derek over, a fond smile decorating his features.

"Hi." Derek smiles back shyly, carefully manoeuvring a hand until it rests on Stiles' hip.

"How are you?" Stiles questions pushing hair off Derek's forehead before softly nuzzling his nose against his cheekbone. Derek closes his eyes in absolute bliss as Stiles scents him, giving him exactly what he needs.

"Never better." He sighs happily, sitting up as Stiles hands him a bottle of chilled blue Gatorade.

Derek takes a sip as Stiles asks, "Do you feel like talking about the scene now?"

Derek shakes his head, capping the bottle and placing it on the side table for an easy reach. "Maybe later?" He suggests. Right now all he wants to do is sink into Stiles' arms and sleep.

"Sure." Stiles smiles softly, and pulls Derek close so his head rests on Stiles' warm chest. Derek closes his eyes, soothed by the steady thumping of Stiles' heart, reassuring him that this is real, that Stiles is real and in this moment, he cares for only Derek. He wants only Derek.

Derek feels so loved. The bond thrums in agreement.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

All my coworkers keep dropping like flies (aka, going back to college) so I had to pick up double the shifts the past week. I haven't had enough time on my computer to finish the second work of art for this chapter, but once I conjure up some time, or find a wormhole (maybe in a month) I'll upload it to my Tumblr.

PSA for this fic, werewolves can't be turned from a bite, they can only be born. And a ketogenic diet is a high fat, low carb diet highly effective in treating epilepsy.

Honestly, I swear this thing just keeps on getting dirtier and dirtier, wtf... I don't even know, guys...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Derek remembers exactly when he fell in love with Stiles. It was the evening after a long day in court and he was talking to the district attorney outside the courthouse when his phone rang. He picked it up and excused himself when Stiles called out a cheery greeting. It was only a year after that fateful dinner party when Stiles put him on retainer, and they were already very good friends.

Stiles had called to tell Derek about an old tome he bought on Kappa marriage laws and thought Derek would like to read it. The conversation eventually turned to Derek talking about his cases and how they were stressing him out, all the while Stiles murmured encouragements in his ear, reassuring him that he would get through it, that he's a good fucking lawyer. Before Derek knew it he discovered he'd been talking to Stiles for nearly two hours. Derek had made some excuses about an appointment and hung up the phone after a long goodbye.

Derek knew right then and there that what he felt for Stiles was much more than what a lawyer feels for their client, or even a person for their friend. He loved Stiles. He loved how he could just get Derek. How he could intrinsically know what was bothering him and address it in a manner that wouldn't make him defensive, like whenever he spoke about difficult things to others. Stiles made things so easy.

He was Derek's anchor.

The first time he fantasized about Stiles was that very same night. Derek was up late watching one of his favourite television shows, and by watching he meant staring at the screen as Gina Torres shot a reaver with a rifle, not processing any of it. Instead his mind was elsewhere. Distractedly, he had run his thumb up and down his abs, feeling the first stirrings of arousal.

Derek had turned off the television and brought his lube out, intending to jerk off to his usual fantasies: women, maybe even some men he found attractive. He wasn't expecting his mind to automatically go to Stiles, but when it did he couldn't stop thinking about him.

And that's how he ended up with his face buried in his pillow, and three fingers buried in his ass, begging for an imaginary Stiles to fuck him harder, faster. He came untouched even though the angle was awkward as hell. It was the fantasy that pushed him over the edge; whole year of repressed thoughts and desires rendering him speechless as he sobbed, biting into his pillow.
Back then Derek would've never believed that in only a few years later he would have a five inch toy up his ass, rolling vibrations making his eyes roll back in his head as Stiles grips the wireless remote, a smirk gracing his features.

"You like that setting, don't you?" Stiles asks, sitting down in the chair Derek was tied to last week, his legs cross as he stares at Derek who kneels on the bed, erection straining up to his belly. Derek closes his eyes, groaning loudly when Stiles presses another button on the remote. The vibrations start rolling and twisting.

Before Stiles tied Derek up, he lightly fixed a blackout blindfold around his eyes, but the absolute blinding darkness was far too disconcerting, so after a minute Derek sheepishly asked that Stiles remove it. Even in minimum light Derek's light sensitive eyes can see things clearly, but the all encompassing darkness behind the blindfold was too much for his nerves to stand. Any further sensory deprivation is something that isn't going to happen.

Instead of looking put out about it, Stiles had kissed him, reassuring Derek that he wasn't disappointed, but thankful that Derek told him the truth and didn't decide to go through with something he was uncomfortable with in an effort to please him.

A black spreader bar cuffs his ankles, holding his legs shoulder width apart, as rope artfully fixes his arms behind his back. Stiles spent an age on the rope patterns stretched across his chest, and Derek can appreciate the aesthetic of the geometric shapes, the triangles and diamonds fitting to the shape of his body, accentuating his muscles.

This time when Stiles had stepped back to look at his work after looping and tying the last knot, Derek hadn't worried he was leaving. Instead, he stared right at Stiles and watched his reactions carefully, scenting the air and licking his lips when the thick cloud of arousal had flowed throughout the room and both their eyes flashed golden.

Stiles had worked the toy into his ass after preparing and stretching him thoroughly, during which Derek almost came twice as long fingers massaged over his prostrate, finding it in only one go. It's like Stiles' crooked digits belong in his ass. He had whined when Stiles pulled them out. It's a good thing the toy more than makes up for the teasing. Derek's letting out these bitten off moans he knows Stiles appreciates going by the way he bites his lip every time Derek releases them.

By some sort of shibari magic the toy is held steady, preventing it from slipping out. The purple ropes loop around the tops of his thighs as high as they can go, and are presumably tied around the base of the toy holding it firmly inside him. Derek's more or less fixated on the rope wrapped around his cock and balls, keeping him from coming.

Really, the only thing that could make this better is if Stiles wasn't wearing so many damned clothes.

The suit is beautiful on him, slim so it accentuates Stiles' insane shoulder to waist ratio, but Derek hasn't seen anything more than the tip of Stiles dick. Something he finds ridiculous since they've had sex a total of two times and Stiles didn't come either of those times.

Derek wants Stiles to come.

"Please, Stiles." Derek begs, face flooding as Stiles rises and approaches the bed.

"Hmm?" Stiles asks, head quirking to the side.

"Your clothes..." He says, trailing off until Stiles presses another button on the remote and the vibrations change again and he gasps, mouth dropping open.
Stiles says nothing, just smirks and pulls at the windsor knot of his skinny tie, letting the patterned fabric drop to the ground as he pulls off his blazer and undoes to the top few buttons of his dress shirt. Stiles quirks his brow, running a boney knuckle down his own throat. "What about them?"

Derek growls, eyes fixated of the glimpse of pale skin revealed to him.

"Do you like that, Der?" Stiles licks his lips, slowly unbuttoning the rest of his shirt, hands moving down to the button of his pants. Derek stares, riveted, but Stiles' fingers only play with the button, before moving up again.

Derek frowns. "You tease."

Stiles' gasps dramatically, mockingly affronted, "You take that back."

"Never." Derek says, smug.

"So disrespectful." Stiles teases, walking away. "Unfortunately, bad boys don't get good things." Derek whines as Stiles once again takes a seat on the chair.

"Please?" He begs, desperate for Stiles to touch him.

"Will you be my good boy?"

Derek nods frantically as Stiles looks him over. "How good?"

Derek meets his eye. "Very."

Stiles smiles. Rising to his feet he slinks over, eyes never leaving Derek's, even when Stiles slides his hand into his hair pulling his head back. Derek swallows, throat bobbing, as Stiles nuzzles against his neck, nose trailing along his skin and breathing in his scent. Stiles presses a kiss to Derek's jugular before pulling away.

Derek's so aroused at the display of dominance, he can't even see straight. Stiles must have really done his research on what turns on a werewolf. He's fucking rock hard.

Stiles unbuttons his pants and lets them fall. Derek groans when he sees Stiles isn't wearing anything underneath.

"You're circumcised?" Derek blurts out, staring at Stiles, belatedly realizing just how rude that was, but the fae don't circumcise their children. It's considered a human tradition, one born from a human religion. Maybe it's because Stiles' father was human?

"Is that a problem?" Stiles questions, moving closer, until Derek can smell the scent of arousal and precome coming off of him in waves.

"Not at all." Derek whispers as Stiles' fingers move over the ropes binding him, shifting up his chest until they trace the line of Derek's jaw covered in a thick beard. Stiles thumbs his bottom lip and Derek bites at the finger, taking it into his mouth, feeling the texture of the finger print against his tongue. He salivates at the taste of Stiles' sweat.

"I want you to suck my cock." Stiles says, watching Derek's lips surrounding his digits, before he tears his eyes away, meeting his, looking for his reaction. Colour?"

"Green." Derek says quickly the moment Stiles pulls his thumb from his mouth.

Stiles smiles. Gripping the base of Derek's neck in a large palm, he brings their faces closer together,
until he stares into Derek's eyes, his own twinkling. Stiles leans in for a kiss, and Derek gives it to
him, capturing his lips and opening his mouth to Stiles' probing tongue, letting him take and give in
return, their pace maddening and slow. Stiles breaks the kiss with a final bite to Derek's bottom lip.
Derek stares down at his red mouth, wanting to kiss it again and again.

Derek feels Stiles' hand rest on his chest, pushing him and Derek shuffles back, inching his way
further back on the bed as Stiles climbs up, standing where Derek was just kneeling.

Derek gets a face full of Stiles' dick, he's liable to do anything but complain.

Stiles holds his cock in hand, letting it drift across Derek's reddened lips, teasing him. When Derek
moves forward to take him in his mouth, Stiles pulls away at the last second.

"Oh come on," Derek complains, "surely this can't be that good for you?"

"You'd be surprised, Der. I like getting you frustrated, and if it means I don't get my dick sucked,
well, thank god that I have hands I can use to rectify that. Unlike you." Stiles smirks and gently
touches his knee to Derek's straining cock, making him let out a groan of pleasure.

"Fuck, Stiles, please? I've been good for you, haven't I?"

Stiles runs the back of his fingers over Derek's cheekbone. "The best."

"Then let me get you off."

Instead of taking Derek's offer right away, Stiles cradles Derek's jaw, staring into his eyes. "What
can you take?" He asks seriously.

Derek swallows and licks his lips. He has limited experience when it comes to blowjobs and hasn't
touched a cock but his own in at least a year. Whatever experience he gained happened during
college before he met Braeden, and then after that, one night stands when he was still going through
divorce proceedings. Many of the men he's slept with preferred to go down on him after catching
sight of his cock. Uncut cocks are so rare in America, he's practically considered a fetish.

"I can't deep throat," he finally admits, "yet."

Stiles bends over, pressing a smacking kiss to his forehead. "That's perfectly fine. I can deep throat
enough for the both of us. Do what you are comfortable with." Stiles moves forward until his cock
rests against Derek's mouth. "Go ahead, sweetheart."

And Derek does. Stiles stands there, his hands gently combing through Derek's hair as he lets him
do whatever he wants, tonguing and sucking at the head, tracing the veins. Just exploring the
velvety skin laid out in front of him. He can't go any further than halfway down Stiles' cock, but
Stiles doesn't seem bothered by that at all going by the fucking sounds he's making, like Derek is
actively sucking his brains out.

Eventually, Stiles grips around the base and starts jacking himself off, hand meeting Derek's lips on
each upstroke and Derek moans at the firm but gentle grip Stiles has on his hair, not pulling or
tugging, but just there. Derek should probably tell him he is perfectly okay with hair pulling. Next
time he's sure to straighten that out.

Stiles pulls himself out of Derek's mouth just before he comes, shooting all over Derek's chin and
throat. He feels the familiar tug of Stiles feeding on him. His skin ripples from the sensation just
before Stiles climbs off the bed and grabs the lube from the nightstand while Derek shuffles over to
the edge. Stiles takes Derek's cock in his slicked palm, jacking him off only a few times before he's
also coming with a long groan.

"Fuck, Stiles." Derek sighs, resting his head on Stiles' shoulder, tucking it against Stiles' neck, breathing in the scent of sweat and sugar.

"Come on," Stiles grins, lightly slapping Derek's butt and nudging the toy a bit. Derek feels his cock stir valiantly. "Let's get you untied."

A short shower follows and Stiles presses up against his back, rubbing his skin with large palms and unscented soap, massaging the quickly healing sore muscles. Later, with a cup of warm darjeeling in hand, Derek lays cradled in Stiles' arms, warm between his legs, as they sit on his couch watching *Firefly*. Derek can't help but draw parallels between the first time he touched himself thinking of Stiles and now. They're even watching the same show, although this time Derek is actually paying attention to the television. He has what he wants.

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"Ooo, so tell me all about the positions you guys get up to." Erica smirks, tiny IKEA pencil tapping away at the corner of her mouth. "Doggy style? Missionary? Maybe even the lion on the cheese grater..."

"Lion on the what?" Derek frowns, turning away from the sofa he was measuring.

"C'mon, Derek, *Lysistrata*?" She says and when Derek still looks confused she sighs. "Figure I'd be the only one to appreciate ancient Greek theatre.

"Erica, you took a course in Uni. I didn't."

"Details." She waves her hand, before moving on to another sofa and shaking it, presumably checking how sturdy it is. Derek stays far away and pretends he doesn't know her when people start shooting her confused glances. "Hmm." She says, "I think I like this one the best. It seems pretty strong and the colour is perfect." Suddenly Derek remembers Erica and Boyd's near sexual adventures on his couch. She's probably not shaking it to check its weight limit.

"No." Derek says, walking away, but Erica grabs him by the collar of his leather jacket, stopping him in his tracks.

"Yes." She argues stubbornly.

"But it's fucking ugly."

"Well, I never!" Erica gasps dramatically, hand over her chest as she stares at Derek, mouth twitching, giving away her amusement.

Derek rolls his eyes, and takes her by the wrist, trying to pull her away from the awful sofa, but she hooks a foot around the sofa leg and doesn't move an inch.

"Nooo, I want the Apelsinträ'd sofa." She whines, reading off the tag and absolutely botching the pronunciation.
"I'm sure there are other, better looking ones, stable enough to fuck your husband on."

"You're underestimating the werewolf vigour." She whines.

"I am a werewolf."

"A pathetic one. Bet you've never even broken a piece of furniture in your life." Erica mutters, knowing full well that Derek can hear every word she says.

"Fine! I'll get you the goddamn sofa." He growls dropping her wrist. He aggressively scribbles down the code for the one next to it, a nice leather number in a muted beige. It will be sure to squeak if Erica ever decides to do anything even remotely sexual on it. Anyone who says he isn't devious really doesn't know him.

"That's the wrong code." Erica announces, reading off his shoulder.

Fuck.

They catch dinner at a nearby organic eatery, taking the window seat. Derek keeps an eye out for anyone who would want to steal ugly furniture off the back of Erica's pickup truck. There's a reason why he strapped the sofa at the very end. It would be stolen first, and Derek's apt to not feel very bad about it.

Erica orders the salmon, spooning the side of mashed potatoes onto his plate. It used to be difficult keeping up with Erica's ketogenic diet back when he first met her. Sometimes he would forget she couldn't ingest sugar or carbs. Erica used to glare at him if he brought a store bought pecan pie to dinner and forgot to bring anything else she could eat. Eventually he got the hang of it, and so became her second favourite sniffer werewolf always ready to detect ingredients in her food that could trigger seizures.

"Is it safe?" Erica asks, holding the dill sauce up to his nose.

Derek sniffs and nods, "Yeah, they used hormone free cream."

Erica grins and pours almost the whole ramekin of sauce over the fish.

Derek laughs, shaking his head, before taking a bite of his rare steak.

"Soo... I'm guessing you're not planning on going for the funeral."

"What funeral?" Derek scoffs, chewing on his steak. "No one is going to claim the body, Malcolm's getting a state financed cremation."

Erica raises her brows. "Harsh, Derek."

"Can you really blame any of us? He was an emotionally abusive bastard, and the only good thing he ever did was contribute his sperm to our existence... Oh! And die."

"Yeah I get it, I've seen a whole smorgasbord of deadbeat parents in my line of work. Actually, I haven't seen them because they usually don't show up for parent teacher night. But I can tell they exist just by the way some of the kids carry themselves: like they have no support system at home. Like it's them against the world. It's a cycle, and a shitty one at that." She twirls her fork around the raw kale on the side thoughtfully. "Don't get me wrong, there are some amazing parents who try their very hardest to make the most for their children, and yet the system still beats them down. It's fucking horrible because some of these kids have real talent and it's a shame they don't get to show
Derek smiles at Erica. She's always been so passionate about education, and is always the first to complain about the crushing debts plaguing youth simply to get a degree that might not even guarantee them a steady job.

"I'm bringing Stiles along to the auction." Derek says. "He's sure to find some art he likes enough to throw money at. He's like that when he finds a worthy artist."

Erica sighs, smiling. "The leanan sídhe and their muse, it's one of the most beautiful relationships in the fae world. So equal."

Derek snorts. "You must not be as up to date on your fae knowledge. Leanan sídhe drive their artists mad. It may seem mutualistic on the outside, but it's just another example of cheating in a symbiotic relationship. The leanan sídhe always wins in the end." Derek places his fork down on the table, suddenly not hungry anymore.

Erica frowns. "That's not how the books say it. What you're claiming is true for the human-written myths, but the stories documented by the fae themselves say nothing of madness. The relationship is portrayed as perfectly equal."

"Erica, I know a leanan sídhe, believe me when I say those books are full of horseshit. I can't believe I'm saying this, but the humans have finally got something right about us." He tosses his crumpled napkin on the plate, finished with the steak.

Derek never gains his appetite back, mind too full of what Erica said. It's too early in Stiles' and his arrangement for the minor symptoms of madness to show, and if Stiles does his job right, they shouldn't start showing until the very last session. Derek can't help but remember when Stiles himself called the leanan sídhe's relationship to their food source mutualistic. But if that is completely true and not an exaggeration, what could possibly be driving Stiles' subs insane?

Derek's in Erica's basement piecing together a particular difficult coffee table by the time his mind finally makes the connection. He drops the screwdriver on his foot.

What if that is why Stiles keeps dropping clients? Because the madness isn't supposed to happen, but it is, and starving himself is Stiles' way of protecting the artists he cherishes and admires?

Maybe that's why he took you on, a little nagging voice in the back of his skull sneers coldly, because he couldn't give a single flying fuck if he drives you insane.

Derek dents the wall when he throws the screwdriver at it.

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Derek picks Stiles up in the Camaro the evening of the auction. He remains mostly silent the whole drive to Brooklyn, but Stiles is as talkative as ever, filling what would normally be an extremely awkward silence.

Derek still nods at the right moments, making vague sounds to represent yes or no, but he doesn't add his own two dice to the conversation. He feels hurt, bitter even, and it's going to take him a while to get over that.

They're crossing the Brooklyn Bridge when Stiles reaches over to the console and turns the radio off. Derek raises his brow, Stiles had been happily singing along to music earlier.
"Okay, what's up with you?" Stiles questions, turning to face him fully. Derek doesn't even have the excuse of needing to keep his eyes on the road, they're stuck in traffic.

"Nothing." He says, shrugging his shoulders and looking out the driver's window. The sun is setting, casting an orange glow over the East River. If Derek shifted so his eyes glowed beta gold, he'd no doubt see the few swimmers near the shore with their tails glamourd so humans can't see them. A small flotilla of garbage flows by and Derek thinks those mermaids are pretty brave to swim in the murky greyish-green water. But then again, public pools are so much worse.

When he was younger, his school had a chlorine pool. The smell alone was enough to drive him sick. Not only the chlorine, but the scent of piss and other human unmentionables. He's avoided anything but saltwater pools after that, but usually the most he chooses to immerse himself in is his bathtub. Although he finds himself more and more willing to try out Stiles' massive bathtub with jets and massagers. It smells like lemons. Derek is pleased.

"Don't give me that." Stiles reaches a hand out and touches Derek's knee lightly. "You know you can talk about anything with me. I'm really good at listening, surprisingly."

Derek grits his teeth. "It's personal." He spits out and regrets it instantly at the look of blatant dejection on Stiles' face. Like Derek took his good intentions, puked on them and ran them over with the Camaro.

"Oh." Stiles says simply, withdrawing his hand like Derek's stung him. "Okay, fair enough."

Derek clears his throat uncomfortable. "So. Um, Erica's reserved us the best seats in the house."

Stiles stretches his mouth into what looks like it could've been a smile if it hadn't failed so badly, he nods before pulling his phone out of his pocket, and Derek takes that as a sign that his pathetic attempt of fixing the conversation is over and failed.

He reaches out and flicks on the radio letting it fill the now extremely awkward silence.

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The school is illumated with light coming from the windows when they pull up. The lot is full, a pleasant surprise, meaning these kids are hopefully going to get a lot of exposition directed towards their art tonight.

Even though Stiles is dressed somewhat casually, he still cuts an imposing figure as he marches just slightly ahead of Derek, opening the door for him.

"Thanks." Derek mumbles, and Stiles says nothing, taking the lead again. It's like he knows his way around, even though he's never been here before. Derek wonders if one of his abilities as a leanan sídhe is the ability to sniff out an artist. It must be true because they find the gallery right on their first try.

The moment Stiles walks into the room, Derek senses a feeling of contentment flood over Stiles' skin. Leaving Derek in the dust he rushes off further into the room to look at the art displayed. Derek smiles, as Stiles seemingly follows his nose, stopping right in front of a painting, staring at it with wide and wondrous eyes. Derek shakes his head fondly and goes to find Erica.

He finally locates her off in a corner talking to one of her students, a tall girl with a portfolio tucked under her arm. Derek doesn't think he's ever seen a human carry themselves with the level of dignity this girl processes. Right away he knows that the art Stiles is staring wondrously at must be hers.
"Derek!" Erica calls out to him. He smiles at her, walking over and kissing her on the cheek. Erica gestures over to the girl, "This is Dante." The girl waves her hand and nods her head at him, Derek reaches out and shakes her hand, noticing her firm, unwavering grip. "Dante, this is Derek Hale. He's an attorney.

Her eyes widen. "Oh, so you're not a parent then?"

Derek chuckles. "I'm afraid not, I'm still too young for that."

"Dante's competing for our school's art award, and personally," Erica whispers, eyes twinkling, "She's totally going to win."

The girl blushes and stares at the ground, shuffling her feet. "Thanks, Mrs. Reyes." She mumbles.

Erica checks her with her shoulder. "You are my favourite student after all, but don't tell Michael that, you know how dramatically jealous he gets."

Dante rolls her eyes, and when Derek looks confused, she whispers conspiratorially, "He tried asking Mrs. Reyes to prom and when she turned him down he jumped off the roof."

"He's joining a theatre group when he graduates," Dante adds.

"That's... Wonderful?" Derek says, confused.

"Quite." Erica grins.

He spends a while talking to Erica and Dante, and quickly learns that Dante's situation is the same as many of her classmates. She comes from a low income family with a struggling mother working her ass off just to keep she and her siblings fed and warm. She wants to go to art school and intends to apply to as many as she can afford to with measly earning from yet another minimum wage job.

Derek wonders how people are supposed to enjoy life when they have to work three jobs just to make rent. No wonder the rate of drug use is so high, it's the only thing that can free people from a situation where the alternative is so bleak. Derek doesn't even bother asking about Dante's father, the answer would probably be depressing.

All this girl wants is to win that award and collect the five hundred dollar prize in order to help her family, and maybe even buy paints so she can continue to create and display in local galleries. She happily explains she's failing math and doesn't even care because the math the government mandates is as irrelevant to her as nuclear physics would be to a baker.

Dante's just thankful his mother taught him how to balance his check book and do his taxes when he was young because of what he remembers of high school, they never taught him the important math. He imagines the system hasn't changed much in a decade. A lot of kids don't have a parent with enough time on their hands to sit them down and teach them the things they should be learning in school.

And people wonder why Derek doesn't want children. To bring up a child in this sort of fucked up
system, is something he could never do with a clear conscience. At least things are slowly improving, and maybe in a few hundred years things will be better. Derek hates to think what Stiles went through in the eighties with the stigmata of AIDS surrounding anything that could be perceived as sex work.

After a while Derek wanders off, trying to find Stiles. The auction is in half an hour, and Stiles is nowhere to be found. Derek grabs a cup of punch, wishing it was spiked. He feels so awkward surrounded by highschool students and parents, and honestly, he isn't enough of an art enthusiast to be endlessly entertained by the works. They're good, don't get him wrong. Each artist is different and unique but most of them share a love of bright colours, and abstraction, especially Dante's work.

It's slightly figurative, but even Derek can tell a lot of her inspiration comes from Harlem Renaissance artists. Stiles has quite a few Aaron Douglas paintings decorating the walls of his penthouse chock full of brightly coloured silhouettes, dancing figures, and fantastical landscapes.

Derek's walking another circuit aimlessly around the gallery when he hears Stiles' heartbeat skip and start to quicken. Derek whips around, nearly dropping his glass, but he doesn't see Stiles anywhere.

The heartbeat sounds like it is coming from across the school. Leaving his glass of punch on a table, he quickly walks out of the gallery.

Worried, he strides purposefully through the corridors, nose to the air, following Stiles' scent, along with the scent of another person tinged with the faint hint of cigarette smoke. Stiles doesn't smell scared, so Derek isn't too concerned for his safety, but he is curious as to what is causing such a strong reaction.

At the end of the corridor lies a door, the light from the small window casts a long trail on the floor as Derek walks up to it. The smell of oil paint is high in the air when he cracks it open, hearing Stiles laugh within.

"Derek!" Stiles calls out happily where he rests on the teacher's desk, legs swinging in front and arms braced behind his back. An older woman with hair greying at the temples and a stoop sits in front of an easel wearing gloves and coveralls absolutely covered in paint splatters. "I found the school's brownie. This is Miss. Imani, she's been looking after the school since the seventies."

The woman turns wrinkled eyes to him, her spectacles sliding down her nose, as she looks him over. Finally finding him not a threat to her work, she turns back to her painting, laying down thick strokes of colour.

Derek turns to Stiles shaking his head, amused. "You would find the only fae in this school."

"What can I say? I must be a fae-ctor."

"Get it? Cause I detect fae with my spidey powers."

Miss. Imani snorts. "Are you one of those money money types?" She asks with a scratchy voice that could only develop from years upon years of chain smoking.

Derek frowns. "I guess...?" He says carefully, guessing a money money type is a person who earns a triple figure salary.

"Good." She remarks, grabbing a shop towel and cleaning her brush off with a solvent that makes Derek's sensitive eyes water. "Make sure you bid on little Dante's work, that girl has potential. Plus she always gives me her carton of 2%. I love the lactose intolerant ones."
"Nooo." Stiles whines, pouting. "Her art is all mine, you can't have any."

Derek laughs. "I'll be sure to remember that. But, it'll be all sold if you don't hurry," Derek checks his watch, "the auction starts in five minutes."

"Holy shit!" Stiles exclaims, hopping off the desk faster than the speed of light. Calling out a goodbye to Miss. Imani, he grabs Derek by the hand as he takes off, nearly jerking Derek's arm out of its socket. The old woman just grumbles in return, strongly reminding Derek of Satomi. She's always one to complain about anything and everything, but fiercely protective to a fault.

They run through the corridors and stumble into the auditorium laughing. Stiles' hand is a warm presence around his, and Derek is sorely tempted to link their fingers. Just as he has the idea, Stiles lets go, taking their reserved seats right by the front. Derek follows after, plopping down in the next squishy seat. It smells like mildew and Derek wrinkles his nose in displeasure.

Only a second later Erica walks onto the stage, microphone in hand. "Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to our yearly auction!" People clap, but the most enthusiastic is Stiles who almost stands up to clap. Derek stops him with a hand on his thigh.

"C'mon, Derek. Live a little." Stiles whispers right back, long finger caressing Derek's knuckle.

The auction goes by in a blur, and Stiles bids exorbitant amounts on a few pieces that make the parents sitting in their row stare incredulously. Most of the other pieces stay in the low hundreds, Stiles is the only one tossing thousands around.

Finally at the end of the auction, Dante brings her works up on the stage and Stiles sits up straighter, grasping the flimsy piece of cardboard, cut out of what looks to be a Froot Loops cereal box, acting as his bidding paddle with Stilinski scribbled on it.

There are five paintings in the whole series and Stiles eyes them like they're the second coming.

"For the first work, entitled Lost in Transition," Erica gestures Vanna White style to an oblong canvas covered in semi abstract geometric shapes, "Bidding starts at $200."

Stiles' bidding paddle shoots up so fast he almost looses grip of it. "Forty thousand for the whole lot."

Erica drops the microphone and the resounding thump and crack of something plastic snapping resonates through the whole auditorium. The microphone rolls to a halt beside Erica's shoe as she gapes soundlessly at Stiles.

A speechless Erica. Stiles has really outdone himself this time. It's so silent in the auditorium, Derek swears he can hear crickets.

The silence is broken by Dante jumping up and down, squealing in between shouts of "This fucker's got a deal!" and, "am I fucking dreaming?!"

Erica scrambles to pick up the microphone, clearing her throat. "This is a four, with four zeros after it, yes?"

"Yeah, of course." Stiles quirks a brow, saying seriously, "I don't joke about art. Can I have them
"Alright then... Sold to Stilinski." Erica declares with a flourish of her hands.

"Yes!" Stiles shoots up out of his seat and performs some sort of fairly vulgar victory dancing involving the cabbage patch and copious amounts of hip thrusting. Derek tries to ignore that he is right on face level with Stiles' now rolling hips, but it's difficult considering he's seen Stiles naked and has a very active imagination.

Derek knows Stiles isn't just throwing away his money. He has no doubt that in a few years Dante will be an artist on par with the likes of David Hockney or others selling their works for millions. Stiles has never been wrong when investing his substantial fortune in an artist. Besides, forty thousand is just a dip in the bucket compared to the millions Stiles has to his name: a mix of fortune inherited from his mother, and his own profitable business ventures. Stiles invested a large sum of money in Google back in the 90s, and now the shares make up a large chunk of his fortune.

Dante looks like she's having a moment when Stiles hands over a cheque with four zeroes on it and the hug she gives Stiles lasts a whole minute.

Stiles is going to be keeping a very close eye on her career, Derek can tell. Knowing him, he's probably going to talk to his connections in New York's premier art institutions about giving her a scholarship to cover the rest of the tuition.

"That was really kind of you." Derek whispers in his ear after Dante runs off to call her mother who couldn't show up because of work.

Stiles scoffs, reaching out and taking Derek's hand in his. "She's going to be brilliant, Derek." He sighs in happiness. "If only I could show you her aura, it surrounds her like a golden band of light. I can't fucking wait to see what else she creates."

Derek squeezes his hand as Stiles turns to him smiling like the fucking sun, his skin glows bright and his cheeks are flushed from excitement. He's never been more beautiful.

