Lost (On the Road to Self-Destruction)

by bluerib

Summary

When word reaches the Beacon Hills Sheriff Department of an illegal, underground, full-shift pit fight Deputy Stiles Stilinski is the first to volunteer for the raid. He expects the usual: wounded wolves, pissed off owners and enough violence to fuel the world if it could be bottled and sold. What he gets isn't all that different; except for that black wolf with red eyes that has the judgiest wolf-face ever. Stiles is instantly smitten, it all goes down hill from there.

Notes

The wolf only remembers how to fight. It knows that it hates the new pit, hates the sickly-sweet smelling lady and hates (really, really likes) the strange human that smells like home.
Smells Like Home (Tastes Like Honey)

The wolf doesn’t remember a time before blood and death. It only remembers having to fight to survive; its claws and teeth ripping into the flesh and fur of others like it. It remembers the thick, cloying scent of perfume and a crooning voice that elicits shivers down its back. The bars on its cage, the gruel in its bowl—these things are familiar.

It knows that it’s in the back of a car, knows that that means it’s being transported to a new location where it will be pitted against others like it. Sometimes words from Before pop into its head when it sees or hears something. They don’t always make sense but the wolf doesn’t think too hard about these things. It fights when something living is put in front of it and eats whatever goes into its bowl. Such is its life.

The roar of the vehicle dies and the jarring stops. The wolf waits quietly in its cage, careful not to press up against the bars that are coated in something that leave burns along its fur. The thick collar around its neck is tight, it delivers a warning shock as the doors are opened and the humans poke their heads in.

The woman that makes his hackles rise isn’t one of them, but the balding man—Gerard his mind whispers—is there with a catch pole in one hand. The wolf hates this man, so much so that he doesn’t mind the shocks that come with fighting against the catch pole as it slide arounds its neck. The noose tightens and it chokes as it’s dragged from the cage. Gerard manages to stay just out of reach of its snapping jaws. The other men around Gerard laugh as the wolf lunges for them, reaching the end of the pole and choking itself in the process. It smells burning flesh as the substance coating the pole works past the fur and meets its skin.

The wolf is dragged beneath ground, through steel doors in the ground and down the stairs into a tunnel. It’s dark and smells of ashes. Flashes of bright light and red heat startle the wolf as it inhales deeply. Suddenly the wolf no longer fights because it dislikes its handlers, it fights because this place is bad and it wants out. Even as it’s hauled back into the cage area it can taste the fire.

Even as the catch pole is released it whines pitifully. Gerard only smiles and taps the bars of the cage with the pole, saying something that the wolf does not understand.

Other wolves pace their cages restlessly as the humans kill the lights and slam a pair of massive doors shut behind them. It would appear that tonight they’ll rest, and tomorrow they’ll fight.

Sleep before a fight is important because every wolf is different and no fight is easy. Tonight, though, the wolf can’t find a comfortable position. It circles restlessly on the cement floor, even going as far as to paw in a corner. Its claws scrabble uselessly against the concrete and it whines in distress. Another wolf barks, but the wolf does not answer. It claws at the floor until the pads on its paws are worn down and its nails and stubs. It bleeds at some point, but the wolf has always healed quickly and pain is nothing new.

Somehow the night passes like that. It isn’t until the steel doors crack open again that the wolf stops its restless pawing and pacing. The floor of its cage is a bloody mess and its nails have been worn down past stubs. A handler tsks at it but does nothing else. The wolves bark eagerly as food is brought in. It’s tasteless, but the wolf doesn’t remember what taste even is.

For some reason, when the metal bowl is slid through the slot and into its metal cage the wolf doesn’t even think about eating it. Today its stomach is roiling around uncomfortably. The wolf feels like curling up in the corner and throwing up. Again the handler comes by its cage, smacking a shock baton against the bars at the front of the cage when the wolf refuses to eat. The man says something, but the wolf doesn’t even bother trying to pretend, just licks at its paws in the corner. The bowl is
pulled from the cage and does not make a reappearance. Not that the wolf was saving it for later, it’s glad to see the bowl gone.

Hopefully the other wolves will eat slowly because as soon as they finish eating the fights for the day will begin. The wolf doesn’t hate the others and it knows that they don’t hate it either. These fights are just another fact of life for them, something as simple as breathing.

Except this time, right as the others finish eating and are licking their chops for any stray chunks they might have gotten on their muzzles, another wolf is brought in. Usually all the wolves come in the night before to settle for the night. This is new; the wolf doesn’t like new. The strange wolf is too bright eyed, too young for the wolf to be comfortable. It doesn’t seem wary of the others and even looks the wolf in the eyes for a short time before it looks away quickly. Most wolves refuse to meet its eyes, most will simply roll onto their backs and bare their throat outside of a fight to it. Inside a fight is the same, no one shows submission. Two walk into the pit, only one walks out.

The handler places the new wolf into the cage across from the wolf. This makes the wolf unhappy, and it paces its cage, snarling to let its feelings on the matter known. The handler bangs the shock stick against the bars again, yelling something at the wolf. He then moves several cages over with a catch pole, catching the wolf inside and dragging it out. The wolf knows the human will come back for another, will lead that wolf to its respective chute, and will later return with only one of those wolves. It should make the wolf feel something, but the wolf doesn’t feel anything anymore. The anxiety last night had been a surprise, the dislike it feels for the wolf across from it is also a surprise.

It growls low in its throat at the wolf across from it, laying on its belly and baring its white teeth at the other. The other wolf only cocks its head to the side with its tongue lolling it, sitting back on its haunches and looking so care-free it makes the wolf’s snarl grow. There’s nothing to be down about it, so it ends in a staring contest.

The handler comes back for another wolf. The wolf expects it to keep moving because the wolf doesn’t usually fight until most of the others are gone. But it is surprised when the handler stops in front of it.

The catch pole doesn’t come as a surprise to the wolf, but the handler smells surprised when the wolf catches it with its teeth while snarling and backing away. This is pointless, it know that the humans will always win and the wolf will eventually fight; but this fight, the one against the humans, is so much more satisfying than fighting its own kind. The human yells again and pulls out the shock baton. Only the bad smelling woman has control over the wolf’s shock collar, but these handlers have nasty sticks that will singe the wolf’s fur if it isn’t careful. Before the handler can even get the cage unlocked the wolf launches itself at the bars, ignoring the burning of the cage against its raw paws.

With a yelp the handler ends up zapping itself as it stumbles back and away from the door. The door rattles against the lock as the wolf slams its full weight against it, snarling angrily. It only stops when the handler scrambles away and out of the room, no doubt to run and get assistance. The wolf knows Gerard will be the next to come, knows that it will probably be walking into its next fight already wounded. It does not care. Instead of fretting over it the wolf slinks back into the corner and lays back down, licking at its bloody paws.

The new wolf watches it with wide eyes, the other wolves are quiet. Most are wolves it’s seen before. They already know this routine that the wolf likes to do. It’s only a surprise the handler hadn’t been more prepared for it. Sometimes they carry around little spray bottles full of the burning liquid. The worst is when it gets into the wolf’s eyes. Gerard is carrying the bottle when he comes storming to the back. He smiles at the wolf, sick and deprecating. He coos something at the wolf, but
the wolf doesn’t care what he’s saying. Even if it could understand it probably wouldn’t care. The human pulls out the bottle. He motions to another handler, different than the one before the wolf notes, to bring the catch pole forward. They seem to want to tag team him. The wolf feels its lips twitching strangely, like the corners of its muzzle are trying to lift but can’t. It’s an odd sensation that brings one of the words from Before to its mind—smile, Der-Bear, you’re always scowling!

The memory temporarily stuns the wolf, and the handlers use the momentary confusion as a chance to strike. Gerard sprays the liquid at the wolf’s face, blinding it, while the other man snaps the catch pole tight around the wolf’s neck. The wolf yelps in pain, writing blindly at the end of the pole. It feels itself being hauled from the cage and dragged down the concrete. The sound of the other wolves’ breathing gets quieter until the wolf can barely hear it past the dense walls of the tunnels. It can smell humans though, and the musky scent of the earth grows with every step. The wolf feels stone change to dirt beneath its paws as it whines and tries to clear its eyes. No one dares to get close enough to wipe the liquid out of its eyes, so it will have to wait until they clear on their own before it can see again. The last time this happened and someone had tried to wipe the wolf’s eyes they had lost their hand to its teeth. It’s something the wolf remembers with a sense of pride.

Dirt changes into something cold and biting. Metal, the wolf thinks. The pole is released and the door is slammed shut. For a moment the wolf panics; its eyes are not clear yet and the door it knows is in front of its face will open any moment now. The wolf will be expected to walk into the pit blind and if it tries to stay in the cage they will poke at it with their buzzing sticks that singe its fur until it complies and crawls out of the cage. The wolf braces itself when the door in front of it slides open. Before, behind the door and behind the stone walls of the tunnels, it hadn’t been able to hear the crowd. But now that the barriers between it and the humans are gone it can hear the screams and cheers from the spectators.

The wolf whines in misery. The roar hurts its ears and the throbbing in its eyes isn’t going away like it should. Stuck between being shocked or being mauled the wolf chooses to slink out from the opening. It can smell the other wolf, how its fear turns towards confidence as it seems to realize that its opponent is wounded. The wolf keeps its eyes closed and flicks its ears, trying to focus on the other wolf; it’s difficult separating its opponent from the crowd gathered to watch them maul each other to death.

So difficult that the wolf doesn’t realize its opponent is flanking it until it feels the breeze from the other wolf’s movement against its fur. It throws itself away from the shift in the air, hearing teeth snap shut right where it was just standing. The wolf doesn’t think about where those teeth would have latched. Already the opponent is flinging itself at the wolf again, trying to get to the soft tissue in the wolf’s throat or belly.

Most of the pits are sand to soak up the blood, but this one is dirt. The wolf has never fought on dirt before and stumbles in the uneven footing when the opponent lunges for its throat, taking it by surprise when instead it lands on the wolf’s back. The wolf yelps as it feels teeth latch into its scruff. It slams its body into the ground, rolling onto its back to try and dislodge the other from its back. The moment the teeth are gone from its scruff the wolf is on its feet, turning to snap for the other wolf’s belly.

Slowly its eyes sight is returning. The images are blurry, but it’s enough for the wolf to see that the other wolf is moving away, slipping out of reach of sharp teeth. Frustrated, the wolf paces away to the edge of the pit growling with its fur standing on end. Its opponent is smaller and seems more inexperienced. But the wolf knows nothing it certain in the pit; the blood dripping down its scruff and into the dirt is just an example of that. The two wolves stalk each other, circling around the concrete edges of the pit. The wolf can just make out the shape of the other wolf, its eye sight still affected by the burning liquid from the spray bottle. Even its paws are still burning from earlier.
The wolf doesn’t want to prolong this as it doesn’t understand why it isn’t healing like it normally does. Maybe it should have tried to force the food down earlier? It shakes its head, trying to clear up its vision a little more but only succeeds in making its head hurt. Just another hurt to add to the list of them.

Its opponent doesn’t want to wait any longer either, because it throws itself at the wolf. The wolf lunges as well and the two meet in the middle a tangled ball of snarling fur. It’s a direct confrontation, and the wolf is bigger than its opponent so it has the advantage. Its opponent is subdued as the wolf gets its massive jaws around the other’s throat. There is a moment of quiet, a world between the two of them where the crowd doesn’t even matter. In another world, this would be the end of the fight. The other wolf has submitted and the wolf would let go. In another world they would never have fought to begin with. In this world, the wolf closes its jaws and feels fresh copper spill into its maw as it tears through tissue. It doesn’t want to prolong the other’s pain though, and it forces its jaws shut even farther until it hear the crackling of bone.

Its opponent falls limp from the wolf’s jaws.

The noise of the crowd grows from the dull roar it had been for a short time back into the tidal wave of noise it usually was. The wolf does not celebrate with the humans. It bows its head and licks at the other wolf’s head, between its ears. Neither one of them wanted to fight, but they have no choice in this world of theirs. A moment is all the wolf can spare its fallen sister before its being herded out of the arena by the threats of spray bottles and shock batons. Once its back into the chute the handlers shove the catch pole back in. The wolf doesn’t have the energy to fight back this time. Still half blind it now has other injuries to add to the hurts it started out with. It knows the punctures in the back of its neck are healing, but the broken forelimb will take more time. It’s forced to limp its way back to the cages. The handlers barely slow once they have the catch pole around its neck. The wolf can smell their fear though, and there is no Gerard to help them this time, so it suspects the humans are just scared the wolf will try to gnaw on them.

Normally the wolf would. But today it’s tired from staying up all night. It just wants to leave this place so it’ll leave the humans alone for today. It hopes this will make them complacent so it can bite them the next time they come around.

It limps back into its cage, immediately curling up in the back corner to try and stretch out its broken leg. The pain is severe, but it’s not the worst the wolf has had. Not even bad enough to send for a vet. Sometimes if the wolf is hurt bad enough the handlers will call for someone to help the wolf heal. Not today though, this lets the wolf know he’ll survive.

The new wolf across the aisle is watching the wolf try and get comfortable. Ignoring it, the wolf lays its head down on the ground, shutting its eyes to try and rest. If it can sleep through the pain then its leg will be healed by the time it wakes up. Unfortunately the wolf across the aisle seems to have other plans. It whines and yips at the wolf until it crack an eye open to eye the pup. The strange wolf is whining at it, ears pined and belly on the ground. Its tail is even wagging. The wolf snorts and wiggles so its back is facing the new wolf. The pup will learn soon enough that caring for another wolf in this world leads to nothing but pain.

The plan to rest until it’s healed doesn’t work out quite like the wolf had hoped.

A loud bang echoes through the room and has almost all the wolves on their feet snarling. The metal doors open and a group of humans come pouring in with weapons drawn. The wolf can’t smell much of the burning liquid on them though, so it figures the weapons aren’t for the wolves. It doesn’t bother getting up, barely bothers opening its eyes. Not that it really could anyways, its eyes feel so heavy and the fog from before hasn’t lifted yet. Everything is still blurry. It can see the humans moving to through the room though, avoiding the snapping jaws of the agitated wolves who still
havent settled from being startled. The wolf thinks it only blinks, but when it wakes there is a figure standing in front of its cage. It smells like the pup from across the aisle, and the wolf sneezes in confusion.

The man is saying something to someone behind it, but the wolf is having a hard time paying attention. It lays its head back down on its paws, too tired to keep it up. It’s head may be pounding in time with its broken leg and its heart beat but that doesn’t mean it won’t snap at anyone that tries to get close. It tries to convey this with its eyes but this only seems to make the humans snort and chuckle a little. It’s a confusing reaction. The weapons have been lowered and the other wolves are calming down, so the wolf figures it can lay back and wait for whatever comes next.

Another human comes to its door, this time to actually open it. The wolf flattens its ears back against its skull, pulling its lips up to snarl at the man without actually making a sound. The man actually gets into the cage and sits down. The strange action has the wolf stilling. It raises its head from its paws and cocks it to the side. The human is babbling up a storm, chatting happily as it sits near the front of the cage. The wolf is sound confused it lets out a soft whine. The human quiets and scoots forward a little bit despite a quiet protest that comes from outside the cage. The strange smelling non-wolf smells distinctly unhappy at the human’s decision to come closer to the wolf.