"Are you hungry? I'm craving a good pie." Stiles asks, tugging him out towards the Camaro.

They end up in a little hole in the wall all night pizzeria, ordering one of their classic pies.

"Well, it's no Di Fara, but it's still pretty alright." Stiles remarks around a bite, cheese hanging off his lip. Derek reaches out and picks it off and Stiles eats it right out of his fingers. He feels himself flush.

"Wasn't Di Fara shut down for heath code violations?" Derek asks, folding the slice in half before taking a bite.

"That's water under the bridge." Stiles shrugs. "It's not like we fae can get salmonella."

"Yeah, but humans..." Derek trails off. They're not so resistant to disease.

Stiles laughs. "Then it's a good thing they were shut down for a while."

Derek snorts.

He pays the bill and checking his watch, discovers it's nearly one in the morning. Stiles is sending movers over tomorrow to pick up the art he bought, so thankfully Derek doesn't have to worry about
fitting an eight foot canvas in his Camaro. They're both dead on their feet, and Derek wants to go home, collapse on his bed and just sleep like the dead.

Thankfully they don't get stuck in any traffic going into Manhattan. It's just under half an hour when Derek is parked in front of Stiles' building.

Stiles leans through the open driver's window. "Come upstairs, Derek. I know you don't want to be alone in your big haunted brownstone."

"It isn't haunted." He protests, tempted to just relent and stay the night at Stiles'.

Stiles rolls his eyes. "I know, and that's the whole point. At least if it was haunted you would have a cute ghost friend to keep you company."

Derek laughs. "Why a cute ghost friend, when I could have you?" He glances at Stiles up under his lashes, watching a gorgeous flush spread up over pale skin.

"Come upstairs, Der." Stiles says simply, using the nickname that over the weeks has become synonymous with mind-blowing sex. Stiles turns around and walks away like he expects, no, knows Derek will follow.

He does.

They don't have sex that night, but Stiles curls up behind his back and presses a warm kiss to his cheek, before drifting off to sleep. Derek stays awake a bit longer, staring out into the darkness of Stiles' room, studying everything from the paintings on his walls, to the books on his shelf, reading the titles. Eventually, Derek turns to face Stiles. Gazing at his beautiful sleeping face, the moonlight falling on the sharp contrasts of his cheekbones, his button nose, Derek happily memorizes his peaceful expression.

He tucks his face into Stiles' neck before letting his eyes close, the scent of Stiles' warm skin washing over him like a gentle breeze.

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Derek has only ever bottomed once. In college, when he was drunk and picked up someone he normally wouldn't, a man much more muscular than him. It was a memorable night, since it fostered his love of bottoming. Unfortunately, Derek has a type when it comes to men, and usually that particular type tends to take one look at him, and assumes he wants to top, and he's much too shy to correct them. Don't get him wrong, he loves topping, but he likes the feeling of bottoming and doesn't always want to rely on toys. They have a tough time beating a flesh and blood cock and the body behind it.

The thing is, Derek is a very fluid bisexual whose preference often switches from men to women and back again. It doesn't mean he stops being attracted to one while wanting the other more. Just because he likes soft, shaved legs on a woman, doesn't mean he prefers the same on men. Derek recognizes that all genders have their pros, and he learned long ago to not put himself down when one day he wanted a dick up his ass and the next a tight cunt around his cock.

He can't even count on ten fingers how often he's imagined Stiles fucking him.

Derek is starting to think he has Stiles in a category all by himself. There's women, there's men, and then there's Stiles. Derek has a whole separate section in his porn folder dedicated to dark haired top twinks with moles covering their bodies and surprisingly hairy limbs. Although, whiskey eyes are surprisingly difficult to find.
Stiles has been the one constant in his fantasies for quite a while. Derek knows that just because Stiles is a dominant, it doesn't mean he's a top. Thinking that way would be backwards and stereotypical. He doesn't know what Stiles prefers because they haven't done that yet. Sticking a toy up his ass is not the same as fucking, but he hopes that Stiles saw just how much pleasure it brought Derek and plans the session accordingly.

Before they begin, Stiles sits him down on the couch and hands him a cup of tea.

"Today I was thinking we could have penetrative sex, are you okay with that?"

Derek swallows, staring down at his face reflected in the cup of warm tea.

"Derek, you're going to have to answer me here..." Stiles reaches out for him, taking his wrist in hand, rubbing a thumb over Derek's pulse.

"I want to bottom." Derek mumbles, nervous.

"Okay, that's what I was planning anyway." Stiles smiles. "You mentioned that as a preference in your notebook, remember?"

"Yeah, but I didn't know if you would want to top me."

"Der," Stiles says softly, reaching out and cupping his cheek, "I'm very versatile, so if you want to only bottom I'm on board with that, but if you want to try topping, I'm also very on board with that." Stiles runs his thumb along Derek's beard, his nail scratching at the bristly hairs.

"How would you bottoming even work? You're a dom." Derek questions, curious.

Stiles smirks. "I could ride you, for one. But I think I would really enjoy missionary with you on top, that way I could easily control you with commands. For example I could tell you to stop moving, and let me fuck myself on your cock." Stiles winks mischievously.

Derek lets out a plaintive, "Stiles... Fuck," at the thought alone.

Stiles continues, grinning brightly. "I could place my hand at the base of your throat, and control you with how tight I squeeze. I could use my heel to kick your butt, urging you to go faster or slow down. There's so much I could do, you just have to use your imagination." Stiles' smiles as he taps a knuckle against his temple.

"I'm beginning to get that."

Stiles smiles sweetly. "So like I was saying, I was hoping to tie you up again, but this time, I want to fuck you. Are you able to come with prostrate stimulation alone?"

Derek nods. He can come untouched, but it's difficult holding a comfortable position long enough with a toy to bring him there.

"Okay, I want us to try for that."

"It will take a while." Derek warns.

"That's fine, we have the whole day."

This time when Derek enters the room, he finds chains hanging from the hooks in the ceiling, meeting down to a singular circular ring. It's looks extremely sturdy, like it could take his weight.
"Are you suspending me from that?" Derek questions.

"Not today. I'm just going to tie your hands above your head with wolfsbane laced rope so the marks remain and flog you before I fuck you from behind. Colour?"

"Green." Derek gasps, only now noticing the collection of floggers resting on Stiles' bed. He recognizes the one that was in Stiles' hand when he answered the door a few weeks ago. "Can I?" He asks, his hand hovering just over the handle.

"Go ahead, touch them."

With Stiles' blessing, Derek picks it up, combing his fingers through the oiled leather tassels, it's heavier than he expected, and he lets the strands trail over his forearm, leaving shivers in its wake.

"Nice, isn't it?" Stiles asks right in his ear, bringing him out of his reverie.

"Yeah." Derek swallows, setting the flogger down in its original place. He leans his head back, resting against Stiles' warm body, feeling the press of Stiles' front all along his back. Stiles gently runs a hand down the side of Derek's neck, urging him to tip it to the side, and when he does, he starts trailing kisses down the skin.

Derek sighs in pleasure, gasping when Stiles bites where his neck meets his shoulder. Stiles sucks the skin for a long moment, before letting go, giving it a final lick as the mark fades.

"I want you to suppress your healing for me, okay?"

"Mmm, yeah." Derek moans as Stiles moves the collar of his henley even lower, licking into the skin of his shoulder, biting down again on the muscle. This time Derek concentrates, focusing on shutting down that aspect of his wolf. It whines as it retreats further into the depths of his mind, but he soothes it, promising that this will all be so worth it, just for the look on Stiles' face.

When Stiles lets go with a final lick, Derek can already sense Stiles' pleasure radiating out as fingers gently touch the hickey decorating his skin, prodding at it, until Derek hisses from the sensitivity. "Sorry." Stiles apologizes, pressing a light kiss right next to it. "It's just so pretty."

"Proud of your work?" Derek teases.

Stiles hums, fingers trailing down his arm until he grasps his wrist, pulling Derek over to the suspended ring. "So proud." Stiles tugs him closer, until his forehead rests against Derek's, staring into his eyes. "I can't wait to make more." He says, pressing a kiss to Derek's bottom lip, before taking it into his mouth and sucking. He bites lightly once, and Derek's hips jerk, feeling Stiles' erection through his pants. Derek's just as hard, probably even harder.

"Fuck." Derek whispers when he feels his cock twitch in his pants, leaking all over his underwear.

"That's the plan." Stiles' grins, slapping him firmly on the ass before letting go and twirling him back around, fingers slipping down to the button of his pants, snapping it open as Stiles grinds his cock
against Derek's ass. "Now, let's get you undressed, stretched, and all tied up."

There's a floor mirror strategically placed directly in front of Derek, "So you can watch me." Stiles says, looping ropes around his torso and biceps, forming intricate patterns with the hemp. Stiles tweaks Derek's nipples as his long fingers trace down, arranging the rope so it sits perfectly on Derek's body, fitting each curve and dip.

Stiles tugs on Derek's cock, teasing him with a lubed hand until precome drips steadily onto the floor. Only then does Stiles move to his ass, slicking long fingers with lube. He fingers him leisurely and carefully until four digits fit comfortably in his ass. Derek groans when Stiles slips a stainless steel plug in his fingers' place.

"How are you feeling?" Stiles asks when he finishes tying the last rope. Derek's hands are suspended directly over his head, so his body is stretched out in one continuous line. "Anything numb?"

Derek shakes his head, smiling. "No, everything's wonderful." He smiles reassuringly. Stiles makes him feels so beautiful, like he believes shibari exists just to emphasize Derek's own beauty.

Stiles walks behind him, gently touching the curves of his ass, before grabbing his cheeks and squeezing, jostling the plug. "When was the last time you fucked yourself with a toy?"

Derek doesn't bother lying. "Last night." He says, blushing. "I thought of you." He watches Stiles' reaction in the mirror. Stiles leans in pressing a soft kiss to the back of Derek's neck.

"Did you come hard?" Stiles teases, whispering against his skin, holding Derek's gaze in the mirror.

"My release hit my chin." Derek admits.

Stiles hums, fingers lightly running over the ropes. "I'm going to give you a choice tonight." Stiles finally says, and Derek's ears perk with curiosity. "Do you want me to fuck you with my clothes on, or off."

"I want you naked." Derek decides quickly. "Definitely naked."

"Fuck no." Derek gasps as Stiles nibbles lightly on his ear. "I want to smell like I'm yours."

"You want to be mine, Der?" Stiles asks darkly, eyes so blown Derek can't even see whisky anymore.

"Yes, Stiles, I want to be so fucking good for you."

"You want to be my good boy?" Stiles whispers.

"Yes!" He groans as Stiles sucks his skin, working on another hickey. Stiles licks the hickey after, blowing on it until a shiver runs down Derek's spine.

"Spread your legs for me." Stiles says, foot nudging Derek's legs apart. "I'm going to flog your gorgeous ass. Colour?"

"Fucking green." Derek groans, thrusting his ass out further, presenting himself to Stiles, waiting for
him. Derek watches Stiles undress in the mirror, staring as inches of pale, mole spotted skin is revealed. He watches as Stiles' fingers trail over the floggers, deciding which one to use. He finally settles on the one Derek picked up earlier.

Stiles returns, pressing himself against Derek's back. Derek arches in pleasure at the touch of skin on skin, the shibari ropes the only thing between them.

"Watch." Stiles instructs, grabbing the ends of the flogger's tassels with one hand, he grips the shaft with the other, flicking his arm at the elbow, he lets the flogger hit nothing but air. A test throw. Next, Stiles stick out his leg, and performs the same action on his thigh. The thump of the leather sounds delicious to his ears and Stiles' skin pinks beautifully. Stiles looks up, meeting his eyes in the mirror. "I have to know how it is going to feel to understand exactly how hard or soft I can hit you. I know you're a werewolf, but the whole point of this is so you don't heal. I don't want it to bruise," Stiles grins, "too much."

Stiles stops a little more than a foot away from him, standing slightly over to the side, flogger in hand. Trailing the tassels over Derek's ass, he shivers at the feeling of the smooth leather tickling over his skin.

The throw comes at a surprise and Derek jerks at the thud of it, feeling the leather sting his cheeks. "Fuck!" He gasps.

"Colour, Der?" Stiles' asks, gently running a soft hand over his ass, soothing the sting.

"Green." He answers breathlessly. "Again, please?" He begs.

"Nine more strokes." Stiles announces, and throws the flogger again.

"Oh fuck." He groans at the sting, it's hard to concentrate on suppressing his healing while feeling so much, and when the marks start to fade, the flogger thuds against his ass.

"Suppress your healing, keep your ass nice and red for me, sweetheart. It's going to feel soo good, I promise, Der. I fucking promise you."

Derek whines, but concentrates as the flogger comes down again and again. His skin stings and his cock leaks. It feels so fucking good, the contrast of pleasure and pain, the continuous sting, one that doesn't fade away by healing. Instead, it stays, a continuous feeling, building and building, until tears run down his cheeks and he's reduced to begging sobs.

"Der, Der, look at me." He's brought out of his daze with Stiles standing in front of him, cradling his jaw, as thumbs wipe away his tears. "What is your colour, sweetheart, tell me, Der?"

"This is so intense, Stiles." Derek gasps.

"Do you want me to stop?"

"Oh, god no, please don't, I'm green, Stiles. Please, I'm green, I promise." Derek pleads.

Stiles presses kisses to Derek's cheeks, before wiping away his tears. "There are three strokes left."

"Green, Stiles." He begs.

"Okay, sweetheart." Stiles presses a final kiss to his forehead before moving behind him and picking up the flogger again.
The last three throws fly by in a blink of the eye and end with Stiles gently rubbing his ass gently. He spreads Derek's red cheeks, tugging on the ring of the plug until Derek gasps when the plug slides out. He groans when Stiles slips lubed fingers back in, checking and making sure he is still well prepped enough to take Stiles' cock.

"Ready, Der?" Stiles asks. When Derek nods, he slowly slips in the head, pushing past the muscles. "Fuck..." Stiles moans. "You're so hot, so tight, Der..."

Derek watches Stiles in the mirror, the myriad of emotions passing by on his face: wonder, pleasure, bliss. Stiles runs his hand over Derek's back all the way down to his ass, the rawness of the skin making him gasp at the sensation of pleasure and pain. Stiles reaches up, placing his hands behind his own head. Derek lets out a questioning noise, waiting for Stiles to slip the rest of his cock in.

Stiles grins, meeting his eye in the mirror. "Slide back on me, take as much as you want."

"Oh god." Derek whispers. He pushes his ass back on Stiles, ever so slowly, until hipbones finally cradle Derek's ass. "Fuck me." Derek begs, feeling so complete, so full, ass stinging from where the heat from Stiles' body irritates the skin.

"Do you want it hard?" Stiles teases.

"I don't want to fucking walk without limping tomorrow." Derek snarls.

Stiles draws back until his cock is almost out, before slamming right back in, balls slapping against Derek's ass. Derek keens, loud, head thrown back to the ceiling as Stiles grabs him by the hips and just gives it to him, thrusting so hard, Derek struggles to brace himself on the floor and his feet slide forward with the force.

"Fuck, Der." Stiles moans, gutted. "You feel so fucking good, so beautiful, so tight. Oh my god, oh my god..." Stiles whispers, resting his head on the back of Derek's, hips rabbiting, pounding into him so deliciously, cock nudging his prostate on each upthrust.

"Please, Stiles, please." Derek begs.

"You're almost there, Der, c'mon sweetheart."

Derek whines, feeling himself slip closer and closer to the edge. One powerful thrust later, he's coming untouched, crying out as ropes of come shoot out of his cock, hitting as far away at the mirror. Electricity runs over his skin as Stiles feeds, drawing out Derek's pleasure and making the orgasm so much more intense.

"Oh fuck, Der." Stiles moans, biting into his shoulder and coming with a long groan deep inside him. Stiles stays inside for one long moment, before slowly pulling out with a wet squelch. Derek feels so empty for a long second before Stiles slips two fingers back in his ass. "Are you okay?" He asks, fingers gently running through his hair.

Derek just nods, lost for words.

"I'm going to untie you, and I want you to go lie down face first on the bed, but don't heal just yet, I want to talk with you first."

When Stiles lets him down, he stumbles and regains his balance when Stiles helpfully wraps an arm around his waist, leading him over to the bed.
Stiles returns with a bottle of Gatorade and a tube of aloe. He gently rubs it on Derek's backside, fingers sometimes getting distracted by the red indentions from the wolfsbane rope decorating his skin. Derek rises on his elbows and sips from the bottle.

"For how long would you be able to suppress your healing?" Stiles questions, capping the tube, before sliding up the bed lying down beside Derek.

Derek furrows his brow. "At most, two days I think but I won't be able to heal the injuries inflicted by the rope even if I wanted to. They'll fade after a few days."

"So you will be able to wear my rope marks to the office tomorrow?" Stile asks carefully, running a hand through Derek's hair.

Derek turns on his side, searching Stiles' face. "Yes." He says.

"Would you, then?"

"Yeah."

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The next morning the hickies still decorate his skin, and he touches the slowly healing bruises in wonder, staring at them in the bathroom mirror. The rope marks are no longer deep indentations in his skin, but instead reddened marks, peppering his skin in lines.

Derek pads into the kitchen after a quick shower, one of Stiles' fancy towels wrapped around his waist. He finds Stiles padding around the kitchen while Billie Holiday plays softly on the gramophone. He's wearing the ratty plaid sweats Derek loves so much, and they hang obscenely off his hipbones. Derek eyes them, before moving up and tracing up over Stiles' lightly muscled stomach, swallowing hard.

Stiles smiles when he catches sight on Derek. "There're eggs in the pan for you." He says, and Derek walks over to the stove, smiling at the French style scrambled eggs.
He grabs the pan, taking it over to the breakfast bar. Stiles leans against it, watching him while biting into a snickerdoodle. Stiles gestures over to the gramophone. "My mother took me to see her in the thirties. She said Billie was having some trouble with an aria, but after the show my mother just shook her hand. You should have seen the look of wonder that overcame Billie's face, like the ideas already brewing in her head just clicked." Stiles snaps his fingers. "Like that."

Derek drags a stool up beside Stiles. "Your mother didn't feed like you do?" Derek asks, curious.

"No, she didn't need to. She was a full leanan sídhe, she could grant inspiration and feed with just a touch of the hand. It's harder for me since I'm half human..." Stiles trails off, staring off into the distance, his brow furrowed like what he's talking about bothers him to no end. He snaps back, changing the subject. "Not a lot is recorded about my species, but there is one little known fact, even you probably don't know it..." Stiles trails off.

Derek waits for him to continue, and when he doesn't Derek sighs, "Well, what is it?"

Stiles grins. "Leanan sídhe enjoy snickerdoodles for breakfast." Stiles takes a bite of a cookie,
crumbs tumbling from his mouth.

Derek snorts. "You don't even need to eat physical food, period."

"Doesn't mean it don't taste good." Stiles mumbles around a mouthful of cookie.

Derek shakes his head, amused, and digs into his breakfast.

Lydia quirks her brow when he walks into the office that very afternoon. "You look disturbingly happy." She remarks.

"Thanks." Derek says sarcastically, hanging up his coat on the rack.

"What's that on your wrist? A rash?" Lydia asks, brow furrowed.

Derek tugs down the sleeve of his shirt, blushing. "Nothing."

"Uh huh, honey. Tell Stiles to keep his perverted fantasies away from the office." She says and Derek stumbles on the way over to his desk.

"Shut up, Lyds." He mutters, collapsing down in his chair, embarrassed.

"You better not have a plug up your ass. Couldn't you have waited until I wasn't in the office?"

Derek sighs, dropping his head down on his folded arms, hiding his face from view. He feels a wadded up ball of paper hit his head and fall to the ground. He looks up to find Lydia grinning like a hell demon.

"Come on, I'm just teasing. I'm happy you finally hooked him. Although... I'm sure he's the one hooking you."

"Hardy, har, har."

Lydia must get her sense of humour from Stiles.

***

Derek's in Midtown, walking along the sidewalk to the underground parking lot where he stashed the Camaro. He just dropped off Heather's petition for the bridge, now they just have to wait for the Department of Transportation to contact them in a few weeks.

He spots a redcap at the corner with a cart of newspapers. Walking up to the redcap, Derek gets a few strange looks from passersby, understandable, since the redcap is heavily glamoured. To human eyes he looks like a smelly homeless man peddling shrivelled apples, holding a sign advertising the forthcoming rapture. Derek always laughed at this particular fae newspaper's puns, the symbol of knowledge is an apple after all. Others newspapers use pineapple glamours. Who the heck normally carries a pineapple around on the street? At least an apple makes an easy snack.

Derek wrinkles his nose at the smell of cow's blood emanating from the redcap's red tuque as he hands Derek back change for the apple/newspaper, wishing him a good day with a small wave. Derek tucks the newspaper in his estate bag.

He's pouring himself a cup of coffee in the office, when he remembers the paper. Derek sits down in his swivel chair, spinning himself around a few times before moving to grab it out of his bag.

"Having fun?" Lydia asks from her desk as she looks through her case files, pen in hand.
"Lots." He snarks, opening the paper and glancing at the headlines, eyes widening. "Shit." He says.

"What?" Lydia glances up at him, irritated.

"Budapest Expels All Unseelie Inhabitants." Derek reads, incredulous.

Budapest has a substantial Unseelie population even though it is a Seelie held city. There are a few hundred Unseelie in the city, most of them working at the EIT headquarters. Being banished means they can't come to work, and since they all work at the same place, that would look very suspicious.

"What?" Lydia exclaims, brow furrowed. "The city council couldn't have sanctioned that."

Derek reads over the article. "On the contrary, they're the ones that suggested it." He says, tapping on a line.

"That's fucking ridiculous." Lydia rises, moving to grab the paper from Derek, quickly scanning it. "How on earth are they going to explain to the European Union why a third of their EIT employees have gone and quit on them?"

"That is a very good question."

The last thing the fae want are humans asking difficult questions. It just leads to messy magic mind modifications. Derek clearly remembers the near slip of 1999, it was the news of the time. A lesser known seer, jealous over another's success, had contacted the James Randi foundation and almost outted the entire fae race for fame and a few million bucks.

If the seer hadn't been stopped by a highway patrol officer for speeding and a whole plethora of unpaid parking tickets he would've succeeded. When he had mentioned where he was going, a fae working the front office of the station had contacted the fae authorities and had him detained. Every single one of the humans in the station had to have their minds wiped and modified, before they started asking the difficult question of where the magic guy with sparks shooting out of his fingers went.

Having a third of a company quit is a difficult fucking question.

"This shit is getting out of hand." Lydia remarks, tossing the paper back on Derek's desk. "The Queen's still locked up with the King trying to save his life, and now shith*eds like this are making terrible decisions without their approval." She sinks back down in her chair. "This is going to get so much worse before it gets better."

Derek sighs, scrubbing his hand over his face. His eyes are closed when he hears Lydia's intake of breath, and the clack of her knocking over her coffee cup. He looks up curiously and sees her sitting up straight, frozen. "Lydia?" Derek asks carefully, "What's wrong?"

All of a sudden her glamour flickers, once, twice, before dropping.

A skeleton stands behind her, fading in and out of reality. Derek gasps when it reaches down and touches her on the arm as the other hand gently sweeps her hair back, before wrapping it's hand around her throat.
She throws her head back and wails.

The windows groan, buckling under the strength of the pure noise pouring from Lydia's mouth. They shatter. The thin glass panes breaking behind him, and spraying the whole office with shards of thick glass. Derek ducks, but shards slash into his back impaling at least an inch deep inside him. He screams in agony, as the glass shreds his flesh to pieces.

She wails and wails and does not stop and Derek lies on the ground, curled up in fetal position, his back a whole mess of agony as his body works to expel the glass, pushing the shards out. When the last piece falls from his skin, Lydia stops screaming and collapses back onto her chair. Her face, an expression of shock and blatant fear. Derek rushes to his feet, limping over to her.

"Lyds!" He calls, slapping her on the cheeks until she blinks her eyes, wet with tears streaming down her cheeks. Her eyes widen frantically, and she tugs desperately at his shirt until he hears the fabric rip.

"They're dead, Derek, they're all dead. So many souls... They're just gone."

Chapter End Notes

Wrote this whole damn chapter on my phone while commuting, so if there are spelling errors... Well... I this whole damn thing on my phone while commuting...
"The authorities are calling it a gas leak which killed all one hundred and fifty three staff and guests of the Las Vegas casino and hotel *Titania.*" The news anchor says, shuffling the papers on her desk. For her this is a solitary tragedy, an accident, something that happened purely by chance. To humans this isn't the bullet that killed Franz Ferdinand, this is an isolated incident.

Derek turns off the television and collapses down beside Laura.

"What's going to happen now?" She asks, her voice lost and confused, arms wrapped tight around her body as if they could ward off the oncoming shitstorm.

Derek says nothing he just wraps his arm around her shoulder, pulling her close and hoping to give her some comfort.

Talia walks back into the living room after being called by the council with an update on the situation. They're trying to keep the incident on the down low, and so all communication to Vegas has been shut off while the Vegas city council proceeds with their own investigations. But Derek knows it'll be at most a few weeks before it spreads like wildfire. They do live in the information age after all. So far only human news has been allowed through the blockade because it would be suspicious if the broadcasts were stopped.

Sooner or later someone watching the human news is going to notice that *Titania* was a primarily fae run casino, and that's when shit is going to hit the ceiling.

"What do we know?" Derek asks Talia. Lydia sleeps in a bedroom upstairs, Allison with her. The screaming took a lot out of her. She was the one who heralded the deaths right as it happened, and she was the one who told Derek to go to his mother with the news. The only reason she screamed for something that happened so far away is because it is somehow going to affect a sizable amount of people. This was no gas leak.

Talia sighs heavily. "It was most definitely not an accident. They have the bio-bombing on tape. Someone took a measly disinfectant spell used to kill bacteria, magnified it a thousand fold, and turned it into a mass purification spell that killed anything and everything living in that building right
"Holy shit..." Cora's eyes widen in shock. "People can do that with magic? Just walk into an area, and kill everyone with a fucking simple spell even I know how to cast?"

"They should have the culprit though." Laura says. "Since they have the surveillance tapes."

Talia purses her lips. "They want Derek to come in." Derek looks up in shock. "One of the guards, Parish, thinks he's seen something like this before. When Malcolm died."

Derek furrows his brow. "But Malcolm was magically impotent, Cora's the only one who got even a hint of magic in the family." Malcolm never cast even a minor spell in his life. Werewolves don't get much magic compared to a witch, for example. They're almost as magically incapable as humans.

"They mentioned blue eyes."

Derek freezes. Werewolves either have golden eyes as betas, or red eyes as alphas. When Malcolm's eyes flashed ice blue, Derek knew something was wrong, but when he wrote it in his statement and no one mentioned it again, he thought it was an irrelevant occurrence and forgot about it.

"They want you to review the security footage."

***

Derek calls Stiles in the car while his mother drives.

"Heeey, Derek." The calls connects to Stiles' sultry voice. "What's up?"

"Stiles..." Derek breathes, suddenly lost for words. Stiles must pick up on his tone because he drops the facade.

"Are you okay? What's going on?"

Derek sighs, looking up and catching his mother's eye in the rear-view mirror. She subtly shakes her head. Derek isn't allowed to tell Stiles about the Casino bombing, but he can warn him without mentioning any details.

"Derek?" Stiles queries, his voice tinged with worry.

"Promise me something?" Derek asks in lieu of replying to Stiles' question.

"Anything." Stiles answers immediately and Derek feels his heart clench at the amount of blatant trust in Stiles' voice. He feels butterflies stir in his stomach, but he has to warn Stiles, so swallowing, he pushing the feelings back down his throat.

"Try not to leave the penthouse unless absolutely necessary and don't go to any large, crowded area with lots of fae."

"What? Derek, why?" Stiles asks, worry replaced with confusion.

"Just please, Stiles, trust me. If there is one thing you must do, it is trust me on this. Please." He begs.

Stiles sighs. "Alright, I'll try. Even though you're being cryptic as fuck."
"Thank you, that's all I ask."

"Are you going to tell me what's going on? Does it have anything to do with the King?"

Derek meets his mother's eyes again. Derek shakes his head even though Stiles can't see it. "I can't say anything."

The line is silent for a few long moments, before Stiles breaks it, asking, "Is someone ordering you not to say anything?" Talia's eyes widen. The only person who has the authority to order Derek to do anything is his mother and Stiles knows this. "You don't have to say anything." Stiles continues. "I understand."

"Thank you."

Stiles sighs. "Just keep yourself safe, okay? Promise me, and I'll do this for you, alright?"

"Yes, I'll be careful. I..." Derek trails off, not knowing what to say.

"I care about you. You're one of my best friends, and I trust Talia, but she had better not be putting you in any danger."

Talia chuckles. "Tell Stiles that I promise to take care of his precious beau."

"She says she'll try." Derek says instead and Stiles laughs.

"That's all I ask. I'll see you tomorrow." Stiles says softly, hanging up.

Derek smiles down it his phone, thumb caressing the contact icon of a smiling Stiles on the screen. Their fifth session is tomorrow, and after it is over, they will be halfway through their contract. Five more sessions and then Derek can never touch Stiles again.

Some days he regrets presenting his application to Stiles. They could have continued being friends and Derek would have continued to pine away, then maybe a few hundred years down the line he would finally work up the courage to tell Stiles how he feels and they could have begun a relationship that would have gone somewhere.

The only reason he applied was because of the seer's words: *taste the whip and love might given likely.*

He actually expected Stiles to fall in love with him because of the words of a man who wears his hair in a mullet because of a curse. Sometimes Derek wonders how he could be so stupid and yet so smart at the same time. He thought that sex could make feelings that aren't there suddenly develop. Make Stiles love him in return. Now, look what happened. Stiles wants him, that's an undebatable fact. He lusts for Derek's body. He can see it in his eyes, by the smell of arousal whenever Derek is tied up at his mercy.

But that's all it is between them. They're fuck buddies with an expiration date. Stiles doesn't want Derek the way Derek wants him. Both body, heart, and mind. A bond without a bond. Stiles wants a friend he can trust, fuck, and feed on, and that's it. Derek has to keep reminding himself of that exact fact whenever he is tempted to open his big mouth and confess his feelings. Derek doesn't think he'll be able to take never seeing Stiles again if he takes it badly.

His wolf sees Stiles as its mate, and honestly, so does Derek. If he can't love him, he can at least protect and provide for his mate to the best of his ability.
The last time Derek walked along these corridors his father ended up dead. It brings back some awful memories, but he supposes that's the whole reason why he's here.

"Derek, thanks for coming." Parrish says, as he walks into the multimedia room. Parrish stands beside a wall of glowing monitors, all of them keeping track of human news stations and any reports that might be fae related. Derek's mother is upstairs, apparently the Queen's now taking a few select visitors because of the situation, so Talia's hoping to get an audience.

"No problem." He says, "Where's the footage you wanted me to see?"

Parrish nods his head at one of the techies who types in some things on the keyboard, dismissing the news to another wall of monitors. He brings up the surveillance footage, about ten videos, all showing the casino floor filled with happy patrons and staff alike.

"This is before the bombing." Parrish states, he touches the console, magnifying a video. He points to the screen. "Wait for it." He says and only a second later a child walks through the doors of the casino floor.

Derek frowns, "Who let a child in by themselves?"

"That's the part we can't figure out." Parrish states, staring at the child weaving through the casino floor like he belongs there. "That's an eight year old human child, and I'm not going to tell you his name because you already know what happened to him."

Dead, like all the rest of them.

Derek nods and shuffles his feet before looking back to the screen, trying to ignore just how young and innocent the child looks. "What's that in his hand?" Derek asks, trying to squint around the terrible video quality, vaguely recognizing the wooden box.

"We bagged it later." Parrish says, bringing up an image of the box on a white background. Derek swallows, his throat going dry. "It's a music box, but you'll never guess what it plays, something morbidly appropriate."

"Ring a Ring o'Rosies." He whispers.

"Yup." Parrish says, popping the p. "Morbid as fuck, considering it's a nursery rhyme about the Bubonic Plague." Turning to Derek, he frowns. "How did you know? There's no audio..."

Derek laughs, pained. "That was my mother's favourite music box, she used to play it for my siblings and I when we were children. Malcolm stole it from her out of spite."

Parrish's eyes widen. "Was it not among the effects you got back from the landlord?"

"You'll have to ask my mother. I didn't want anything of his." Derek makes a face, Talia and Isaac were the only ones to fly down to Fresno to look through the items pulled out from the dumpster, the rest of his siblings felt the same as he did. Anything they could salvage would just be tainted with Malcolm's memory. Besides, he didn't want to deal with the two day drive.

Parrish nods before pulling out his cell phone. He makes a call while Derek looks through the footage, watching as the child walks through the casino, never getting lost even once. It's like there's a GPS system in his brain guiding him where he needs to be. Once, an employee touches him on the shoulder but the child just looks at her and she turns right around, walking away.
"Alpha Hale says she couldn't find the music box in Fresno." Parrish states hanging up. "So that means Mr. Orrin brought it with him when he left the city, but why? Why not something more useful?" Glancing up at the screen, Parrish points at the child standing in the center of the casino floor, slot machines all around him, flashing bright. "Here. Look at his eyes."

Derek looks and gasps. The child's eyes flash a chilling blue just like Malcolm's did when he went right for Derek's neck. The child opens the box and his body crumples right away, the music box falling out of his small arms. Everyone else in the casino collapses a half second later.

"His eyes." Derek says and Jordan nods. "But you're saying he's human?"

"According to our coroner contact, yes, he is." Jordan stares at the video as it plays on loop the small child walking through the floor, slowly but surely walking to his death. "We think he was possessed."

"By what?"

"We don't know. But can you confirm that is the way Mr. Orrin's eyes glowed?"

"Without a doubt." Derek says, staring in shock at the icy blue. "I don't know of any species of fae who can possess like that."

Parrish sighs, pausing the video right when the child's eyes flash. "The Queen says she has an idea, but she's not providing any further insight."

"Does she think Malcolm, and now the bombing, has to do with Deaton's sickness?"

Parrish meets Derek's eyes. "She knows for a fact they are related."

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The morning of his meeting with Stiles he gets a call from the Department of Transportation. Heather's petition went through. She had offered to donate to the ministry, and in return they stopped the demolition of the bridge. He called Heather with the good news and was invited to a hearty lunch in thanks.

Derek spent the whole meal smiling and nodding politely while Heather spoke of the political fuck ups going on in Budapest with the city council, unable to add his own two dice to the conversation, lest he let something slip.

Not being allowed to warn anyone about the oncoming storm is really getting to him, and Derek is for once not looking forward to weekly wine and Netflix night with Erica and Boyd. She has this way of making him open up and talk about his deepest, darkest secrets. Erica's one of the most intuitive people he knows, and she's not even fae.

Lunch with Heather finishes earlier than expected when she gets a call about someone vandalizing one of her bridges. Derek's left with two hours to kill and nothing to do. He finishes up his lunch quickly and packs himself into the Camaro, driving to a coffee shop near the penthouse. Ordering a cappuccino, he takes a seat in one of the booths, pulling out his laptop and hoping to get some work done.

Derek's in the middle of answering an email from a client when the door opens with a ring. The smell of sugar and verbena floods the small shop. Derek looks up just as Stiles strides to the counter, greeting the barista with familiarity. Derek watches as Stiles order a green tea, looking him over from worn running shoes to jogging shorts to a muscle tee that hangs off his lean frame so
deliciously. He looks like he was just in the middle of a run and stopped by to get a drink.

Almost like Stiles can read his mind, he turns, spotting Derek in the booth, just as the barista calls his
name for his order. Derek smiles as Stiles walks over to him, cup in hand, sliding into the seat
opposite him.

"Hiya, stranger." Stiles grins crookedly. "You're early."

Derek hums, "Finished a meeting with a client earlier than expected."

"Were you just going to sit here for two hours?"

"Honestly, yes." Derek says, finishing the email and signing off, closing his laptop with a snap.

Stiles chuckles. "I wouldn't mind if you came by earlier." He tugs on the tea bag a few time before
looking up at Derek under his eyelashes. "I wouldn't mind it all." He blatantly looks Derek over,
eyes lingering on his neck where his tie hangs slightly lose.

"You're obviously not at home, so there would be no point." Derek points out.

"You caught me right in the middle of my run."

"I can see that." Derek eyes a droplet of sweat as it trails down Stiles' neck, settling in the hollow of
his collarbone. He wants to lick it.

"I'm staying away from crowded areas so don't worry, but I'm not about to sit on my ass in the
penthouse all day like a recluse."

"Fair enough." Derek grins as Stiles downs the rest of his tea, rising from his seat.

"Want to join me?" He offers.

Derek has a spare set of basketball shorts and a beater in the boot and he quickly changes in the
shop's bathroom. Stiles waits for him outside, and they stretch out their muscles against the side of
the building. "Ready?" Stiles asks. Derek nods and they take off.

There's a slight nip in the air, but once his blood gets flowing it's hardly noticeable. His feet pound
on the pavement, breath huffing in clouds of condensation and he feels the burns in his legs, relishing
it. Derek glances over at Stiles and finds himself unable to look away. His form is impeccable, arms
pumping as his legs move, thigh muscles clenching and unclenching, he can almost picture what
Stiles would looks like with his legs slung over Derek hips, muscles working as he fucked himself on
Derek's cock. His throat runs dry, and he looks away.

There's a large crowd of people up ahead holding signs as they stand near the pier. They're handing
out flyers and buttons to passersby. The wind changes and their scent drift towards Derek. They're
all fae.

"Banish Unseelie scum." Stiles reads under his breath. "Derek, holy shit."

There must be at least thirty people gathered, all chanting, all demanding for a repeat of Budapest.
Derek can only imagine what would happen if they knew about Vegas. There's a difference between hateful protests and full scale violence, but things could so easily get worse if the news spread.

"Hey, Derek!" Someone calls out to him. Derek whips around as Aiden, a member of the Hale pack strides forward, a board nonchalantly declaring that all Unseelie fae should die, resting on his shoulder. "Have you come to join us?"

"What the fuck are you doing?" Derek whispers furiously.

Aiden laughs, twirling the sign. "Expressing my right to freedom of speech." He says, staring curiously at Stiles, before glancing back at Derek. "We're moving all over the city, trying to get the word out." Reaching into his bag, he pulls out two flyers, handing one to Derek and Stiles. Derek takes it glancing it over with a distasteful expression, while Stiles stands stoically, his arms crossed over his chest, meeting Aiden's eyes and refusing to take the sheet of paper. Aiden just shrugs, tucking the flyer back in his bag.

"Does Ethan know about this?"

Aiden rolls his eyes. "My brother has a bleeding heart, he feels sorry for what happened in Budapest, not happy like he should be."

"He's right." Derek says, crumpling the flyer. Aiden narrows his eyes. "They did nothing wrong, the city council fucked up. Now look what's happening? They have to cover shit up with the humans." Derek read the report, the European council had to sanction hundreds of memory modifications all over Europe just to stop the humans from asking questions. But it's a band-aid solution to the problem. The EIT is still missing just over a hundred employees and sooner rather than later someone's bound to notice it.

"These fuckers murdered our King." Aiden seethes.

"Deaton is still alive." Derek argues.

Aiden scoffs. "For how long? He's essentially dead, lying in a coma like a fucking limp vegetable."

"Fuck you." Derek hisses.

"Oh, I forgot. He's your mother's mate isn't he?" Aiden jeers in a mocking tone.

"Your Alpha's mate," Derek snarls, "and how do you think she'll react when I tell her just what people are saying about him." Derek smiles satisfactorily when Aiden blanches. "I wonder if you'll still have a place in this pack."

"You wouldn't..."

"Watch me." Derek says, eyes flashing beta gold. He takes off without another word, afraid if he says anything else he might do something stupid like claw Aiden. Thankfully Stiles trails after him without asking questions. Once they're a few blocks away, Derek leans against the side of a building, letting out a long sigh.

"Are you okay?" Stiles asks tentatively.

Derek scrubs a hand through his beard wearily. "I'll be fine. Aiden on the other hand..."

"What's Talia going to do to him?"
"I have no idea. She first has to see if anyone else in the pack shares his views, if this is just an isolated incident, she could boot him from the pack for disrespecting her partner."

"And if it isn't? If others think like he does?"

Derek remains silent during the run back to the penthouse via a route far away from the protests.

***

Stiles tosses a soft terry towel at him. "There's a pair of sweats in the bathroom when you finish."

Derek catches the towel. "Want to join me?"

Stiles smiles.

Derek runs firms hands over Stiles' back, rubbing out the sore muscles as hot water beats down on his body. He massages the lemon verbena scented shower gel into Stiles' skin washing away dirt and sweat.

"Mmm.\" Stiles moans as Derek rubs out a particularly tight knot.

"Good?\" Derek asks, smiling and pressing a kiss to the back of Stiles' neck. "Fuck..."

"That could be arranged.\" Derek hums, trailing kisses along Stiles' shoulder, ending in a sharp bite making Stiles yelp.

"Hey, sharp teeth away from the important places."

"You like it.\" Derek smirks.

Stiles chuckles. "Can't deny that.\" He says, spinning around in Derek's arms, facing him. "Hi."

"Hey.\" Derek smiles, capturing Stiles' mouth in a searing kiss, tongue running along Stiles' bottom lip before biting and sucking it into his mouth, swallowing Stiles' moans as he brings their hips together. "I want to blow you."

"Yesss.\" Stiles groans, rubbing himself against Derek before pulling away and leaning against the cool shower wall. He braces himself, waiting for Derek. "On your knees.\" Stiles orders, running a finger along Derek's jaw. Derek captures Stiles' thumb in his mouth, sucking and providing a preview for what is about to come. Stiles stares at his hollowed cheeks with blown eyes and a gaping mouth. Water trails down his beautifully flushed face and Derek looks him over, tracing the path of water over constellations of moles. The bitten red of lips he can't wait to watch gasp out his name in pleasure.

He falls to knees on the towel, protecting him from the cold porcelain of the shower floor. Derek takes Stiles into his mouth, humming at the tangy taste of precome and the scent of clean skin. Running his tongue along a vein, he pulls off only to say, "Pull my hair," before delving right back in.

Derek closes his eyes when he feels Stiles' fingers run through his hair, tangling in it by his ears.
"Mmm, Der, yes." Stiles moans as Derek tries to take him even further into his mouth. He's been practising with a dildo, suppressing his gag reflex, and so long as Stiles doesn't move his hips he should be able to take him fully.

Derek swallows him down, throat fluttering. Looking up, he meets Stiles' eyes, finding him speechless and staring down in wonder. "Holy shit, I didn't know you could do that."

Derek moves his hands to Stiles' thighs, squeezing them and holding on, preventing Stiles' hips from shifting forward, as he moves his head up and down, lips pursed around Stiles' length.

Stiles runs the back of his fingers along Derek's brow, caressing him so sweetly. Derek's heart swells, beating faster with the intensity of Stiles' stare. He doesn't even realize he's crying until Stiles swipes his thumb under each of Derek's eyes, bringing it up to his mouth and licking the tears off.

"Touch yourself, Der." Derek moans, shifting a hand from Stiles' thigh to his cock, groaning as he grips it, jacking himself off to the bobs of his head. "I'm going to come." Stiles warns and Derek answers by swallowing Stiles so far down his nose rests in the hair above his cock, breathing in the scent of skin.

Stiles comes with a groan and Derek closes his eyes, swallowing his release. When the orgasm finally runs its course, Stiles pulls himself out of Derek's mouth, come smearing over his lips. Derek licks them as Stiles watches tasting him and sighing.

"Come here." Stiles says, pulling Derek to his feet. He wraps a hand around Derek's bicep, pulling him close enough for their chests to press together. Stiles reaches over to the side, squeezing out a dollop of bodywash. With a hand between them, he jacks Derek off. The soap sliding against his skin slicker than the water, and he feels himself tip over the edge. Derek buries his head in Stiles' neck, panting open mouthed, breath huffing against wet, flushed skin. He's so tempted to bite down until Stiles bleeds, his wolf aching to claim Stiles as his, thinking he will heal right away. But Stiles isn't a werewolf, and Derek whimpers instead.

When Stiles runs a soap slicked finger between his cheeks, sliding it into his hole with only minor resistance he comes hard, biting his arm instead of saying the three little words he wants so desperately to scream to the heavens.

***

The next morning when Derek leaves the penthouse a weight rests heavily on his shoulders. He's halfway though his arrangement with Stiles, and their next session is in a week.

His phone rings, distracting him from his thoughts.

"Parrish." He greets, picking up the call.

"The Queen wants you to come in."

An hour later finds him sitting on a couch in Deaton's living room, a cup full of expensive smelling tea sits in front of him and Derek is terrified of touching it, lest he snap the delicate porcelain.

"Mr. Hale, the Queen will see you now." The woman, Yukimura, from a few weeks ago stands with a hand resting on her katana like she's ready to draw it at any second if he does something threatening. Derek's may be a werewolf but all that gives him is strength, he has no idea how to fight. He's a lawyer, not a boxer.

Derek walks into Deaton's room. Morrell stands by the floor to ceiling window, smoking a cigarette,
wearing a black sheath dress screaming of professionalism. Derek glances towards Deaton. He looks even worse than when Derek saw him last. He raises a brow at the cigarette.

"It's fine." She says. "Tobacco doesn't affect my brother and I, although it's probably horrible on your sensitive nose." She turns around and reaches for an ashtray, stubbing out the cigarette and opening the window. Looking Derek up and down she gestures to a pair of armchairs sitting right by the glass. Derek takes the one directly in the path of the breeze bringing fresh air into the otherwise smoky room.

"You're probably wondering why I've called you here." She says, crossing her legs. Derek shakes his head. "I have some idea. The blue eyes, right? I was the only one who got a close enough look at them."

"Yes." She says, reaching for a file sitting on the small table between them. "I want you to look over a few images and tell me if you recognize the eyes in them." She flips open the file, sliding it over to Derek.

The file contains around twenty images, ranging from old sepia photographs of light eyed people to modern day colour photos to images of paintings. He frowns at the sepia images, not knowing how he's supposed to recognize the eyes if he cannot even see the colour, so he moves those to the back of the pile. Scanning through the colour photographs, he frowns. These all look so normal. Nothing like the glowing chill that permeated from Malcolm's eyes. Cold like the arctic and endlessly ancient like a glacier. They were also a memorable shade of blue, and none of these are like that.

Derek tosses aside the photographs and the Queen shifts in her chair as Derek moves to the paintings.

Derek nearly drops the files when he comes across it. Swallowing hard it brings him right back to the time in the holding cell, cold hands wrapped around his throat. The shitty security cameras in the casino were unable to capture the intensity, the ferocity of the eyes, but the artist who painted this managed well enough.

"This one." Derek says placing the photo of the painting down on the table, tapping on it. The woman portrayed within wears typical Northern Renaissance clothing, sitting in a pose reminiscent of the time, but her gaze is filled with such unfathomable emptiness, eyes the perfect shade of blue. The artist must have spent years searching for the ideal pigment to create this blue, the typical azurite would have been insufficient.

The Queen purses her lips. "I see. Thank you, Derek. You're free to go."

The door cracks open just as Derek rises to his feet. "Noshiko, I told you not to disturb us..." Morrell says before trailing off, catching sight of a woman Derek's never seen before in his life. "Kali, what are you doing here?"

The woman steps forward just as Derek moves in front of Morrell, pushing her behind him, not trusting anyone not supposed to be here.

The woman cocks her head to the side as if studying Derek, and her eyes flash with recognition, a cruel smirk takes over her features. "You again." She says, even though Derek doesn't know her.

"Did you get my jokes?" She says and brown eyes bleed to a glowing blue. Derek jumps to action, shoving the Queen away just as the woman hurls herself towards him, legs twirling in the air. Derek
raises his forearm protectively and feels the sharp sting of pain along his skin, the scent of iron
flooding the room. He's bleeding, a lot.

"Do you finally remember me?" The woman grins, pushing right up to him, her momentum and
weight knocking his balance. Derek stumbles back, head hitting against the glass with a sharp
crack. He's disoriented and dizzy, blinking as the blurry form of the woman stands in front of him,
hand around his throat.

The Queen throws a spell at the woman but she just grins as the spell bounces off a barrier, sparking,
the magic absorbing. "Ah, ah, ah. Wait your turn." She spins and thrusts her hand out. The Queen
is flung back through the room and right out the door. It slams closed after her.

"Now then, since you don't remember me, let me give you a clue..." The woman turns back to him,
hand tightening. "Knock, knock." She snarls, each 'knock' punctuated by her slamming his head
against the window. The world swims and he feels glass digging into his skull splintering and
breaking. A massive piece falls away from the frame onto the street five stories below. A crash
sounds, followed by the honking of horns.

The only thing preventing him from falling from the open window is the woman squeezing his
trachea in a death grip.

She smirks, pulling him closer until her face is only inches from his own. Leaning forward, she licks
his lips, tongue dragging disgustingly over his mouth as he squeezes it tightly shut. Closing her eyes,
she moans. "You taste delicious." She declares, opening her eyes and whispering in his ear. "Like
yearning and a leanan sídhe." Derek's eyes widen in terror, the woman smirks. "He tastes of sex
with a side of crushing depression. I can just imagine how scrumptious he might be in person."

"You fucking stay away from him!" Derek snarls, his eyes glowing and teeth elongating in
righteous fury.

She simply smirks as Derek thrashes in her grip, struggling to be let loose so he can maul the woman
in front of him, absolutely uncaring about this Kali being possessed in the face of threats against
Stiles. An idea pops into Derek's head, and he doesn't even think about how wrong it could go.
Making sure the woman has a tight grip around his neck, he kicks off with his feet, the momentum
throwing his body weight into open air.

Falling out the open window might not have been the best of plans but at least he's taking the woman
with him. The wind tangles his hair and time slows in freefall. Derek shifts in the air, wrapping his
legs around her waist, making sure she'll hit the ground first.

Derek closes his eyes just before the impact.

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He wakes in a bed, a constant beeping in his ears. Derek groans in pain. Sitting up, he blinks his
eyes open. Laura sleeps slumped in a chair beside what looks like a hospital bed. The beeping is
only a heart monitor.

Derek rolls his neck. He feels absolutely fine, maybe a bit sore, but nothing that would constitute
being brought to a fae hospital. It's not like he fell from a twenty story building.

"Laura." Derek whispers, voice sore, Laura only stirs and Derek rolls his eyes. "Laura." He says
again, reaching out and flicking her nose.

"Gah! Naked skeletons!" She exclaims, shooting up out of the chair.
Derek frowns. "What?"

"Huh, nothing..." She blinks, finally registering Derek as awake. "You're alive!" She shouts, pulling him into a tight hug. Derek awkwardly pats her on the back.

"It was only a five story building. I wouldn't have died," He says, rolling his eyes.

Laura looks at him strangely. "Thank fuck you didn't feel it then."

"Feel what?" He asks carefully.

"I don't know if I should tell you, you might have PTSD or something..."

"Laura..." He says in the voice he's used since they were young and he wanted something from her.

Laura scratches her head, and Derek sees the exact moment she gives in. "Glass went right through that thing's skull, so whatever possessing the woman's dead body got out of there in a hurry. When they retrieved her body, they found a weeks old rotting corpse, just like Malcolm. The glass pierced through your neck, though. You were bleeding real bad. We thought you were going to die."

Derek processes that information. Does the blue eyed creature need a dead body to take a person over, or do they die slowly as it possesses them? Somehow Derek can't imagine that thing feeding its hosts, or allowing them to sleep.

"What are they telling the humans?" He asks.

"Window washing accident." She scoffs. "Even when there wasn't any scaffolding outside the window. I swear the cover-up guys have no creativity whatsoever."

"And the Queen?"

"Singed but fine." She says reassuringly.

Derek groans, rubbing his eyes. He feels gross and his mouth tastes disgusting. "How long have I been asleep?"

"Three days as your body healed."

Derek's eyes widen. Three days... But that must mean that Stiles...

Derek pushes aside the covers, scrambling out of the bed. He yanks the needles out of his arm, the heart monitor flat lining.

"The fuck are you doing?" Laura questions as he strides over to where a set of clothes sits on a dresser. Tugging the hospital gown over his head, he pulls on the briefs just as Laura grabs his arm. "Derek, you have to rest for at least another day."

Derek shakes his head. "Stiles is in trouble."

Laura's brow furrows. "What do you mean?" She asks just as Derek pulls his arm out of her grip, and finishes dressing.

"The thing possessing that woman basically implied it was going after him next. Where's my phone?" Laura stares at him, shocked. "Laura!" He yells and snaps her out of a daze.

"It was smashed in the fall, but I have Stiles' number programmed on mine." She reaches into her
pocket, handing it to Derek.  

Stiles picks up on the first ring.  "And here I thought you were ignoring me l'amore.  A whole week without hearing your radiant voice is a week poorly spent."

l'amore.  Derek mouths at Laura.  She shrugs, looking sheepish.  Derek purses his lips, his sister should have mentioned becoming such close friends with Stiles.

"Laura?  Helloooo, are you there?  Did you butt dial me again?"

"It's me, I'm borrowing Laura's phone."  Derek says.

The line is silent for a long second.  "Well in that case, please ignore my blatant come on towards your sister, but can you blame me?  She is a wonderful woman."

"Are you at home?"  Derek asks, ignoring Stiles' words.

"Yes...?"

"Stay there, I'm coming by."

Stiles sighs.  "Fine, I'll go put on some pants."

***

Laura drives him to the penthouse after confiscating the keys to the Camaro, declaring him a road hazard even though he feels perfectly fine.  Laura chooses to leave him in the lobby, she pats Derek's cheek wishing him luck like he's walking into battle, leaving the Camaro behind before calling a cab for herself.

She can probably sense a certain amount of desperation in Derek, and even he feels like the moment he sees Stiles he's liable to say something incredibly stupid.

Derek stares at Stiles, his mouth dropping open.  He doesn't think he's ever told Stiles about his flying phobia.

Stiles opens the door wearing sweats and a rumpled tee only a few seconds after Derek knocks.  He pushes Derek into the parlour, taking a seat beside him on the sofa.  "Okay, now tell me what the hell is going on.  I haven't heard from you in three days, and Lydia's been covering for you, saying you had to take a business trip to another state or some shit like that.  But when she said you flew there, I knew something was wrong."

Derek pushes Stiles back, climbing onto his lap.  Stiles' hands move to rest on his hips, eyes questioning.  "Hmm, never would have thought all this talk about phobias would get you so hot-"

Derek interrupts him, pressing a soft, relatively chaste kiss against Stiles' mouth.  His eyes remain open as he gazes at Stiles, lips moving gently together.  Eventually, Derek pulls away, resting their foreheads together.  Stiles' eyes wander over Derek's face, not saying anything.  Derek smirks, proud
he managed to reduce him to silence.

Stiles' eyes move down to his lips, and Derek licks them subconsciously, moving back in and capturing Stiles' once again.

Derek feels a hand slide slowly into his hair, while another one slips under his tee, tracing the knobs of his spine. Derek closes his eyes, feeling the tickling of long fingers and revelling in the sensation as Stiles' lips move with more and more purpose, until they are devouring each other.

Stiles breaks the kiss with a gasp. "No. I see what you're doing here, you're trying to distract me away from the topic at hand, but I know your plan, mister, and it isn't going to work." Derek slowly rolls his hips, grinding against Stiles who groans, throwing his head back, giving Derek the perfect opportunity to latch onto the skin of his throat, marking and sucking. "Oh, fuck, Der." Stiles licks his lips. "Do that again."

Derek gives him what he wants, Stiles' voice growing hoarser as Derek moves his mouth down the long column of his throat, leaving marks in his wake.

"I want you to fuck me." Stiles gasps and Derek nearly bites down in shock. This isn't a session, their next one isn't for a few days. This is just sex, no feeding required, and Derek has no idea how he's supposed to feel about it.

Stiles rises from the couch, and takes Derek's hand in his, leading him to his personal bedroom instead of the other room.

This is Stiles' personal space, Derek thinks vividly as Stiles pushes him down on the sheets that smell of Stiles, sleep, and a faint hint of arousal. These sheets don't smell of detergent like the ones in the other room where Stiles changes them before he comes over. This is the place where Stiles likely jacks off when he wakes up in the morning and maybe before he goes to sleep at night.

Derek scoots up towards the headboard, resting his back against it as he watches Stiles pulls his shirt over his head, and in one strong movement, pushes down his sweats. Derek thinks this is the first time Stiles has been naked while Derek is clothed.

Derek rushes to tug his shirt off and remove the rest of his clothes, kicking off his jeans and boxers to his ankles while Stiles helps him tug them and his socks off. Stiles climbs onto the bed, sinuous and lithe in his movements, plopping himself right in Derek's lap.

Leaning forward, he affectionately rubs his nose against Derek's, looking into his eyes, mischievously, as he takes Derek's hands and moves them to his ass cheeks, urging Derek to squeeze. Derek does, and more. If the startled squeak Stiles makes when Derek slaps his ass is anything to go by, he really enjoyed it.

"Asshole." Stiles grins, biting Derek lightly on the nose in revenge.

Derek quirks a brow. "What are you going to do about it?"

Stiles' eyes gleam just as he settles right down it Derek's lap, moving his hips just so his dick rubs against Derek's. Letting out a long moan, his brow furrowing in pleasure just as Stiles bites at his mouth, tugging his bottom lip with teeth, letting go only to lick and soothe the ache.

Stiles smirks climbing off Derek's lap, reaching into the bedside table for a bottle of lube. Throwing it at Derek, he falls face first on the mattress. "Finger me." He says, voice muffled by a pillow.

Derek snaps open the tube and slicks up his fingers, getting right down to business.
He's three fingers in, stretching Stiles eagerly, sucking a gorgeous hickey onto the back of his neck, just about to slip his pinkie in too when Stiles bats his hand away. Pulling off of him, Derek sits back on his heels, watching Stiles twist over onto his back, facing Derek. His hand reaches out, tugging on Derek's cock a few times to get him back to full mast.

"Fuck me like this, just like this." Stiles spreads his legs, waiting for him.

Derek slicks up his cock and moves over Stiles, gently helping him arrange his thighs over Derek's hips, kissing him, as he slides into Stiles' tight, hot heat. A groan passes between them, swallowed by each other's mouths.

Derek thrusts deeply and slowly, rolling his hips, and pressing kisses to Stiles neck and collarbone. Stiles' mouth gapes, his head thrown back in pleasure, brow furrowing every time Derek pushes inside.

"Deeper." Stiles orders softly, clamping his legs tighter around Derek's hips.

Derek obeys, sliding his hands under Stiles' ass, lifting him up allowing the angle to change for him to slide even deeper. Stiles digs his heel into a butt cheek urging him to go faster, arms come up, sliding into his hair, gripping it and holding on for dear life as Derek changes the pace. Derek slams into Stiles, the bed creaking with force, their flesh slapping. Stiles pulls him closer into a kiss that is more teeth than anything else.

"Touch me." Stiles moans and Derek moves a hand between them, jacking Stiles' off to his thrusts until he's coming with a loud shout, gripping tight Derek's hair. He pulls Derek closer, whispering in his ear. "Come for me, sweetheart," and Derek does with a long groan, collapsing on top of Stiles.

Panting hard, he buries his face in Stiles' neck "I love you," Derek declares, "I love you so fucking much."

"You love me?" Stiles squeaks.

Derek pulls back to look at Stiles, nodding his head, stricken, but it's not like he can take it back. "Yeah." He confirms, swallowing hard waiting for the inevitable fallout.

"Oh." Stiles appears shell-shocked, like it is such a complicated thing for him to imagine someone being in love with him. "Um, okay...?"

Derek rolls off Stiles and buries his face in a pillow, bemoaning his stupidity.

***

Derek hasn't spoken to Stiles in a few days. The night after that impromptu session of sex followed by his confession, Derek went home and drank himself into a stupor. Enough alcohol for him to be numb to everything around him. So he could forget the way Stiles barely looked at him after. Derek couldn't even bear to stay the night, choosing instead to go home and forget it all happened.

When he had turned on the new phone Laura gave to him just before they left the hospital, he found a dozen missed calls from his mother, but he didn't even bother calling her back in case she noticed something was up and started bothering him about it.

It's the third day and Derek lies curled up in his wolf Snuggie, a bottle of whiskey in one hand, the television remote in the other, and a half empty baggie of wolfsbane on the table in front of him. He broods, watching angsty romance movies with depressing endings while taking long gulps of whiskey.
There are tears flowing down his cheeks as he watches a sobbing Count Almásy cradling Katherine's corpse when the doorbell rings. Hurriedly, Derek wipes his eyes free of tears knowing the redness will clear up by the time he makes it to the door. He finds Erica on the other side.

"Hey, you missed Netflix night and you're not answering your phone." Erica says pushing past Derek into the house. "What's up?" She quips, her hands on her hips waiting for him to answer.

Derek sighs, running a hand through his hair. Instead of explaining himself he nods towards his rec room. "Want to join me? The English Patient is almost over and I've got A Single Man queued up."

"Sounds like fun...?" She raises her brow. Derek shrugs.