The wolf doesn’t know what to do though. No one has ever come into its cage so unprotected before, let alone crawled towards it like this. They are finally within arm’s reach. The human could easily put a hand out to touch the wolf and the wolf could take off said hand just as easily. They both seem to know it, as does their audience outside the cage. Some time passes with them sitting there like that. The human continues to talk and the others outside the cage slowly seem to relax enough that they go about with whatever they were originally planning to do. More people are brought in; they wear white coats and smell like the vets do. It doesn’t relax the wolves, but the vets have never really hurt them before so they don’t try to bite anyone quite yet. The wolf lays its head back down as it watches the strange human watch it. It can’t figure out the smell of this one. Whatever the scent is, the wolf really likes it but doesn’t like that it likes it. Nice things don’t last long, they get taken away once the handlers realize the wolves consider something nice. The wolf doesn’t want this nice thing to leave. The strange urge to get closer and touch causes the wolf to wiggle uncomfortably. The human makes a questioning sound, but the wolf can’t answer so it just crawls forward a little bit on its belly.

Fortunately the human doesn’t seem frightened by this, if anything the man smells pleased. The wolf doesn’t trust this so it flashes teeth as it inches forward. A little bit of apprehension slips into the human’s scent but he doesn’t move farther away like a normal person would. Eventually the wolf has inched forward enough that it can stick its nose into the man’s crotch. The human makes a startled, embarrassed yelp but doesn’t move. The wolf snuffles happily before shifting a little and sticking its cold, dry nose into the man’s throat. Somewhere along the way the wolf’s tail had started wagging.

The human makes a concerned noise and brings its hand up to brush through the fur along the wolf’s neck. It rubs against the still healing punctures there and makes the wolf yelp in pain. Even as the human snatches its hand back the wolf’s teeth snap at it. There’s a concerned shout outside of the cage and the wolf scrambles back out of fear of the shock baton it believes to be coming. The human inside the cage whisper-yells back at the other humans but doesn’t move. He immediately smells disappointed and tries to coax the wolf back over to him with soft tones. The cooing reminds the wolf of Gerard and the woman though so it flattens itself against the floor and watches them darkly. The human makes a defeated noise and backs out from the cage while facing the wolf. The wolf is sad to see him, and the nice smell, go. It whines sadly, tail thumping a little on the ground before it tucks its nose under its unbroken leg. The human just looks at it sadly.
It’s only now that the wolf notices that the other wolves are being moved. The humans are using catch poles without the burning liquid on them, but the wolf doesn’t trust it. When a human approaches his cage, despite the protests of the wolf’s good-smelling human, the wolf feels a surge of energy rush though him that allows him to stand. He lunges at the pool, breaking a tooth against the metal as he grabs the pole, snarling with bloody spittle flying everywhere. The human releases the pole in surprise, it drops uselessly into the cage with the wolf. Just like earlier the wolf throws its body against the bars of the door to its cage, skin bubbling when it makes contact with the burning fluid.

Any progress its body made in healing is quickly undone. The humans are shouting at one another and a white coated man approaches the cage with a weapon in hand. The wolf howls a challenge, throwing itself against the cage again, daring the human to try and come closer. The human doesn’t.

Something buries itself into the meat of the wolf’s thigh. It’s a brief stinging sensation that the wolf buries because of all the other hurts that are taking up the forefront of the wolf’s brain. It’s only when the wolf starts to feel too tired to stand that it realizes it’s been tricked. Even as it collapses onto its side it growls and snarls at the humans. In particular it watches the good-smelling human outside of its cage. The wolf should have known. Nice things never last long, and humans will always help one another. Still, a small part of the wolf’s mind marks this as a betrayal.

The world dims around the edges. Even when the good-smelling human steps into the cage and runs its hands through the wolf’s fur the wolf can’t bring itself to take off a couple of the man’s fingers. It feels itself being heaved into arms and carried from the cage, but beyond that, the wolf’s vision fades and it slumps into the man’s arms.

Well, the wolf thinks, it can just bite off the man’s fingers tomorrow when it wakes up again.
Chapter Summary

Stiles may have the self preservation instincts of a lemming, but he’s not about to let anyone mess with the alpha werewolf he found, okay? They're going to be great friends, even if the wolf doesn't know it yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

To say Stiles is committed to ending the numerous underground rings is an understatement. He feels like he owes it to himself and to Scott to keep fighting the hunters that catch wolves and use them for profit. Days after Scott had been turned he’d been captured by hunters, only to be released by a hunter’s daughter. They had both returned to Beacon Hills from Los Angeles where Scott had been held. Both had been tight lipped about what they’d seen.

If Stiles’ best friend won’t tell even Stiles about what happened to him in the pits then there really must have been no words for it.

So Stiles volunteers for every raid that comes through the Beacon Hills Sheriff’s Department. His father eyes him strangely every time, like he wants to tell stiles to stay behind but he can’t because Stiles is just another one of his deputies. Even the Sheriff has to try and avoid playing favorites. It’s still pretty obvious he’s the favorite though, because Stiles is everyone’s favorite, obviously.

He’s drinking a coffee from the café down the street when the news of an illegal, full-shift pit fight comes in. Full-shift fights were unusual because full-shift werewolves don’t exactly grow on trees. A complete shift is difficult, and even then the wolf retains some of its human thinking which can make a hunter’s life very difficult. There’s a reason average people fight dogs instead of wolves, namely the increased intelligence and very sharp teeth.

To his disgust, Rafael McCall is leading the FBI’s team for this raid. Scott’s dad has always been a sore spot that Stiles would like to punch in the face for the way he comes in and out of Scott and Melissa’s life. The sight of his face in the conference room at the station has Stiles’ fingers twitching towards his Taser. He may not be able to shoot the guy, but it sure would be nice to zap him once.

The rest of the station is gathering, and his dad has even pulled the wolf teams in from patrol. They’re not a big town, or a big station so they only have a couple of human-wolf teams. Scott paired up with Stiles occasionally, but he mainly sticks by his girlfriend Allison’s side. They’d come out of the pit together and had been inseparable since; it didn’t seem to matter that they had once stood on opposite sides as wolf and hunter. Neither one is technically a deputy, but the werewolf division is special and comes with different titles.

“Listen up! We’ve got word of another raid. This one’s close to home, and I’ll understand if anyone wants to sit it out,” Rafael McCall looks severely around the room, stopping on Cora Hale.

Cora looks confused until Rafael continues, “Our informant has let us know the next fight is going to be in the tunnels underneath the Preserve. We’ll be infiltrating through an entrance beneath the Hale house.” Stiles can hear her inhale, but he knows Cora would never back out of this. Especially not
after she’s learned that fights are going to happen right beneath her old family home. “We’re going to be sending in a team tomorrow morning to do some scoping. Argent, you and Beta McCall will be going in as a last minute entry for the fight.”

Stiles wants to object because the both of them have bad memories of the pit. Won’t the hunters recognize Allison anyways? She’s an Argent, and the Argents are big in the underground arena. They’ve been hunters for so long. They’re known for putting up alphas in fights—the leaders of the werewolf community with the potential to be the most dangerous. Stiles has never met one on a raid, but he’s heard stories of feral alphas taking down full packs of wolves before. He doesn’t have any desire to be on the wrong side of something like that.

Unfortunately Scott and Allison are already nodding their ascent to the plan. They’re ushered off by a few of Special Agent Rafael’s cronies before Stiles can even formulate a plan to object. He grits his teeth and does not glare at the man in the front of the room—he’s a professional dammit, he can be professional about this.

“At 0900 tomorrow we’ll move in to stop the fights. The first is scheduled for 1000 tomorrow morning, we’re going to stop it from happening. We’ve got a pretty typical mix of betas this time around, a couple of blue eyes in the mix. Some are feral, some seem to still have some of the mental capacity of a human. You’re to treat each wolf as a feral. You’ll be equipped with catch poles and regular bullets. The wolves will be seen to by the vets on staff and they’ll be transported to the appropriate medical facilities for rehabilitation. Yes, Deputy Stilinski?”

Stiles’ hand has been swaying in the air for the past several minutes, but he’ll pretend that he hasn’t been ignored for those minutes. Dad should be proud; he’s being so professional. “What about feral Deltas?” There are Alphas, Betas and Omegas. Beyond those three is Delta, a feral Omega that has descended past the possibility of rehabilitation. Mostly rabid, they’re usually put down with a wolf’s bane bullet to the back of the skull. Stiles doesn’t believe in the diagnosis of “rabid,” or “too feral, termination recommended.” He’s seen to many wolves go down that way. They don’t put humans down when they have severe PTSD, so why should they be “terminating” wolves who were once pretty human?

Rafael’s eyes narrow a little bit, “That’s a diagnosis to be determined by the veterinary medical staff. Appropriate action will be taken once they’ve determined the mental state and the recovery prognosis of the wolf. Any other questions?”

There are none so they’re told to come sign a waiver and a signup sheet if they’d like to go. Stiles has terrible flashbacks to high school field trips where they’d had to do the same exact thing. Except now he can sign his own we’re-not-liable-if-you-trip-fall-and-die form. Because he’s an adult now, even if he still lives with his dad. In his defense, he’s concerned about what the man will eat if Stiles leaves. No doubt it’ll be something greasy and a not-so-distant relative of fast food. Stiles is having none of that. He’s only 23 anyways, it’s not like he’s 40 and living at home. He really hopes it doesn’t come to that.

Maybe he can train his dad to eat healthy without having to always be hovering over the man’s shoulder. Unlikely, if it hasn’t happened yet but a man can dream.

Stiles signs both papers and leaves to find his dad. He’s in his office, shuffling through what look to be case files. Stiles catches a glimpse of a coroner’s report on what looks to be a werewolf but John shuts the folder before he can really get a look at it. On purpose, no doubt.

“So was that fast or was that fast?”
“Yes, Stiles, come in. How can I help you today?” His dad says dryly. Stiles shrugs and flops into one of the chairs in the office, grateful he doesn’t have his gun belt on so he doesn’t have to adjust it.

“Well Sheriff, I’d just like to express some concerns I have about the raid tomorrow. The main concern being why the hell this was slapped together so fast.”

“If you have questions you should be addressing them with Agent McCall.”

“That’s Special Agent McCall, dad. Like, super special.”

“Stiles.”

“I’m just saying! Besides, what kind of man sends his own son into that kind thing? Aren’t there rules against this? Conflict of interest maybe? I just don’t get why it has to be Scott. The FBI has their own team of werewolves right?”

“This is in our jurisdiction, you know that. I don’t like it either, but what else are we going to do? The risk is minimal. The Argents aren’t even going to be participating the fights tomorrow. They didn’t register any wolves.”

“And that’s another thing! How can we really trust this informant? Who is this person?”

“You know I can’t tell you that, Deputy.”

“Dad, creator of my life, provider of my soul—come on! You have to give me something here!”

The Sheriff sighs and rubs his face with his hands. “Son, I need you to let this one go. Go on the raid like you signed up to do, keep your head down, and follow your orders.”


“Can’t be worse than the Brussel sprouts.”

“Oh, trust me, it really can.”

Stiles heaves himself up from the chair and leaves the office with the sound of his dad’s misery playing in the background. It’s fine if he doesn’t want to tell Stiles what he knows, Stiles will be an adult about it and not ask any more questions. Doesn’t mean he won’t make his dad eat everything leafy and green for dinner for the next week. He never said he’d be mature about it.

Scott is nowhere to be found after the meeting so Stiles assumes Rafael must’ve gotten a hold of him and Allison and not let them go. He does, however, find Cora lingering in the now empty conference room. She hasn’t moved from her chair but Stiles can’t get a read on her face because she’s holding it in her hands.

“Hey,” he starts softly, putting a cautious hand on her shoulder. Her control is perfect, but the last thing he wants is for today to be the day it’s not perfect and to end up with a claw in his arm. “You okay?”

She just laughs bitterly, “I just found out that hunters—a group of people who murdered my entire family, are holding fights underneath said family’s home, pitting my species against one another just for fun. Am I alright? No, I’m fucking pissed. These assholes are going to pay. I hope they fight back tomorrow so I have an excuse to rip into them with my teeth.”

“They’re hunters; not the brightest crayons in the box. Of course they’ll fights back.”
Cora smiles, a mean and sharp thing, “Oh I’m counting on it.”

Stiles can’t really say anything to that so he doesn’t. They sit in silence for a minute before Cora sniffs once and stands up. “I’m going to save as many wolves as possible tomorrow. I know you will too.” She walks out before Stiles can say anything to that, shoulders pulled back and spine rigid.

The rest of the day kind of just floats by. He answers a couple of calls, but they’re mostly just domestic disputes. Stiles just ends up sitting in his patrol car when he not trying to mediate another fight from Ms. Palmer and her elderly neighbor Mr. Reese. The two are always fighting about their property line, the former always complaining about the latter mowing over her flower beds. Mr. Reese just claims it’s his land anyways, and he doesn’t “no damn exotic dandelions” all over his lawn. Stiles just thinks they’re both old and bored.

By the time he gets home he’s weirdly hyper. There’s a buzzing just beneath his skin that stays there the whole time he changes and starts making dinner. The salad is done by the time he dad comes in through the door.

“I see you weren’t kidding.”

“About the lima beans? No, no I wasn’t.”

The Sheriff sighs, “Could we at least have a burger tomorrow night? Maybe go to the diner after the raid?”

“Maybe if we have the energy? I dunno, I leave those things pretty drained usually.”

“All the more reason to splurge on a burger and fries. Oh, a piece of pie too!”

“Even if we go you’re still getting a veggie of some sort, a salad instead of fries. Maybe a turkey burger too, better for you than red meat.”

“Slave driver,” John says fondly, ruffling his son’s hair as he grabs some plates to set the table. They don’t talk much when they sit down to eat. Stiles tells his dad about the flower war and how exciting that was. Despite the newest development of the pit fighting at the old Hale property Beacon Hills is usually pretty quiet.

His dad does the dishes this time while Stiles hunts for something to watch on TV. He settles on Jeopardy because they both like it. Sometimes he thinks it should feel weird, to still share a space with his dad when he’s 23. It doesn’t, though. Mostly he just thinks about his dad’s weak heart and what could happen if Stiles isn’t there. So he sticks around and plans to stay unless he’s told to leave.

Stiles can’t sleep even after he’s brushed his teeth and laid in bed for a good three hours. He knows his dad is out cold because he can hear the snoring through the walls. The raid tomorrow has him too keyed up to catch a wink. Normally he can catch a couple of hours of sleep before something like this, so he’s not sure what it is about tomorrow that has him so wired. Maybe it’s the fact that it’s literally so close to home? He doesn’t think that’s it, just knows that there’s something crawling beneath his skin that’s making him restless.

Somewhere between rolling around in his bed and shoving his face in the pillow he actually does manage to sleep a little bit. He thinks he does, at least, because the next time he opens his eyes his clock is blinking an ugly, red, 6:29 AM at him and there’s the beginnings of a sunrise coming in through his window. He sits up in bed, shutting off his alarm before it can actually go off. Stiles can hear his dad in the shower already, so he gets up and patters downstairs in his flannel pants and a t-shirt he’s had since college. The coffee is already dripping into the pot, something for which Stiles
will be forever grateful for. He may get up early every morning, but he’s never been a morning person and it hasn’t gotten any easier for him.

John finds him with his cheek pressed to the counter top, right in front of the coffee pot, half asleep. He sends Stiles on his way to the shower with an affectionate hair ruffle that’s become part of their morning routine. Stiles grumbles as he stumbles up the stairs and into the shower. Somewhere along the way he’d lost his clothes and grabbed a towel.

The warm water does wonders for both his bed head and attitude. He wakes up pretty quick after that. The station will provide a uniform for today, so he dresses in a pair of jeans and a dark t-shirt. Stiles kind of hopes they’ll give him all black SWAT tactical gear. He’ll look so bad ass in that.

His dad already has breakfast made by the time he makes it back down stairs. They both usually leave around 7:40 for roll call at 8:00. The coffee tastes like heaven and the toast practically melts in his mouth. Stiles must make some odd noises because his dad is looking at him strangely.