She cuddles up next to him on the couch, after calling Boyd and confirming that she did not in fact find Derek's bloated corpse in the shower. Derek can't even imagine a werewolf dying from a slip in the shower, but then he remembers some of the baby wolves in Satomi's pack running after him and tripping over their little feet. Falling on one's face must be a bipedal thing.

A Single Man finds both Erica and he with tissues crumpled up in their fists, blowing their noses and wiping their eyes. Derek hasn't touched the whiskey since Erica showed up. He likes to imagine that Stiles would be proud of him, but he's still drunk enough that even the thought of Stiles' indifference to his feelings makes him sob just a little bit harder.

"Fuck, why'd I let you do this to me?" Erica wails, makeup smeared over her face. "They didn't even allow him to go to the funeral!"

"Want to watch another one?" Derek sniffs wiping his nose, as the credits roll.

"Fuck yes!" She exclaims, her voice wavering slightly and Derek nods, queuing the next film.

***

Derek finds the letter in the mail the next morning after Erica left. It is postmarked to the day before he had his 'falling out' with Stiles, when he was still asleep and couldn't check his mail. Opening the envelope he finds an invitation to Stiles' gallery opening party for tonight.

Derek is pulling a suit out of his closet, lying to himself and muttering that the only reason he's going is because he's worried for Stiles. This is going to be a big occasion. He's seen the size of the gallery: three floors with lots of space for possessed people to walk unnoticed and do unfathomable amounts of destruction. Derek should have known that when Stiles promised to stay away from crowded areas he didn't consider his own gallery opening to be a risk.

Derek parks the Camaro underground instead of taking a taxi, his way of ensuring that he won't get drunk if he doesn't find what he's looking for and ruin this important date for Stiles.

Walking into the gallery he's flooded with the scent of many people, and an overindulgence in horrible perfumes and cologne. Most of the people are humans gathered in groups, holding flutes of sparkling champagne in hand as they discuss the art. He only finds a few fae scattered around the gallery, but none of them appear to be acting strangely.

A waiter comes up to him with a tray full of glasses of wine but Derek shakes his head. He needs a clear mind for this.

"Derek?"

Derek whips around, finding Stiles with a hand in his suit pocket as he stares at Derek.
incredulously. "I thought you wouldn't show." He says and Derek blinks. Stiles almost looks ashamed. "Listen, I'm sorry for the way I acted-"

Derek shakes his head. "No apology needed." He swallows. "You look nice." He comments, voice strangled as he looks over the dark green, almost black suit clinging to Stiles' lean frame, the silk black tie around his neck and the creamy white of his dress shirt.

Stiles looks down as if checking if he does indeed look nice, a blush forming over his cheeks. "Thanks," he murmurs, barely audible if not for Derek's good hearing, "you don't look so bad yourself."

Derek ducks his head, blushing.

Clearing his throat, Stiles continues. "How are you liking the party so far."

"It's nice..." Derek nods jerkily.

Stiles smiles faintly. "You don't have to lie, I know these parties aren't really your thing. I really appreciate you coming regardless." He smiles, gazing warmly into Derek's eyes.

"It's important to you, and I wouldn't miss it for the world." Derek says, trying to convey as many feelings as he can into his tone. He feels something stick in his throat when Stiles tears his eyes away. "I saw that you showcased Dante's pieces." Derek says, trying to salvage the conversation.

"Yeah." Stiles says, nodding. "She's around here somewhere if you want to say hi, but you might have to wait in line, she's being swarmed by collectors.

"Maybe later." Derek smiles. He's happy for the girl, he really is, but right now he wants to focus on Stiles. Glancing around the crowded room, he notices that anyone could overhear their conversation. "Is there anywhere we could talk? In private." He adds, noticing the way Stiles looks completely terrified at the prospect.

"Yeah." Stiles says, his voice weak. "There's a balcony on the second floor. Come on." He leads Derek through the throngs of people, nodding his head and greeting them as he goes. Pulling aside a curtain, he reveals French style doors that he opens for Derek, letting him out into the chilly night. A breeze tangles the hair at his nape, tickling him. Stiles closes the curtain first, then the doors. "So no one interrupts us." He explains.

Suddenly Derek wishes he took that glass of wine when Stiles tugs on his tie, shuffles his feet, looking as awkward as possible. "So what's up?"

"I told you I loved you and you said nothing." Derek blurts out.

"Okay, getting right down to the heavy stuff I see." Stiles smiles weakly like he's telling a joke that isn't really funny. "Couldn't even ask how I was doing first, could you?"

"How are you doing?"

"That was sarcasm," Stiles huffs, smiling fondly before his face clouds once again. "I'm good. You?"

"Me too."

The silence stretches for what seems like hours. "Soo..." They both say at the exact same time. Stiles chuckles. "Seems like this whole conversation is going to be awkward as fuck."
Derek's face falls at Stiles' words. This is where Stiles confirms that he doesn't love him in return, that Derek's feelings are a hindrance, that he wishes to never see Derek again.

"I like you, Derek, but..." Stiles trails off, searching for the right words while Derek squeezes his eyes shut. He knows it's coming, but that fact doesn't soften the blow any less.

"It's fine." Derek says stiffly, not really meaning it. "It's fine if you don't feel the same. It's fine if you don't want me in return." His voice cracks painfully, and he ducks, hiding his embarrassment.

"Der..." Stiles starts, and his voice is full of such pity, as he uses the nickname Derek was sure meant something. What about sweetheart? What did Stiles mean when he called Derek his sweetheart, was it nothing for him?

Anger and frustration swells in his chest and suddenly Derek can't handle it anymore. He turns around and walks towards the doors. "Wait!" Stiles calls, grabbing at his arm. Derek almost rips it out, only remembering at the last second that Stiles is much more delicate than him, more prone to breaking.

"There's nothing to explain." He says through clenched teeth. "You've said you're not interested, I'm not going to force the issue, I'm no asshole."

"Derek, please." Stiles begs, and there's a hint of desperation in his voice, and Derek can't help but look back at him. "I need you to understand, it isn't you."

"Yeah I know." He rolls his eyes. "It's not you, it's me. I know the whole spiel. Now let go of me, and come Monday you won't have to see me again for anything but business."

Stiles flinches, and it isn't just Derek's imagination. He looks like he's about to cry and it makes Derek falter. "I have needs, Derek. You know what I am, you know how I feed."

Derek nods, he knows the basic logistics of it. When Stiles dominates he offers inspiration to his subs, and consumes the resulting life force the inspiration produces, it's a mutually beneficial relationship. He can do that, he knows Stiles isn't monogamous, but he can learn to deal with it. He just wants... Fuck, he wants whatever he can get. Little may it be.

"I can't do long term relationships."

"I know you practice polyamory. I'm fine with it." Derek isn't fine with it, but he can learn to be.

Stiles hisses, running his free hand through his hair. "You just don't get it. I would be monogamous if I had the choice, but I'm only half leanan sídhe. I'm defective."

"What?" Derek furrows his brow, not understanding what Stiles is trying to say.

Stiles runs a hand through his hair, gripping a fist around the strands, his hand looks so tight it must be hurting him. "I'm not right, I'm fucked up, I'm built wrong, whatever you wanna call it. Okay, Derek? I drive my partners mad and it's not supposed to happen. It never happened to my mother, or her mother before her. They were pure blooded, full leanan sídhe and I'm nothing but a sad excuse for one. It's why my clients are only allowed a certain number of sessions with me, because if I remained committed to only one person they would go fucking insane. I'm not entering into a relationship with you, because I don't think I'll have the strength to let you go, and I can't be the reason you lose your mind."

"We can find another way." Derek begs, eyes wide, suddenly understanding Stiles' reasoning for everything. That Stiles might just love him in return. That he is denying himself because he's afraid
he might hurt Derek.

"Feeding on my partner is how I form an emotional connection with them, if I never fed on you, our relationship would feel incomplete, a shadow of what it could be. Why do you think my relationship with Sophie fell through? I never fed on her, so we never really sparked. But with you, I would be so tempted to take. And you know me, I can't handle temptation very well."

"But..."

"I can't do it, Der. Not to you. So please, I beg of you, don't make this any more difficult than it is." Stiles drops his arm, taking a step back. "I don't think we should have sex anymore. Let's at least keep our professional relationship intact, I don't think I could bear losing everything."

Derek remembers the way Stiles would cradle his jaw in cool hands, pressing gentle kisses to stubble, whispering Sweetheart, Good Boy, Der... so lovingly, and he thinks he's already lost everything.

Chapter End Notes

I'm really backed up on answering comments, but my internet's been annoyingly spotty, I'll answer them when my modem stops being such a smarmy ass. I promise.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

School is busy, work is busy, life is busy. Sigh, but I will finish this thing. Two more chapters!!

Chapter warnings for bad dream BDSM etiquette and depressing language.
Oh, and I'm sorry in advance for the angst.

Fae descriptions are in the endnotes. When I finish the whole fic, I'll go back and format it so it is easier to view them.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Derek picks up the phone the next time his mother calls. He's sitting in an all night diner only a block away from Stiles' gallery. They don't serve alcoholic beverages on the menu, and he's too drained to find a bar. In some way he's grateful. Derek feels so empty, so fucking hollowed out on the inside, and no amount of alcohol could possibly bring him back from this.

When his phone rings it's a relief.

"Yeah?" He answers, bone weary and so tired he's resting the sleeves of an expensive suit on a suspiciously sticky table and couldn't care less.

"Where the hell are you? I'm at your house." His mother sounds exasperated, like she too has been worn thin.

Derek sighs, waving his hand for the cheque. "I'll be home in thirty."

Talia's sitting on his couch when he opens the door. "Sorry I've been dodging your calls, but I've had a shitty last few days." He toes off his shoes haphazardly, walking over to sit opposite his mother.

"You can't just drop off the face of the planet, especially not after something like that." By that, Derek assumes she means his second altercation with the blue eyed creature. "Thankfully the security tapes at Alan's have audio so we don't need your statement."

"You know about the creature threatening Stiles, then?"

Talia nods. "I've assigned a 24/7 security detail on him ever since we reviewed the tapes."

Derek sighs in relief, feeling a heavy weight lift off his shoulders.

"I'm assuming Stiles is the reason you look like someone shot your puppy? My guards told me you left his gallery looking like Atlas with the world on his shoulders. Why didn't you come straight home?"

Derek shakes his head. "I just couldn't be here right now." He loves the brownstone, he really does. It belonged to his mother when she first came to New York, immigrating from Ireland with Laura and a reluctant Malcolm. But it's since been tainted with one failed marriage, and sometimes seeing
how massive it is reminds him exactly how empty the rooms are. Stiles had called the brownstone big and haunted, he couldn't be more right.

It's different than how he feels about Stiles' penthouse. It's just as large as the brownstone in terms of square footage, except space is spread out horizontally over one floor instead of the five vertical stories of his house. But where the brownstone is cold and empty, the penthouse is full of personality, remnants of Stiles' parent's love on top of all the artwork Stiles inspires people to create. The penthouse is a physical embodiment of Stiles' entire being, his soul made flesh, and Derek loves it almost as much as he loves its inhabitant.

"I'm sorry, for everything that's going on, I never expected, nor prepared for something like this." Talia says, her expression solemn.

Derek waves away her apology. "There's no need to apologize, you're my Alpha, but you're also my mother. You're not responsible for everything bad that happens to me, no matter how much you think you are." Derek smiles. "Now, what did you need?"

Talia purses her lips, smiling softly. Rising to her feet, she walks over to Derek, joining him on his couch. He scoots over, making room. "To tell you something. It could just be my imagination, but just as well, it might not." She frowns, looking down at her hands.

"What is it?"

"You can't tell anyone what I am about to say. Not even your sister, okay?"

"What's going on?"

Talia closes her eyes. "The Queen's hiding something, I don't know what, but I need to know what she asked you to do when she called you over. She hasn't allowed us to access to the security footage of your conversation."

Derek shrugs. "She gave me images to look at and asked me if any of them resembled the blue eyed creature."

"She gave you a set amount?"

"Around twenty." Derek says, puzzled about where his mother is taking this.

"Did you manage to identify one?"

Derek nods.

"Describe it."

Talia asks Derek to fetch his laptop and she pulls up Google. Derek explains all he remembers about the painting: the Northern Renaissance clothing, the ermine cloak draped over the woman's lap, her velvet dress, her plucked eyebrows and forehead, all typical fashion choices of the time. Except for one thing. The ice cold eyes. After a few long moments Talia has five tabs open. She goes through them and each time Derek waves away the image shown, until the third tab. He grabs his mother's wrist, nodding to the painting, "This one."

She clicks on the link. "Painted by Anthony van Dyke in 1619, the Portrait of Hendrickje (surname unknown) was one of his earliest commissions in Belgium." She reads from the MET museum website. "The painting is said to be of a wealthy merchant's wife, commissioned only a few weeks before her death from tuberculosis and finished posthumously." Talia scans over the rest of the
article. "The painting is in the MET's permanent collection." She turns to Derek. "How do you feel about a field trip?"

Derek smiles softly. "Just like when I was young?"

Talia snaps the laptop shut. "Exactly, my dear child, but with more murder and intrigue, of course.

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"This particular painting is strange and atypical of renaissance portraits." The curator drones to the group. Derek and his mother stand in the back, wearing dark clothes, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. "Does anyone know why? No?" The curator says, not even waiting for anyone to answer. "The answer is belladonna. Also known as deadly nightshade, a poison which with a few drops into the eyes, dilated the pupils allowing them to appear dark and large. Belladonna eyes were fashionable and any lady who could afford the poison, used it. Yet, *the Portrait of Hendrickje* features a wealthy woman with contracted pupils and large blue irises. Strange, when one considers the trend of the time. Anyway, moving on..." The curator leads the group away from the painting, allowing Derek to step forward.

The canvas is life-size, making the painting all the more disconcerting. A shiver runs down his spine when he stares into the woman's eyes.

"Makes you wonder, doesn't it?" Talia says, her gaze roaming over the woman's form. "If she was already dead when this was painted."

Derek hums in agreement, most likely that was the case. "It's chilling, but the resemblance is uncanny. Everything from the eyes to the predatory stance. This is the creature."

"This proves it's over four hundred years old, so it must be a long lived fae. Yet, we have no idea what it is."

"The Queen knows." Derek points out, remembering the way the Queen pursed her lips, like she already knew which image Derek would pick out of the pile, like she just tossed the others in with it to make it seem like she was as unaware as him.

Derek leans closer and reads the plaque on the wall. "Donated by Deucalion Pelasgian." He reads, eyebrows raised. "It can't be a coincidence?" He turns to his mother.

She scoffs, eyes bleeding red. "There's no such thing as coincidence." She whispers harshly, before her eyes fade back to normal. Turning to Derek and smiling, she touches his cheek lightly, "Go home, child." She says, her hand dropping from his face. She whirls on her heel and strides out of the gallery, purpose in her step.

Her car is gone by the time he makes it down to the lot. Derek frowns as he climbs into the Camaro.

***

Derek should have sent Lydia to witness the contract signing. He's not ready for this but it's too late to back out. He sits to the side, in the chair furthest away from Stiles, tapping his pen, head in a stupor while Stiles speaks with a new client. *His replacement.* Derek thinks, staring at the golden haired woman smiling seductively. He wants to rip that coy smile off her face, pull Stiles to the side and get down on one knee, begging to be taken back, fuck it if he goes insane. The world's about to go to shit anyway.

Just this morning, he spotted another protest on his way to work. People calling, not for Unseelie
banishment, but executions. Things are escalating rapidly, and it will only be a small incident of
violence that sends the snowball rolling down the hill.

"Love, you're a gwragedd annwn, I wouldn't be able to hit you thrice without you wanting to leave
and find a nice body of water to swim in."

"I'm sure we can work around the love taps." Franziska says daintily. "It's fine, so long as you don't
use your hands." She smirks. "Whips work wonders."

Derek wants to find a nice body of water to drown himself in instead of listening to the fucking
flirting between these two.

Stiles is acting so indifferent to Derek. He hasn't even glanced at him since he walked through the
door, save for a raised brow after Derek coughed when Franziska mentioned wanting to try things
Derek would never agree to. He doesn't even know how she's supposed to have most of the things
she wants done to her considering she's a species of fae whose magic has evolved to transport her to
water the moment she is hit three times by a lover.

Stiles has been dropping clients for months before he took Derek on as a sub. When he was
involved with Derek he was only domming two others, compared to the regular twelve when Derek
first became Stiles' lawyer. Every since their conversation in the gallery Stiles has scheduled
interviews upon interviews and contracts to sign. It's like he's accepting anyone who even asks.

If Derek thought Stiles starving himself was destructive behaviour, this is so much worse. This binge
eating is like if Derek went out to McDonalds, picked up thirty Big Macs and started shoving them
down his throat until he simply couldn't fit anymore. Then ordered a big shake to wash it all down.
Derek can't say anything about it because Stiles refuses to even look at him. He wants to grasp at his
hair and fucking sob.

He can't help but think about what Stiles said at the gallery. That he was monogamous, and only
resorted to polyamory because he was forced to. Stiles has thirty contract signings lined up,
splurging is so unlike him. Derek's so lost in his thoughts, that when he finally notices the ring on
Franziska's finger, he stares for a few seconds longer not believing it exists.

"You're married?" He gapes, staring at her ring finger in shock.

She smiles like she's recalling fond memories. "Yes."

"You can't be married..." He looks up and meets her eyes. "Are you still in contact with your
spouse? Are you still in a relationship?"

Franziska frowns, like she's about to ask how it is any of Derek's business. It's suddenly blaringly
obvious she never even read the fucking stipulations. The sessions are limited to ten, the client must
be sound of mind and body, and the client cannot be with anyone else sexually or romantically from
session one to the end.

"She is." Stiles says, speaking up and leaning back in his chair casually.

"What the fuck? You knew about this?" Derek's voice goes high, mouth gaping in shock. "The
contract clearly states-"

"The contract has been modified and updated." Stiles interrupts. "You should have gotten the fax I
sent to the office."

"She can't sleep with her husband and you at the same time, those stipulations are in place for a
reason, the madne-

"Derek." Stiles smiles through clenched teeth. "Leave."

He stares at Stiles for a long moment, even after Stiles turns back to Franziska with a winning smile on his face. Derek turns around and walks out of the study in a fugue state. He sits in the living room holding his head in his hands, wondering how things could have gone so wrong so fast.

Derek hears Franziska whisper behind the closed door. "What is wrong with your lawyer? This is just sex, I don't need to give up my husband for sex."

She is so fucking misinformed about what Stiles does, he wants to scream, it is most defiantly not just sex. It is protection, it is caring, it is the opposite of 'just sex.'

Stiles' next words drive home what Derek knew in his gut the moment he walked into that office and Stiles didn't meet his eyes. Like Derek was absolutely nothing to him, not even a friend. Stiles snorts, knowing Derek can hear it, "Derek's opinions are quite compromised at the moment. I might just need a new lawyer."

It's such a casually cruel statement, something Stiles would never say, not in a million years. Derek rises to his feet and walks out of the penthouse without another word.

He's in his car when he calls his mother, "It has him," he tells her when the call connects, tears running in streams down his cheeks. "It fucking has him."

***

"Are you sure? Derek, I'm not saying you're jealous, but you're probably just jealous." Cora says nonchalantly, sipping tea from the King's fine china, looking like she hasn't a care in the world. It's all a farce. Derek knows his sister, she is drastically overcompensating for how panicked she really is. For fucks sake her shirt is on backwards.

"I know Stiles, he would never do anything that could harm his subs. Accepting that woman, even though she doesn't fit any of his requirements is so unlike him. She's an accountant for fuck's sake, not an artist."

"Neither are you, Mr. Lawyer." Cora scoffs.

"That's- It's completely different!" His voice rises in anger.

"I believe you, Derek." Talia says, interrupting the argument. She decided to bring the rest of the family up to speed after Derek's phone call, realising that some things could no longer be kept in the dark. At this point trying to protect the people they care about no longer involves keeping them away from what is going on. Derek knows for a fact that Laura keeps up a correspondence with Stiles, he shudders to think what would happen if Laura went to meet him without knowing he was possessed.

The elevator dings and the three of them look up. Opening, it reveals Laura and Isaac. "Sorry we're late." Laura says, sliding right beside Derek, wrapping her arm around his shoulder. He's always been closest to Laura out of all his siblings even though they're the furthest apart in age. Derek leans into her embrace, easily taking the comfort given.

Talia pulls her phone out of her purse, placing it on the table. "I have the truth from Deucalion's own mouth." She says, and Derek remembers her running off after seeing who gifted the painting to the MET.
"Well, play it then." Cora says, leaning forward.

"Talia, what is this all about? I'm busy, I cannot just put down my work for your whims. If you hadn't noticed, the city is falling apart." The Queen states, striding into the room, Yukimura following close behind.

Derek growls, pushing to his feet in fury. He marches right up to the Queen, eyes flashing and canines lowered. Yukimura pull her katana out of its sheathe in one deft move, but Morrell raises her hand stopping her.

Derek takes the opportunity. He launches and pushes the Queen up against the wall, snarling. He wraps a hand around her throat, squeezing. The sword pierces into the meat of his shoulder but he ignores it. "This is on you! This is your fault. If you told us what you knew, this wouldn't have happened to him."

"I don't know what you're talking about." The Queen says hoarsely with a raised brow just as Derek is pulled off of her and tossed to the ground, the katana's tip is placed at the base of his throat as his shoulder heals. He hears Laura yell in the background, but he tunes her out. It's just him and the Queen in the room as far as he's concerned.

"Fuck you." He spits out just as the katana is pressed deeper, drawing blood. "You fucking knew what it was all along."

"I knew, but what good would telling you do? It's not like you can do anything about it." The Queen scoffs, "A mere beta, not even an Alpha, thinking he can save the world with the power of love."

"I could have protected Stiles if I knew how that thing possesses people." Derek thinks he sees Yukimura's stoic expression waver when she hears Stiles' name, but it is probably just his imagination. "I assumed it possessed by proximity, but now I know different."

"What makes you think that?" Yukimura is the one to ask, and Derek turns to her in surprise.

"It has an ego the size of the Empire State Building and a flair for the dramatic to match. If it possessed someone at the gallery, it would have made itself known." He turns back to the Queen. "You saw the way it ironically deposited Malcolm in an art museum. Those childish jokes it spews every time it even opens its mouth. The creature is fucking psychotic, and I've seen my share of psychopaths in court. If there's one thing I know about them, it's that they are consistent. Now tell us exactly what it is so we can all help to remedy this fuck up."

Morrell sighs. "Let him up Noshiko."

Yukimura dumps him none so gently on the couch. Derek glares at her, rubbing his healed throat, smeared with blood.

Morrell nods to the phone lying on the table, "I'm assuming you already know."

"Unfortunately." His mother says, pressing a button on the phone. Laura wipes the blood from his throat with a napkin but Derek is too busy listening to thank her.

It begins with a scream, and then Deucalion starts begging. Derek knew his mother is ruthless, it is the only way she could have survived as an Alpha for centuries, but being presented with clear evidence of it is another thing altogether. Derek drowns out the sound of claws piercing into flesh, listening instead to any of Deucalion's words that aren't sobbing pleas.
"I'll tell you what you want, just please!"

"Who poisoned Alan?" Talia asks, her voice clear and authoritative.

"It was me! Your bond mate gave me the poison to put in the hors d'oeuvres. Malcolm said if the King died the courts would be disbanded and I could go wherever I pleased without having to deal with boatloads of paperwork."

Derek feels like banging his head on the wall. Deucalion is trying to say war is imminent because a fae with an inflated sense of his own importance wanted to take a trip down to the Bahamas. It's so absurd, and would be more believable if Deucalion worshipped the creature. Apparently Talia reached the same conclusion he did.

"You're lying. You're five thousand years old, too ancient to be this stupid." She growls, followed by a scream and the gruesome sound of something soft slamming against something hard. "What about the painting?"

"What painting? I have many..." Deucalion sobs.

"You know exactly which one." Talia hisses. "Hendrickje."

The tape is so silent, Deucalion might have succumbed to the injuries inflicted on him, if it wasn't for his heavy breathing.

"You know." Deucalion states his whole demeanour changed. He sounds calmer now, like the screaming and crying from before was all an act to make him appear meek and pathetic. Now, he's showing his true colours.

"I do."

"If you know, then you know exactly what it will do to me if it discoverers my treachery. It does not take kindly to betrayal."

"What is it?"

"χάος." Deucalion says in Greek, "The mighty. The great. The eternal!" Deucalion's voice rises in volume, taking on a frantic edge. "He will chew up this world until nothing is left, and I will rejoice when he sucks the marrow from your bones-" A loud thump sounds like Talia clocked him over the head to shut him up before the recording cuts off.

Derek is the first to speak. "What does that word mean? χάος?"

The Queen sighs. "The Ancient Greeks called it the Primordial Void, a creature born from nothing. We simply know it as the first Voided being. It belongs to no court, holds no loyalties towards anything but itself, and its appetite for chaos is insatiable. It was the instigator, the one to whisper discord in the ears of the original fae council, dividing the courts, leading to the destruction of our home world."

"Like the Nogitsune? Or Eris?" Laura asks.

"A ancestor cum teacher of sorts to both," the Queen says, "but while the Nogitsune is locked away in a vault, buried a mile underground, this one has always evaded us. What we can't figure out is why now? After hundreds of thousands of years on this planet, why is it choosing now to make its move?"
"Has the planet ever been this populated before?" Talia looks around the group. "Seven billion people. That's a lot of chaos to feed on." She turns to Morrell. "You remember the fae wars. If the history books are right, Earth is condemned the moment they begin."

The Queen nods. "And what is more satisfying to a creature who feeds on chaos than the dying screams of billions of people."

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Derek knows he's dreaming. The space he's in just doesn't have the same vitality as reality, but it feels so genuine.

It feels real when Stiles presses him down onto his soft bed, pressing lingering kisses down his throat, hands holding Derek's arms above his head, their fingers clasped together. It feels real when Stiles whispers words of love and longing into his skin, breath tickling the soft hairs on his chest.

The room seems to brighten and burst in a shower of stars the moment Stiles tells Derek that he loves him, that Derek should have never doubted Stiles about his feelings, that he only said those words at the gallery to protect Derek because he loves him so very much.

How could Derek do anything but stare in wonder at Dream Stiles? His skin glows a pale milky white, even more vibrant than Real Stiles, and his eyes shine a whiskey amber, so different from the gold of Stiles partial shift. More like his human eye colour, but pronounced, powerful.

Stiles' limbs move sinuously as he pulls ropes that look like they've been spun from gold out of thin air, twirling them around thin fingers, staring down at Derek with so much love and longing in his eyes. Derek's heart skips a beat. Stiles wraps the ropes around Derek's body like they are clothing, decorating him with knots to show him exactly how much Stiles cares.

The room spins and suddenly they're not in Stiles' room anymore, but by the banks of the lake in Central Park where they spent the last full moon. In reality their time there was all innocence, in this dream it is anything but.

The full moon hangs heavy, consuming most of the sky, coating their skin in silver light as they move together, naked as the day they were born. Stiles runs a hand down Derek's chest, fingers bumping over golden rope stretched tight and Derek gasps, feeling the sharp bite of Stiles' nails digging into the soft vulnerable skin of his belly. He thrust his head back, body arching as Stiles enters him, fucking him. No, making love to him with caressing strokes that Derek feels in his very toes, they curl in pleasure.

The moon grows even brighter as he nears his climax, but when he calls out in release, Stiles pulls out of him, moving away. The moon dims as Derek whines, reaching out for Stiles begging for him to come back, to return to his arms, but Stiles turns his back on him.

The air shimmers like a mirage and suddenly Stiles wears the dark green suit from the gallery opening as he walks away, a glass of champagne in hand like he didn't just shatter Derek's heart into a million pieces.

Instead of giving up and leaving like he did at the gallery, something Derek knows inadvertently led to Stiles' possession, Derek scrambles to his feet, chasing after Stiles as he disappears into the cover of trees.

The moment Derek enters the woods he knows he's not in Central Park anymore. This smells like the old woods Satomi's pack used to run in during full moons. These woods are less tame, branches
more aggressive as Derek pushes through them, chasing Stiles' glowing figure. The golden ropes fray from the abusive tearing of sharp branches, and Derek mourns their passing with a heavy heart the moment the last piece falls from his skin.

He emerges into a clearing where Stiles stands in the center, facing away, back strong, shoulders resolute, waist trim. Derek strides forward, reaching out with a smile on his face. He's going to tell Stiles that they will find a way around the madness, maybe a bonding would help? It would make Derek stronger, connect them together in a way they've never been connected before.

Now that Stiles loves him, all of Derek's reservations about bonds fall apart like the golden ropes. He is allowed to have Stiles. They are allowed to be together. With the bond, Derek's lifespan will be lengthened by a few hundred years. He will live twice as long as any normal werewolf. He will not die and leave Stiles alone to suffer the centuries without him. They will be together until their dying day.

Derek touches Stiles' shoulder and once again, the clearing spins. Blinking, he sees they are in the Room. The bay window looks the same, but the view outside is completely different. Instead of the Hoboken skyline, the moon takes over the entirety of the massive window. Derek stands on the carpet Stiles had him kneel on during their first session. Stiles stands only an inch away, eyes so blown they aren't even amber anymore as he stares at Derek, face unreadable.

"Where are your restraints, Der?" Stiles says, running a teasing finger down his abs, fingers tangling in the hair above his cock, touch only ghosting over it. "I thought you were supposed to be my good boy?"

"I am." Derek pleads, "they came apart as I ran after you."

"My work doesn't simply come apart." Stiles states, his voice tinged with something that might have been arrogance if Stiles had a prideful bone in his body. But, Stiles is sweet, caring, loving, he is not haughty.

"You need to be punished." Stiles declares, just as ink black ropes appear from nowhere and wrap around Derek's arms, stringing him up to the hook attached to the ceiling until he can't move an inch. "Bad dogs need to be punished."

Derek's eyes widen in shock. Stiles has never called him a dog before, a word derogatorily used to insult werewolves. But then everything gets so much worse.

Stiles pulls out a thick, leather blindfold, and Derek feels like crying.

"Red." He says.

Stiles moves closer.

"No." Derek gasps, just as Stiles wraps the blindfold around his eyes. "No, Stiles, please stop! Red, Red!" He yells in terror as the blackness swims in his vision. "No, you promised! You told me you would stop! Please, please, stop!"

"You want it." A voice whispers in his ear, it's raspy and unused, a bastardization of Stiles' husky tone. "Don't lie, you want him to render you blind. Plug up your ears, your nose, until your pesky doggie senses are nothing but shit." Derek gasps as thick beeswax is packed tightly into his ears until he cannot hear anything at all, when a fog of heavily scented smoke prevents him from smelling anything but it.

He's left there, feeling unhinged and disorientated, nothing but the ropes ground him, preventing him
from floating away into the ether. Left for what feels like hours and hours, months upon months, years even, until the blindfold is ripped violently from his face.

Derek's vision clears, his ears pop, and his sense of smell is returned to him.

"Aww, did the little puppy not enjoy that?" The creature wearing Stiles' face teases. "You love him so much, it must pain you so watching him do this to you, everything you fear the most. But alas, there is one more thing you fear even more than a loss of your senses." The creature picks up a cruelly twisted blade from a table by its side. It looks ancient, older than time itself, made from bronze and sharpened with a flint until it glints ferociously.

Derek feels tears streaming down his face, they slip into his mouth and he tastes salt.


The Void smiles, twisting Stiles' lips cruelly. "It seems there is something missing from your love story, sweetheart. Can you guess what it is? No...? It hasn't fucked over yet." The void creature flips the knife in Stiles' hand. "But, I'm sure I can remedy that."

And the creature draws the knife across Stiles' throat.

Derek wakes up screaming.

***

"Bad night?" Laura questions as Derek enter the kitchen, making a beeline straight for the coffee pot. The whole house certainly heard him screaming last night in his childhood bedroom.

He never managed to go back to sleep after that, too afraid of experiencing another nightmare.

Derek sits down by the breakfast bar, cradling a large mug of black coffee in hand watching while Cora spreads raspberry jam onto a slice of bread. Derek's stomach turns as he remembers the way Stiles' skin shredded under the brutality of the blade, the way warm life-blood gushed over his hand as the Void smirked like he ached to feel Derek's pain, longed to bask in it.

Derek stares down into his cup, refusing to look up until after she finishes eating when her plate clinks as she puts it in the dishwasher.

"Derek." He hears his mother call from her office.

He tosses his untouched mug of coffee down the sink as he walks out of the kitchen.

"Are you alright?" Talia asks, worry in her gaze as she looks Derek over, no doubt fixating on the bags under his eyes and the new clump of grey hair at his hairline. He looks like he aged a whole century overnight. "What did you see?"

"It was just a nightmare." His voice rasps. Derek winces, coughing a few times to clear it.

"It isn't. I've spoken with the Queen, the Void is temporal, it has no physical form unless it takes one
from another, it's not a stretch to imagine that it can dream walk."

Derek touches his temple. "That thing can read my mind?" He questions delicately, afraid of the answer.

Talia shakes her head. "No fae can read a thought, brains are physical things along with the thoughts inside them. Dreams on the other hand, they come from beyond, they are not yours alone."

Derek nods. "That's how seers look into the future, they have a stronger connection to shared dreams."

"Exactly." Talia taps a nail on her desk. "From what Morrell's guards are extracting from Deucalion, the Void is able to embed dreams with suggestions, but it is still your own mind. It is simply magnifying your greatest fears and using them to its advantage. Trying to weaken you through your feelings towards Stiles." She looks at him with such pity and worry in her eyes, Derek can do nothing but look away.

Derek stares down at her desk where a snow globe souvenir from Disney World sits. Talia took him there when he was little, he spent the whole time running around with a Mickey Mouse hat on his head, getting his autograph book signed by all the princesses. But it was Belle who changed his world the most. Every kid wants to be a Disney hero or heroine when they grow up, Derek wanted to be Belle.

Just not Belle in her standard yellow ball gown. Belle with a book in her hand and intelligence in her very being. A girl who dreamed of being more than a pretty wife to the town hero, more than what her society dictated her to be. Just as Derek dreamt of being more than the youngest son of one of the world's most prominent Alphas.

Derek worked hard to get where he is today. Endless night of memorization, learning how to make connections, how to argue for his client, how to win cases. It's why Stiles and hundreds of other people hired him. He is sharp as a whistle and can handle stress.

But this is personal. Derek has never been attacked so directly before now. There's always been a buffer, the knowledge that the shitty things aren't happening to him, but his client, and it is his job to get them out of said shitty situation while acting as a observer, not a participant.

Derek's body is weighed down with such hopelessness as he meets his mother's gaze, the woman who's always believed in him, even when his father wouldn't, the woman who cared for him, paid for his education, his first house, was there for him when his marriage fell though. Derek looks at his mother and he says, "It killed him, slit his throat right in front of me. I cannot watch that happen again. I just can't."

Talia meets his eyes. "Then it won't."

"You can't know that."

She leans back in her chair

"Sit down, Derek." She says, and shifts aside some papers on her desk. She pushes a folder over to him.

"What is this?" He takes it, reading it over.

"The surveillance detail I have on Stiles, this is their report for the last few days."
"The Void is taking him clubbing?" Derek asks incredulously. Only fae under fifty go clubbing, any older and they're over compensating for something. Derek can't even imagine what an ancient primordial being would do in a nightclub. Twerk?

Unless of course, that's where it feeds...

"It's a prominent fae establishment and from what I can tell after cross referencing the protesting fae with the nightclub goers..."

"They're the same people." Derek breathes.

"The Void is whispering discord into these people's ears. They're the ones going out and escalating the situation. I'm honestly surprised news of Vegas hasn't gotten out yet."

"It's saving Vegas for last." Derek states. "It's going to escalate things so far until it rests on a tipping point. The Unseelie are already being harassed in the streets, but they aren't fighting back. They believe things are going to get better since the Queen is on their side. What happens when they find out about Vegas? That the Queen concealed the bombing from them, that some of their friends might be dead and they don't even know? Vegas is going to shove them right off that edge and they will retaliate. That's when the real violence will begin."

"Fuck." Talia whispers. "The Void so far ahead of us and we're running around like headless chickens trying to do damage control, covering up things that were never meant to be covered up in the first place. We should have told everyone about Vegas when it happened."

"No." Derek shakes his head. "That would have made things so much worse, right now we have to focus on the present, sweep the Void's advantage right out from under it. It doesn't know that we know it's possessing Stiles. We should use that to our advantage."

Talia frowns. "What are you thinking?"

"If I could meet with it at the club, gain its trust, make it think that I would do anything to keep Stiles' safe, including helping it with a guarantee that it will let Stiles and I live, maybe I could stall it enough for a solution to be found."

Talia stares at him for a second too long. "Any promises it makes you are worth nothing, Derek. It thinks only of itself, cares only for itself. It gives not a single shit about you and Stiles, you are pawns in its game. So long as you remember that, I will give you full support with your plan."

Derek nods. "All it offers are empty promises." Derek will be tempted, but the memory of the Void slicing open Stiles' throat is fresh in his mind. He is unlikely to forget.

***

The taxi drops him off in front of the club. *Oberon* is located in the Meatpacking district, established by its namesake fae in the eighties before gentrification chased away the prostitutes and drug dealers calling the district home. Yet, *Oberon* still remains. It doesn't look like a nightclub at first glance. The building it occupies is listed as a New York City landmark: abandoned, but still of enough importance to the city's heritage to be left standing.

Derek hands the driver cash before crossing the cobbled street to the building. The jeans he wears are a pair he's never donned before, Laura bought them just after he separated from Braeden along with the tight, obscenely low necked shirt clinging to his form. Her way of encouraging him to "get back out there." He had to take the tags off after digging them out of the back of his closet.
The street is silent as death, no one there to watch as he slips around the side, walking to a nondescript door. Derek knocks, and partially shifts so his eyes glow beta gold in the night.

A view port slides open just as a man with an extremely scaly skin condition looks through, sniffing the air as if checking for sure that he really is as fae as his eyes claim to be.

The view port slams shut, but the door cracks open only a second later, filling the alleyway with the thrumming low beat of a bass line. The lizard man, a dragon, holds out his hand, tongue slithering out, tasting the air. He's managing a partial shift, a dragon fully shifted could never be contained by a building.

"Gold for dance." The dragon hisses and Derek drops two earrings into its palm. He barely even looks at the gold before swallowing it, throat turning a glowing orange as Talia's earrings melt on the way down. "Hmm, good gold. Enjoy your visit." The dragon blinks before shifting out of the way, blending into the shadows.

Just as Derek walks into the darkened room, the door slams closed. The only light is the glow emanating from the dragon's skin and reptilian eyes.

Another door lies ahead, music radiating from it, a pulsing light shining all around the edges. Derek steps forward and it opens automatically for him.

His senses are accosted all at once as he stands at the top of a wooden staircase. Loud hypnotic music, strobing lights that would send Erica into a fit in one second flat, a heavy cloying stench of burning incense and sweaty bodies. The room is cavernous with low ceilings, stretching further than the eye can see. It probably used to be a wine cellar, going by the arching nature of the ceiling. All the racks have since been dismantled, but the hint of wine in the air remains. Derek descends down the steps.

The bodies pulse and reverberate, moving to the low beat of the music. Some fae remain glamoured, easier since their true forms may be too large to fit in the tight space, but those who can get away with shedding their disguise, do. A kappa strides past him, holding a cucumber in hand as the water cradled by its bald spot splashes precariously. Derek spots a werewolf grinding up against a rakshasa, her blue skin glittering in the light as her second pair of arms reach behind her, tangling in the shifted werewolf's hair. Derek tears his eyes away, at this rate the night will be over before he even locates the creature holding Stiles hostage.

He pushes through the crowd, trying to make his way around. He doesn't shift, too afraid he might nick someone with his claws if he pulls them out, but he doubts they will notice, everyone is too drugged up on the incense burning from suspended holders. The only reason Derek isn't is because of the packet of herbs Talia gave him, magicked to ward off the smoke. The protective barrier surrounds him a foot in all direction, allowing him to keep a clear head.

He stops in his tracks when he catches a scent not meant to be here. A human.

Derek's so tempted to leave well enough be and focus on his mission, but the scent sharpens and Derek finds himself pushing through the crowd, hurrying over to where fear is beginning to transform into compliant arousal. The smoke calms fae, makes them less likely to start shit, but to humans it is stronger than fucking mollies.

Derek spots the girl yanked along by an incubus and his teeth drop inadvertently as he elbows his way through, shoving people out of his way. She's wearing fucking bunny pyjamas like the incubus pulled her out of bed on a school night. She can't be older than fifteen.
Derek breaks through the rush of people just as the incubus' fingers near the top button of her top, her eyes are clouded and dazed and Derek growls, wrapping his hand tight around the incubus' throat, snapping it easily. It will heal in a few hours but will be sore for days, maybe he will learn an important lesson.

"How did it get in here...?" A slithery voice hisses in his ear, "Humans are not allowed." Derek has a sneaking suspicion that the extra bright glow in the dragon's throat has something to do with it. Dragons' weak morals are nothing compared to a little extra dirty gold.

The dragon takes the stunned girl's arm, and in a whir, disappears. She won't remember a thing, and when the police find her wandering the streets, they'll say she was sleepwalking and call it a night.

Derek turns around intent on finishing his search, only to find an icy eyed Stiles standing only a foot away. "Quite the hero complex you've got there." Stiles, no, the Void says, its voice loud and recognizable despite the thrumming bass. "But if it were for anything but show, you would have taken the girl home yourself. That little rich thing had a gold leafed chocolate cake for dessert. At the moment I imagine the dragon is quite enjoying pulling the miniscule flakes from her entrails." The creature winks just as all the blood leaves Derek's face.

Derek takes a step back towards the stairs, but the Void stops him with an hand on his arm. "Don't even bother. He's already dumped her corpse."

"But wha-" Derek gapes, "How the hell is he able to get away with that? The law-"

"Welcome to the underground, Sweetheart." Derek winces at the nickname. "Did you think all fae were such good law abiding citizens? Do you see that minotaur over there." The Void points over Derek's shoulder and he doesn't even bother to look, not wanting to take his eyes off the creature for even a second. "It enjoyed the pregnant woman it ate before coming here. They're considered a delicacy among his kind. But you know what really get minotaur going? Pregnant nereid, there's just something about the young fishy taste..." The creature licks it's lips. "Speaking of... Isn't your nereid friend pregnant? Allison is her name...?"

Derek launches himself at the creature, teeth and claws fully extended, but the moment Derek places his fingers against the pale flesh of that long throat, prepared to tear it out, he recalls pressing kisses to that very skin. Derek's claws retract in horror. He was just about to rip Stiles' throat out and it wouldn't have done anything. The Void would have lived on, but Stiles would be dead. A desecrated corpse, walking around, nothing more than this thing's meatsuit.

"You're fucking evil." Derek hisses.

The creature sighs, rolling its eyes. "You people are so binary, humans and fae alike. You love putting things in places, ordering them into systems. Good versus evil. Black versus white. But..." The creature wags its finger. "I have a secret for you. Nothing is binary. I'm not evil, I need to feed just like you do. But while you slaughter animals, I sustain myself on chaos, and what is more chaotic than an all out war between courts?

"Stiles though," the creature throws its head back, groaning and rotating its shoulders like it takes great pleasure in occupying Stiles' body, "he's an endless buffet of depression and self hatred." The creature looks at Derek, licking his lips. "Do you even know how much this man loves you, Der? It's fathoms more than he loves himself... Which, I guess, really isn't saying anything considering he absolutely hates himself."
Derek's face must reveal his emotions with a look of such naked glee on its face. " Didn't you know, baby boy? He loves you, he wants to have your metaphorical babies. He even loves you more than he loved that slut rusalka. Did he tell you about her? Svetlana was her name, hair green like stringy reeds and skin like brackish water. Honestly, I don't get the appeal, but whatever it was sure did it for Stiles. He was fucking her before he knew about the splices his human father's DNA added to the wonderful cornucopia that is his well of self hatred. You can just imagine what happened to her..."

Derek frowns. Stiles never mentioned a rusalka before. He swallows heavily in realization. She's the reason behind Stiles' ten session rules, why he never feeds on the people he dates. Stiles knew about the madness from firsthand experience. How... horrifying. Derek wants to wrap Stiles in a tight, comforting hug. To watch someone he loved slowly descend into insanity, first not understanding why, then the realization that he was the cause must have pushed Stiles over the edge.
Derek doesn't even know what to say. Everything the Void is spilling is so intrinsically personal to Stiles, Derek feels dirty even hearing about it, especially since Stiles isn't controlling his mouth.

Derek wants to rip out the Void's throat to stop it from saying anything more, but he can't. Derek doesn't trust himself to try and silence it just in case he accidently does something irreparable. A memory from a dream echoes, blood flowing from a jagged wound, the pinked stark white of bone hinted amongst the carnage.

"The two of you are so alike." The creature continues. "You believed you married a woman who actually loved you, instead of a woman settling for the man she was sure would remain selflessly devoted to her while she built up her career. She would have never divorced you if she hadn't met that medic in Eritrea." Derek's eyes widen and the creature smiles even wider. "This is quickly becoming a night of depressing revelations for you isn't it?"

Derek growls. "Then why don't you leave him be and take me over instead?"

The Void sighs. "Honestly, Der, you don't know depression. Boo hoo, so your ex-wife was cheating on you, your life is soo hard." It scoffs. "You wouldn't even know an alcoholic if one spat on your face. Grow up, you child. Stiles is my first choice for a body, you aren't even my millionth."

The creature sneers. "Stiles just makes you too gosh diggly darn happy. Even when he's making you sad. He's like crack for you: he tries so hard to be the crystal clear stuff, and you take whatever he gives you with open arms. We could go to the bathroom right now, I could finger you with his hands, fuck you with his cock. Don't you want this body, Der?" The Void takes Derek's hand and places it over Stiles' limp dick. "Hmm, seems Stiles isn't feeling up for that right now, probably because he's too busy screaming, begging me not to hurt you... He tries so hard to be the man you see in him. Not the fucked up cesspool of depression and self-loathing he really is. What I would give for you to see him through my eyes... Maybe that would send you careening off the edge."

Derek feels tears break free from his eyes, streaming down his cheeks as he yanks his hand out of the Void's icy grip. "What do you even want?"

The creature smiles, eyes crinkling in the corners like Stiles' used to once upon a time. "I want to watch it all raze to the ground and when it's over and done with, I think I will finally slit your precious Stiles' throat. Then, even I will turn to ashes."

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Derek climbs into the back of the unmarked surveillance van sitting only a block away from the club.

"Fuck, Derek, you look like shit." Parrish remarks, handing him a bottle of cold water that he gulps down thankfully.

"Did you catch everything?" Derek asks, pulling the wire and microphone out of his shirt. "The music didn't interfere?"

"No, I edited out the low frequency sounds so I could hear everything going on loud and clear."
"I can't believe it let you go, just like that." Parrish's partner, Graeme, says. "I thought it would kill you at any second."

"What do you expect?" Derek scoffs. "It knows it's going to win. My life means nothing to it in the grand scheme of things."

Parrish and Graeme look at each other for a long second before Parrish reaches out and claps Derek on the shoulder in comfort. "I'm sorry about what it said, all those personal things. We can cut out the footage that has no relevance to the investigation...? No one but us has to hear it..."

He trails off when he sees Derek shaking his head. "No, I want everyone to hear the unedited version, it could have said something relevant in the middle of one of its spiels. If we cut anything out we could miss a clue."

"Okay," Parrish nods as Graeme climbs into the front of the van, starting it up. "Get buckled in, we have an apocalypse to avert."

The van jumps over potholes on the drive to the King's mansion, streetlights flashing intermittently through the grilled back window as Derek stares down at his hands. He can't help the benign feeling niggling at the back of his head that he's missing something important, necessary even. But if there is one certain thing, it's that within the long winded spiel delivered by the Void, rests their salvation.

Chapter End Notes

Links may be NSFW in unexpected ways, especially the kappa one, just fyi...
All images are how I picture the creatures, they may or may not be true to mythology.

**gwragedd annwn** - A type of water fae. The story goes that one married a human and left her lake to be with him, but when he hit her three times (love taps as the legend goes, I roll my eyes) she was forced to return home to her lake, never to see her husband again, (good riddance, she got out of an abusive relationship.)

**Oberon** - The king if the Seelie court, (but not in this fic. Here, he's simply a rich business fae) married to Queen Titania. She holds all the balls in the relationship, he's just her consort. He features heavily in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

**kappa** - A Japanese water demon with an affinity for cucumbers. Supposedly the bald spots on the top of their heads must always remain wet, so on the off chance you're attacked by one, bow, and it will be forced to return the bow as a sign of respect, thereby emptying its bald spot of water, forcing it to return to water and fill it up again.

**rakshasa** - A Hindu demon. Very scary beings with a taste for human flesh. They come in a variety of colours and have many arms, all the better to slay us with. They usually dress like angsty goth teenagers. Lots of skulls, peeps. But of the real variety.

**incubus** - Like a succubus, honestly I don't understand the difference, some people says an incubus is always male, others say that's not always the case. But it remains the same that they both feed off sex.

**minotaur** - A Grecian mythological beast with the head of a bull and body of a man. It likes eating trespassers in its maze. The legend goes that it was conceived when
Poseidon made the King of Crete's wife fall in love with a bull, and then she proceeded to do unspeakable things to that poor bull :( (The ancient Greeks were a strange bunch, Zeus alone...)

**nereid** - Sea nymphs who supposedly spend all their time helping soldiers find their way around treacherous seas, when they're not practicing archery, of course ;)

**rusalka** - A Slavic water nymph, the name is commonly translated to English as 'mermaid.' Their mythology is very interesting, but then again so is all Slavic mythology.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

It's been months, omg, but I told you guys I haven't given up.

So I had a friend read over this chapter because I was worried that all the stuff in it seemed a bit far fetched, but he reassured me that in a story about fae, BDSM, and great primordial voids, nothing is too far fetched.

You might want to skim through the previous chapter because things start right where it left off, and once again fae descriptions are in the endnotes.

Chapter warning for suicidal language and lots of blood.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"Derek, we have a problem." Laura approaches as he opens the door of the King's building. Her heels click ominously against the marble lobby floors, echoing the bad news she no doubt bears.

"What now?" Derek asks, eyeing a guard watching them by the elevators. He wears council colours, and it makes his brow furrow. If the council wasn't informed about what's going on, why are they here? Derek glares at him, but the man doesn't even blink.

Laura takes him by the arm, steering him into a far corner tucked away behind a plethora of decorative plants. "The North American council's claiming jurisdiction. They're taking over and laying down so many fucking roadblocks." Her teeth clench as she hisses the next part, "They're making our lives miserable."

Derek narrows his eyes in confusion, "Morrell has the power to override them, doesn't she?"

Laura scoffs, shaking her head, "Come upstairs, you'll see what I mean."

"This is not the time for fucking bureaucracy." Derek hisses as they walk past the guard on the way to the elevator.

"I know." She glowers, staring down the guard as the elevator doors shut. The man flinches, and Derek spots a hint of the Alpha his sister will become when their mother gives up the ghost. If the world doesn't end before then.

The elevator releases them onto a floor filled with white walled conference rooms, usually reserved for negotiations with visiting diplomats. Laura steers him over to one of the larger rooms. Even a long corridor away, Derek can hear the faint buzz of shouting and fists slamming against tables. Noises the soundproofing isn't able to keep out.

Derek opens the door, only for a pen to violently fly by, embedding itself an inch deep into the wood beside his head. The Brownie council member who luckily ducked out of the way before it met its mark, stares at the writing instrument like her life just flashed before her eyes.

"You have no right!" His mother yells furiously from across the room, and Derek knows she was the one behind the killer pen.
The room is a mess. Isaac has a guard in a headlock, showing his age and experience as he wrangles the woman with one arm, shouting and pointing accusations with another. Cora's nose to nose with a council member, screaming at him, spittle flying out of her enraged mouth.

Yukimura prevents anyone from approaching the Queen while she sits beside the same blond Erinyes who read him a few weeks ago. She's holding his hand while he reads her, eyes moving behind closed lids. Derek thinks his name is Jackson.

"Stop." Jackson says, holding up his hand, and the room shudders to a halt, except for his mother who still shouts.

"She is the Queen! She is your leader, you have no right to invade her mind like this!" Talia points at Jackson. "What the fuck is this boy going to do with the secrets she keeps? She knows things your mind can't even comprehend!"

"Believe me, I know." Jackson grumbles, rubbing his temple while the Queen's lip twitches, amused.

"Well?" A council member asks, only to squeak when Talia flashes her red eyes at him.

Jackson nods. "It's the Void."

"I could have fucking told you that." Talia growls.

A council member scoffs, "Alpha Hale, considering you were one of our prime suspects when the King was poisoned, we were justly inclined to not believe a word you said."

Derek's fangs drop as he steps forward, growling in indignation, "How dare you. My mother loves the King, she would never hurt him!"

The council member turns his head to the side, eyes becoming slits like a reptile, revealing his Nāga heritage. Derek doesn't like to hold prejudices against his fellow fae, but everyone knows Nāga are slimy, conniving creatures. Sometimes stereotypes are true. "Don't tell me you couldn't sense it, boy."

Derek's eyes narrow, trusting not a single word from the Nāga's tongue, "Sense what?"

"Don't-" Talia begins, but she's cut off by the Nāga's laugh.

"The King bound himself to Alpha Hale. The moment he dies, she stands a chance of taking his throne and all the power that comes with it."

"I told you, I am uninterested-"

"Is it true?" His sister asks, her voice quiet, tinged with a hint of betrayal. Derek reaches out to take Laura's hand, running his thumb across her knuckles in comfort.

Talia's expression falls, her eyebrows dip as she searches for something to say.

"Why wouldn't you tell us?" Derek questions just as Isaac drops the guard from the headlock, pulling Cora away from where her hand is now fisted in her guard's tunic. They turn to their mother, twin looks of betrayal on their faces.

Cora makes a hurt noise. "We are your children, your family, your pack. You are supposed to tell us everything."
“Cora, love...”

"We're your pack," Laura emphasizes, but when Talia opens her mouth, Laura holds up her hand, "Don't even try to say it was a spur of the moment thing, this is a big decision, it must have been years in the making."

Alpha bonds, if made hastily, stand the chance of breaking apart a pack. When their mother left Malcolm, a small portion of the pack found their bonds to Talia broken. Some became omegas, others joined Satomi's pack. They supported Malcolm, but because he was not an Alpha, they couldn't be his pack.

"I love him." Talia says simply.

Realization floods Laura's eyes, "If you bonded with him, it means you're immortal. He gave you his immortality so you're tied together. You're the one keeping him alive." Laura whispers and Talia nods, "Why wouldn't you tell us?"

"Because it's not allowed." The Queen suddenly speaks, rising from her place on the couch. "My brother and I are not allowed to have bondmates because it disrupts the balance. The courts are meant to be our whole world, but now Talia is half of Alan's."

Derek shakes his head, suddenly defensive. Of course he has the right to know if his mother's delving into another bond. It affects the whole pack, especially Laura who will never be Alpha now. But it is pack business, it is sure as heck isn't anyone else's.

"That makes no sense, I'm sure the King can multi-task." Derek scoffs.

"You wouldn't understand. You don't know what it is like to feel the Earth as we do, to know that the courts run through our veins, the infinite amount of power we are entrusted with. It is our duty to rule and love this planet and everything contained within. We cannot show discrimination or favour because it would destroy the delicate balance. My brother, my other half, my twin, he should have been immune to the poison, but his power was divided, half of it given to Talia." At that his mother lets out a little sob, but the Queen continues unhindered, "The Void has more power than us, we cannot stop it. I cannot stop it without my twin, and he is lost to me."

Derek clutches the little USB key in his pocket containing the Void's words from the club, "We can't just give up, we have to try." He says desperately.

"There is nothing we can do." The Queen states, a looks of fragility overcoming her features, showing her age and wisdom, and how little it is worth in the face of such adversity.

"We can kill the King." The Brownie states and Talia lets out a snarl of pure rage, but the Brownie raises her arms in acquiesce. "If we kill him, like we thought Alpha Hale intended, his power will transfer to her," she says with a look of abhorrent disgust on her face, like even the thought of murdering her ruler makes her sick to her bones. "There's only a small chance she may die in the process since the King is not giving his power over willingly."

The Queen shakes her head, holding up a palm to Talia where four guards are keeping her from ripping the Brownie's head from her shoulders. She stills, shrugging off the guards, but flashes her eyes threateningly at the Brownie. "There's only a small chance it will work, and considering Talia doesn't want the power, it won't take."

Derek's barely even listening to the conversation, his mind is scrolling through every single conversation the Void has had with him. It's been very forthcoming in its information, perhaps
because it thinks they cannot stop it. A little too forthcoming.

Derek recalls something the Void did in his dream, something he doesn't want to remember but cannot ever forget. Memories of blood rushing down a pale throat as flesh and bone part like butter. Derek closes his eyes in pain, but he's still left with a decision. A decision he knows he has to make, but doesn't want to.

A decision where, regardless of what he chooses, the man he loves is going to die anyway.

He swallows heavily, feeling like his throat is trying to work itself around a cutting stone. He clears his throat, "We can kill it. I know how." Derek announces, sealing Stiles' fate. Everyone in the room turns to look at him just as his claws slide out, shredding his palm to ribbons.

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Derek unplugs the USB from the presentation computer while the whole room sits in silence.

The Nāga is the first to speak, "And this is supposed to help us how?"

"It's going to kill itself after it's destroyed all of us." Derek explains, "which means it can die. If it can kill itself, we can kill it."

"And listen to the wording it used," Laura says, frowning apologetically at Derek, "It's saying it will slit its throat."

Derek chews on his bottom lip, "It influenced one of my dreams a while back," He says, shaking his head when memories of flowing blood flood his mind, "It held a knife in its hand." Reaching for a pad of paper, he draws the jagged bronze knife from his dream, metal twisted and ancient. He could recall its form with his eyes closed. He's unlikely to forget the way it cuts so easily. So cruelly.

The drawing circulates around the room and Derek hopes someone recognizes it, but at the same time hopes it's a dead end. The drawing stops in front of the Queen. She stares down at it with a look of horrible confusion and frightening recognition.

"This is mine." Her voice cracks as she glares at the paper before glancing up and meeting Derek's eyes. Tapping the sheet she says, "This was the blade Alan and I used to spill our blood when we brought the fae to Earth. But it was left behind in the fae realms as a way of anchoring the spell. At least that's what I thought."

"So, it has the life blood of the King and Queen magically embedded into it." Derek says.

"Yes." She says, her voice horrified, "But it cannot be on Earth, it cannot physically exist here or we'd all be pulled back there. It must still be in the fae realms."

"We need that knife." Talia states.

The Queen nods, but then her shoulders collapse in defeat, "Without Alan, I cannot open the veil between the worlds."

"Aren't you forgetting?" Talia quirks her brow, "I'm Alan's bondmate, I should be able to channel some of his power."

The Queen rubs her forehead as she thinks, "It might work, but there's a greater chance that it will fail."
Whispers sound through the room as the council argues among themselves, Derek catches murmurs of the risks, as well as the Nāga saying that it could all blow up in their faces. His mother seems to be taking none of that shit. She stands up and walks over to the Queen, gripping her by the shoulder reassuringly. Turning to address the room as a whole, she says, "It's better than not trying at all."

***

"Erica." Derek slurs when she opens the door. Her wide eyes run up and down his body, a look of deep concern apparent on her face as she reaches out to grab his shoulders when he stumbles forward. "Everything's so fucked."

He's standing on Erica's porch, a bottle of whiskey in one hand, a suitcase in the other as his best friend pulls him into her house. It's midnight of the same day he told a roomful of people that he, and only he, would be allowed to kill Stiles and by extension the creature using his body.

"Erica." Derek sobs as she deposits him on her sofa. His shoulders shake with emotion, his body shivering uncontrollably. He can't stop crying, he can't, no matter how hard he tries, and any thought of what he has to do sends a new barrage of tears streaming down his cheeks. "Erica," he gasps, "what do I do?"

Erica's eyes are wide, blonde hair cascading over her shoulders. Derek notices with dull pride that she's wearing the set of Catwoman pyjamas Derek bought her last Christmas. She grips his fingers, pulling at them and somehow wrestling the bottle of wolfsbane infused whisky from his grip.

"What's going on, Derek?"

And he explains.

By the end of it, she's collapsed on the sofa beside him, looking off into the distance with a thousand yard stare. "Shit, Derek." She finally says, breaking the silence, "I honestly don't know what to say. Fuck."

"Just tell me it's all going to be okay? Like you've always done. Like in collage when I thought I was going to fail during exams. Like when I was worried I wouldn't pass the bar. You've always managed to pull me out of my funks. I'm supposed to get on a plane and fly to Ethiopia, a trip I'm dreading, but even that doesn't compare with what I'm supposed to do when I get there. Erica," Derek reaches out and grabs her hand, "look into my eyes and tell me that everything is going to be okay."

Slowly, Erica turns to face him, her eyes shine with moisture, "Everything's going to be alright," she says, just as an errant tear escapes and trails down her cheek.

Derek closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

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"You think you're so smart, Der." The Void nibles at his ear, tongue trailing out to lick the lobe. It pulls away, draping its arms over Derek's shoulder.