“Toast is good, son?”

“So good. Best toast. Good toast.”

“Fully coherent this morning, I see.”

“Completely coherent.”

The Sheriff sighs, “Did you sleep at all? I know you tend to get kind of tense before these things.”

“If this is about to lead into a conversation about how you wish I would sit these raids out then two things: 1. I will not sit this one out, 2. I actually did sleep, thank you very much.”

“Alright, Stiles. I just worry about you.”

Stiles softens a little at that because yeah, he does actually get it. “I’ll be fine, dad. I always am.”

His dad mutters something into his coffee that sounds an awful lot like, “Famous last words,” but he’s prepared to be extremely generous this morning and ignores it.

They get out the door right on time. Stiles’ dad gets to bring his patrol car home, but Stiles prefers his jeep. He coos at her and pats her side, his dad just throws him another look. At this point he’s too used to Stiles’ uniqueness to say anything about the odd gestures.

The station is buzzing with activity. Everyone is in the conference room, waiting for their assignment. Special Agent McCall clears his throat and the chatter quiets until all Stiles can hear is the occasional sip of coffee.

“Earlier this morning we had a team infiltrate the fights so we would have eyes on the insides to know what exactly we were walking into. The first fight was scheduled for 9 AM but has since been moved. We’ve just been told that it’s already happening. This is simple. We enter from the storm cellar entrance at the Hale house. Teams 1 and 2 will take the pit area, team 3 will clear the hallways and make their way to the cages. I don’t want any wolf running free; we don’t know what kind of mental condition any of them are in. Once the tunnels are rooms are cleared we’ll send the team of vets and psychologists in. The physical and mental health of the wolves will be evaluated. Each of you is to get your gear on and report to your team’s captain in 15 minutes. We leave in 20. If you aren’t there, then you’re not going.”
The group splits immediately after that. Stiles glances at the chart and sees he’s on team 3. A part of him is surprised, but most of him is just excited because that means he’s going to be in direct contact with the wolves. The surprised part rears up again when he sees who he’s on the team with. Stiles has to wonder if there’s even a conflict of interest clause in the rules for this kind of stuff somewhere.

“How’d that happen?” Stiles glances to the side at Deputy Parrish. The man has a curious expression on his face and is scratching at his temple thoughtfully. “Don’t know why they’d put you and your dad on the same team. Seems a little strange.”

Stiles snorts, “You’re telling me.”

“Well it’s better than being on a team with someone you hate, right? You, the Sheriff, Deputies James and Kennith, and Scott McCall: that’s a good team for you.”

“Scott’s not really with us. We’re just supposed to contact him when we get to the cages and get him out of there.”

“Still, it’s not a bad team,” Parrish seems to be looking for some kind of reaction from Stiles because he just watches the younger man intently.

Stiles isn’t sure what he’s looking for and he doesn’t have time to figure it out; he’s got to change and meet up with the other. “Yeah, sure.” He nods to Parrish before heading for the armory.

The deputy in charge hands him a tactical vest to put over the black long sleeve he’d already been given on an earlier raid. He already has the boots and black cargos so he asks for his weapons instead. Stiles is given a shot gun with regular ammo. The lack of wolfs bane is probably to drive the point that they’re not supposed to hurt the wolves, home. He’s also given a couple of flash grenades; if nothing else he’ll have something to stun a feral wolf. Hopefully it won’t come to that.

He dresses and meets his team in the parking lot. Beacon Hills has a population of 30,000 people. It’s big, but not big enough to warrant one of those cool, underground police garages to house the patrol cars and SWAT vans.

Teams 1 and 2 get to ride together in a single van while his team has to take a patrol car behind them. Beyond that he notice a couple of undercover cars with people in them waiting for the teams to move out. He figures they must be the vets and psychologists. Sometimes if the operation is big enough the department will ask for civilian volunteers to help sort through the werewolves and get them situated. Stiles can’t see any right now, so either it’s a small fight or no one knows if they’ll need the extra help yet. The latter isn’t a comfortable thought.

The ride to the Hale property is silent. Stiles has to slap a hand onto his knee to force his leg to stop bouncing up and down, but otherwise he manages to keep still and quiet. It’s quite an achievement.

It’s even more eerie when they get there. The sun is out, but the forest doesn’t seem to catch much of the warmth because it’s cold for some reason. There aren’t any birds or squirrels either. Nothing makes a sound beyond the humans- and Cora- and the leaves crunching beneath their feet. The whole place feels dead; Stiles gets this creepy feeling that they shouldn’t be here. It feels almost like a graveyard that they’re disturbing. He can’t imagine what it must feel like for Cora. He knows she doesn’t come here often even though she technically owns the land.

Teams 1 and 2 are already getting themselves into position. The van they rode in transforms into a communications center. Special Agent McCall will be heading up command there, giving order into the microphone to specific teams while watching through the little cameras on their tactical helmets.
Stiles didn’t get a helmet, but whatever, not like he wants Scott’s dad spying on him anyways.

Rafael signals the first two teams to enter; Stiles can’t hear anything for the first few minutes but soon enough there are sounds of gunfire coming from the cellar entrance. It makes his heart rate skyrocket as his team position themselves at the entrance of the tunnels. Deputy James is taking the lead and Stiles is right behind him. Deputy Kennith is right behind Stiles with the Sheriff pulling up the rear. They get their signal to descend into the dark, Stiles immediately turns on the light on his gun. Someone must have killed the lights in hopes to confuse the others. Whether it was the hunters or the other teams he can’t say.

The tunnels aren’t all that expansive or confusing. The way has already been partially cleared so they follow the trail of bodies around another corner towards the end of hall. It splits off into two directions, one of which has the sound of screams and gunfire coming from it. The other hall is silent.

Of course they pick the quiet hall. It probably hasn’t been cleared and chances are if Teams 1 and 2 didn’t go this way then it leads to the wolves.

Around the bend they can see massive steel doors at the end of the hall. There are a couple of hunters lingering in front of it, their backs to the team. That changes quickly when they hear the footsteps. Deputy James picks off the first and Stiles manages to shoot another one in the leg. The third gets off a couple of shots but they mostly miss. Stiles feels a sting along his cheek, but knows it’s just a scrape. He hears a gun go off behind him and see the hunter stumble and go down. Either his dad or Kennith got in a shot.

The hall is cleared and all that’s left is to get through the doors. They aren’t locked, but no one is rushing in. It’s probably just the wolves; sharp teeth, aggressive mentality and all. No big deal. The Sheriff grabs onto one of the handles and Kennith grabs the other. Stiles and James bring their guns up and nod for the doors to be opened, ready for something to come rushing out from the other side.

Nothing does.

The doors slide open with a massive groan and the hall is suddenly filled with the snarling sound of wolves. Stiles enters the room, sweeping around it to look for any straggling hunters or loose wolves. He finds none.

It’s not the worst kennel they’ve been through. The cages are steel and no doubt coated with wolfs bane. Probably electrified too. Most of the wolves have collars on. Stiles spots the one wolf he knows and goes to let Scott from his cage. Kennith is there with a pair of sweatpants for Scott as he changes from wolf to man.

“Thanks dude,” Scott take the sweat pants and slips them on.

“You alright?” Stiles can’t see any injuries, but he’s not just asking about surface wounds either. Scott shrugs.

“Yeah. They only got in one fight, and no one touched me,” He’s staring at something behind Stiles. With a frown Stiles turns to look at what has his best friend so distracted. His mouth drops open because that is a massive wolf curled up in the cage. Shiny, black-blue fur and massive paws with some wicked looking nails. It’s probably a veteran fighter by the looks of it, and was also the first wolf of the day if the drying blood and oddly misshapen leg are any indication.

Scott walks over to stand in front of the cage, a couple of feet away. Stiles would almost call the distance respectful. When the wolf looks up at them with dull, intelligent red eyes Stiles know why the distance and quiet respect are coming from his friend.
An alpha.

Stiles is immediately fascinated. “Holy shit, holy shit,” he whispers, “That’s an alpha.”

“Yeah. He was the first fight of the day. I think he belongs to Gerard Argent. He put up a massive fight with the handlers and Gerard came back to deal with him in person. It was awful. Seems pretty docile as long as it’s not being bothered.”

“Male?”

“Yeah.”

“Shit man, this is so weird,” male alphas were typically culled by hunters, just because of their aggression being too much for even the pit fights.

Stiles never really did have much of a sense of self-preservation because he has an intense urge to get in there with this massive creature and pet it. He knows there’s a human side to it that understands maybe a little bit of what’s going on. The door is kind of wet when he puts a hand on it to unlock it. The others pause around the room; Stiles can feel their eyes and his father’s disapproval. No one wants to startle the wolves though so no one lunges to stop him.

Only Scott hisses at him in shock, “What are you doing, Stiles? Get away from there. It’s a feral alpha, it’ll chew you up and eat you.”

But Stiles is already crawling into the cage, doing what he does best: being reckless and babbling a mile a minute about anything that comes to mind.

“Hey wolfy, man I have to say you’re a pretty attractive wolf. Such black fur you have, what pretty red eyes. A little bit of the big, bad wolf going on, but that’s a good thing, right? Gotta work great on the lady wolves. Lemme know if you can understand this, so I don’t like, insult you or anything. A warning bark before a bite would be nice. Oh hey, hi, look at that, you have some big paws my friend. Very big, are you still growing?” The wolf hasn’t tried to chew off his face yet, just cocks its head and watches him curiously. He can hear other people in the room, probably the vets and psychologists to the evaluate health and feral-ness of the wolves.

Stiles sits on the ground with his back to Scott and the other members of the task force. He can practically feel the disapproval radiating and burning holes into his back.

The wolf makes a whining noise then, forcing Stiles’ full attention back on it. It squirms a little bit first, like it’s not sure what to do, but eventually it crawls forward with its belly on the ground. Stiles doesn’t hold his breath as the beast comes close enough to touch, but yelps loudly when it shoves its face into his crotch. “Okay, yeah, nope, that’s a thing- I forgot that that was a thing dogs did. Not that you’re a dog, but kind of close. Same Genus? Family? I dunno, oh- yeah, hi, that’s my neck.” Its cold tongue is poking at the soft underside of his jaw. Stiles gulps but doesn’t really feel afraid. The action feels oddly like acceptance on the wolf’s part.

Stiles brings his hand up and runs it along the wolf’s head cautiously and when it doesn’t seem like the touch is going to get his face ripped off he continues down along the neck. The tail thumping behind the big, black body is oddly adorable and endearing. Stiles is so completely gone on the wolf that he doesn’t really notice he’s entered dangerous waters until his hand is already rubbing against an open wound. The wolf yelps in pain and jerks away just as quickly as Stiles snatches his hand back.
“Stiles!” Scott shouts behind him, alerting everyone as the wolf snaps its teeth at Stiles’ hand. It misses, but Stiles isn’t convinced it was ever really trying to bite him in the first place. The poor thing immediately expects punishment because it hunkers back down close to the floor near the back of the cage, snarling angrily at them. Stiles doesn’t feel afraid, just so very sad.

He makes a noise in the back of his throat but it doesn’t seem to make anyone feel better. Not the wolf, and not Scott who is demanding he get out of the cage right now, because that is a feral animal Stiles dammit.

Stiles backs out slowly, careful not to incite anything else from the cowering alpha.

Deaton is immediately there, a tranq gun locked and loaded in his hand. Stiles wants to protest that because this is just a scared wolf and it doesn’t need to mistrust them anymore than it already does.

They close the door in time but it’s still startling when the wolf throws itself at the cage doors, agitating the other wolves and its injuries. Deaton doesn’t wait, just lines up the shot and sticks a tranquilizer into the hind leg closest to them. The wolf makes a wounded noise but doesn’t really slow down until about a minute or so later when it wobbles.

Somehow it manages to shoot Stiles the most betrayed look ever. He tries to tell himself that the tightness in his chest is from anxiety and not regret that he actually betrayed this wolf.

The wolf slumps in the cage. Before anyone else can get their hands on it Stiles is in the cage and pulling the limp body into his arms. As huge as the thing is it doesn’t seem to weigh much. Stiles can feel its ribs through the dense fur. The thought sends a ripple of anger through him. Hunters already pit the wolves against one another in fights to the death, the least they could do is feed the damn things.

Deaton is there, ready to take the wolf from his arms but Stiles won’t give him up. His grip tightens, “I’ve got him. Just tell me where to go.” The vet stares Stiles down but shrugs and leads the way out of the tunnel. The other wolves are being led the same way one at a time on catch poles. They don’t seem to be fighting back- the alpha being the only one that seemed to have any fight left in it at all.

Outside there are more vans than there were when Stiles went underground. A bunch of volunteers are loading a couple of heavy duty dog kennels into the back of one of the vans.

“Where are they taking them, Doc?”

“There’s a sanctuary in Lucerne Valley for wolves. We’ll send them there where they can be rehabilitated and hopefully shift back into their human forms. I’m sure the FBI will be happy to talk to them.”

“And this guy?” Stiles is apprehensive. They’ve based the white vans by the volunteers and are approaching what looks like a large, oddly shaped animal control car. Instead of multiple holding spaces inside of it there appears to be only one. Stiles is not impressed. He stops and glares at Deaton because he has a feeling where this is going and he doesn’t like it one bit. “He’s not feral. You’re not putting him down.”

Deaton makes a pained face and sighs, “Stiles, he tried to bite you. We can’t have an alpha werewolf, a full-shift alpha werewolf, trying to bite people. There are rules for these kinds of things for a reason. There isn’t a whole lot of wiggle room here.”

“Then you should’ve shot him in the head! I’m not letting you put him down. You said not a ‘lot’ of wiggle room which implies there is some space to negotiate here!”
“Is there a problem over here?” Great. They’ve attracted attention now. ‘Lo and behold Raphael McCall is wearing a frowny face right behind Stiles, eyes snapping to the wolf in his arms when they turn around. “Is that the alpha I’ve been hearing about? What’s its status like, Dr. Deaton?”

“It’s displayed some aggressive feral tendencies, Agent. My recommendation would be to euthanize.”

Stiles’ dad has joined them now, but he’s not looking at the wolf or the Vet. He’s looking at Stiles and he knows that look. It’s the look the kid wore when he brought home that kitten he found under the bench at the park, or the baby bird from their front lawn, and it’s just as heart wrenching now as it was then. “Stiles…”

“He’s not feral! He was injured, okay? I rubbed over his neck where he had some teeth marks-sharp, bleeding teeth marks, very painful I hear- and he yelped. That’s all. He didn’t bite me.”

“He tried.” Stiles glares at the vet, willing with his eyes for the older man to shut up.

“But he didn’t. I probably would’ve tried to bite me too! That’s not the point anyways, if he had wanted to bite me he could’ve. I was in that cage for a while!”

His point must get across to Raphael because he actually looks to be considering it.

“What would you say if we didn’t put him down? What kind of treatment would you recommend?”

Deaton shoots them a tired look, “That’s the problem. I’m not trying to be cruel, Deputy. Alphas are probably the most fragile of all werewolf types mentally speaking. They rely on the pack bond to maintain their balance and without that they fall into a fugue that turns them feral very easy. It’s difficult to pull them from that. I suppose if you were to try the best thing you could do for him would be to establish a new pack.”

“What if we found his old pack?” Stiles has never been so proud of his father for sounding so on board with saving the wolf.

“Besides that being very difficult since he can’t talk and tell us where to find his old pack, it’s possible those ties have been broken by the Hunters. Forcing an alpha werewolf into a permanent state of full-shift is a process that requires breaking the human side first. To do that they would have had to cut off his old life entirely; that means cutting his pack from him.”

A pang goes through his heart at the thought of the wolf losing an entire pack. That’s like losing your whole family, and Stiles can’t imagine losing his dad.