Derek knows he's on a plane, flying to Ethiopia where the veil between the fae realms and the human is the weakest. It's the place where the fae first came through so, according to the Queen, the tear between the realms still remains. Flying there should theoretically allow them a greater chance of success in passing through to the birth land of his people.
Derek knows all of that, but his mind is somewhere else entirely. He's dreaming, and in his dreams, the Void holds all the cards.

The Void has moulded the dream space to look like he's on Stiles' couch, a bowl of undulating pomegranates on the center table in front of him. A sick way of reminding Derek of his sexual relationship with Stiles through the fruit most linked to fertility and sex. It's not even trying to make this seem real. It's playing with him, teasing him.

It still thinks it has the upper hand.

Or, it could be afraid, and cockiness is the only way it can feel like it still retains control of the situation.

"So intelligent, that big brain of yours." The Void uses Stiles' fingers to play with the short hairs behind Derek's neck. "It's why Stiles loves you so."

Derek pulls away from the creature, pushing it out of his lap as he moves to stand. His movements are slow, like he's in a fugue state. Glancing out the balcony door emphasizes just how much of a dream this is. The Void obviously has no care for fine detail, and instead of the view across the Hudson, Derek finds a floating mass of stars and nebula, like the penthouse is soaring through the cosmos without a care in the world.

The creature slides up to him, wrapping it's arms around Derek's waist. "You could never hurt him, could you, Der?" It's voice echoes, piercing through his skull. "Not when he's already been hurt so much. His mother's death when he was so young, watching his father age while he remained eternally young, his hand in Svetlana's downfall. I mean, c'mon, he's been handed shit hand after shit hand, are you really going to do that to him?" The Void spins him around, and Derek struggles, but it's in control, not him. The Void stares into his eyes, "Is your hand holding the knife really going to be the last thing he sees before he dies?"

"Derek!"

A hand shakes his shoulder and the dream crumbles to pieces around him, but before he blinks up to see Laura, worry creasing her forehead, the Void pulls him close, whispering in his ear, "You talk big talks, but can you really do it, sweetheart?"

"Derek, are you okay? You kicked my seat." Laura says, her face haloed by a dim glow of blue LED lights from the aircraft's bulkhead. The cabin is set to night. It's dark and everyone is attempting to sleep, some with more success than others. "I know you hate flying." She adds, but Derek nods, reassuring his sister and letting her go back to sleep.

But now that he's awake, his brain finally registers that he's on a plane, and it's like a the air sucks out of his lungs. His nails dig into his palms, thankfully still human.

Shifting in his seat so he faces the window, he slides it open, hoping the sight of the outside world lends him some reprieve from the claustrophobia. They've finally crossed the Atlantic, the miles of blue underneath, given away to land. Checking the flight details, he finds they still have an hour until they reach Cairo for their layover.

Derek stares out the window, he's not going to fall back to sleep again, it was a miracle that he slept the first time. A miracle he's even on this plane in the first place. He hates flying, and yet, here he is.

He would have stayed behind in New York if it wasn't for the simple fact that staying behind would put Stiles' life in the hands of someone else. But he could never allow that. He brought the knife to
the table, he should be the one to use it. Stiles' last moments will be with him, not with anyone else.

That sobering fact is the only reason he hasn't asked for all the mini wine bottles aboard the plane. Thoughts of what he has to do to Stiles to save the fucking world are consuming him. His brain doesn't even have the capacity to feel airsick. It's sobering, images of what Stiles will look like when Derek has to kill him. Will he hate Derek? Or will he understand it had to be done to save the lives of billions of people.

There's only one thing he knows for certain, there's no getting around what he has to do.

He's startled out of his thoughts when Yukimura slides into the empty seat beside him. He looks at the woman curiously but she stares straight ahead, her jaw clenched as she grips the arm rests. Derek finds himself chuckling lowly, and when she glares at him, he shrugs unapologetically. There's just something funny about knowing that while he's a twenty-nine year old werewolf with a pathetic fear of flying, there also exists a nine hundred year old Kitsune with the exact same fear. Very reassuring.

"What do you want?" He asks.

"To talk, obviously." She says shortly and through clenched teeth. She doesn't seem have the same emotional distraction Derek does from her fear of flying and so is showing it very clearly. She's much less confident than all the other times he's met her before.

"Obviously." Derek echoes with narrowed eyes.

"Believe me, there is nothing I'd like more than to return to my seat and knock myself out for a few hours with some sleeping pills, but I'm not here for you-"

"What does the Queen want?" Derek sighs, interrupting her.

"I'm not here for the Queen," she whispers, "I'm here for Stiles. I know how you can save his life."

Derek freezes, ice running through his veins. Does she think him stupid? Doesn't she know he's already asked the fucking Queen if there was a way Stiles could live through something that would kill a Primordial Void?

"Calm down." She whispers and only then does Derek realize he's half shifted and growling.

"Fuck you." He snarls, looking around to see if anyone heard them. Laura's fast asleep, along with the rest of the werewolves, so if they keep their voice down, no one should hear them. "How dare you say this to me now when you know I've already asked." Asked might have been an understatement, more like begged.

"The Queen doesn't know."

Derek scoffs, "I find that hard to believe. Anyway, what would you have to gain from telling me this, what do you care?"

"You think I don't care about Stiles Stilinski?" Yukimura laughs before her expression twists and she hisses indignantly, "Claudia was my best friend. Stiles is my godson. My daughter is married to his best friend. He is my family." She leans closer, encroaching into his space. "I have known him, cared for him, longer than you've been alive, child." Her eyes burn a fiery orange, contrasting with the dark blue shrouding the cabin, it lights her face like she's a demon straight from hell, fury pouring from her pores. "Now tell me again that I don't care for Stiles Stilinski. Go ahead, I dare you."
Derek finches away from her, and that seems to calm her down somewhat because her eyes fade back to normal and she thumbs at her temple. "I apologize for my short temper, I have a migraine."

Derek swallows nervously before nodding. He looks away from her, "just say I believe you, why are you only telling me this now."

"Because it might not work." She sighs, "I had to be sure you were absolutely committed to what had to be done before I gave you a way out."

Derek frowns, "That is an exceptionally shitty thing to do."

She simply shrugs in acceptance, "I love Stiles, and I would go to the ends of the earth to help him, but I love my daughter more and would do anything to save her. This is not an guaranteed solution, Hale, there's a seventy percent chance it might not work. Even then, are you still willing to hear it?"

Derek places his hand over his face, shoulder's shaking at he laughs silently. Relief and hope floods his aching bones, "Where you see a seventy percent chance of failure, I see a chance Stiles may still live, a chance that is thirty percent higher than it was before." He sits up and leans towards her. "Tell me."

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"You're smiling." Talia remarks as they step off the ATV, pulling equipment bags off the vehicle.

"It's a beautiful country." Derek glances around them, appreciating the beauty, his mood significantly lightened after his talk with Yukimura on the plane. He walks over to where their camp is being set up, dropping the duffle bags in the dust, waving it out of his face when it floats up with the wind.

The sun which was once high in the sky when they landed, now sits massive and red on the horizon line. It's powerful, so near to the equator, and if it weren't for his werewolf healing, Derek suspects he'd be well on his way to developing a fine sunburn.

They're in the Afar Triangle in Ethiopia, in the area where scientists consistently find early hominin fossils. Derek thinks the Australopithecus afarensis, Lucy, was discovered only a few miles south of their current position. It's funny to think that the birth place of humanity was also the birthplace of the fae's history on Earth. Some of these fossils might have even been present when the fae came through the veil.

There's a constant breeze rolling in from the west tinged with the scent of sulphur and fire. As well as being a significant human archaeological site, it is also an active volcanic area. The region is dust and fire and completely different from all that he has known. But the Queen seems to find it comfortable enough.

She walks along the land, her feet bare, the corners of her lips twisted skyward. When she catches him looking she smiles, saying, "It resurrects fond memories, I can still remember what it first felt like to breathe clean air after knowing only pollution and death for millennia."

"And now you're going back, how does that feel?" Derek asks curiously, wondering if the Queen feels some inch of dread at the prospect of going back to the place she was so desperate to leave, she tore through space and time to do it.

She hums, "Honestly, I don't know how I feel. After living over five hundred thousand years on this planet to go back to that place, it feels like defeat." Her voice is pensive as she stares out at the horizon watching the burning crimson sun sink over a vast valley of sand and dust and nothing. "I
always like to think that it must have changed, I've watched the birth and death of hundreds of millions of species on this planet. Things change so very fast here, species evolve, they die, they improve, bad designs become better. Nothing stays the same on Earth." She pauses shaking her head, "But then I remember that place is not Earth."

"What do you mean?" Derek turns to face the Queen fully, her expression is calm and collected like she knows what is coming and she has made peace with it.

"Magic." The Queen states, "When used to destroy, is worse than chemical warfare, even worse than the atomic bomb. Magic doesn't dissipate like radiation after thousands of years, it lingers, as powerful as the day it was spelled. I recall human kings salting the earth of conquered cities, but even then the land recovered. It's been thirty years since Chernobyl, and it will be another twenty thousand years before the area is once again fully habitable, more than twice the amount of time anatomically modern humans have existed on this planet, but the land will eventually recover. Earth has this incredible way of bouncing back. But there is no return from destructive magic. The fae have lived on Earth for half a million years, yet our home world will be exactly the way we left it. Destroyed and polluted beyond repair by magic. Not even time can help it."

Derek frowns, "And yet, you wear a smile like you are happy to return."

She turns to face him, just as the sun finally disappears over the horizon, plunging the valley into darkness, intermittently broken by the gas lamps being lit around the camp.

"It is still my home. Just as this beautiful land is the birthplace of humanity, beyond the veil, the rift, lies the land that birthed me." She smiles, gently patting him on the cheek, before nodding her head towards the camp. "Go, child, help your mother prepare what we need. Then rest. Tomorrow, we have a long day ahead of us." She holds his gaze for one long moment before peeling her eyes away to stare up into the night sky. The milky way flows like a river stretching from one horizon to another, consuming her attention as she gazes at it like a woman who believes she will never see it again.

Derek walks back to camp.

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There's a picnic blanket laid out on the earth. A deep red and white check pattern laid out underneath an incredible spread of all Derek's favourites foods. The sun is high in the blue sky and there's not a cloud in sight.

Stiles kneels in the middle of the blanket, his body turned away from Derek as he arranges plates of food for them.

Derek leans back on his elbows as he watches Stiles work. They're alone in Central Park, a field of perfect green grass surrounding them in all directions. A bee flits by to land on a distant bed of flowers. It's a beautiful day.

"Pierogies?" Stiles asks holding out a plate of steaming food, a quiet smile gracing his soft lips.

"The sweet potato kind?"

"Yes, of course, they're your favourite." Stiles places the plate in front of him.

"You're the one who whetted my appetite for them in the first place." Derek leans forwards and presses a kiss to Stiles' cheek, "Thanks for the food."
Stiles grins like the sun, his cheeks pinking slightly from the praise. Derek pats the blanket beside him and Stiles crawls over with his own plate, arranging his long limbs comfortably so his thighs press against Derek's.

"You good, Der?" Stiles asks, resting his hand on Derek's questioningly.

Derek bites into a scorching hot pierogi, hissing when it burns his tongue.

"You know, my father made these exact same pierogies for my mother when he was wooing her. He said they were the reason my mother even considered his advances in the first place."

Derek swipes a pierogi through the pepper sauce, "And now you're using them to woo me."

"Really?" Derek quirks a brow, "It doesn't feel like it." He jokes.

Stiles puts down his now empty plate, rolling over onto his back as he looks up at Derek. His feet are bare, and tiny little hairs splatter over the knuckles of his toes. Derek finds it incredibly adorable.

"When did I first make you pierogies?"

"I still have the newspaper clippings." Stiles reaches out, taking Derek's hand in his, "I was so proud of you, and when you opened the door to my penthouse, a smile on your face, and a pack of my favourite soda in hand, I knew I was falling for you. The pierogies I made just confirmed my suspicions. I've only made them for one person before you. They're so tangled up in memories of my parents, I knew I would never be able to share them with anyone I didn't care about deeply."

Derek stares at Stiles, his eyes wide. "I didn't know you were paying attention to that case."

"You are everything to me."

"I'm sorry," He says, his voice choked, "I don't know why I'm crying."
"You pity me." Stiles says abruptly, his voice taking on a sharp edge.

"What? No, of course not!"

Stiles shakes his head, sitting up and moving away from Derek until they no longer touch. "It's alright, I completely understand. Even I pity me. My whole family is long dead, the woman I once thought I would bind myself to, I might as well have murdered her. And then you say you love me, even knowing all this? You pity me, it's the only explanation."

"Stiles, I loved you long before I knew of your past. I fell for you, not the Byronic hero you're claiming to be. You've had so much shit happen to you, but I know you." Derek lays a hand across Stiles' heart feeling for the thump he knows so well. "And you're good."

Stiles smiles fondly, the sharp edge to his expression fading away to softness. They lay together on the blanket for what seems like ages. Listening to the birds chirping, the insects flittering around, the breeze rustling through the trees. It's all so much better, sharing it with someone he loves. They're so wrapped around each other, Derek only notices dark clouds rolling in from the south until they are almost upon them. When Stiles sees them he grabs at Derek's hand desperately, holding on with a strength that makes him wince.

"What's wrong?" Derek asks at the faint hint of fear and resignation apparent on Stiles' expression.

"It's noticed I'm here." Stiles turns to face him, staring into Derek's eyes desperately.

"What's noticed?" Derek asks carefully.

"The Void."

Derek recoils violently, pulling his hand out of Stiles', shifting back as far as he can, "What?" Then it comes to him, this is all a dream, none of this is real. The Stiles in front of him is nothing but an illusion created by the Void.

Stiles shakes his head like he was reading Derek's mind. "I'm not, Der. I'm real."

Derek narrows his eyes, cautiously watching Stiles' every move.

"I'm me," Stiles points to the clouds, "That's the Void." He says, his expression twisting in concentration, "I'm trying to hold it back, but it's advancing."

"What?" Derek gapes, mouth falling open in shock.

"It's worried, I can sense it. Derek, whatever you're doing out there is working. It let its guard down and I was able to contact you. It's frightened."

"No, I don't care what happens to me," Stiles says, looking so tired, like the Void is continuously sucking him dry. "Just kill it, get it out of me. Please." Stiles worriedly glances at the clouds before rushing forward and wrapping his arms around Derek's torso, his body a long, warm line along Derek's. "I love you. Be careful." Stiles says, pressing a kiss to his forehead.

Derek awakens in his sleeping bag, the heavy weight of Stiles gone from his arms, the soft caress of
his lips only a memory. Rubbing his eyes, he sighs with frustration and loss. That Stiles was real, and if Yukimura's plan doesn't work, those will be the last words they'll ever share.

Gazing up at the top of his tent, the fabric shifts in the breeze as he waits for the sun to rise.

***

The Queen sits cross legged in a dip in the sand. Cradled on her lap, rests an empty plastic bowl. They picked it up from a nearby village while driving to the site. It has a cartoon flowers on the sides with smiles printed on little anthropomorphized faces.

It makes the blood the Queen drips from her wrist all the more horrifying. It splatters the sides of the bowl, coating the flowers in a fat layer of clotted blood. Thickening and turning solid as the Queen whispers her spell, eyes flickering behind closed lids.

"Now, Talia." The Queen says weakly, slumped over from blood loss. At least three pints of her plasma sits in the bowl, and when Derek's mother opens her wrist with a sharp claw, it nearly reaches overflowing.

The scent of copper is high in the air, but when the Queen finalizes her spell, the sharpness of ozone enters the mix. She places the bowl on a nearby camping table just as a couple medics rush forward, a cooler containing donated blood held between them. Derek walks his mother over to a nearby tent and holds her hand as a medic feels for her vein before hooking up a blood bag, asking that he keep it elevated until they find a rack to hang it from.

"I feel the spell working," Talia says with wonder in her eyes, "It's like my blood is calling to me."

The Queen smiles faintly from the cot beside them. Yukimura holds her bag of blood. "That's magic."

"I don't have magic." Talia breathes, her brow furrowed in confusion.

"But now you do, how does it feel? You're the first werewolf in history to possess more than just a spark." The Queen says, turning to face Talia. "Does it sing in your veins? Do you feel it running through the ground beneath you. Floating about in the very air you breathe."

Talia simply nods and the Queen turns away, "Then you know how my brother feels each and every day. But you must remember there are responsibilities that come with this power."

Talia grips Derek's hand until his bones grind. "I know, or are you forgetting that I am an Alpha? I know something of power." She says, her voice confident and sure.

The Queen chuckles, "So that's what Alan sees in you."

Eventually the bag empties and the medics hook up another one, until that one empties too. Derek switches place with Laura and goes to check on the spell.

Peering over the edge, he notices that the liquid swirling inside the bowl is no longer blood. Instead it's a metallic rose gold, reflecting the light from the hot Ethiopian sun. The Queen said that when the liquid turns silver and all the traces of red are gone, the spell will be ready.

Until then, they wait.

"What will happen when we have the knife?" Derek asks the Queen. She's sitting up now, looking much more spry with two replacement pints of blood back in her. "It's not like we can bring it back
to this world."

The Queen nods her head to Yukimura and the woman picks up a small wooden box, "We went to your lover's apartment and dug around a bit." She holds open the box for Derek's eyes. Inside, within a small glass test tube, lies a few strands of what looks to be Stiles' hair.

"When the rift between our worlds is finally open, I'm going to cast a summoning spell, using your lover's hair as an anchor. That should bring the Void here. Then, it's just a matter of taking the creature with us when we jump." The Queen says it so nonchalantly, like that is supposed to be an easy achievement.

Derek's expression must speak for him because the Queen pats his hand reassuringly. "It will work, child. If you do not have faith in me, at least have faith in your Alpha." The Queen closes her eyes, sighing heavily. "Your mother is strong. Stronger than I expected. It's not only Deaton's borrowed magic fueling the spell, it is her own power. The spell will work, I can feel it."

He licks his lips nervously. Looking up, he meets Yukimura's eyes, she tilts her head to the tent exit before rising to leave. Derek waits a few minutes before getting up to follow.

Yukimura stands off to the side, dwarfed by a large rock outcropping. When Derek walks up to her, she seems to fade deeper into the shadows like a wraith.

"Why all the secrecy?" He asks.

"There are some here who would rather Stiles die along with his possessor." She whispers, pulling him closer to her. "The council is afraid of him."

Derek furrows his brow. "Why?"

"He's the perfect host." She explains, "The Void has never remained in a body for so long. The council is afraid that once the creature is dead and Stiles remains alive, the Void's influence might corrupt him too."

"That's ridiculous, Stiles would never-"

"Is it, Derek? Is it really?" Yukimura interrupts him, her expression going stony and troubled. "It's had him for weeks, who knows what kind of torment it's been waging on his psyche. By now he must be nothing but a shell of the man he once was."

Derek shakes his head, remembering his dream the night before, "I've spoken to him, he's fine."

Yukimura blinks, a looks of confusion overcoming her features, "What do you mean by that?"

Derek shifts nervously, "Last night he came to me in my dreams."

She frowns, "That could have been the Void pretending to be him." She says but Derek shakes his head again.

"Trust me, it was him. The Void is an incredibly shitty actor. I would know, it's contacted me so many times. It loves recognition and there's no recognition in pretending to be someone it's not."

Yukimura sighs, "What did Stiles say then, in your dream?"

Just the thought of Stiles' words make Derek collapse upon himself. Leaning bodily against the rock, he says, "He wants it gone. He's so tired. He looks so tired. I just want him safe and happy and
alive." He purses his lips, "I don't know why this is happening to him."

"Derek, it's happening because he was unhappy."

"Then how the fuck could I have not noticed that?" He whispers mostly to himself. And he calls himself a lawyer. It is his job to notice things, but he couldn't even see that the man he loves was in pain.

Yukimura scoffs, "We tend to ignore the things that make us uncomfortable."

Derek growls, "Stiles does not make me uncomfortable."

"Then you've never wondered why his powers had the potential to drive the people he serviced mad?"

"I never knew." Derek hisses, "He is the only leanan sìdh I've ever met."

Yukimura's face falls, and she turns away from him. Silence hangs between them for what seems like hours until she lets out a long, tired sigh.

"I'm sorry. It is all my fault and I'm just projecting it onto you. Claudia Stilinski was my best friend. I knew her powers, and I knew how they corrupted when she gave birth to a half human child. Stiles is an anomaly, he was never meant to be. But when I saw Claudia hold him, nothing but love in her eyes, it did not matter that the child should have never been born. She loved him, I loved her, and so by extension I loved him. I should have never turned a blind eye to the destructive potential of his abilities."

"You knew what he could do before he even met Svetlana?" Derek breathes.

She nods her head solemnly, "I knew, and I did nothing. I was afraid my words would turn a happy, outgoing man, in love with life, into a sullen introvert. A man who would stay away from all that he loved because he was afraid he would harm it. I was a fool, hoping that it would work out, that Svetlana would be alright. I watched as weeks went by and her mind grew sicker and sicker, and Stiles killed himself from worrying. He was afraid she had frontotemporal dementia," Yukimura says tiredly, "That she had a human disease."

"And you never told him?"

"I was weak. I am weak. I watched my godson struggle through the most difficult moment in his life, as he wondered just what was happening to the woman he loved. When he discovered it was him, I..." She trails off, placing a hand to her brow, closing her eyes in what might be pain or even guilt. "I couldn't bear to see him like that. I left him all alone when he was so vulnerable. I could have explained, but I didn't. I chose not to, because I kept hoping everything would work out, but all it did was get worse."

Derek doesn't even know what to say. Socially, he would be expected to reassure her, comfort her, tell her everything will be alright regardless of her actions, but he can't bring himself to do it. She treated Stiles like he was a precious thing to be coddled, to be protected, like he wasn't a grown man who would have benefited from knowing more about himself. And in the end, it was the wrong thing to do.

"This is my fault." She says and Derek can't help but agree.

"When we get him back, and we will get him back," Derek says sharply. "You will tell him all that you know."
She nods, "I will tell him, even though there will be no point."

"What the hell do you mean by that?" Derek asks, puzzled.

Her brows dip as she frowns, "I thought I explained on the plane? If the plan works, Stiles will become completely human or completely leanan sídhe. We're killing off one side of him along with the Void, and it's up to fate to decide exactly which side that should be." She pauses, her lips turning down. "If he is even able to survive being one without the other."

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The spell is ready. It glows a vibrant silver, and as the Queen holds the bowl up to her face, the concoction reflects off her dark skin, making her appear paler than usual. A faint buzzing, so high pitched only werewolves can hear it, sounds in his ear, like the spell is talking back to all those present.

"Bring me the hair." She says, holding her hand out for Yukimura. Derek catches Yukimura's eye as she moves forward, but she quickly looks away. She is ashamed of what her inactivity has lead to and she shows it.

Cradling the bowl in one hand, the Queen uncaps the test tube. Muttering an incantation, she gently blows over the top of the tube before violently crushing it into the palm of her hand. Blood overflows from the wound and it runs down her forearm to her elbow, dripping onto the hot dust of the earth.

She grinds the glass and Stiles' hair into her palm until it begins to glow a faint blue, like the colour the Void turns its victims' eyes. It grows stronger and stronger, as her words grow louder and louder.

All of a sudden she lets go of the glass and it falls to the ground. Looking up, she tilts her head to the side. "It's here." She whispers.

Derek feels the scream of power long before he hears it.

It's like the energy of the Void explodes throughout the valley, coating it in an icy blue light for one short second. Power like a shock wave rips though his body and he jolts, stepping forward then backward as he attempts to regain his balance. A few guards aren't as balanced on their feet his he is, and they fall to their knees in the dust.

Nothing stands on a patch of earth surrounded by a thick line of dark powder the Queen laid out a few minutes ago, until suddenly something appears like it formed from nothing. It begins to take on a humanoid shape, until he recognizes it.

Stiles.

Or at least his body.

"You fucking bitch!" The creature roars, rushing forward before slamming against an invisible barrier held above the dark powdery line. Sweat beads along the Queen's forehead as she speaks faster and faster, louder and louder until she is practically yelling words that sound nothing like any language he's ever heard.

"No!" The Void claws at the barrier and Derek gasps when it seems like the air ripples around its hands. It won't last much longer. Derek finds his hands clenched in fists at his side, body preparing for a fight, whether it be to protect his family from getting hurt, or to stop the guards from landing a fatal blow on Stiles' body.
The barrier explodes the next time the Void shreds at it.

Before Derek can even make out its next movements, a guard lays dead in the dirt, his throat torn out. Blood and viscera coats the creature's arms up to his elbows as it strides forward, making a beeline directly for the Queen. Yukimura grips her katana as she steps forward, getting ready to protect her charge, but before she can cover the Queen, Derek's ears pop, and the buzzing stops.

The Queen shouts one final word before throwing the contents of the bowl high into the air. It's almost as if time halts because the metallic liquid floats and shimmers in the sun, glinting and casting facets of light upon all those present.

The Void stops its advance and stares up at the spell, a look of fear and desperation apparent on its features. "Fuck." It says just as a loud, low groan sounds, like the earth is crying out beneath them. Derek feels a tugging in his sternum, pulling him towards the liquid as the Queen calls out the names of all those who will come with them. His name first.

"Talia Hale!" The Queen shouts next and he watches his mother take one step forward, then another. Derek echoes her exact movement, bringing them closer and closer to the rift.

"Stiles Stilinski!" The Queen hisses and the Void roars in fury as Stiles' body steps forward without its permission.

"No, no no!" It shouts, struggling, but it is as every bit as helpless as the rest of them. The floating liquid seems to stretch the air around it, as it opens the wormhole, the rift to the fae realms. There's nothing but emptiness within the gape, and Derek finally feels an intense fear for what will come.

"Marin Morrell." The Queen concludes silently, and the tugging sharpens until everything fades to nothing.

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**Chapter End Notes**

**Brownie:** Not a delicious dessert in this case. Originating in Scottish folklore, Brownies are like the standard fae, tiny and wrinkled and covered in curly hair. They quite enjoy porridge and honey.

**Nāga:** A creature originating in Indian religions, often depicted with the tail of a snake and torso and head of a human. Many stories portray them as evil creatures.
This isn't the last chapter, there's still an epilogue which will come later, cause you guys have been waiting almost four damn months for an update. I reached a good cut off point, and I wanted to give you patient angels something, so here you go!

So some warnings for this chapter. There are copious amounts of blood and bloodletting for magical reasons in the style of the last chapter. As for emotional warnings: my beta called me a roller coaster tycoon bitch because this chapter sent him a bit off the rails. Emotionally. But I guarantee happy endings, so do not fear. Too much, but a little bit of fear is always nice... ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Derek stares up at a deep mauve sky, feeling like he was sucker punched in the stomach. With the first breath he takes in this strange new world, a sulphur stench floods his lungs like rotten eggs. He quickly turns on his side and empties his stomach.

The damp earth is cool on his feverish skin, soothing the twist of his stomach, the pounding of his head. It feels like the spell rearranged his insides when it brought him through the veil. Groaning in pain, he shifts until he's sitting, head dangling between spread knees until finally, his ears stops ringing.

"Fuck." He hisses, rubbing his forehead. Looking at his surroundings, he notices with a chilling pang that he's completely alone. He can't see or smell the Queen, his mother, or even the Void. Derek's lying at the bottom of what looks to be a steep ravine, the walls stretching up ten feet at the sides. A dried river bed continuing on and disappearing around a twist in both directions. It seems sentient, actively attempting to clog up his lungs. Almost like it was spelled to do.

He has no idea what to do, but he figures picking a direction would be a start. He can't just sit and wait for the others. He doesn't know if he alone was separated from the group, but they could be fighting the Void right now without him. They need his help more than he needs theirs.

Derek tries to scent the air to get a sense of which direction to go in, but all he can smell is sulphur and things that have been dead for a long, long time. There's also this awful staleness flowing in the air around. It seems sentient, actively attempting to clog up his lungs. Almost like it was spelled to do.

He picks a direction, and starts walking.

The moons on this planet tug at his wolf, painfully and yet so right. He senses all three of them in his bones, even if the thick, brown clouds obscure them partially. However, the moonlight pours through the dark sky, casting a helpful light upon the earth. Enough light to help him find his way around in the murk. It's not as bright as earth, and he still manages to trip a few times, catching himself at the last moment.
The ravine seems to stretch on forever, and he walks for what feels like hours, but might actually be ten or so minutes. Derek contemplates stopping and walking back, to see if the other way goes anywhere. He's cold and lost. His boots squeak when he moves because there's muck in every single crevice of his clothing. If he was human, he'd sure have a itchy rash covering his body. His werewolf healing helps, but all the repeated scratching and healing is wearing him down.

He's just about to give up when he notices an area of the bank has collapsed into the ravine. Scattered amid the cold clay are boulders with cutting edges and reeking mud. But it's still a way out, and Derek plans on taking it.

He jumps onto the closest rock, but nearly slips and brains himself. He's more careful after that. Slowly, inch by inch, he makes his way up, gripping and pulling. His hands are torn to shreds on sharp stones, but Derek cannot find it in himself to care. He's half delirious and bone weary, expecting Stiles to be at the top, just within his reach.

Finally, he bodily pulls himself out of the ravine, fingers scrambling in the dirt for a handhold, anything to grab onto. His fingers curl around a root, surprising him. Derek uses it as leverage, feeling the life beneath his hands as he collapses onto his back, staring up in wonder at the tree the root was attached to.

It's massive. And it shouldn't exist.

The Queen said the poisonous magic should have killed everything, including the organisms in the soil. But maybe some forms of vegetation evolved, becoming resilient. There's obviously still water, going by the copious amount of mud, and it's not like the trees need to breathe the way he does.

Shaking his head, he climbs to his feet, patting the trunk of the tree as he walks past it. Now's not the time for curiosity. Stiles needs him.

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Derek swipes a bead of sweat from his brow before it falls into his eyes. The clouds have somewhat cleared away, casting even more light upon the dirt. He hasn't seen another sign of life since the tree by the ravine, but he still looks. Curiosity among all the boredom getting to him.

The land he walks is rolling. Stumpy hill, after stumpy hill rising and falling like the English moors, minus the grass and heather. It's all dust at the top and mud at the bottom. He's tired as fuck and cannot feel his Alpha, meaning she must still be far away. For all he knows, he could have chosen the wrong direction to walk.

Derek stops and rubs his forehead in frustration. "Shit." He says quietly, staring off into the distance. Visibility is shit, and he can only see over a few hills, the higher ones blocking his view of the horizon. This was supposed to be difficult for an entirely different reason. Fate must hate him with a passion.

He's just on the verge of sitting down and resting when a flash of deep purple light rises slowly from his far left. Derek stares, as it lights the sky with a flare.

Instantly, he's running, feet pounding on the soft dirt, arms pumping as the light starts to dissipate, but now he knows where he's going. He finds himself only slightly scared of what he will find. Anything is better than uncertainty.

Derek finally clears a series of hills, finding himself running on flatter, dryer ground. It's still too dark to see what lies further in the distance, but he can just make out a series of organic shapes.
sticking from the earth like mountains.

_Trees_, he thinks. A whole forest of them. But what makes him gasp, eyes wide in shock and wonderment, is what lies in front of the forest. Sprawling, collapsed, and eaten away from millennia's worth of pounding from the weather. _Ruins._

Derek slams into an invisible force and he stumbles, gasping in shock, as he feels the renewed tug of his Alpha, his mother, calling to him. He feels trepidation, fear, and a small hint of relief in the bond. Finally, he's not alone.

The ruins he's running through are nothing more than the crumbs of a past civilization. Stones and eroded columns collapsed in his path. He takes leaping jumps over them, moving through the dead city until the ruins start thinning out, until only the occasional scattered stone lies in his way.

A chill runs down his spine and he slows into a slow walk. This is where he needs to be right now. A semi intact building lies in front, columns still holding up a partial roof. It resembles ancient Grecian architecture, but could be just about anything, Derek's no historian. The stench of ozone floods his nostrils, like leftover magic and he knows this is where the flare spell was cast.

Someone steps from the shadows of the ruins.

"I was hoping the Queen would show up first, but I wouldn't mind an audience, especially one so easy on the eyes."

Stiles. No. The Void, strides from the temple, confidence in his step. He should be cowering in fear, knowing what is about to come, but instead he is walking without a care in the world.

It frightens him.

"Don't look so surprised, Derek. You thought you could beat me at my own game, but you forget that it's still my fucking game." The Void snarls, eyes flashing a cold blue as it raises Stiles' wings, spreading them like a wall of sharp knives.

"You thought you could play the fucking player, but Morrell isn't the only big bitch in the room with magic at her fingertips. It was easy enough to throw off her spell, to cast the three of you far away and me, close to the destination. Close to what you wanted."

Something flashes in the Void's hand and Derek turns his gaze to it, feeling his heart stop in his chest. A simple, sharply cruel knife rests in its right hand, glinting in the low light cast by the moon. It's the bronze knife from his dreams. The whole reason they're here, and the Void got to it before they could.
"Fuck." Derek whispers.

"That's right, baby." The Void growls, a cutting edge to its tone, as it walks down the steps of the temple, getting closer and closer. "You've done nothing but piss me off. So, Stiles is going to watch while I skin his one true love. Piece by fucking piece." The Void licks its lips. "I was going to save you for last, but man, I'm feeling hungry for some screaming right about now."

Derek stumbles backwards, tripping over his feet in his haste to get away. He tries to run but his limbs are sluggish like the Void's magic is gripping him in place. He can't handle this creature by himself, there's not fucking way. He'll be dead before anyone finds them.

"Why you leaving, baby boy? Come give daddy a kiss." The Void's eyes glow brighter until its skin illuminates with the blue light pouring from its flesh.

"Stiles." Derek pleads just as the Void reaches its empty hand for him, the wings curving with its clawed movement, "Please fight this."

"Oh he's trying, sweetheart, he's trying so hard." The Void pinches Derek's cheek condescendingly. "But there are no trophies for hard work in this race, only for those who win."

"Stiles." Derek begs again as the Void trails its freezing cold hand down his cheek, tracing the length of his jaw, slipping even further down until it rests on his throat. Derek swallows heavily, feeling the Void's hand tighten. "Stiles." Derek looks into the cold, blue eyes, hoping to see even a small hint of amber before he dies. To hold onto some comfort, something, anything.
But there's nothing there.

Derek closes his eyes and waits for the end.

Suddenly, the hand is ripped from his throat. The force of the movement sends him careening, crashing into a half collapsed wall. A sharp pain hits before his healing takes over, fixing the broken bones as he watches his mother fling the Void back. She casts one worried glance at Derek, then takes off after the Void.

Claws flash and teeth snarl as they fight hand to hand.

The Void directs the bone wings, using them to block Talia's blows at it swings the knife, trying to cut and maim. But Talia is fast, and Derek stares wide eyed. Even for a werewolf, she's moving at supernatural speeds. It must be a result of her bond with the king since she's holding her own against a creature much, much stronger.

Derek scrambles to his feet, and jogs towards them, just in case his mother needs him. She's not trying to land killing blows on Stiles' body. She's just trying to incapacitate the creature in order to take away the knife. She's being smart. Nothing can actually hurt the Void, it can only hurt Stiles. A swipe at the hand holding the knife is more effective than one at the throat.

He holds his breath, making sure to keep out of the way, but within reach.

Finally, a trickle of blood runs down the Void's arm, and Derek knows Talia landed a blow. The Void leaps away, far out of reach, and stares down at its arm in shock. Like it can't believe what it's seeing. The blood is red and Stiles', the scent of sugar and metal flooding the air, a hint of verbena pouring from the wound.

Tears instantly fill Derek's eyes, he hasn't smelled that scent in ages.

"Fucking bitch!" The Void screams, stomping its foot in indignation, but the scent cannot leave Derek's nose. No matter the creature in front of him now, Stiles is still there, buried deep inside, but there.

A memory comes to him. Stiles holding his chin, tilting his head, fingers dancing across his scalp as he leans closer, sharing breath. *Do you trust me, Der?*

*Please trust me.*

*Trust me on this.*

"Stiles," Derek says out loud, looking up and meeting the Void's eyes, "Trust that we will keep you safe, trust that we will kill that thing inside of you. Trust that I will never, ever let you die. Trust me, Stiles. Trust me, I love you."

The Void freezes in shock and it's like time stops. Talia is still rushing forward in his peripherals, but all he cares to see is the Void falling from Stiles' face. The blue leaving his eyes as they clear. Honey flows from the pupil as all traces of the Void disappear, leaving the man Derek loves more than anything in the world.

Stiles looks at Derek with adoration and desperation, an expression he must echo. He feels like screaming to the heavens in joy because Stiles did it. He fucking did it, he fought the Void, he got back control. He's going to be alright. Everything is going to be alright.

Stiles coughs.
His eyes go wide and he coughs again, a dribble of red trickling from the corner of his mouth like a soft thread. He stumbles. Derek frowns in confusion as the red drips from Stiles' chin to his chest, trailing over his clothes flowing down until it is absorbed by the blooming flower of red sitting right over his heart.

"Derek?" Stiles asks, confused, looking down at his chest, a little furrow between his brows. "Derek?" Stiles repeats just as his eyes roll back in his head and he collapses to his knees. The thick, splintered branch embedded in his chest, throwing off his center of balance. He teeters dangerously on the edge of collapsing onto it, impaling it further. Just like a king falling on his sword. Derek rushes forward and grabs him by the shoulder, gently moving him until he rests in Derek's lap, eyes still wide and shocked like he can't believe what just happened.

"Oh my god." He hears a gasp, and Derek looks over to his mother. Horror in her expression as she stares at them with a hand over her mouth. The same bloodied hand that plunged the branch into Stiles' body. She probably expected the Void to move out of the way of a killing blow, and didn't expect Stiles to remain still.

When Derek shifts to rest his hand over Stiles' clammy, cool forehead, he realizes it is trembling. He's in shock, his mind recognizes. Like his brain and body are separate, trying to convince him that branch buried deep within Stiles' body is an illusion, something fake, perhaps a trick. Anything but the truth.

"What have I done?" Talia whispers to herself and strangely enough, it's that which brings him out of his trance.

Derek swallows heavily, looking down at the man in his arms, eyes open and un startling, body still without a heartbeat. He looks away, both unable and unwilling to believe what is right in front of him.

The wind rustles the leaves in the nearby forest, just as the Queen pushes herself from it. She emerges like the land is clinging to her skin. Sticking and fighting her flesh, like her body is a warzone. The magic is trying to kill her, recognising her as one of those it was spelled against. Derek watches numbly as she walks forward, until she kneels in front of them.

Derek looks at her, wanting to feel anger, to demand why she didn't get there sooner, but he feels nothing. Words are not going to change a thing. Stiles will still be dead.

The Queen touches a hand to Stiles' cheek, closing her eyes. "They are still there." She says. "The Void is keeping them tethered to the body. Only the knife can separate them, but Stiles is in control, it has no power to animate the corpse."

Derek flinches at the word *corpse* so carelessly said.

"We still have to use to knife." She remarks coldly, reaching for the blade still resting limply in Stiles' hand, but Derek growls and grabs it before she can.

"You'll kill him." Derek curls himself protectively around Stiles, trying to cover as much of his vulnerable skin as he can.

"He's already dead. We've done what we set out to do. Free him, let him pass on peacefully, don't keep him anchored to that hateful creature." The Queen says emotionlessly.

"There must be something we can do?" Derek begs, "Please, I'll do anything. Just, please. Not like this..."
"Child..."

"Please, Marin." Talia speaks up, "There must be something you can do to help him?"

The Queen looks at his mother with exhausted eyes, full of age and wisdom but a bone deep weariness.

"A sacrifice." She says apropos of nothing. "My life for another."

Derek freezes. Is the Queen really willing to give her life up to save Stiles, someone who means nothing to her?

"Why?" Derek asks, confused.

"I am tired." She says, answering Derek’s question. Looking at Talia like his mother understands the words she is saying.

"I know." His mother says in return, "You place too much responsibility onto yourself."

"I wish to rest."

Derek stares on in confusion when his mother replies, "I know."

The Queen sighs, "I knew I would never see Earth again when I came here. I was born from this land, and it demands I return to it," she declares just as a trickle of mud pulls itself from the ground. It twists around her ankle like it is trying to pull her into its depths. "I should return to it."

For one second, the sentient magic that’s been trying to clog up Derek's lungs ever since he landed in this world, pauses in its efforts. It listens to the Queen's words, to the sacrifice she is offering. All of a sudden the scent of sulphur dissipates and Derek finds himself breathing normally.

The Queen nods her head once in agreement, accepting the contract the magic is offering. She holds out her hand to Derek. "Give me the knife." She says.

Derek’s hand tightens around the handle for one long minute before he gives in and hands it over. Taking it, she rises to her feet.

"Magic always demands blood." The Queen whispers and holds the knife up to the moonlight, pricking a finger with it, letting a drop of blood trail down the blade until it splashes on the ground. Almost instantly, a hint of green floods the air and Derek knows that whatever plant was hiding beneath the soil took its first breath of life in millennia.

"Two sides of the same coin. Different and yet the same. One is life while the other is death.” The Queen recites the tale all fae children are told. She turns to Talia, "Will you take my place, rule beside my brother in my stead, keeping the balance?"

Talia nods her head, tears in her eyes. "I will."

"Will you be Queen of the Unseelie, in my stead?"

"Yes."

"Will you be a fair, equal ruler, in my stead?"

"Yes."
The Queen closes her eyes, "Tell Alan I love him."

"He knows."

The Queen smiles just as she shifts her hand over the blade, cutting a long deep gash into her palm. She moves her bleeding palm over Stiles' face, letting the blood fall like rose petals, puddling on Stiles' pale skin.

With a stuttering start, Stiles' heart beats anew, just as the Queen takes on his pallor.

"A life for a life." She says shakily grabbing hold of the offending branch, tugging it from Stiles' chest with a wet sound. The open wound heals over immediately, skin stitching back together, muscle repairing itself.

"What about the Void?" Derek asks, wide eyes never leaving Stiles' chest.

"The knife." She says, bending over, "We must bleed the creature from his veins." Taking the knife, she makes a small slit under Stiles' throat, not deep enough to harm permanently, but enough for blood to flow. Keeping the knife in place, flowing blood coats the blade, growing darker and darker, until a substance like black tar seeps from the wound into the earth, the ground soaking it up eagerly.

Her hair greys and deep shadows rest under her eyes by the time all the black floods from Stiles' veins.

"Is he okay?" Derek asks, feeling Stiles' strengthening pulse, "Is it gone?"

"It's gone." The Queen affirms, tossing the blade into the dirt. She holds a shaking hand for Talia to take, her skin translucent and fragile. "You will lose your wolf." The Queen warns just before their hands meet.

"My daughter will take good care of her." Talia says.

Just as their fingers touch a shooting light exploded from their joining. He feels a sharp biting sensation like thousands of dull knives pricking at his skin as the force guiding him his whole life, since the moment he was born, is ripped violently from his sternum, leaving his body torn asunder. Derek gasps as the spirit of the Alpha leaves.

The world spins for a long moment, what feels like centuries as the power tries to get its bearings, to correct itself, the Alpha seeking the next most deserved in the pack. A deep roar sounds, blasting his ear drums with powerful, pure, unadulterated noise. He whimpers as he hears Laura's gasp as the power makes its decision regardless of the separation in dimensions. Derek throws his head back and howls to the heavens. He feels Laura's answering call in his bones.

She's a young Alpha, yet she is already a million times more powerful than their mother. Their pack will be strong under her guidance.

The light flashes, dropping away from the Queen who falls into a desiccated heap. Sucking into his mother, the light envelops her in a blinding aura of glowing gold. Derek covers his eyes, the power singeing his flesh as it burns like a million suns. A cloud of dust blows all around as he tries to cover Stiles from the worst of it.

In the end, his mother stands in the center of a slowly settling cloud, a being with glowing golden skin, gaze completely black and devoid of all emotion. But when Talia turns to face him, her eyes widen in recognition before closing in concentration. Steadily, the light dims until his mother is left
standing, a glamour steadily in place.

"Derek." She gasps, her voice rusty but tinged with a hint of wonder. "Derek. I can feel everyone. All the Seelie and Unseelie, everyone." She smiles, "Alan is awake now that the Void is gone. I can feel him here," she says touching her heart in wonder.

Stiles inhales sharply and Derek looks down, marvelling at the man still cradled in his arms. "Stiles?" He asks delicately, pushing a strand of hair from his face. Derek wonders if Yukimura was right. If one half of Stiles flowed out alongside the Void's black tar. If he lost one aspect of himself when the Void was absorbed by the land beneath them. As Derek wonders which side of Stiles lies in his arms, he realizes he doesn't give a single flying fuck, he will love him regardless.

"Derek." Stiles smiles back, running a light thumb along his jaw, "How are you feeling?"

"Hi." Stiles frowns uncomfortably, shifting in Derek's arms like he's got an itch he just can't scratch. "Like someone's going at my back with a feather."

Derek smirks in relieved amusement, his mouth twitching as he tries to not to laugh, "Ticklish?"

"Yeah." Stiles rubs his shoulders, testing out their weight.

"They're like my mother's," he says in awe, "but hers were a dark auburn, these are the exact colour of my dad's hair, the same dark blonde."

Derek smiles in relief. At least Stiles only lost the negative aspects of his father's humanity, not what truly mattered. "How do they feel?" Derek asks, thinking of the sickly bone Stiles sported before. These wings are healthy, and they move with a life of their own, twitching and wandering. One tip reaches out lightly and pokes at Derek's ear, before retracting almost shyly, hiding behind the other wing. The wings of a leanan sídhe.

"Fuck, Derek. They feel amazing." Stiles rolls his shoulders, testing out their weight.

"They look amazing." Derek smiles. "May I?" He reaches his hand out, asking permission to touch.

Derek kneels right in front of him. Stiles' eyes don't glow the same gold as before. Instead they are brighter and more natural with hints of auburn like a fine honeyed whiskey. He thumbs gently at Stiles' cheekbone. Leaning down, he presses a soft kiss to the corner of Stiles' mouth.

Stiles makes a small surprised noise, but tilts his head, shifting the kiss until their lips join, searing and running him alight. Stiles kisses him desperately, like a man dying of thirst. Opening his mouth,
letting his tongue slip into Derek's as he reaches out and tangles his fingers in the hair at Derek's nape, gripping hard and fast, like he never wants to let go. Derek holds on for the ride, giving just as good, mashing his lips to Stiles until they bruise and heal over and over again, a continuous cycle he never wants to stop.

Finally Stiles breaks the kiss, resting his forehead against Derek's, gazing into his eyes.

"Are you ready to leave?" Talia asks breaking the moment. She respectfully crouches in front of what remains of the Queen's corpse as it disintegrates, becoming one with the land. Only when all traces of the Queen disappear, does she stand up.

Derek tears himself from Stiles, nodding.

Talia picks up the knife, and cuts a slit into her palm. While she performs the incantation, Derek reaches out and takes hold of Stiles' hand, smiling when he turns to look at him. Stiles grips his fingers tight just as the rift open. The gape reveals nothing but black darkness, but Derek has nothing to fear, so long as he holds fast to the man he loves, everything will be fine.

Chapter End Notes

The epilogue will be much easier to write than this nightmare. Angst is fucking difficult, but fluff and smut isn't. And there is going to be much love, boning, and healing in the epilogue cause I've hurt these boys enough, don't 'cha think?

Pleeeeeease leave me a comment, tell me what you thought. I'd absolutely love feedback on this. I rewrote it so many times, and I'm freaking out like crazy letting this out into the world. I still think some parts seem too far fetched... I dunno, shrugs...
Chapter Notes

I am so happy with this chapter, sooooo happy. It's nearly 10k long and it feels like the perfect ending for this fic.

I wasn't going to include the seer in this chapter, but after what happened in January, I just had to. The Goblin King will live on forever :)

It's been eleven months since I started this, but it feels like so much longer. To all you guys who stuck around for the full ride, you're awesome, and your feedback really shaped the direction I took this in, so thanks so very much. I love you all!

(p.s. Click on the link when it appears for a nice, atmospheric song)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Derek?" The voice on the end of the line is low and distorted, but he would recognize it anywhere. He leans back in his office chair, smiling into the receiver. Only a few months ago, the sound of this voice would have him reaching for a bottle of whiskey, now it just floods him with memories, both good and bad. Memories he now can look back on without feeling sorry for himself.

"Hey Braeden." Derek greets his ex wife like an old friend.

"How'd you get this number?" She asks, and Derek feels something akin to affection when he hears the suspicion in her tone. Still the same Braeden.

Derek swears he can hear her roll her eyes, "Yeah, well, you and I didn't exactly part on the best of terms."

He frowns, "About that, I'm sorry, Brae. For everything."

She huffs, her voice going static through the bad connection. "I should be the one apologizing, Derek. I was the one who left you, if you remember."

"No," She chuckles lowly and fondly, "Letting each other go was one of the only things we did right in our relationship."

"I loved you." Derek admits sadly, "Parts of me still do."

"Derek, love wasn't our problem, it was everything else. We wanted different things, and in the end, that's what was most important to the both of us. You wanted a city life, to stay in one place forever, I couldn't give you that. I wanted a military life, to travel the world and never settle down, you couldn't give me that." She sighs, heavy through the line, "I would have called you sooner, if I didn't think you'd have appreciated it."
Derek bites his lip, amused, "You're right, a few months ago I wouldn't have."

"What changed, why'd you call? I know you, you're not one to suddenly get sentimental, you want something." She says, a teasing tone in her voice. "Tell me what it is, and I'll see what I can do."

Derek spins in his chair, working up the courage, "It's nothing big." He says nervously. But this call is to help Stiles, and Derek would do anything for him. "Do you think you could write a recommendation for a friend of mine? You've met doctors, many of whom specialize in PTSD treatment, and he really needs someone he can talk to, someone who has handled soldiers coming back broken from a war. Someone who knows how to help someone put themselves back together again. The psychologists he went to just don't get him."

Derek thinks of Stiles. How Derek sometimes wakes in the middle of the night to find Stiles' side of the bed empty. It used to frighten him, not hearing Stiles' heart beat anywhere in the penthouse. The first time it happened, he had jumped out of bed and run down to the lobby, wearing nothing but his pyjama pants. The older concierge had taken one look at him and pointed to the security monitors behind the desk.

A flickering video of Stiles sitting on the roof played for him on the screen. Stiles was only a small bunch of pale pixels, wearing nothing but a robe over boxers as he stared up into the night sky. Yet Derek could tell exactly what he was feeling. The camera was pointed to his back, Derek wasn't able to see the expression on his face, but he knew what it was. What it always was.

A thousand yard stare. The one Stiles wears when he thinks no one is looking. When he's too tired to plaster a smile on his face and pretend that everything is alright. Pretend like he doesn't remember what the Void did to him. What it made him do to others, to the people he loves.

Braeden hums, "I know a few off the top of my head. Tell you what, I'll write you a letter, and email you a few names, your friend can go from there. How's that sound?"

"Perfect, Braeden. Thank you." Derek smiles, looking out his office window to the city below, watching as people go on with their daily lives. Not knowing about Stiles and how hard he fought to save them.

"You're very welcome." She says, and then after a long silence, "This friend of yours, does he make you happy?"

"Yeah." Derek smiles, "The happiest."

"That's so good to hear. Don't be a stranger, it's nice hearing your voice after such a long time. Promise you'll call again?"

"I promise."

He hangs up the phone.

Derek walks over to the mirror Lydia installed in the office. He fiddles with his tie, fingers running over the paisley pattern printed on the green silk. A long time ago Stiles once said this tie matched his eyes. The memory of that moment brings a smile to his face as he tucks the tie properly into his suit, making sure every errant thread is in place. He has a bonding ceremony to attend.

He's in the coffee shop beneath the office, waiting for his order when his phone dings, indicating a new email. He opens it to find the list of names Braeden promised him. Later, he'll look through them and see if any of them are fae. It would be easier on Stiles if he was able to let everything loose when he talks about the Void's possession.
The barista calls his name, and Derek grabs his order before heading out the door towards his car.

Erica is holding the ceremony in her school's auditorium. She wanted her students to be there. She and Boyd are getting married as well as bonded, so they don't have to explain to the human students what a bonding is. Erica plans on explaining the extra rituals away as a traditional pagan ceremony, which it technically is. Humans used to perform the ceremony, even though with no magic it was ineffective for them. Knowledge of it was eventually lost to time.

He pulls into the high school parking lot, smiling when he sees a familiar blue Jeep parked nearby. Ever since Stiles met Erica during the auction, where he bought her student's art for a ridiculous amount of money, they've kept in touch. Now, they're frighteningly good friends. Sometimes he fears they talk about him behind his back. Whenever they're in the same room they always have their heads together, snickering, and glancing at him out of the corner of their eyes.

Derek sighs. He can't complain. He'd rather his best friend and the man he loves like each other than hate each other's guts. Even if they sometimes talk about his butt's rating level of smackability when they think he can't hear.

He follows the signs, making his way to the dressing rooms behind the stage. Derek smirks when he sees the sign on the door proclaiming a fiery death to anyone who bothers Erica before she's done doing her makeup. He knocks on the door. Guess he'll just have to take the chance.

"Whoever you are, come in, so long as you're not Boyd. Or happen to look like him, or smell like him, or fuck, even is the same gender as him." Erica calls out, panic in her voice.

Derek pulls the door open, walking in with a smirk on his face, "Well, that last one is a bit of a deal breaker."

"Derek!" Erica yells, launching herself out of her chair, right into his arms. He makes sure the coffee he's carrying isn't a casualty, before hugging her back. "Took you long enough, you fucker." She says, squeezing him tight around the middle.

"How are you feeling?" He asks, pushing a strand of hair out of her face, tucking it back into her messy bun.

"Nervous, but also kind of hungry." She eyes the pastry bag Derek put down on her dressing table. Derek rolls his eyes, and pulls a buttered croissant from the bag. Erica grabs it and bites off a huge chunk, chewing happily. "This is why you're my favourite." She points out around a mouthful of pastry.

"Favourite what?" Derek questions, taking a seat on the ratty couch in the corner. It smells like sparkly glitter lotion and aerosol spray tan, but he can't bring himself to care. He's just so happy.

"Werewolf."

"Your soon-to-be-husband is a werewolf." Derek points out, amused. "How is he not your favourite?"

Erica waves away his question with a dismissive hand. "He hogged all the covers last night, right
"Dog jokes, funny." Derek says, "Is Stiles rubbing off on you?"

"Oh honey," Erica meets his eye in the dressing room mirror, "I'm not the one he's rubbing off on."

"Fair enough." Derek says, laughing it off, even though he hasn't been intimate with Stiles since before the possession. He's giving Stiles space, the freedom to choose when or if he still wants a carnal relationship with Derek. If Stiles doesn't, it's not a deal breaker, Derek wants him for more than his body. But it worries Derek.

Sex is a huge part of what Stiles has spent the last few decades being. Derek knows that since his human half was banished with the Void, and he became a full leanan sídhe, Stiles no longer has to have sex to feed. Still, he wasn't domming because it was forced on him. Stiles was doing it because he loved it. Derek hates to think that was one of the many pleasures in life the Void had stolen from Stiles. Including his love of sausages.

One morning Derek had brought sausages and eggs and cooked Stiles a delicious breakfast to eat in bed. Stiles had taken one look at the sausages and dry heaved over the side of the bed, begging Derek to take it away from him. He had caught Stiles mumbling something about entrails, and Derek didn't want to ask. He was both afraid of the answer, and afraid of what bringing it back up would do to Stiles.

He's healing, but it's still a work in progress, and some things will never be the same, but others will.

Derek leads Erica to the bonding circle, letting her pass through. His sensitive hearing picks up the soft crackle of magic as it seals her and Boyd within its embrace. Derek stands aside. The students watch, not knowing exactly what's going on, but Derek hears a few hearts speed up. Either they sense something different because they have fae somewhere in their family tree, or they're just really happy for their teacher.

The druid officiant says a few words in the old tongue, before he too steps from the circle, sealing it behind him. The magic grows and ebbs, feeling for the potential between Erica and Boyd. Then it snaps, and the room fills with the electric scent of ozone. It's taken. The circle fades to nothing and the thrumming of Erica's heart soars.

He meets Stiles' eyes over the heads of the audience. Something in them has Derek's heart stopping in his chest. Longing and love is what he sees as Stiles looks at him. Derek is not yet ready to bond himself to anyone, he probably won't be for a few decades, maybe centuries. But he knows if he ever changes his mind, Stiles will be there. He'll take Derek by the hand and they'll brave the centuries together, their spirits joined. But until then, they have this.

***
Victor Martin enters the world screaming three hours after his mother wins an Olympic gold. The news announcer smiles into the camera telling America that Allison Martin, the winner of the first gold of the games, had a successful delivery. Derek reminds himself to call Lydia later and congratulate them on their new baby. He's looking forward to seeing how nereid and werewolf genes combine. Derek wonders if Victor Martin is now the proud owner of gills and has an affinity for the moon.

"I'm thinking a platypus." Stiles says, reaching for the remote, turning the television off. He curls up at Derek's side, popcorn bowl balanced on his lap. Derek steals some, munching and finding quite a few crunchy kernels. He opts not to say anything, knowing Stiles can't stand the smell of food burning anymore, and chooses to undercook everything. "Or some sort of furry amphibian."

Derek rolls his eyes, "With our luck, the baby is probably going to be venomous like a platypus."

Stiles turns to him, wide eyed, "Platypuses are venomous?" He says with a gasp.

Derek wiggles his fingers at Stiles, "Like you'd never believe, they have these little spurs on the backs of their limbs that excrete venom."

Stiles stares at his wiggling fingers, horrified. "I think I would be less freaked out if they were fae, and not just another strange creature cooked up by Australian evolution." Stiles shudders, probably thinking of the hunter's spider.

If there's anything Derek learned in the month since he moved in with Stiles, it's that he is absolutely and utterly terrified of spiders. Only a few days back Derek had woken in the middle of the night to Stiles screaming bloody murder.

He was fully transformed by the time he made it to the kitchen, expecting his worst nightmare to be waiting for him. Memories of what they went through during the past year coursing through his mind. Instead, he found a shivering, sobbing Stiles. His arms thrown around Derek's neck, face buried in his fur, stammering about how he saw a black widow spider on the lid of his midnight snack jam jar.

Derek had transformed back, peeled Stiles off his body. Picking up the jam jar, he found a harmless garden spider attached to the bottom. It didn't even look like a black widow. It was green and completely harmless. Derek had promptly tucked Stiles back in bed, and wrapped the blankets around him, promising to protect him from all the insects out to get him. Stiles had drifted off to sleep, mumbling about how Derek was his hero.

"Good thing werewolves aren't venomous, or we'd have a problem." Stiles mumbles. Derek grins toothily like the wolf he is.

"Oh yeah?" He teases, bending over and snapping his blunt human teeth at Stiles' button nose. Stiles giggles for him to stop. Half heartedly pushing himself away, he scoots down the couch. "Oh but I can't stop," Derek chuckles, shifting so he's crawling, approaching Stiles like a lion cornering his prey. Stiles is laughing now, as he kicks at Derek, but he easily dodges Stiles' flailing limbs.

"Derek." Stiles begs, hiccupping when he can't get enough air. Derek lunges forward and buries his face in Stiles' neck, kissing and nipping enthusiastically at the skin. He's so happy he almost doesn't realize Stiles has gone still. Derek freezes and pulls back, searching Stiles' face for any signs of distress. Stiles lies beneath him, his eyes open as he stares back at Derek. The moment stretches between them until it reaches a breaking point. Derek's about to climb off Stiles and apologize when Stiles says three little words.
"Please, don't stop."

They echo in the quiet room and Derek searches Stiles' expression. He finds nothing but desperation within their depths. Desperation and a hint of something else.

"God, fuck, Derek. Bite me." Stiles hisses.

Lust. There's lust in Stiles' eyes, something he hasn't seen in ages. Now it drifts up in waves, the scent of arousal. Stiles' eyes darken and he tilts his head to the side, giving Derek all the permission he needs.

He sinks his human teeth in the delicate skin of Stiles' neck. He bites gently, but firmly, and he must be doing something that pleases Stiles because he lets loose this noise that goes straight to Derek's dick. He sucks the flesh into his mouth, worrying it with his tongue as he lies on top of Stiles. Covering him, protecting him as his wolf urges him to do.

He wants to take Stiles like he's never taken him before. He never wants to let Stiles go, never again.

"Derek, please. Oh, oh, oh.... Fuck, punish me." Stiles pleads.

Derek jerks in surprise. Pulling away, he stares down at Stiles in shock. Stiles meets his gaze, his own eyes just as surprised. "Stiles..." Derek starts, trailing off.

"I need this." Stiles begs, "I'm asking this of you, and I know we haven't talked about it, but I swear to you, it's what I want right now, what I need. And I know you want it too. I can feel your wolf screaming to claim me. Just this once, please?"

Derek lifts a hand to Stiles' cheek, shakily running his fingers over still sallow cheekbones. Stiles is still hurt, but he is slowly recovering. Is this what they truly need right now? Or are they simply vulnerable, in need of something to ease that fear away?

"Is there a difference?" Stiles asks, reading his expression.

"You know there is." Derek replies, "You practically wrote the book on consent."