“What if I take him?”

Stiles’ dad has a vaguely constipated look on his face at the suggestion because hey, he has to live there too. Raphael looks at Stiles like he’s insane, and Deaton is eyeing him like he’s considering putting Stiles in the back of the death van instead of the wolf.

“We’ve got a yard, I have the advanced werewolf instinct training, Scott practically lives at our house so we’ve got a werewolf expert on hand- it’s perfect! The government won’t have to pay to have him euthanized or pay to have him rehabilitated. Plus we’ve bonded already! Ask Scott. Scott! Hey get over wolf boy, I know you’re listening over there.” Scott is indeed listening from over by the volunteers van, looking a little bit sheepish at having been caught. He jogs over after he’s been caught though.

“They did kind of bond.”
“Not ripping Deputy Stilinski’s face off while in the cage doesn’t constitute as bonding, Beta McCall.”

“It kind of does though, Dr. Deaton,” Scott braces his shoulders the same he did in high school right before he stepped onto the lacrosse field. Like he’s getting ready to head into battle. Stiles may or not fangirl a little on the inside. “Stiles invaded an alphas space without permission, he showed no signs of submission- only signs of not being threat, and made it out without even a scratch. That doesn’t happen unless the wolf in question has taken a liking to the intruder.”

They all look to Agent McCall because at this point the final decision is his because technically the wolf is a ward of the government until it comes around from its feral state.

Finally he nods, “Alright. The Stilinski’s can keep him housed and cared for. If he makes a full recovery we’ll speak with him. If at any point he displays threatening behavior or becomes too much for you to handle he can be given to the Wolf Sanctuary like all the others.” Stiles practically cries with relief because this means he can pack the wolf into the back of his car and they can go home.

“Deputy, if he ever bites someone he will have to be euthanized, is that clear? I expect you to willingly surrender him if such a thing happens. I’ll have some paperwork drawn up that says that in writing and you will sign it. Are we clear?”

Stiles nods vigorously; his wolf is going to be an angel.

Deaton doesn’t look happy about it, but then again his opinion doesn’t really matter to Stiles. As both McCalls wander off to oversee the end of the operation and Deaton leaves to make sure the volunteers are handling the wolves properly, Stiles is left with the wolf in his arms and his dad.

“You sure about this, kid?”

“Yeah dad, I think this’ll be good. You didn’t see him in there. He wasn’t really a danger, just seemed really tired of being treated like shit, you know?”

“Alright, well, let’s get him out of here then. I’ll drive you back to the station and then come back. Get him home and settled, okay? Be careful when he wakes up you don’t know how he’ll react to a new environment. Keep your gun with you just in case you need it.” The look Stiles gets tells him that the last requirement isn’t an option at all.

“Okay. I’ll text you when he’s up.”

Stiles piles into the back seat, somehow managing to maneuver both himself and the wolf into the back seat without much difficulty. He forgoes a seatbelt to instead cradle the warm fur closer. He pretends to ignore his dad looking at him via rear view mirror the entire ride back to the station.

The Sheriff watches the alpha while Stiles runs into the station to change back into his clothes form that morning. He quickly clocks out for the day and runs back outside. He’s out of breath by the time he manages to wrestle the wolf into the back of the jeep; even with his dad’s help it’s still a workout.

“Be careful Stiles. I’ll see you around 7 tonight, okay?”

“Yeah, dad. I’ll have dinner ready.” They part with a brief hug before each clammers into their respective car. Stiles tries really hard not to speed home, but he heard a little snuffling sound from the back seat that probably means the wolf is waking up. It would be super adorable if it weren’t also kind of terrifying; he doesn’t want to be in a car with a possibly semi-feral wolf that’s just coming out of a stressful situation.
Luckily the sedative holds until Stiles can get the front door open and put the wolf on the carpet in the living room. He makes a quick run up the stairs to grab some blankets from the linen closet. The wolf is making the snuffling noises again by the time he gets back down stairs. Stiles rearranges the furniture a bit to give the wolf more space; he pushes the couch over against the wall next to his dad’s old recline and shoves the coffee table in-between the two. The blankets make a nice cushion that he moves the wolf onto.

Stiles backs away from his guest, sitting on the floor with his back to the coffee table. He doesn’t want to be too much in the wolf’s face when it wakes up.

It takes another couple of minutes but the black mound of fur begins to move a little. Its ears twitch and flick a couple of times and it takes a couple of large shuddering breaths that Stiles can hear from across the room. It almost sounds like the wolf doesn’t really want to wake up.

Stiles holds his breath when red eyes finally open. They flick around the room at first, taking in the surroundings. The lack of a steel cage is pretty obvious and the wolf seems to perk up at that. It’s so busy surveying the new territory that it doesn’t really notice Stiles until it’s already clambering to its massive paws and turning its head in Stiles’ direction. It freezes when it notices the human.

“Er, hi? I’m Stiles, this is my house. Well, our house now I guess,” Stiles watches the wolf plop its butt back down while facing Stiles. It hasn’t tried to kill him yet though so he takes that as a good sign and continue, “You’re going to be staying with my dad and I for a while. We’re going to help you get back on your feet. Or, well, your two feet. Not four. Is any of this making sense? Bark once for yes, twice for no?”

The wolf stays silent.

“Or not at all. That works.”

They sit there eyeing each other. Stiles isn’t sure how much the wolf remembers from the pit, if it’s still feeling a little bitter about being tranquilized or not. It doesn’t seem to remember and Stiles is more than happy to not bring it up.

Suddenly the wolf’s tail thumps against the ground and stiles jumps a little bit in surprise as it climbs to its feet again and comes towards him. It doesn’t seem threatening though so he just waits quietly as it comes over to investigate him for the second time.

Stiles wrinkles his nose when the wolf shoves its face into the spot where his neck and shoulder meet. Its nose is wet and cold, but he prefers that to being chewed on so he doesn’t push the alpha away. He remembers talk about submission and packs from the seminar he went to in Los Angeles so Stiles tilts his head to the side, offering a greater expanse of his neck to the wolf.

It must appeal to the alpha because the wolf plops itself in his lap- all 100 plus pounds- and licks a long, wet stripe up his cheek.

It’s simultaneously the most wonderful and disgusting thing he’s ever experienced. Apparently hunters don’t believe in brushing their charges’ teeth. Which, Stiles can understand because of the whole hostile kidnapping thing. He wouldn’t want to be near those teeth if the wolf wasn’t friendly with him.

“We need a name for you! We’ll have to think of something until you can tell us because I don’t want to keep calling you ‘the wolf’ in my head.”

The wolf looks so entirely unimpressed with him that Stiles is impressed with how unimpressed the
“Black sheep? No, okay, I get it, you hunt sheep so calling you sheep would make you less wolf-like. How about Shadow? Midnight? Blacky? Moon? You gotta give me something to work with, man.” The wolf is judging him. That is a judgy wolf face that is looking at him right now; Stiles wonders how this is his life right now.

“Okay, compromise, how about I make food for you, me and dad and then we can ask dad? He’ll be so grateful you haven’t used me as your dinner that he’ll give you a great name. Like, Miguel or something.”

The wolf throws him an expression he can confidently say is disgusted before climbing out of his lap to explore the rest of the house. Stiles wants to follow him, but at the same time wants to give the poor guys some space.

Either way the whole thing makes the wolf seem less feral and more human. Stiles can already smell the progress. Or the smell of tropical paradise. Why is he smelling tropical paradise?

“Shit. Miguel, wolfy, black sheep, whatever your name is- don’t chew on the air freshener!”

So maybe not so human and more feral than he thought. “I’m going to have to child proof this house, or rather wolf proof it. Just for that, you’re stuck with the name Miguel!” Scott is going to love this, he thinks as he climbs the stairs to hunt down the poor air freshener that was no doubt victimized by the wolf. It’s probably Karma for all the vegetables he’s made his dad eat.

Chapter End Notes

I'm supposed to be studying. But I procrastinate like crazy so here's an update for your enjoyment. A day early too! Also there is an actual wolf sanctuary in Lucerne Valley, California called Wolf Mountain Sanctuary. Go check it out. Thanks to everyone who left me kudos, subscribed and commented! I may not always answer if there isn't a question, but I do read the comments and it always motivates me to write more and do better.
Far Removed (From This and That)

Chapter Summary

Living with humans is hard. Remembering is even harder.

The wolf has lived with the humans for what feels like several days now. It notes this passage of time only by how many times the sun has gone down and risen again.

Only one of the humans is cautious of the wolf, and even that seems to be fading. Despite the word ‘feral’ being thrown around a lot, the wolf doesn’t feel the call of the moon yet. There’s nothing wild stirring beneath its fur and shifting its bones. Not yet. So it is cordial to its hosts. Well, more like its guests. The wolf has already marked the territory as its own so really these humans remain only out of its generosity.

It snuffles into the hand that strokes its head, encouraging more rubs behind its ears. The good smelling human is also known as a Stiles. The wolf isn’t really sure if this is a name, a breed, a ranking or something else entirely, but it’s the only thing it has come to associate with its favorite human. Despite being the wolf’s- an alphas- favorite Stiles seems to dislike the gifts the wolf will bring to show appreciation. The first squirrel had been left on the porch steps and the wolf thought maybe that’s why its gift hadn’t been well received. So tonight it would bring the squirrel up to Stiles’ bedroom and leave it on the bed.

That was another thing the wolf was discovering! As it went through everyday life with these humans it was remembering things! There were words that suddenly made sense and had meaning now. It was terribly exciting and made the wolf’s tail thump happily.

There was a call from the kitchen and the wolf was off like a shot. Gone were the days of gruel that was tasteless, now it was fed an amazing diet of meat. Sometimes they put green and orange things in the wolf’s food but it typically just ate around the offending objects. Today there was a massive slab of red meat waiting on a plate near the dining table. The wolf tuckers into happily, but quietly. It still hasn’t managed to break some of its habits from being a pit wolf; it knows the humans are always cautious when the wolf has food in front of it. As if the wolf would ever confuse them for food- Stiles wouldn’t be worth the hunt, too skinny with not enough fat. The wolf doesn’t even think about the other human. At first it was almost like being around another alpha, but the wolf remembers living with another alpha when the wolf was beta. The older human reminds the wolf of that alpha.

Stiles hasn’t left the wolf’s side since the wolf got here. It’d woken up in a pile of warm blankets to see massive brown eyes watching it from a couple of feet away. At first the wolf had shuffled uncomfortably because the staring was weird, but then it’d gotten over it. Besides, there were many things that needed exploring in its new territory.

After finishing its meal the wolf wandered away from the humans, ending up at the back door and sitting down. The humans liked to watch the moving images on the black box but the wolf didn’t like the noises and preferred to watch over its territory from the back door. There was a black, somewhat see through material that stopped it from going outside though. Not that it really prevented the wolf from leaving. But why run away? There was food here and free scratches. Where would the wolf even go?
It lays down on its belly and rests its head on its paws, considering this. If it left the wolf would run the risk of being captured again. It’s not as if the risk is really diminished by remaining here though. It has the feeling that Stiles would act as a barrier should someone come for the wolf. A growl builds up in the wolf’s throat at the thought of someone hurting its Stiles.

The human makes a sound behind the wolf, talking to it.

“-outside?” The wolf chuffs and climbs to its feet. Maybe running will get rid of some of the energy. Stiles laughs and opens the door, the wolf charges out, leaping off the porch. It rolls in the grass, panting happily. The fights had taken most of the wolf’s energy, but with no outlet other than the occasional run around outside the wolf finds itself growing restless. It knows this will only worsen as the full moon grows closer.

“Miguel! Come on, inside!”

The wolf ignores the human. Stiles know the wolf won’t respond to that particular name.

“Sourwolf!” The wolf deems this an acceptable name and turns to head back inside only to be distracted by a quiet ringing noise coming from the edge of the yard. It makes the wolf shiver; the sound is exactly like the one the electric collar the wolf used to have to wear in the pits. The ringing pitch had come right before a particularly painful shock. The urge to go investigate is strong, but the wolf ignores it in favor of herding Stiles back inside with its snout, whining at the human to move faster. Whatever was out there would chew through the human easily, the wolf liked its human in one piece.

Despite grumbling and dragging its feet the human did go inside at the wolf’s urging. Whatever was in the shadows of the trees didn’t come out as the door slammed shut behind the two.

Getting ready for bed was probably one of the wolf’s favorite things in its new routine. It liked being able to jump up on the bed and curl up in the middle. Granted, the wolf never got to stay there because Stiles would come in, see it laying in the middle of the bed, and promptly shove it over. The wolf didn’t mind, it liked shoving its cold nose into Stiles’ warm side better anyways.

This routine had worked well for the past several nights. Tonight, however, Stiles moved around too much for the wolf to really get its nose in a good spot. It almost yelped when a stray arm smacked it right in the face! The wolf huffed and stood up, looming over the still-for-a-moment body of its favorite human. When it seemed as though the human was comfortable the wolf flopped its entire body on the back of the human, smooshing it into the bed. Finally the wolf could sleep without risking a punch to the nose.

They don’t stay in that position though. Stiles is on the floor by morning and the wolf has sprawled itself out to take up all the space on the bed. There is much grumbling when this slight infraction is discovered, but the wolf figures that Stiles will live and get over it; even if the human is still shouting at the wolf when it claws open the door and clambers down the stairs. It heads to the back porch and whines for someone to let it outside. The older human is more merciful than Stiles, who will no doubt ignore the wolf out of bitterness and spite, and lets the wolf out.

It does its business right in Stiles’ small garden before trotting off to the edge of the fence to find out
where the noise was coming from yesterday. It’s quiet now, just the usual sounds that come with morning: birds, insects, the teenager next door singing at the top of its lungs- the usual. Even the scents are the same. The wolf can find nothing amiss.

The human calls for it to come back, its voice irritated. The wolf ignores it in favor of digging a hole by the fence. It could jump over it supposes, but digging is so much more fun. The human disagrees because it comes running out at the wolf telling it to stop but the wolf is so close to almost making a big enough pit to get through to the other side that it just digs faster.

Stiles must hear the commotion because he comes running out too. He smells like worry, but the wolf is more concerned with the other scent it just picked up. Gerard.

All of a sudden the smell of Stiles and the morning sounds disappear as the wolf is suddenly back in the pits with Gerard beating at it with a stick coated in the burning liquid. He’s grabbing at the wolf’s collar with his bare hands and the wolf thinks yes, this is it! The man has finally screwed up and the wolf is ready to take one of his hands off as a consequence. Just as the wolf gets its teeth in position around the human’s wrist a spray of cold water shocks the wolf out of its revere. It yelps and wrestles away from the offending spray.

By the time the water stops the wolf is back within its right mind and is absolutely horrified with what almost just happened. It can’t smell any blood, so it must not have broken any of the older human’s skin but it had been a very near thing. The wolf can still taste the human’s sweat and fear on its tongue. Stiles is talking to the two of them but neither is listening. The older human doesn’t smell angry as he sighs and answers Stiles quietly. He doesn’t sound angry either. But the wolf knows this isn’t always a telling sign of anger for humans. Gerard had been quiet before he struck too.

The wolf lowers itself to its belly, whining and trying to look as submissive as possible. It doesn’t want to be sent away so it will submit to the humans this one time. To this willingness the wolf flattens its ears against its skull and bares its throat to the older human. Stiles gasps but the wolf shuts its eyes so it doesn’t see the older human’s reaction.