Stiles smiles faintly, taking Derek's hand in his and pressing a kiss to his palm, "I'm saying yes, Derek, can't you hear me? Yes."

Derek frowns, still unsure. "You've always been the one in control. You always held the whip. You always take charge."

"You say I've always been in control, but only a few months ago, I was anything but." Stiles says shakily. "When the Void was inside me, I couldn't do anything. I couldn't stop it no matter how much I yelled or screamed. My need to control, to hold power over everything was worth shit all." Stiles shivers. "So please, I want to feel you holding me back. I need to know that something can stop me now. I tried so hard to stop it, but it never worked. It killed and it slaughtered, and it used me to do it. Hold me down, Derek."

Derek rests his hand over Stiles' chest, feeling his heart beat steadily underneath. He's not lying, he's telling the truth and his heart never stutters. Derek nods in agreement. "Stoplight system, okay?" He waits for Stiles confirmation before continuing.

Taking his weight off his arms, he plasters his body all along Stiles'. The warmth of his skin, pressing through his clothes, heating Derek from the outside in. Stiles whimpers as Derek noses at his neck. Huffing breaths across his soft, pale skin.
The wolf is pleased that his mate is lying still for once, submitting to him. Derek rumbles in his chest as he rubs his nose all along Stiles' collarbone. He pulls down and rips his shirt, revealing more and more pale skin for his pleasure. The wolf loves that skin, adores it, would worship it if he could.

Derek bites, and when he does, Stiles hisses in pain. He waits for a colour to be shouted, but nothing but moans leave Stiles' lips and he continues.

He rubs his body all along Stiles'. His weight pushing Stiles into the cushions as he takes out his pleasure on his mate's body. His sweatpants covered cock notches into the area between Stiles' hipbone and thigh. Derek thrusts. Moaning in pleasure, he keeps on thrusting. His teeth remain clamped around Stiles' neck as he holds him down. Positioning him like he wants.

When Stiles tries to lift a hand to place on the back of Derek's neck to tug him closer, Derek snarls, stopping his movements prematurely. He presses Stiles down harder until he can hardly breathe and Derek thrusts, he thrusts and thrusts. Mindless in his search for release.

Stiles comes between them but the wolf ignores him except for a reprimanding nip. Stiles should have waited. The wolf doesn't linger on it too long, and soon, Derek's coming with a shudder and a wall rattling howl.

He bites down on Stiles' neck, finally drawing blood. It's the taste of pennies in his mouth that has him pulling away in horror, an apology on his tongue. He finds Stiles staring up at him, tears on his cheeks but nothing but gratefulness in his eyes.

"Thanks you." Stiles whispers as Derek rises to fetch the first aid kit and bottles of water from the fridge. Derek cleans his wound, then wipes away their come, pressing apologetic kisses to Stiles' skin. His heart is racing and only slows when Derek tucks him under his arm, cradling him to his chest like he is something precious, something to be loved. And to Derek, he is. He presses a kiss to Stiles' forehead as they lie together in comfortable silence.

"Are you okay?" Derek asks after a while.

Stiles snuffles, trying to press himself closer to Derek, "I feel better than anything I've felt in months."

"Do you want to talk about what that was?" Derek asks.

"Not particularly, but I think we should." Stiles sighs, obviously exhausted.

"If you're tired, we could wait until morning?" Derek offers, giving Stiles a way out, but he shakes his head.

"I want to talk about it now." Stiles pushes away until he can look at Derek's face. "I feel guilty." He confesses, "And I know this won't stop the guilt from returning, but it put me out of my mind for a few minutes."

Derek nods, acknowledging what Stiles is saying. Stiles feels weak, that if he was just a bit stronger he could have stopped the Void. Derek's not going to try and reassure him, to try and argue that even the Queen felt helpless in the face of the Void. Stiles was trapped in its mind, only he knows best what it felt like.

"And you?" Stiles asks.

"When the Void was possessing you, my wolf nearly went mad. I've never felt so helpless before in my life. It's like I was always a step behind it, no matter what I did. It was frustrating and awful
knowing that it put your life on the line. Tonight, I liked holding you down, it settled my wolf and it
settled me."

"Thank you for telling me that." Stiles says, a smile pulling his lips up.

"I love you." Derek says truthfully.

Stiles' eyes soften, his smile turning fond, "I love you, too."

***

Only a few days after the Void was purged from Stiles' body and they returned to earth, his mother
had held a press conference. The cameras had rolled as she walked on stage, on display for all of the
fae to judge, as she announced the Unseelie queen had died to save them all. Gasps had echoed
throughout the room as reporters shouted questions and demanded answers. What happened? How
is this possible? And the most important one of all, what now?

His mother had stood up tall and proud and declared that she would take care of them. She shares a
bond with the king, has all the powers of the old queen, and most importantly, she cares. She then
proceeded to reveal what happened in Vegas.

The fallout wasn't as bad as expected, and it warmed her to the press. The old queen had lied, tried
to cover up the tragedy. But this queen, she spoke the truth.

Derek had stood to the side, and held Laura's hand. His Alpha's hand, as they watched their mother
shine in her spotlight. Talia Hale is more powerful than anything they could have ever imagined,
and she's their mother.

Talia had stopped them after the press conference with a hand to Laura's shoulder. She looked
happy in her skin. Happier than Derek had ever seen her. She lives with the king now, leaving the
house to Laura. Derek hears rumours that they plan on loosening the stiff regulations preventing
Seelie from living in Unseelie territory, and the other way around. Now that the two rulers are
bonded, it only makes sense.

That day, his mother had whispered in their ears and handed them an envelope filled with hundred
dollar bills. "There's extra in there if you both want mani pedis." She had laughed and hugged them
close. "A reading from the seer is a must for new Alphas."

Months later, and Laura finally has some time to spare.

It's only been a few weeks since he and Stiles had sex on their couch, and he's hoping the seer can
shed some light on their future. Derek pays the cab driver while Laura climbs out, staring up at the
neon sign proclaiming the shop Satomi's Claws. Chinatown is exactly how he remembers it the last
time he was here. Thanks to Satomi, the developers haven't touched this part of the city. Most of the
shops are rent controlled and will remain that way as long as she is in power.

"I always knew Satomi had a sense of humour." Laura says when Derek walks up to her side.

Derek scoffs, "You should see the name of her meditation and hot yoga studio." Laura quirks a
brow and Derek continues, "Aware Wolf."

"Oh my god." Laura snickers, holding the door open for Derek as the bell chimes, "That's too
good."

"Don't even get me started on the wig shop." He whispers just as one of Satomi's daughters plods
over to meet them, teeth out and sharp.

"Mariko! Is that you? I haven't seen you since you were yea high." Laura holds her hand to her knee, "You young ones grow too fast. Where's Shizuka, is she here too?"

Mariko's eyes narrow when she sees Laura, "Alpha Hale." She greets grudgingly, "The seer said you would be coming. Follow me." She whirls on her heels and marches off.

"Is it just me," Laura whispers so only Derek can hear, "Or does she seem a little bit angry at me?"

Derek rolls his eyes, "Don't you remember? You used to pick her up and spin her around until she would puke when she was a toddler. She hates you."

"Yikes." Laura mouths, "Did I really?" Derek nods. "Okay, wow, I'm a bitch." She walks a little faster, calling after Mariko. "Hey, Mariko. You know if I did anything to hurt you before, I'm sorry, okay?"

Mariko purses her lips and holds open a curtain for them to pass through, saying nothing to Laura's apology. Laura just sighs and walks through, dragging Derek with her. Derek glances back to see Mariko flipping them the bird. He hears Laura say under her breath, "Geez, I'm just no good with children." Derek strongly echoes that sentiment.

They find the seer pacing in front of a toaster, humming under his breath. The scent of toaster strudel wafts through the air, making Derek's stomach grumble. The seer turns to face them with a sour look on his face, and Laura startles at his appearance. He wears a spiky grey wig that looks like it's a century old. Bandages are tied around his eyes with two nondescript buttons sewn to the front. It must be a new persona, Derek's never seen it before.

"Where's Satomi?" Derek asks. Usually Satomi spends her days in the salon. No matter how much she denies it, anyone can see she cares about the seer. Even if she keeps pushing off his advances.

The strudel pops from the toaster and the seer grabs the pastries, placing them on a plate. Taking them over to a nearby table, he sits, "I feel a wreck without my little China girl." He croons sadly, poking unhappily at the pastry.

"Mama's in New Jersey." Shizuka, Mariko's twin, says, walking down the stairs leading to the second floor. "Another Alpha was trying to encroach on her territory, she's teaching him as lesson." She scowls briefly at Laura, probably for the same reason Mariko did. Laura terrorized the twins when they were little.

The seer holds up his plate, "I've made some breakfast and coffee." He sings. Shizuka grabs a strudel, plopping down on the seer's lap. He tucks her head under his chin as they both eat. Derek wishes he could take a photo, they're adorable, like a father and daughter.

Laura pulls the envelope of cash their mother gave them from her purse, sliding it over on the table. Shizuka grabs at it, and immediately begins counting it with a businesslike flair. "There's an extra two hundred." Shizuka points out when she finishes counting.

"That's to get these done." Laura holds up her fingers, wiggling them "And if Derek wants his nails done too."

Derek stares down at his bitten and cracked fingernails, considering it. But Shizuka shakes her head. "There's only enough money for one manicure."

Laura gapes, "Surely a manicure can't cost two hundred dollars?"
Shizuka's eyes narrow, "Your manicure does."

Derek chuckles in amusement as Laura sighs in resignation. She'll never win them over. "Let's just get this over with."

Shizuka flashes her sharp teeth as she climbs off the seer's lap. "I'll be at the front with Mariko." She calls over her shoulder, pushing through the curtain, leaving them alone with the seer.

"She's a Queen, and such are queens." The seer sings fondly, gazing after his quasi daughter.

"If that's what you call a spoiled brat." Laura mutters under her breath, offering her hand for the seer to take. "This isn't going to hurt, is it?"

"Got to get a rain check on pain." The seer grins, teeth sharp.

"What does that mean?" Laura whines, just as the seer grabs her hand. She quiets instantly as the seer's mouth flattens into a grim line. The buttons over his eyes, are emotionless. Derek wishes he knew what he was thinking, but the bandage hides everything. Eventually, the seer drops Laura's hand. Reaching for his toaster strudel, he picks it up again, taking a big bite.

"Well?" Laura asks, "What did you see?"

The seer breaks out in a wide smile, "With you by my side, it should be fine."

Crumbs scatter everywhere as he sings with a full mouth. Derek makes a face of disgust, especially when some on the crumbs land on his clothes.

Laura sighs in relief before frowning, "Any specifics you could warn me about?"

"Young girl, they call them the Diamond Dogs." The seer half sings, half chews.

"So basically other werewolves? Laura scoffs. "I could have told you that. Wolves have always challenged mom for territory. New York is prime real estate."

The seer snorts, "See these eyes so red, red like jungle burning bright."

Derek claps Laura on the back, "Congrats big sis, you've got to keep your eye out for wily Alphas, not just omegas." Laura pouts at the new development.

After, while Laura's in the front getting a two hundred dollar manicure, the seer takes his hand and wordlessly asks if he can read his future. Derek nods an affirmation, figuring it can't hurt.

"Things that happened in the past, only happened in your mind." The seer croons.

"Huh?" Derek frowns, brow furrowing, feeling like something isn't right, "Is this for me?" The seer shakes his head, and Derek swallows. He came here with a purpose, to know his and Stiles' futures. Maybe the seer is picking up on that. "Is it for Stiles?" He asks and the seer snaps his fingers in confirmation.

"No one can blame you for walking away." He continues singing. Derek doesn't understand what he's trying to say, but he figures it would be best to tell Stiles. He should know. "I shall always watch you until my love runs dry. Oh, beautiful baby." The seer sings, his voice, full of so much emotion. "Better take care. Think I better go."

The seer drops his hand abruptly, and Derek watches a single solitary tear escape from under the bandages, trailing slowly down his cheek.
"Listen to me you conceited, selfish, son of a bitch." Derek hears a woman growl as the elevator doors open. "You can drown in your guilt for all I care, but you fucking did this to her. You'd better show up."

"Is there a problem?" Derek asks. There's a older woman stabbing her finger in the air only an inch from Stiles' face. He doesn't look scared, though, if anything he looks resigned.

The woman turns to look at him, a scowl on her wrinkled face. She smells faintly of fresh water and waxy vegetation. She isn't human, but she also isn't anything Derek's seen before. Allison smells of saltwater, and this woman smells similar, so she must be a nymph of some kind. "No problem, wolf. I was simply reminding dear Stiles of his duties. Duties he has practically forsaken ever since he met you." She spits, venom in her tone.

"Vasilisa, please." Stiles begs, "He has nothing to do with this."

"He has everything to do with this." Vasilisa prods at Derek's chest, "This one better show up too. I want him to know about my sister and what you did to her."

Derek blinks, the clues connecting in his mind. "You're Svetlana's sister?" He asks.

Vasilisa's eyes widen in surprise, "You told him about her." She looks at Stiles as he sheepishly shuffles his feet.

"In a manner of speaking, yes." Stiles says. The Void told him, and honestly Derek doesn't know if it wasn't for his possession if Stiles would have told him at all

Vasilisa huffs and reaches into her purse. Rummaging around for a bit, she pulls out a piece of cardstock, handing it to Derek. He takes it, looking it over curiously. It's a funeral announcement for one Svetlana Fyodorova. Derek looks up, meeting Stiles' eyes. There's so much pain in them, it breaks Derek's heart.

"I'm sorry for your loss." He says to Vasilisa but she just sighs tiredly.

"Make sure he shows up, she would want him there." She says, turning on her heel and leaving without a word. Stiles watches her go with a sad look upon his face. He steps aside for Derek, letting him into their apartment.

The moment he shuts the door, Derek wraps Stiles in a hug. Stiles clings to him, body shaking as he finally lets loose the sobs he was holding in. Stiles cries and Derek holds him together as he grieves for the woman who will forever be lost to him. He thinks of what the seer said back in Chinatown, and Derek wonders if that was a message from Svetlana to Stiles.

"Stiles?" Derek says, slowly stroking a hand down his back in comfort. "I have something to tell you."

When Derek finishes relaying the message to Stiles, he cries even harder than before, but Derek holds him even tighter. He presses kiss after kiss to his hair and whispers "shhh" into his skin. Comforting him as well as he can. Later, when Stiles is wrapped up nice and warm in a fleece blanket on the couch, Derek heats water on the stove, preparing Stiles' favourite tea.

Slipping Svetlana's funeral announcement out of his back pocket, he pins it to the fridge. It's in two days, and they'll both be there.
They day of the funeral dawns bright and warm. It's a beautiful day and families are up and about, children dragging their parents off to the park or waterfront. Derek dresses in one of his lightest suits, a black tie to match as Stiles sits on their bed, arms wrapped around his legs as he watches.

"Aren't you going to dress?" Derek asks, gesturing to the end of the bed where Stiles' matching suit lies.

"I'm scared." Stiles says even as he climbs out of bed, reaching for the clothing.

"It's not your fault, you know." Derek says as Stiles pulls the pants up over his briefs. He helps Stiles into the shirt, and buttons it up for him.

"That's not what Vasilisa said." Stiles pouts, staring down at the floor.

"It's what Svetlana said." Derek reassures, "She didn't blame you."

"She should have." Stiles says, kicking his toe against the floorboards. "We were supposed to be happy. We were going to bond with each other, live together and grow old together. Instead what did she get? Rusalka have human life spans. She died of old age, catatonic since the seventies because I melted her brain into mush."

"She didn't blame you." Derek can only repeat as Stiles finishes dressing. He looks in the mirror and hangs his head.

"I didn't even get to say goodbye."

Derek takes his hand, squeezing his fingers. "You will now."

***

The funeral is a sombre affair. Only a few others show up. People who knew Svetlana back in the seventies and cared enough to say good bye. Also a few nurses from hospice-care who, Derek assumes, looked after Svetlana for years. Vasilia stands at the forefront, tears in her eyes as she talks about her sister. Sharing memories and stories with those gathered. Stiles clings to Derek, to the support he provides, as Vasilisa talks about how happy her sister was after she met the man of her dreams, her eyes fixed on Stiles.

The funeral is almost over, the casket lowering into the earth, when Yukimura steps from behind a gravestone. She meets Derek's eyes over Stiles' shoulder and nods to him. He returns the greeting before turning back to the funeral. Vasilisa leaves without a word to Stiles, she simply wobbles away down the cemetery road. Derek watches as Stiles stares after her, an unreadable look in his eye.

Yukimura approaches then, trudging across the trimmed lawn, and Stiles' expression turns questioning. "Noshiko?" He asks, "What are you doing here?"

"Paying my respects. But I also wish to speak with you." She says to Stiles but glances at Derek. At that, he understands. This is her keeping the promise she made in Ethiopia to explain to Stiles all about his leanan sídhe heritage. What being leanan sídhe entails, and why his powers corrupted in the first place.

Derek excuses himself and leaves them to talk in private. He walks amongst the gravestones, reading the names and epitaphs of the people they belong to, wondering what Svetlana's will say and
who chose it for her. He finds a quiet bench by the side of the road and sits, relaxing in the afternoon sun.

Stiles joins him after some time, silent, but for the slightly faster thump of his heart.

"I want to be angry at her." Stiles finally says, "But it's difficult, she's been a mother figure to me for so many years." He frowns. "It hurts because everything could have been so different if she had just told me what I was doing to Svetlana." He looks off into the distance, a pensive expression on his face. Derek studies his features, from the shape of his nose to the delicate lashes fanning amber eyes. Derek cannot help but disagree, it might make him selfish, but he doesn't care. If things were different, he wouldn't be with Stiles. He probably never would have even met him.

On the balcony, at Dante's art opening, Stiles had said he was monogamous. That he only slept with others because he wasn't allowed to feed on one person. Stiles probably wouldn't have dominated others if he still had Svetlana. And if he wasn't a pro-dom, he never would've hired Derek.

"Hey." Stiles says, touching his hand lightly and drawing him out of his thoughts, "What are you thinking about?"

Derek sighs, rubbing his forehead, "About how things could've been." He admits.

Stiles tilts his head to the side as he looks at Derek, "I don't think Svetlana would've liked you much."

"You're too broody. She was a flower loving hippie, you would have harshed her mellow and frustrated her to no end. Plus, she wouldn't have liked some big shot lawyer lusting after her man."

Derek snorts, blushing up to his ears, "What about you, how do you feel about my broodiness?"

Stiles hums, a smile growing on his lips. He nudes his shoulder against Derek's, "Well Mr. Hale, I'd have to say I'm quite fond of it."

Derek leans over and kisses Stiles' cheek, "Then, Mr. Stilinski, I'd have to say I'm quite fond of you."

***

Thankfully, one of the psychologists on Braeden's list turns out to be fae, much to Derek's relief. On a Saturday, he drives Stiles over for his first appointment in Manhattan. Derek drops him off, and trolls around the nearby shops, wearing a perpetual grumpy face, worried about Stiles even as he kills time. He scares off quite a few sales associates, and to make up for the crying he hears coming from the back of the store, purchases a plum silk scarf for Isaac. All the while wearing an apologetic expression as the cashier scowls at him.

He's just really worried. Stiles' doctor may have a list of commendations the size of the Statue of Liberty, granted to him by the military, but Derek highly doubts anyone in the military has ever been possessed. Unless they have, and in that case, the doctor might be perfect.

Derek's sitting at a cafe, sipping a triple shot espresso, when the receptionist phones and tells him Stiles will be out soon. When Derek opens the door to the office, he finds Stiles chatting happily with the receptionist. He takes one look at Derek, and his smile spreads into a wide grin. He walks up to Derek and links their arms. "Tally ho." He grins, pulling Derek from the office.
Derek drives while Stiles chats about the doctor. Apparently he was given homework to go out and do something that makes him happy. Derek suggests going to the Met and Stiles enthusiastically agrees.

He parks the car on a nearby inner street and they walk to the museum, hand in hand. Stiles yammers on about how excited he is to finally see the Vigée Le Brun exhibition and Derek cannot help but smile along.

Stiles takes him through the galleries, pointing out various paintings, giving him background stories behind each one. Some of them seem too ridiculous to be true and when Derek starts second guessing Stiles, he starts making up stories. From then on it becomes a game where he has to guess if the story Stiles is telling him is true or not. In the end Derek looses badly and has to buy Stiles something from the giftshop.

When they get home the plush Salvador Dali Stiles chose, complete with cape and tiny moustache, is placed on their headboard. Derek can't even be mad about it. The grin it brings to Stiles' face whenever he sees it, never fails to make Derek smile in return.

***

The days pass into weeks, and the weeks into months. Stiles' doctor keeps making him go out, doing things that used to make him happy. Things the Void ruined for him, but that Stiles is slowly reclaiming.

One day Derek had come home to a roast in the oven, the scent of slow cooking meat wafting in the air. He had found Stiles on the other side of the kitchen, staring at the oven and refusing to take his eyes off it. Derek didn't know what Stiles feared it would turn into if he looked away, but he can imagine. Given that it is the scent of burning meat that freaks him out. Still, Stiles had eaten the roast with relish as he asked Derek about his day.

He's getting better, it's obvious, even to those unaware of the fae. Their concierge constantly comments happily on how Stiles is putting on more weight. He even offers to bring Stiles his wife's famous moussaka to help.

It should come as no surprise to Derek when he climbs out of the shower to find a naked Stiles on their bed, slowly stroking his cock. And yet, he still stumbles and only just manages to catch himself on a nearby dresser, barely preventing himself from bashing his head in. Not that it would have done anything permanent. It's just that he doesn't want to have to wash bloodstains out of the carpet.

"What are you waiting for." Stiles crooks a finger, "Get over here."

Derek swallows. They haven't had sex since that one time on the couch months ago. Hell, they haven't even talked about it since then. To see Stiles like this, laid out like they do this all the time, makes him flush all the way up to his ears. He climbs onto the bed, knee walking over to Stiles. Derek's not going to touch him unless he gets full, enthusiastic consent, but he needs to be closer.

"Stiles," He starts, "This isn't just because the doctor might have said you're ready, is it?"

Stiles lets go of his cock and crawls closer to Derek. "No, silly. I just want to feel your hands on me again." He says, taking Derek's hand in his, he places it high on his thigh. "Touch me."

Derek searches his expression for any hint of doubt, finding none, he slides his hand higher until it rests in the vee of Stiles' legs. Stiles moans when he softly strokes the sensitive skin there. Derek leans forward and captures Stiles' mouth in a passionate kiss. He tries to convey months worth of
longing in their liplock, and he must be successful because Stiles pushes him roughly onto his back and quickly straddles his hips.

Dazed, Derek stares up at him with heavily-lidded eyes, licking his lips when Stiles finally breaks the kiss. Slowly, he raises his hands above his head, wordlessly asking Stiles to hold them. He does, wrapping his fingers tight around Derek's wrists.

"You like that?" Stiles asks coyly. "Hmm?" Derek nods rapidly, unable to speak with how much Stiles is making him feel. "Do you want me to fuck you, sweetheart?" He asks, emphasising his words by grinding down harder until Derek hisses, pain and pleasure intermixing.

"Please, oh god, please." Derek begs, but Stiles freezes. All the blood leaves his face, and suddenly he looks like he wants to vomit. "Stiles?" Derek asks, reaching for him, but Stiles jerks out of his grip.

"Don't." He says weakly, raising a finger. "Yellow. Just wait."

"What's wrong, how can I help?" Derek asks. Stiles has never safeworded with him before.

"Please." At that, Stiles turns even paler, "Just shut up Derek, red, okay? Red." He climbs off Derek and runs to the bathroom. Derek hears the tap run, but it doesn't manage to cover up the sounds of Stiles retching into the toilet. Derek climbs off the bed, reaching for his boxers and slipping them on. He knows Stiles asked for space. It's why he said red. But something Derek said made him safeword, and he wants to know what it is so he can avoid saying it in the future.

He leans against the bathroom door, listening to Stiles breath. It isn't jumpy and irregular like he's having a panic attack, but his heart is thumping away like a stampede. He knocks on the door, worried, "Just tell me what I did, ple-"

"Don't fucking say it." Stiles says, voice wobbling, "Don't fucking beg."

"Stiles..." Derek trails off just as the door opens and he nearly falls on his back. Stiles stands in front of him, tears and snot running down his face. He looks so awful, so torn apart, Derek doesn't know what to say.

"I hear them, Derek." Stiles lifts a shaking hand to clutch at his hair. "They plead for me to spare their lives, praying to every single deity they know even as I tear out their throats with my bare hands." Derek scrambles to his feet, approaching Stiles like he's a caged beast.

"I see them as they lie beneath me. As I stand over them, hand coated to the elbow in gore." His eyes flicker over to Derek's. "I held them down, as they begged for their lives, begged, and I didn't listen. I turned a deaf ear as I ripped them apart." Stiles says as he collapses into Derek's arms, sobbing, his body shaking with grief. "I killed all those people."

"No." Derek whispers furiously, "It was the Void. He was controlling your body. None of this is your fault." He enunciates, cradling Stiles to his chest, rocking him and whispering reassurances. It wasn't Stiles, it was never Stiles. He was the victim. The Void was the predator and it eviscerated him just as well as it did all those other poor souls.

Stiles cries until he cannot cry anymore and it slowly breaks Derek's heart.

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Stiles spends the day after in a fugue state. Shadows bruise under his eyes as he pokes at the food Derek serves to him. He's lost his appetite, and Derek would hate it if all the work Stiles has done to get better was lost because they tried to get physical much too soon.

Derek sits opposite Stiles at the breakfast bar, eating, and sending him worried glances as he lets his food gets cold. Stiles bites his lip, frowning, looking like he wants to say something but doesn't know how. "What's wrong?" Derek asks, reaching for Stiles' hand but he jerks out of the way and Derek finds himself grabbing at air.

"You still have the brownstone, right?" Stiles asks quietly.

"Do you think you could stay there, just for a week or two? Until, um," Stiles makes a noise of frustration.

"If that's what you want." Derek sighs unhappily.

"It's not about what I what," Stiles says, angrily picking up his fork and stabbing at his eggs, "It's unfair to you."

Derek frowns, putting down his utensils. "What is?"

"This farce of a relationship."

Derek feels himself getting angry. What does Stiles mean by that? Does he think Derek is not serious about them? Because he is, he's been in love with Stiles for years. He's never been more serious in his life.

Stiles must notice his confusion because he continues. "We got together because you wanted me to dominate you. We started this relationship because of sex, and now, I can't have sex with you. It's unfair for you to still be anchored in a relationship where you're not getting what you want. You should be with someone who can still be your dom and take care of you, like you deserve." Stiles says emotionally. Not even bothering to looking up at Derek as he breaks off their relationship, after all they've been through.

"Sex." Derek states dumbly.

Stiles tosses the fork onto his plate, angrily gripping at his hair, "Yes, sex and domination. I can't right now, okay? That time on the couch was a fluke, and after last night..." Stiles makes an awful noise, his voice higher like he's about to start crying at any moment. "I don't know if I can, at least not for a while."

"Sex." Derek repeats because he can't believe it. Stiles honestly thinks that's all Derek wants from him.

"But you asked for me to dominate you. I didn't ask for it, it was you."

"I thought it was the only way I could have you." Derek hisses under his breath, "I figured it would
be better if I could have at least that with you than never have you at all. I love you to absolute fucking pieces, you goddamned asshole, or did you forget that?"

"Derek, I can't be with you." Stiles says sadly.

"We can be together and not have sex. Fuck, I will gladly never touch you again, if that's what you want. Just don't leave me, Stiles." Derek pleads, "And don't make me leave you."

Stiles scrubs a hand over his face, "It's been so difficult for me, Derek." He says, "I know I don't show it, but I rely on you so much, I couldn't bear it if you tired of me and chose to cut your losses. I couldn't stand it."

"Look at me." Derek says, waiting until Stiles lowers the hand covering his face. Until he looks at Derek, fear and dread in his eyes for what he thinks is coming, "That's not going to happen, I promise you that. We're both so broken, but we'll be broken, together, and we'll repair ourselves, together. Eventually, we'll get better, and when that happens, we'll still be together. Okay?" Derek asks, leaving his hand open on the table for Stiles to take. When he does, Derek folds their hands, gripping tight and refusing to let go.

"Okay."

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**Three Years Later**

The room is dim. The only lights shine from over the bar, and a solitary spot light that illuminates the stage. A woman stands on the stage wearing a slinky black dress from another era. Her raven hair flows long and free, cascading down her back. She grips the microphone like it's a lover's hand as she croons, singing softly, but powerfully. Her voice is rough from years of smoking cigarettes, but it smoulders, echoing in the small bar. A man sits behind the woman, playing a guitar with his eyes closed, head tilted to the side.

Derek sits in a booth with Stiles, a shirley temple in hand as he listens to the flowing music. Stiles' eyes never leave the woman, not once, throughout her whole performance. He doesn't even touch his drink as he listens, expression glazed over, mouth hanging slightly open. Derek watches Stiles, his every movement, every twitch in his expression. This man he loves more than anything in the world.

The woman finishes the song and bows her head gently to the soft applause she receives. She climbs off the stage and Stiles rises to approach her. Derek listens in as Stiles praises her performance, his eyes shining. He calls her an artist, a visionary.

He asks after her work, if she feels the music comes to her easily. She admits with a sheepish smile that she struggles. She's currently stuck on a ballad, and can't seem to get out of her funk. She's unsure on how to continue, and doesn't know which direction to take it in.

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Stiles smiles reassuringly. He reaches out and takes her hand in his. She smiles at him, confused. Derek watches and lets his eyes glow gold so he can see beyond Stiles' glamour. The glamour unfolds, revealing his true form to Derek. He watches as long, feathered wings unfurl from Stiles' back, stretching and reaching out to the ceiling. They fold around the woman, embracing her, even though she cannot feel a thing.

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Stiles' eyes shine whiskey brown, as his whole body seems to glow, emanating a soft, warm light. The woman gasps, realization flooding her eyes as Stiles grants her inspiration. She places a hand
over her forehead, stumbling back, like she cannot believe it. She stammers apologies to Stiles and takes off faster than the wind. No doubt to write down whatever sprang into her mind before it disappears.

Stiles turns to face him, wearing a look of such blatant happiness and freedom, Derek can hardly stand it. It makes his heart soar to know that Stiles finally feels complete, finally feels right in his skin. Derek lifts his hand for Stiles to take, "Let's go home?" He asks, and Stiles smiles.

Chapter End Notes

You can find a VERY nsfw drawing that didn't make it into the fic here if you want (hint: it's the one with the rigging and the bj)

End Notes

Nice comments make me smile and squeal, mean comments make me cry and want ice cream. Don't make me want ice cream, I'm on a diet.

Oh, and tell me if I should tag anything.

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