It will later defend itself with growls and yips that it most certainly did not jump in shock when a hand runs over its head and settles in the thick scruff around its neck. The wolf looks up at the human it almost ate, red eyes wide. The man has an odd look on his face, but it doesn’t appear to be an angry one. Relived at having been forgiven the wolf quickly shuffles to its feet and shoves its massive body up against the human’s legs, crowding it and yipping happily. Both humans laugh as it licks at their hands; one in thanks for the forgiveness and the other in forgiveness for spraying the wolf with water. It’s grateful that it was stopped, but it will bury all of Stiles’ shoes the next time the human throws water on the wolf.

They head inside, the hole beneath the fence and the strange scent forgotten for now.

Something must change after that because suddenly the wolf is being present with the option of going with one of the humans in a car. They’re going places, and the wolf is going with them! It’s possibly the most exciting thing to happen to the wolf. Ever.

Obviously the wolf picks Stiles, though it does lick the older human’s hand in apology. Maybe it should try biting the humans more often if that will get them to take the wolf places.

It should probably be more apprehensive about the car, since the wolf has never had a good experience in a car. But this isn’t a car, at least it’s nothing like the wolf has ever ridden in before. It also smells like Stiles which helps a lot. The glass wall between the wolf and the outside goes down on its own when Stiles finally starts the car. This allows the wolf to stick its head out and feel the wind in its face as the pull away from the house and head towards wherever the humans plan to take
the wolf.

The wolf should be concerned, it knows this. It just tried to bite the hand that feeds it; they could be taking it back to the pits or worse, to the vet. Sometimes, when wolves go to the vet they don’t always come back. Instead of worrying over it the wolf decides to trust in Stiles and just enjoy the ride. If these are the wolf’s last moments then it’s going to enjoy every last one of them.

They don’t go to the vet. At least it doesn’t smell or sound like the vet. Granted there are wolves here, but there are mostly humans. By the time the older human has arrived the wolf has wrinkled its nose because it still smells like misery, but neither of the wolf’s humans look or smell miserable so the wolf assumes all is well.

When they go inside the wolf is dizzied by the explosion of sounds and smells. This is nothing like the pits. The pits had been blood, fear and sand. This, this smelled like anger, anxiety, excitement, arousal, confusion, every scent the wolf thought existed plus some that were new. Unsure what to do with itself the wolf just pants nervously beside Stiles, trying to fight back the instinct to fight all the unknowns in the room.

A familiar scent jumps out at the wolf. It trots away from Stiles’ side, flicking one ear to face the human as it scrambles to follow after the wolf. The scent is getting stronger until finally the wolf is staring up at the human that was a wolf, specifically the wolf that had been in residence for a couple of hours across from it in the kennels of the last pit. Both wolves look surprised.

Stiles catches up, chastising the wolf if the tone of his voice is anything to judge. The wolf turns to glare at the human when the tone turns familiarly to the other not-wolf. The humans just laugh at the wolf and the wolf snaps a warning bark at them.

Surprisingly the entire building seems to go quiet at that. Someone tries talking to Stiles, but Stiles is too busy kneeling and scratching at the wolf’s ears soothingly, murmuring something the wolf doesn’t understand. Most days this does not bother the wolf because how can it miss understanding something that it never understood? Today however, right now, not understanding is beyond frustrating for the wolf. It growls again, hackles rising. It knows this makes other wolves nervous because the wolf is an alpha, the wolf is naturally big. Raising its fur makes it bigger, more imposing. Especially when it growls and shows its teeth. It’s not really trying to scare the humans, but the wolf is frustrated and instinct is easier to fall into when the wolf is having a hard time understanding something.

There are some shouts and the wolf snaps at the hand that tries to pull Stiles away. No one touches Stiles, not the wolf’s Stiles. If they want a Stiles they’ll have to get their own.

The added noise makes it even more difficult to focus, this makes the wolf more frustrated. It feels moisture building in its eyes and it shakes its head to get rid of it. Something must have lodged itself in its eyes, it hates when that happens.

It’s chaotic one second and quiet the next.

“Derek?”

The wolf’s ears twitch and it pops out of its defensive crouch, eyes scanning for the caller of the name. It’s another not-wolf but this one smells familiar. There’s a tingling in the back of the wolf’s mind and the wolf has to sit down or it’ll fall down its legs are shaking so hard.
Derek, Derek, Derek, Derek

“I’m going to be an alpha, Der-bear!”

“Derek, son, you’re going to make captain this year if you keep throwing like that!”

“Honey, could you grab your little brother? I may be his mother but I think he loves you more!”

“You’re not alpha, Derek, not even second best. That’s Laura! You don’t get to boss me around just because you’re older than me!”

“So naïve, nephew, it’ll be the death of you.”

There are ghosts in the peripheral of the wolf’s eyes. It wants to howl and run away, but it’s surrounded on all sides- there’s no running away from this one.

Derek. It has a name. It remembers its name is Derek and it had a family.

Derek had a family.

Derek whines and shoves its nose into Stiles’ belly, butting at the human with his head. Stiles sighs softly and rubs behind Derek’s ears.

“C’mon bud, I thought this would be a good idea. Clearly I was wrong.”

“I think you all have jobs to get back to, correct? Actual law enforcement jobs with laws that need enforcing? Go enforce!” The older human is shooing all the spectators off but the wolf is too busy marveling at the fact that he can finally understand what the humans are saying but doesn’t know how to convey the amazingness that is this knowledge.

“Cora? What was that about?” Stiles is still rubbing at Derek’s head and neck but he’s half turned to face the woman who’s standing by a wall. She seems to be leaning on it for support, her face stuck between laughter and shock.

“That’s Derek. Oh my god Stiles that’s my brother, that’s my brother. I thought he was dead, they said- they said-” She breaks down into tears and slides to the floor. Derek is glad she doesn’t come closer because as much as she seems familiar she doesn’t feel familiar enough to be family. Maybe she is, maybe she isn’t.

Stiles tears his eyes away from the sobbing not-wolf and stares at Derek hard. The wolf whines and shifts under his eyes before licking the human’s cheek in an effort to stop the burning gaze. It works.

“I don’t think he remembers anything. He’s still kind of feral? A domesticated feral? Dad can we pull a blood test to see if matches? Or do they do wolf dental records? I don’t think they do, but we totally should. That would be a great way to identify-“

“Yes we can have Deaton pull blood, no, we don’t have wolf dental records, Stiles,” the older human answers so he must be Stiles’ Dad. At least the wolf has an actual title for the man.

The woman from before is still crying when Stiles’ Dad goes over to talk to her. She looks at Derek longingly with watery eyes, but the wolf only cocks its head at her curiously. She breaks down into more tears. Stiles tries to usher the wolf away but the wolf is fascinated by what might be a huge part of his past. This woman could be the key unlocking more memories! Derek lumbers away from
Stiles’ side, trotting over to the not-wolf named Cora.

Cora laughs wetly in between sobs as Derek licks her face and sits in front of her. She seems to know that he doesn’t really know her, because she doesn’t try to latch onto him like he expected. A small hand cards through his fur, but nothing more than that.

“Oh man, Laura is going to be so excited. Peter too. You guys didn’t always get along but they loved you. I can’t believe you’re alive! Don’t worry, Der, we’ll help you remember.”

“I’m not sure introducing him to more people is best?” Stiles hesitantly offers.

Cora stiffens and her scent turns both defensive and hostile, “You going to keep my brother from his family, Stilinski? That’s not going to work.”

“That’s not what I’m suggesting!” Stiles holds his hands out him front of him, the wolf isn’t sure what this is supposed to do. Stiles should hunch his shoulder and bare his throat if he wants the not-shewolf to back off. “I’m just saying he was just in the pits not all that long ago. I’m not sure we should be throwing so many people at him, okay? He kind of tried to amputate my dad’s hand this morning because we startled him. I just don’t want to trigger anymore incidents like that.”

“We’re werewolves, we’ll be fine.”

“Oh I wasn’t aware that you wolves grew appendages back!”

“That’s not the point! You can’t just keep him all to yourself-“

“All to myself? I am not! I’m not trying to-“

“You’re acting like a jealous girlfriend! You got something to confess, Stilinski?”

“That’s ridiculous! I’m not-“

“Alright you two that’s enough. Poor Derek doesn’t need to be caught up in this and I’m sure the rest of the office has had more than entertainment at his expense. Cora, Stiles has legal custody of what the government has deemed a feral alpha pit wolf who was first in line for euthanasia. He’s on thin ice. We can’t just hand over custody, especially not with such a conflict of interest here, okay? This doesn’t mean you can’t see him. I’m sure Stiles would be happy to bring Derek into work to see you.”

“I thought we established that this wasn’t a good idea?”

“It’s a great idea. He just needs a little time to adjust. Look at him, he looks well-adjusted to me! I’m sure he was startled earlier. The guy needs to get out of the house Stiles, I don’t want him there alone, and you need to get back to work. A house sitter is out of the question so what else would you do?“

Stiles grumbles and the wolf thumps his tail against the ground in sympathy. “Fine. But he goes on patrol with me! I want one of the k9 squad’s cars.”

“Deal.”

“You’re going to use him like a k9 unit? Is that even legal? How do you know he’ll listen to you? Derek’s awful at listening to orders, he always ignored mom and Laura,” Cora says the last part kind of sadly.
Derek takes offense to that because he can listen when he feels like it. He just doesn’t usually feel like it.

“He’ll be fine! Right, Derek? You don’t want to be home all day, do you?”

Derek glares at Stiles. These humans are ridiculous.

“See? Look at that glare. He’s got such a judgy wolf face.”

Cora laughs, “You should see him when he’s human. It gets even better! Or worse, I guess.”

Derek? Human? The idea is nauseating. It also doesn’t make sense. He whines and paws at his nose in distress. Even Stiles’ Dad chuckles at his misery. “Go do some paperwork, Stiles. I’m sure Derek will be OK sitting next to your desk. Poor guy looks ready to take a nap and it’s only 8:40 in the morning.”

Stiles does indeed go to an area where he sits and types stuff. Derek does kind of want to sleep because remembering is actually really tiring and stressful but he can’t sleep out here in the open like this. When Stiles is distracted by someone bringing around donuts Derek slips away and into a room that smells mostly of Stiles’ Dad. The older man is writing something intently and only pauses when he feels Derek come in and lay down on his feet under the desk.

The human peers underneath to look at him, smelling amused. “Too much for you out there, big guy? I don’t blame you. Let’s see how long before Stiles panics at your absence.”

Derek does manage to catch a nap for a little while before Stiles does indeed notice he’s gone and comes running into the office. Derek thumps his where it hangs out from underneath the desk because he’s too big to fit down there entirely and Stiles breathes a sigh of relief.

“You scared me, dude! I was worried you’d made a break for it or Cora and kidnapped you.”

The wolf huffs but refuses to move from his comfortable spot.

“Fine, that’s fine, you just stay there until I’m done, okay? We can leave early and get some ice cream or something.”

Derek remember ice cold on his tongue and a burst of something sweet-sour in the back of his mouth. The memory isn’t as startling as the first ones were; this one is even kind of pleasant.

They don’t get to go home early though because Stiles gets called away on a domestic. Derek goes home with Stiles’ Dad, riding in the back of his car and feeling oddly like he’s being punished somehow. He isn’t, and Stiles’ Dad proves this when he offers Derek a heaping scoop of vanilla ice cream.

“Stiles doesn’t let me have ice cream usually, but I bought this and hid it in an empty box of frozen cucumbers. The kid preaches veggies, but he hates cucumbers. You can’t say anything though since I’m sharing with you, okay? We’ve gotta look out for each other. Just remember who gives you the extra helping of beef and who gives you the carrots okay?”

Derek doesn’t really get it but he yips anyways because the ice cream tastes pretty good and he’d like to see some more of it in his future.

Stiles doesn’t get home until late. Both Derek and Stiles’ Dad have already eaten dinner. There were no carrots on Derek’s plate tonight so his suspicions as to who was actually feeding him the orange slices of death were confirmed.
Despite running into his past Derek feels like it’s been a pretty good day. He got to run around in the yard for a long time with Stiles’ Dad just sitting on the porch reading until it got dark so he’s actually pretty tired from the long day.

It’s right before bed that Derek realizes he’s forgotten something extremely important. He didn’t get Stiles’ squirrel last night before bed, so tonight he has to do that. When Stiles’ Dad lets him into the backyard Derek is off like a shot. He huddles underneath the bushes in the back that the border the fence between his yard and the neighbor’s yard. The neighbor has a bird feeder that partially hangs over into his yard. It makes for a great hunting spot as the squirrels are usually too busy getting fat on seeds to notice him.

Except tonight. He waits for a couple of minute and there are no signs of any squirrels. He doesn’t usually try this when it’s dark out, so maybe they don’t come out tonight? Maybe one got away from him and tipped the others off. Regardless there’s nothing to catch here. He’s about to give up and cut his losses to try again tomorrow when he hears rustling coming from the other side of the yard.

Suspicious, the wolf turns around and quietly toes his way over. A strange, cat like thing is ambling across the yard like it owns the place. Derek has to kill it on principal now because no, this is his yard. Even if the black and white thing does smell strange.

Derek manages to get his teeth around its neck just in time to be sprayed by the most fowl smelling substance he’s ever had the opportunity to smell. He’s smelled a lot of bad stuff before, but this one takes the cake. It’s not enough to deter him though. Although the shock might have caused some lesser wolf to drop its prey Derek’s jaws actually clamp shut around the neck of the creature. He tastes blood and bone as it dies.

Stiles might have to wash the thing before they eat it, but Derek is sure that he’ll appreciate the gift.
Running with Wolves (Today, Tonight)

Chapter Summary

Stiles wishes he could make some sense of Derek and Beacon Hills. Stiles needs to be careful what he wishes for.

Chapter Notes

There is plot in this chapter. If you haven't really noticed, this story is kind of a dark concept that's been masked with Stiles' personality and Derek's awkwardness. The plot does not make the story any lighter, only darker, if anything. You'll be warned in beginning notes if there's something that might be a trigger or might be too graphic as the story doesn't have a rating yet. This is just a general heads up about what could possibly come. This particular chapter is no more graphic than the chapters before it.

Stiles may have jumped the gun on bringing the alpha home. With the full moon looming over his head and Derek’s strange behavior, Stiles isn’t sure he’s cut out to handle this.

Stiles doesn’t get to bed until sometime around 4’o clock in the morning. He’s tired, dirty, smells gross and on the edge of committing homicide. He’d sent his dad to bed a long time ago because Derek was ultimately his responsibility, not his dad’s.

It had seemed like they were making progress, but looking at it now, Stiles isn’t so sure. The wolf is acting like a dog and Stiles doesn’t know what that means. None of this is in the little handbook that the government hands out about feral wolves. Stiles has already tried researching it, but there’s not much information out there about feral alphas. Especially not feral alphas coming out of the pits. Most are already dead by the time anyone thinks about possibly asking questions. As if the presents of dead, once fluffy forest animals isn’t enough Stiles knows the full moon is coming up. He doesn’t think that the dead animals are related to the full moon, but he’s been wrong plenty of times before. Maybe he should ask Cora?

He flips over and tries to sleep but flipping over puts his face toward the door where he imagines Derek is sitting and whining quietly. He shouldn’t feel guilty, okay? The wolf had caught a skunk and Stiles had to actually take the dead thing from Derek before the wolf would let go of it. Stiles has held a dead skunk. He doesn’t want to repeat the event. A long, tomato sauce bath had occurred after that. Something neither Derek nor Stiles were happy about. The wolf splashed and tried to escape and Stiles had to wrestle him back into the tub and actually hold him down while he soaked him.

In the end they’d both ended up wet and smelling like tomatoes. Stiles had been so angry he’d cleaned up the red stains, stomped off to bed and slammed his door shut before Derek could slip into the room and up onto his bed. Now he kind of regrets being so mean, not that he’s let go of all the anger.

There’s a pitiful whine from the other side of the door that dies off into a short whimper. Stiles
knows he shouldn’t give in; they tell you in parenting courses to tough out the whining, your child is fine. The analogy should work but Stiles can’t help throwing off the covers to go open the door. Sure enough, Derek is laying against the door. Opening it causes the wolf’s body to roll onto Stiles bare feet.

“Alright. Get in here. But Derek I don’t want any more dead forest friends, okay? No more dead animals. If you kill anything, you eat it. Or bury it. Don’t bring it to me or inside the house, don’t even leave it on the porch steps! All occupants of this house must be breathing!” Derek’s face manages to contort into something sad and remorseful. Stiles doesn’t know how he does it, do wolves even have enough facial muscles to make sad faces?

The door clicks shut quietly when Stiles leaves it to crawl back into bed grumpily. It’s a front that Derek must see through because he climbs up next to Stiles and tucks his wet nose into the back of Stiles’ neck.

It was hard trying to sleep without Derek in the bed, but now that he’s beside Stiles the human falls asleep the moment he shuts his eyes.

Stiles has never been woken in the middle of the night by Derek. The wolf is usually quiet in his sleep, even when he falls asleep on the couch or the porch. Tonight Stiles wakes to the sound of snarls and whines. He blinks in the dim light of dawn; the sun’s barely up over the horizon, just a thin line of light that streams in through the window blinds.

Derek is in bed next to him, rumbling in his sleep. His gums are pulled up and Stiles can see just how sharp the wolf’s teeth are. The growling makes it obvious Derek isn’t having a good dream, the way he’s running in his sleep makes Stiles even more nervous. The black fur on the wolf’s back is raised, something Stiles hasn’t seen since the day they’d pulled the wolf from the pits.

“Derek? You’ve gotta wake up buddy. C’mon, it’s just a dream. You’re with Stiles.” Stiles murmurs quietly to him, not wanting to shout or touch the wolf. He’d like to keep both his hands and face without any holes.

Unfortunately Derek doesn’t wake, just continues to whine and growl. Stiles gently rolls out of bed, trying to disturb the mattress as little as possible. He gets a little farther from the bed, opening the door in case Derek needs somewhere to run the moment he wakes up. The last thing he wants is for the wolf to feel cornered. “Der, c’mon bud, wake up.” He’s a little louder this time and that seems to help because Derek’s movements edge on the right side of waking up.

“Derek, come on back, you’re safe now,” Stiles keeps himself close to the window and out of the way of the door. It turns out to be a good idea because Derek comes awake with a small howl that has the wolf barreling out of the room. All 100 some pounds of him would have trampled Stiles on the way out.

Stiles follows him down the stairs. Surprisingly Derek doesn’t head towards the back porch or barrel straight through the solid wood door to get outside, instead Stiles finds him trying to worm his way under the couch. Derek’s a big wolf, even if he’s a little underweight still, and the crack between the floor and the couch is nowhere near big enough for him to get through. He’s determined to make it work though because he crams himself in as far as possible. Before stilling and whining miserably.

It shouldn’t be funny. The poor guy just woke up from a night mare, startled himself into running, and now is too fat to actually fit under the couch. Stiles thinks he might be a little stuck too. The picture is a little funny though and Stiles has to choke back a laugh. The noise seems to have woken his dad too because he comes trudging down the stairs only half aware of what’s going on.
“I heard Derek come running down here, what’s going on?” He spots the wolf’s butt sticking out from under the couch, back paws scrambling against the hard wood to try and propel the body even farther under, and sighs, “I don’t want to know. Tell me later. It’s too early for this. I’ll start on the coffee.”

“Yeah, thanks dad.” Stiles grabs the flashlight from where it’s hanging by the front door and drops to the floor by the couch on the opposite side of Derek. He flips up the cloth flap covering the gap between the bottom of the couch and the floor and sticks his head under it. “I’m going to turn on the flashlight, Derek. Don’t freak out.” They don’t really know if the wolf understand them yet, and after last night Stiles is pretty dubious about how much Derek is really comprehending but it’s better than not saying anything. He flicks the light on and has to bite back a snort at the expression on Derek’s face.

“I know big guy. You don’t fit under here though so I’m going to have to lift the couch to get you out, okay?” Derek whines his misery again, and Stiles can hear his trail thumping against the floor. Stiles takes that as his ascent and crawls back out from under the couch, flicking off the flash light as he goes. The couch is light so it’s no trouble lifting it off of the wolf. Derek darts out from where he’d been stuck and bounds to the dining room table to hide under there instead.

Stiles sighs and decides to leave him to it. Dad was right, it’s too early to deal with this. Thankfully the coffee is already dripping into the pot when he joins his dad in the kitchen.

“Everything okay?”

“I don’t know, dad, he had a nightmare and decided to try and fit under the couch.”

The Sheriff snorts, “He’s too damn big to fit under that thing.”

“Yeah well he didn’t know that, but I guess now he knows. He’s under the dining room table now, I don’t know why he didn’t just hide under there to begin with.”

There’s a soft chuffing sound coming from the dining room that sounds suspiciously like Derek protesting their gossip.

“You think he’s understanding us a little bit these days?”

“I’d like to hope so but after that little stunt last night I’m too sure. How much is wolf and how much is man?”

“Can you really separate the two in a full shift wolf, Stiles?”

Stiles frowns and sighs, “That’s probably a Cora question. I’m thinking I’ll take him back in today. He can either spend the day with Cora or in the back seat of the patrol car while I’m working. Who knows, maybe we’ll get a call that needs a nose like his.”

The Sheriff winces, “Be careful what you wish for Stiles.”

Stiles thinks maybe his dad was right. Derek hadn’t wanted to spend the day with Cora, so instead he got to spend it with Stiles in a patrol car. The wolf must think he’s too good for the back seat though because he’d refused to sit in the back and had instead climbed into the driver’s side to climb over the center console and into the passenger side. He refused to budge after that.

So Stiles goes about his work day with a big ass wolf sitting in the passenger seat. He gets a lot of side looks in traffic at red lights. There’s a this memorable moment when they pass a minivan and the
kids in the back seat all press their noses to the window to get a look at Derek. While full shift wolves may be common knowledge, actually seeing one in person is much different than looking at a picture.

The call for the assistance of a wolf comes in just after lunch. Stiles had fed Derek a roast beef sandwich while he had chewed on a turkey sub. The radio crackles as the operator calls in. It’s a runner that’s made off into the woods on the west side of town. They’re requesting a wolf unit to come bring them in as they’re considered armed and dangerous. Stiles radios back that they’re on their way.

The department used to use dogs for this, but with the reveal and integration of werewolves in the late 1990’s they use wolves for the more dangerous tasks. They’re sturdier and have better senses, so dogs were demoted to quieter situations mostly involving the search for cadavers or missing persons. Plus, wolf teams were more expensive and not every town had one. Beacon Hills has several but they’re usually on loan to other departments.

Stiles pulls up to the scene about 15 minutes after he’d answered the call. There are already a couple of patrol cars with their lights on parked around a wrecked SUV. Stiles turns to Derek and makes sure the wolf is looking him in the eye, “Okay, this is how it’s going to go. We get out, you’re going to sniff the car, than you’re going to head into the woods and get this guy, alright? I’m going to be following you along with a couple of other deputies. Don’t kill if you don’t have to, okay? I know you kind of understand what I’m talking about, so can you huff or bark to let me know you get it?”

Derek cocks his head at Stiles before panting happily, pink tongue lolling out from white teeth as he yips at the human.

“Good enough.”

They get out and Derek immediately heads over to the wreck, nose to the ground. A couple of the other deputies nod to Stiles and get ready to head into the woods. Derek noses through the wreck a little bit, even going so far as to climb into the upside down car. He reappears a minute later, yipping at Stiles before running into the woods in massive strides. Stiles groans because keeping up is not going to be easy.

The deputies follow him in and through the brush. It’s all pretty confusing even though it doesn’t last long. An 8 minute chase turns into gunfire when Derek leaps onto the suspect who had been trying to hide underneath a fallen pine tree. Derek yelps in surprise, but Stiles doesn’t hear any pain in the sound. The deputies are all shouting for the man to put down his gun, their own weapons drawn and aimed at the man. Derek just leaps on the guy, jaws snapping angrily. He somehow manages to get his gaping mouth around the gun and the man’s hand. The man screams in pain as Derek gnaws on him, releasing the gun and crumpling to the ground. It’s kind of funny watching him scramble backward and away from Derek, trying to cradle his broken, half severed hand to his chest.

Derek is happy to let him go, opting to gnaw on the gun instead. The deputies give him a wide berth as they close in to arrest the guy, Stiles ends up being the one to try and wrestle the loaded weapon from the wolf.

“Stop that, does this really look like a good thing to chew on? You saw it shoot at you!”

Derek whines but gives up his new chew toy, now slathered in wolf saliva and full of teeth marks. Stiles sighs and disarms the wolf, feeling silly about the wolf thing. “I swear, Der, the deputies are going to thing your rabid at this rate.”

“Oh yeah, Stilinski. A real killer, that one,” a deputy mocks as he passes them, eyeing a panting
Derek with apprehension.

“Killer of skunks and forest animals, yes, yes he is.”

“He leaving you dead animals as presents?”

“Yeah, you know anything about that?”

The deputy grins, “A little bit. Probably thinks he’s providing for you. It could be he’s taken to you as his pack, or he wants you to be his mate and he’s trying to court you. You should talk to another full shift alpha though, they’d probably know better.”

Stiles gapes at the deputy as they walk away, “Wait, what’s your name! Hey!” He’s ignored but Stiles shakes it off and turns to look at Derek again. Oh heck, the wolf better not be trying to make Stiles his mate. Pack is fine, but anything more is reserved until Derek can walk on two feet again and think like a human.

“We need to talk to Cora more.” Derek whines and Stiles whines too, “I know you hate being around her. But she’s your family, she has the answers, and I know you have more family who have even more answers. Laura would know more about this, that’s for sure. I’m tired of not knowing shit.”

Derek bats at his face with his massive front paws, sneezing at Stiles. The two start the trek back to the car and Stiles winces as the muscles in his leg and abdomen protest. They’d run pretty hard for such a short amount of time and distance.

The trip back to the station is quiet. Even the radio is quiet, only crackling to life occasionally. Over all, Beacon Hills has grown steadily more silent ever since the raid. There have been less traffic tickets, less robberies, and even the neighbors have been keeping quiet. It’s nice, but Stiles is suspicious because nice things don’t last for long. Especially nice, quiet, peaceful things.

Cora must have a sixth sense for her brother because she’s stalking by Stiles’ desk when he and Derek get back. “There you are! I was looking for you. Derek how are you? I heard you got into a little scuffle?”

Derek shuffles nervously as she gets closer, her fingers twitching with the urge to pet him and make sure he’s whole and fine. The wolf huddles closer to Stiles, bumping into the human’s legs and whining pleadingly. Stiles takes pity on the sad creature that Derek Hale turns into when Cora comes around. “He’s fine, Cora. I was actually looking for you so it’s a good thing you were trying to hunt down Derek as usual.”

“What do you want, Stilinski?”

“I think we should set up that meeting with Laura and Peter. I’ve got some questions that I’m pretty sure only Laura can answer.”

“About damn time. You got a time in mind?”

“Is Saturday okay?”

Cora looks a little dubious, “You sure? The full moon is Friday. Speaking of which, you got a plan for that? Any idea how he’s going to act?”

Stiles winces, “Damn. I knew it was coming up, I just didn’t really think it was so soon. Could we meet tomorrow then?”
“Laura and Peter are in New York City, they’ll be back Thursday. We could try Thursday? I don’t know how he’s going to be acting, if he’ll be able to handle sitting down and trying to talk or do the full shift equivalent of that the day before the full moon.”

“I was going to run with him, I guess. Give him more time outside, go for runs leading up to the full moon; try to get that energy out so he doesn’t explode.”

“You could try the preserve if you wanted to. Just let him have free reign. He should be fine then.”

Stiles looks thoughtful, “That sounds pretty good. You don’t think he’ll have any bad memories from fighting there?”

“I don’t think he will. He could I guess, I don’t really know. Maybe try taking him out there before the full moon to see what he does?”

“I’ll try that tomorrow night then. We still have a little bit of time, it’s only Tuesday.”

“Leading up to the full moon can be pretty tough for a wolf too though, we get kind of anxious if we’re pent up inside all day. The patrol thing is a good idea, it keeps him out and about.”

Derek pushes his nose into Stiles’ hand, demanding to be pet or telling Stiles he agrees, Stiles isn’t sure. Either way he puts a palm on the wolf’s head and strokes through the soft fur there, pulling gently on his ears. “Yeah, we’ll keep doing that. Plan for Thursday when Laura and Peter get in then. Let me know as soon as they can meet, just text me.” She already has his number from the staff Christmas party where they’d had to coordinate who was bringing the fruit cake and the egg nog.

Cora gets away with patting Derek’s head once before the wolf ducks away. Stiles clocks out early again, because one man hunt was enough for him and Derek. He knows he can’t keep doing that, that the paperwork is piling up on his desk but he can’t justify leaving Derek to his own devices just yet. Besides, it’s so quiet lately that it shouldn’t be too big of an issue. If anything, he’s saving the town money by not working a bunch of hours right now. Maybe his dad will come home early too.

Derek hops into the Jeep happily, sticking his head right out the window the moment Stiles rolls it down. It’s not late at all, only 2 o’clock, maybe they could get Scott to come hang out if he isn’t working with another department.

Stiles is lost in that thought as they drive the scenic route home that he doesn’t notice that Derek stop lolling his tongue happily. The wolf snaps his mouth shut and cocks his head, listening to something in the distance. He tips his nose into the air, scenting it.

Stiles sees the black blob that is Derek squirm out the window of the moving car out of the corner of his car.

“What the fuck! Fuck, shit, DEREK! What the fuck, what the fuck!” Stiles slams on the brakes and swerves over to the side of the road, nervously eyeing the mirror to make sure no cars are coming. Derek just vacated the vehicle, hit the eject button, adios, sashayed his way right the fuck out of Stiles’ passenger window.

Stiles’ emotions sway dangerously between impressed, terrified and furious. Impressed because how the hell did he manage to get his big ass out the window, terrified because he could be dead, and furious because Derek could be dead. The last two are pretty big points, honestly.

The car is barely in park before he’s throwing himself out the door—not the window, Derek, some of us are civilized—and running around the back to look for his misplaced wolf.
There’s a pretty clear path of wolf sized foot prints leading through the mud and into the dense brush. Stiles is a little scared now, for himself, because this is how all the bad horror movies start okay? He opens the passenger side of his car and gets his gun out, flicking off the safety and quietly following the tracks into the overgrown field.

It hasn’t rained recently, which has Stiles so beyond confused about the mud that he’s entered the ‘what the fuck’ territory again. Stiles can’t hear Derek, certainly can’t see him, and he doesn’t want to call for him because he’s pretty sure they’re not the only things out here. It’s eerily quiet, the hairs on Stiles’ neck and arms are standing on end. The farther away from the road he gets the harder his heart pumps. There’s a bad smell in the air.

Stiles has to press a sleeve to his mouth and nose because the smell is so bad. It burns his eyes and the back of his throat but he can’t place a finger on what it is. Whatever it is, it’s rotting.

There’s a buzzing in Stiles’ ear that he can’t get rid of. His nerves climb the more he walks.

The grass rustles and a black figure startles him. Derek trots up to him, ears flat against his skull. Stiles doesn’t give a fuck because right now everything in him is screaming to turn around and go back. He trusts Derek to follow because the wolf already came back to him once today so he flicks his safety back on and sprints back to the car.

His feet hit the asphalt and Stiles’ knees give way. He bends over next to the car, not daring to even touch the muddy earth again, and vomits the turkey sandwich up all over the side of the road. He’s shaking hard, sobbing into the black fur that’s suddenly there.

Stiles doesn’t even want to be on the road here. He just wants out, so as soon as he’s able he pulls himself to his feet and climbs back into the car. This time, he rolls both windows up and turns up the heat all the way to chase away the cold, wet feeling on his skin.

It’s May, in California. It hasn’t rained in weeks, there are brush fire warnings.

Stiles still wants to throw up.

Even when they get home the wolf is quiet. Stiles doesn’t know why he jumped out of the car window, it’s not like he can ask and get an answer. He’s not sure he wants to know. Tomorrow, he’ll probably want to investigate because Stiles is nothing if not disgustingly curious. But for now the slimy, cold feeling has settled into his bones and not even the hot shower got the gross feeling off his skin.

He feels like decay as he settles on the couch to wait for his dad. Somehow, Derek manages to climb up onto the couch. Any other day the wolf’s heavy weight and warmth would feel suffocating but today, right now, they make Stiles feel safe.
Death Valley (Ashes and Dust)

Chapter Summary

Derek doesn't understand, the wolf just doesn't need to.

Chapter Notes

Minor warnings for not-too-graphic death description

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Derek doesn’t really understand what happened. The scent had been like a rope around his neck; once he’d caught it it was like something had pulled him right out the window and onto the pavement. He’d barely even registered the feel of his paws squishing the soggy earth into mud.

It hadn’t even been that enticing now that he really thinks about it. The smell wasn’t something he would have followed on his own for no reason. Stiles hadn’t even been a distant thought in his mind at that moment. The world had bled away so nothing remained but that smell. In the end though that’s all Derek knows about what happened; the smell, Stiles’ fear, and the burning rubber of the car tires as they fled home.

Derek doesn’t remember what he saw.

The place in his mind that should hold the memory of what exactly the odor had been is blank. He remembers running through tall grass and the feel of what earth getting muddier and muddier as he runs but there’s nothing else to tell him what happened. The next thing he remembers is sitting in the passenger’s side of Stiles’ car, staring out the windshield with the windows rolled up. The car had stunk of fear and vomit.

Being home was almost worse because while Derek clearly remembered nothing of the field—nothing horrible at least—Stiles did. He’d curled up on the couch and acted like it was going to be his final resting place. Derek didn’t really understand what was going on, just that his human was scared and that an alpha’s job is to protectlove care for its pack. So he’d jumped right on top of Stiles, laying down on the human’s back and burying his wet nose into the other’s warm neck. Every deep breath had Stiles’ hair tickling Derek’s nose.

Stiles wasn’t awake for when Derek accidentally sneezed into his hair and got some wolf-snot into it. Derek made sure to lick the evidence back up, but really only succeeded in mussing the man’s hair up into several different directions.

It wasn’t a surprise when the nightmares started. Stiles only mumbled at first but then started trying to thrash around, but Derek refused to be dislodged and pulled his human from the nightmare by sticking his tongue in Stiles’ ear.

It was a surprise when Stiles stayed sleeping after that.
Not long must have passed, at least not in Derek’s sense of time, but the Sheriff came home and called for Stiles. Derek popped his head up over the couch and barked once to get the man’s attention. The lack of a verbal response from his son must have startled the older human because he came rushing over to the couch.

Derek clambered down from his resting spot, whining in misery at the salty-sad smell radiating from Stiles that still hadn’t left from earlier. The Sheriff shook Stiles’ shoulder once, twice and then slapped him up the back of the head when he wouldn’t respond to a third shake. Stiles woke with a startled cry and flailing limbs. He settled when he realized who had woken him.

“Hi dad,” he croaked.

“You wanna tell me what’s going on, Stiles? Derek looks really worried about you and it usually doesn’t take me smacking you to wake you up kiddo.”

Stiles groaned and slowly sat up, rubbing absentely at the drying wolf-slobber covering his right ear. “Derek and I were heading home earlier. We took the long way home, something scenic for the big guy, ya know?” He paused, his hand shifting to the back of his neck to rub as his face scrunched up in something between disgust and confusion. “We were just driving with the windows down and the next thing I know Derek is jumping out the window while I’m going 45 down the road! I freaked out and pulled over but he was doing a little four wheel drive of his own in one of the fields just between the preserve and that old boarded up store. I don’t remember what that place used to be,” Stiles frowned thoughtfully.

The Sheriff seemed skeptical, “That old butcher’s shop?”

“That! Yeah so we were out there and I see Derek’s paw prints heading into the field so I go after him. It hasn’t rained in forever dad, but the whole place was muddy as hell so that was the first weird thing. Then there was this smell…”

“Smell?” Stiles’ dad prodded gently.

“I’ve smelt a dead body before, in one the raids. Sometimes they leave the wolves…and…well,” Stiles look at Derek sadly, “but this was worse. It smelled like corpses that had been sitting and rotting in the sun for days, dad. I didn’t even go too far in before I had to give up on Derek and run back. It made me sick. Just thinking about it now makes me sick.”

“Bodies? If it was that bad I might have to get someone to take a ride out there and have a look. Could be left over from the pits on the preserve. They might have dumped—well, you know.”

Derek knew. Sometimes the wolves gave up and sometimes they didn’t. The ones that died, regardless of how they went—starvation, wounds, infection, disease so many ways to die in hell—bodies were regularly hauled from the pits and kennels. No one knows where they go when they’re gone, except Derek knows now. He thinks not knowing was probably better. To fight for so long only to have your carcass thrown into a field to be picked apart by scavengers? There’s no honor in that, no peace.

“Yeah, you should. Not me though. I don’t want to be there again. It was creepy as hell, dad. Too quiet, too heavy. The only one that actually saw anything though was Derek.”

They both turn to the wolf expectantly like they expect him to just tell them what he saw. Derek huffs because for one thing, he doesn’t remember what he saw. For another thing, he can’t talk. Something his humans like to forget quiet often.
The look on his face must say it all because Stiles scoffs, “Alright, sourwolf, no one is expecting you to tell us what happened. It’d be nice, but we know it’s not going to happen. I still don’t get how your eyebrows can do that. Do you even have eyebrows?” He smooshes the fur and flesh just above the wolf’s eyes, pressing against the bone gently. Derek only allows it because Stiles’ pulse is still a little racy and his voice has a slight shiver in it that makes Derek want to curl around his human protectively.

Luckily the Sheriff seems to understand too, probably so adept at reading Stiles from the years of raising him. From what the wolf understands, Stiles has pretty much always had the coordination and self-preservation instinct of a baby giraffe.

It’s endearing, if a slightly worrying. But that’s okay now, because the wolf is here to protect Stiles. He can be a baby giraffe as long as he wants.

“Why are you looking at me like that? No, really, dad, why is he looking at me like that? He’s got a glint in his eye, I’m not sure I like it,” Stiles’ shoulders and neck do this weird thing that shortens his neck and gives him a double chin. Derek snorts in amusement, licking the human’s face just to annoy him.

Stiles sputters and crawls over the back of the couch to escape Derek’s wolf breath, his dad just watches them, the scent of amusement wafting over Derek. “How about we order in tonight? Pizza or Chinese?”

“Pizza, but only if it has some veggies on it, you’re not allowed to get meat lovers!”

“Slave driver!” The Sheriff calls over his shoulder as he makes his way to the phone to call for food.

Stiles climbs back down to sit on the couch cushions and buries his face in Derek’s neck. “Thanks, big guy.”

The night ends pretty well. The Sheriff took sympathy on the wolf and smuggled him a couple of slices when Stiles had his back turned and they even let him roam the yard for a good hour before bed. The wolf curls up next to Stiles that night, acting as a wall against the rest of the world. He pretends not to notice just how hard Stiles clings to him.

Despite the day before being something out of a horror movie Stiles and Derek do indeed go to work the next morning. Getting into the Jeep takes a minute though because Stiles pauses with his door open, staring into the car like he’s not too sure he wants to get into it. Derek yips at him in what must come across in an encouraging way because the human takes a deep breath before climbing in and starting the car.

“No side adventures today, okay bud?” Derek snuffles his agreement before sticking his nose against his window. Stiles laughs, “I’ll lower it a little, alright? But not too much, I don’t want you going all kamikaze on me again, okay?”

Derek does not in fact go kamikaze on the way to the station.

Cora greets him as usual, ruffling the fur on the top of his head and burying her face in his scruff. Derek doesn’t really like it when she does this, but he can’t really bring himself to hate it either. Instead he just tolerates it. Something tells him she would probably do it regardless of how he felt about the matter anyways.

When everyone is finally done trying to pet the wolf, Derek goes to sit at Stiles’ desk. It’s not exactly a quiet spot, but for some reason the Sheriff’s office seems even busier and noisier than Stiles’ today
so it wouldn’t be a good spot for him. Stiles is only about half way through his stack of paperwork when his dad pops his head out of the office and beckons him over. Derek’s pretty sure he wasn’t asking for Derek, but he goes where Stiles goes so he trots along at his human’s heel.

“I know you said you don’t want to go back out there, but the other deputies are having a hard time pinpointing exactly where you were talking about so I want to go out and guide them there. You don’t have to search with them, just lead them to field and let them handle the rest. Can you do that for me?”

Stiles purses his lips but finally sighs and nods, “Yeah, we can do that.”

“Good, they’re waiting for you in the parking lot.”

The wolf follows Stiles back to his desk where he grabs his firearm and reattaches it to his belt, muttering darkly the entire time as they leave the station. Sure enough there’s a squad car waiting for them, the deputies inside talking while Stiles clambers into the k9 unit car, Derek in the back.

The windows stay up and the radio stays off, the only sound is Derek’s panting. Stiles has the heat on again and Derek complains with quiet little whines. Either the human is ignoring his discomfort or he doesn’t hear it. Derek is inclined to think the latter of the two.

It feels like forever before they get back to the same spot they were in yesterday. Derek is pretty much dying to get out of the car; both the heat and the smell of Stiles’ anxiety are starting to get to him. The patrol car pulls up behind them and the deputies get out. Stiles doesn’t, his hands are gripping the steering wheel so tight that his knuckles are bleach white.

Eventually though he does get out, pointedly trying not to breath too deeply. He doesn’t open the door for Derek though, and the heat is still on. Derek whines loudly and starts clawing at the door; he’s got a lot of fur dammit and it’s hot! He’s usually super forgiving when it comes to Stiles but this is starting to actually make him mad. Stiles is too busy pointing and talking to the deputies to notice Derek though, even if the wolf has started bodily slamming himself against the window in the back seat. The cage in between the front and back of the car prevents him from throwing his weight against the windshield.

One of the deputies must say something about Derek—possibly how pitiful the wolf looks right now--, because Stiles is suddenly looking awfully guilty and running back over to the car. The open door bring a wave of cooler air, and surprisingly, no alluring scent that makes Derek go crazy.

“Sorry man, I don’t know what came over me. Jeez, I’m going to blast the AC, alright? I’ll give you a treat when we get back too, I’m so sorry I know it’s hot…” Stiles’ scent is full of anxiety and guilt, Derek can smell the sweat on him—like he was the one baking in the back of the car. He does as promised though, pumping up the AC all the way so Derek can finally stop panting. He still doesn’t allow the wolf out of the car though, shutting the door and going back to talk to the deputies instead. Derek wants to know what they’re saying.

The others start their trek into the field while Stiles waits by the side of the road, pacing anxiously at the edge where asphalt meets earth. Derek notices that the ground looks a lot drier than it did before.

Stiles paces the entire time they’re gone. It makes Derek nervous just watching it. The deputies come back looking baffled. They shake their head at Stiles while Stiles starts arguing with them. Derek can tell by the way Stiles’ hands and arms wave around manically. He storms around to Derek’s door and opens it up. “They can’t find anything, big guy but I think that’s bull so I need you to come out and have a sniff okay? Try not to run off though, I don’t want a scar like last time.”
Derek is just happy to be out of the car so he jumps down and immediately sticks his nose to the ground. There isn’t really even a trace of the scent from before, but Stiles wants him to find something so Derek will find something, even if it isn’t really there.

He raises his head and scents the air again, trotting off into the tall grass. The deputies all follow behind him.

It smells like grass, but there’s a distant smell of ozone like there is before a big storm. The deputies must not have gone too far in when they noticed there was no smell, because Derek feels more and more creeped out the farther back he goes. The deputies smell uneasy behind him, the sharp acrid smell of Stiles’ fear makes Derek want to turn around and forget the whole thing. Stiles would never let it go though, so he troops on with his nose leading the way.

Derek pauses when he catches a different smell. He opens his mouth, tongue lolling out as he tastes a bit of what he’s smelling. The roar of hot, orange flames licks at the back of his mind—he has no time for memories now but they make an appearance anyways. Stiles says something to him, but Derek is too busy tasting fire to notice.

The memory cuts off abruptly but the taste of ashes lingers in his mouth.

It’s no wonder he thought of fire because he can smell something sharp now, the same something that Stiles puts into the Jeep once a week. Gas, the back of Derek’s mind whispers, right along with warning bells.

“What do you smell, bud? Why’d you stop?”

Derek’s ears flick back and forth on confusion. Gas belongs in cars, not on the ground. Why is there gas on the ground? The earth back here is muddy, even if the dirt by the side of the road is dry again.

Stiles moves forward as though he’s going to pass Derek and head farther in. Derek snarls at him in warning, teeth snapping on air as he pushes his body against Stiles’ legs to herd the human back. “What the hell, Derek?”

The other deputies seem confused, “Maybe he smells something and doesn’t think we should go any farther?”

“I certainly wouldn’t mind going back, feels creepy around here,” the other deputy mutters.

“No way! We need to know if there’s a body back here or something!”

Derek thinks these humans are stupid. The ground isn’t saturated in the gas so he can understand why they don’t smell it. It’s also being masked by something else. Derek sniffs again, nose back up in the air. What is that smell?

He turns away from the arguing deputies and pushes through some dry, dense brush.

Well, there’s the source of the smell.

The earth in front of him is scorched to the bone, the dirt streaked with black, the plants nothing but ashes. In the midst of the black is the stark contrast of bleach white bones. Derek can’t tell how many dead wolves are there, some of the bones have been crushed, others have teeth marks in them. The sight should invoke some sort of feeling from him, but all he feels is cold. This is expected, this is a product of the pits. Derek knows dead wolves get dumped, now he knows how.

“Oh my god—I can’t—” One of the deputies stumbles away and vomits into a bush. Stiles is paler
than usual. Derek can smell his horror.

“Call it in.”

The deputy that didn’t crawl away nods and runs back in the direction they came from, no doubt to call for help. Derek ignores them and picks his way around the piles of bones. His massive paws leave prints in the ashes, the dust he stirs up settles in his fur. A bone crunches underneath him, something small he hadn’t been able to see before stepping. At first he thinks it’s a rib or maybe a caudal vertebra—a tail bone—but it isn’t, it’s a skull. A tiny skull. Derek stares at it for a second but eventually moves past it. The wolf part of him, the part that is all instinct and no human, surges to the surface. It is more equipped to handle the shock.

Derek recedes into the back of the wolf to watch and wait, to not feel.

The wolf’s human calls for it but the wolf ignores it in favor of stalking a new scent. This one is fresh. It follows the trail of ashes away from the bone pile, the human close on its heels calling for it to stop. The brush rustles on the wolf’s side. It knows the scent of prey, the stink of another wolf’s fear. Suddenly the wolf is back in the pit, its opponent is opposite of it.

The other wolf isn’t a full wolf. It doesn’t shift completely from its two leg form. The wolf snaps its jaws and the other backs away, whining and stumbling to its knees. A fall is lethal, any fighter knows that, this wolf is new. The wolf doesn’t care, it lunges at the other, landing on top with the weaker wolf-human’s neck between its jaws. The slightest pressure would snap its neck.

Stiles screams for the wolf to stop, but that’s not the reason it doesn’t kill the hybrid between its teeth. The alpha instinct in the wolf tells it not to, that this wolf-human is weak but could be something more if it’s allowed to grow. If it’s allowed to live. So the wolf waits until the stiff body beneath it goes limp with submission, the neck in its mouth tips back to expose the throat more. Pleased, the wolf releases the other.

When the two finally meet eyes the wolf instantly feels something there, it doesn’t last long because the wolf-human lowers its eyes quickly, a whine building in its throat. The wolf is pleased by the submission. Stiles is not.

“Hey, it’s okay, no one’s going to hurt you. Not even Derek, he just has an awful resting bitch face, he can’t help it. He’s also not going to get any steak tonight for almost eating you,” the human glares pointedly at the wolf, “which he won’t do again. Can you shift back for me? Or maybe tell me your name? I’m Stiles, I’m a deputy with the Beacon Hills Sheriff’s Department. We’ve got help coming if you’re hurt.”

The other wolf’s face makes an unpleasant crunching noise as the bones in its face shift and mold into something less furry and more human. It doesn’t seem inclined to talk to Stiles though, choosing to hover somewhere between cowering behind the wolf and cowering from the wolf. The wolf doesn’t really care either way; its job here is done. Stiles scratches its head absently in what might be an attempt to lure the other wolf—now turned human—into thinking that the wolf is harmless. The wolf allows the scratches, but does not allow the weaker wolf to get any ideas—flashing its teeth at the creature in a sharp, unfriendly, fanged smile.

Stiles doesn’t see, but the human does frown when the transformed wolf cowers away a little more.

The wolf won’t allow just anyone to pet it. After all, Stiles gives the best scratches.

Back up arrives in the form of the Sheriff and a group of people that smell similar to the ones that were with Stiles when the human pulled the wolf from the kennels. They wear blue jackets with
yellow lettering. The wolf cocks its head to the side in confusion as they start placing the bones in baggies while the Sheriff and Stiles attempt to coax the other wolf out from the brush and with them to the road where there will no doubt be a vet waiting. When the other wolf growls at Stiles—the nerve of this pup—the wolf snaps its teeth in warning. The group falls silent and the other wolf ducks its head, its scent filling with a fearshameguilt smell.

Deciding to break the stillness the wolf turns and heads back for the cars itself. It knows the younger wolf will follow, as will the wolf’s humans.

“Derek! Who does this wolf think he is, huh?” Stiles mutters darkly behind the wolf, following the black figure as it runs for the road. The wolf flicks an ear at him.

They reach the road where the wolf stop to turn and face the others again. Sure enough the other wolf followed. He respectfully doesn’t meet the wolf’s eyes, his body curling in to try and appear as small as possible. The Sheriff notices this, as does Stiles, and they both seem bothered by it. The strange wolf has lost its yellow eyes and the fur around its face—the very human face would confuse the wolf if it weren’t for the obvious scent following the weaker being.

“Son, we’re going to need you to tell us what happened, okay? I’m also going to need your name. No one is going to hurt you now, you’re safe,” the Sheriff attempts to coax the wolf into responding, but all he gets is a shake of the head.

The wolf is having none of that growls warningly. The point is clear; answer the questions.

“Derek! Jeez, what’s gotten into you man?” Stiles taps the wolf lightly on the snout, to which the wolf glares balefully at the human. It thinks about taking a snap at those long fingers, but is distracted by the beta wolf answering.

“Isaac! My name is Isaac,” the wolf hunches more, his scent miserable.

“Isaac, that’s good. That’s a start. Do you have a last name, Isaac? How old are you? Are you bitten or born, full shift or beta form only?” Stiles fires off the questions, looking terrifyingly curious.

Isaac licks his lips nervously, glancing at the alpha before answering, “Lahey. I’m uh, not sure? Bitten though, beta only.”

“You’re not sure how old you are?” Stiles’ dad sounds incredulous.

“N-not really? Maybe twenty-ish?”

“Son, now you’re really going to need to come down to the station with me. We’ll address the age issue later, for now I just really want to know what the hell you’re doing out here next to a mess like that,” he makes a vague gesture in the direction of the bone yard where humans are still milling about, picking through the bones.

The wolf is tired of smelling the ashes and tasting the fire. Satisfied that the Isaac wolf knows his place the wolf grabs Stiles’ pant leg with its teeth and starts tugging its human toward the cars. As expected, Stiles flails and yelps with the coordination of a baby duck. “No, no tugging! Humans are friends, not food! Especially my pants!”

“Get him out of here Stiles. I bet the smell is driving him up a wall.”

“Alright, but call me if anything comes up, okay? I found these wolves, I have to know what’s going
“I’ll let you know when we get something. Go,” Stiles’ dad sends them off with a firm wave of his hand while herding Isaac into the back of a police cruiser.

The wolf settles into the back seat of the car while Stiles drives them away from the scene. The human keeps glancing into the mirror at the wolf, like he’s expecting the wolf to suddenly jump out of the car. The wolf ignores this in favor of pressing its wet nose to the glass window, leaving a wet smear as it drags its snout down the glass. Stiles makes a disgusted noise from the front at the sound the action makes, but doesn’t reprimand the wolf. Good, the wolf isn’t in the mood for human pretenses.

By the time they get home there’s a buzzing beneath the wolf’s skin that won’t go away. It makes the wolf head straight for the back door to be let out into the backyard. Stiles smell confused but opens it to let the wolf out regardless.

Clearly the wolf has been slacking because the territory markers don’t smell as strong as they should. The wolf fixes this before settling in the evening sunlight in the corner of the fenced-in-yard as far from the house as possible.

It sits for a long time, still as a statue and quiet as a hunter.

When Stiles pops his head out to call for dinner, the wolf doesn’t come. Only watching the human eerily with its bright, red eyes. There’s a sharp spike of apprehension, the wolf thinks it smells a little bit of fear in there too. It doesn’t stop the buzzing beneath the wolf’s fur, but that acid smell is enough to summon it from its corner. The alpha rises and slowly trots up to the door, head and tail low, eyes on Stiles the whole time.

Stiles gives the wolf a wide berth when it comes in, the smell of anxiety rippling off of him.

The wolf eyes the meal in its bowl. The usual raw chicken would look delicious but not today. The wolf turns away from the meal, slinking off to the corner in the living room. It curls up with its back against the wall behind the couch so it can watch the entire room and the front door. There’s no conversation at the dinner table, just the sound of forks clinking against plates and then the sound of chairs moving as the humans finish their meal and start cleaning up.

Even the starting of the TV doesn’t stir the wolf from its spot.

The night is just as rough. The wolf doesn’t follow Stiles to bed, only watching as the human gets ready to sleep. Stiles attempts to coax the wolf from its corner, but the wolf doesn’t want to go and growls softly when Stiles gets too close. The human smells hurt when he finally gives up and leaves the wolf alone.

It’s the first night that either of them has slept alone since the wolf got there.

Chapter End Notes

I don't really like this one, but here it is anyways. Kudos to you if you can figure out what's going on with Derek.
You're Faster than Me (I'll Never Catch Up)

Chapter Summary

Stiles can't compete with pack, but maybe he doesn't have to.

Stiles is often confused.

He’s smart, but sometimes his brain just seems to stop functioning. Usually this happens at important times in his life. Right now would be a good time for it to start working again, but nothing really ever goes his way, does it?

He’d come down the stairs to get something to drink, preferably a glass of warm milk. Despite how exhausted he is—a tiredness he feels in his bones—he can’t sleep. It might have something to do with the acute lack of furry warmth that usually sleeps beside or on top of him.

So down the stairs he went to search for a cure to his temporary insomnia. The microwave beeped at him when said cure finished heating up. He pulled it out and sipped at the drink, heading out of the kitchen to go back to his room.

Two bright red dots blinking at him from the pitch black of the living room scare the shit out of him. He spews his rapidly cooling milk out, flailing a little and sloshing more over the edge of the cup. The eyes just blink some more and Stiles can barely make Derek out of the darkness. Imagine that, a black wolf being difficult to see in the absence of light.

“Dude! You scared the crap out of me!”

Stiles can’t really see the wolf’s face, it’s all just one big blob, but he can imagine perfectly what kind of facial expression the sourwolf is making right now. There are several things off about this whole thing, several things have been off this whole day, but Stiles just wants to know why his wolf is sitting in the dark and not sleeping.

“C’mon man, come up to bed. I don’t know what’s up with you today but I know you started acting weird about the time we found that stray wolf.”

It’s true though, Derek had been acting weird for a while now; less like Derek and more like the wolf. Stiles stares for another second before slapping himself in the face, because hello, that’s it. He sets the mug down on the coffee table and approaches the wolf slowly, crouching down a few feet in front of him in the dark. His eyes are finally adjusting and he can just make out the wolf’s wet nose in the moonlight.

“I guess it was pretty horrifying, huh? I don’t really blame you for wanting to take a step back, but that’s not going to help you. You gotta face it at some point, right?” Stiles keeps his voice low and soothing as he stretches out slowly. Derek allows the touch to his head and doesn’t shy away from Stiles’ fingers scratching behind an ear. “I’m sorry you had to see it. I wish you could talk to me, tell me what’s going on in that head of yours. I want to help you, Derek.”

Derek whines softly and shuffles closer, piling all hundred-some-odd pounds into Stiles’ lap. The human makes soothing noises under his breath, running his hands through black fur.
“We’re going to be okay, big guy. We’ll figure this whole thing out. I’m pretty good with solving stuff, ya know? And hey, you get to see your family tomorrow!” Stiles steals a glance at the neon letters on the cable box, “Or later today, actually. How about we both get some sleep, huh?”

Unfortunately Derek refuses to be moved and for all of Stiles’ muscles he’s not going to carry the squirming mass of fur up the stairs without breaking something first. So instead of trying he grabs a blanket and curls around his wolf on the floor.

That’s how his dad finds them four hours later. He nudges Stiles with his shoe, and it’s a testament to how exhausted Derek must be that he doesn’t even move when Stiles untangles himself from the blanket nest to get ready for work.

Stiles is showered and sipping on his coffee when his dad finally asks about finding them on the floor.

“I think Derek went a little feral-y after everything he saw yesterday.”

“Understandable, he might’ve had a flashback to being in the kennels.”

Stiles winced, “Yeah. That’s kind of what I’m afraid of. We’re going to Peter and Laura Hale today though, so maybe they’ll be able to talk to him. Maybe we’ll get to the human Derek Hale, huh?”

Stiles looks back at the sleeping lump of fur in the living room thoughtfully, wondering what Derek looks like with two legs instead of four.

“No matter what form he’s in, he’s always welcome here. I’ve grown attached to the grump,” the Sheriff says fondly. Stiles just smiles into his coffee; of course those two would get along. He’s seen them sitting on the couch together watching TV after dinner. They had pizza the other night and he’d seen his dad throwing slices of peperoni to the wolf.

Plus, Derek has the best grumpy face. He can only imagine what kind of face two legged Derek has.

Stiles is reluctant to wake his friend, but Derek needs to meet his family today because the full moon is hanging over them. This recent set back has Stiles concerned that the full moon could pull Derek even farther into himself. How far can Derek’s conscious retreat before it can’t come back out? Stiles is determined to not find out.

The wolf snuffles into wakefulness but dutifully gets up and follows Stiles to the back door so he can do his business.

“I’m heading out, Stiles! I’ll see you later! Let me know how the meeting with the Hales goes!” His dad calls from the front of the house, his voice followed by the sound of the door shutting.

Stiles lets Derek back in and finishes getting ready for work while Derek wolfs down some raw chicken. He shoots Cora a text asking her the address and she replies a minute later.

Derek climbs into the Jeep after Stiles locks the door behind them. He’s still a little reluctant to lower the window for the wolf after what happened a couple of days ago but Derek likes sticking his head out while they drive. When he doesn’t get to stick his head out he just smoothes his nose against the glass and leaves gross, wet streaks from rubbing his face into it. Stiles is convinced he knows exactly what he’s doing.

With the window down Derek happily shoves his face out, tongue hanging out in the wind. Stiles knows he’s a person, in wolf form, and not a dog but the image is so canine like it has Stiles grinning happily. The address Cora gave him is a twenty minute drive across the city. The house is pretty big and the yard is a decent size that opens up to a thatch of woods that connects to the Preserve. The
Hales may not be living in their old house, but they didn’t really move all that far away from it.

Stiles pulls into the driveway. There’s an immediate difference in Derek. He pulls his head from the window and stares through the windshield, red eyes locked onto the house. The wolf is usually moving, usually a contained mass of wild energy. He sits perfectly still right now but Stiles can sense that energy just beneath the layer of fur.

He gets out of the car and opens Derek’s door. Derek drops down onto the paved driveway, ears twitching as he trots around the side of the house and to the backyard.

“Derek? Where are you going bud?” Stiles hurries after him, hoping the wolf isn’t about to make a break for it into the forest. If Derek runs there might be no catching him.

Derek hits the backyard and bolts for the tree line, Stiles’ heart rate sky rockets and he’s about to scream for Derek to stop, because Stiles is only human and will never catch the alpha wolf if he runs. Stiles is so afraid of losing him, won’t Derek at least say goodbye first if he’s going to leave?

Derek doesn’t leave. Three wolves come bounding out of the woods, howling and yipping in glee. Stiles freezes and watches as they all collide with Derek at the edge of the yard. They drop to their bellies, yelping and licking at Derek’s chin. A pepper grey wolf rubs itself against Derek’s legs happily while a sorrel brown wolf lays at his paws, tail thumping happily. The last wolf, a sable brown female, licks at Derek’s muzzle.

These are the Hales, and Derek recognizes them if the happy whines are anything to go on. Stiles heads for the house to sit on the back porch in the rocking chair. He watches them for a while. When they’re done scenting each other they start playing, running across the yard and chasing each other’s tails. When one steps out of line Derek is quick to snap his jaws at them, like when the pepper grey wolf chews on Derek’s tail a little too hard.

They never go far though, Derek keeps checking over his shoulder and looking at Stiles. Stiles gives him a smile and a wave each time, content to watch the wolves play.

Derek has pinned each of the wolves at some point while they play. They roll over each time, submitting to the alpha and licking at his chin with their tails beating against the ground happily.

It doesn’t feel like long but eventually Derek comes trotting over to Stiles, tail held high and his nose in the air. He looks proud and the happiest Stiles has seen him yet. When he gets close to where stiles is sitting on the porch step Derek yips and licks at Stiles’ face happily. His breath stinks though and Stiles isn’t sure how he feels about being licked since he knows where that tongue has been. Derek back away though when Stiles pats him on the muzzle, seemingly satisfied with grossing the human out.

Stiles looks up and has to jerk away to look the other direction because where three wolves once stood there are now three people. Three very naked people. “Oh my god, some warning guys, please. I’m scarred for life.”

Cora laughs as she skips past Stiles and into the house, “C’mon Stilinski, you never seen a naked girl before?”

“Not a naked co-worker, no.”

“Don’t tease, Cora. We’re just going to get our clothes on and we’ll be right back, Mr. Stilinski,” the other woman laughs and Stiles assumes she’s Laura Hale.

Peter steps past Stiles as well, “I don’t see why we need to get dressed. Derek doesn’t seem to
mind.” Derek snaps his teeth at Peter when the man tried to pet him, but Peter doesn’t seem the least bit bothered and continues into the house. “Humans are so particular about nakedness.”

Stiles rolls his eyes and clambers to his feet to follow the family into the house, Derek hot on his heels.

They have him wait in the living room while they get dressed. Derek paces around the furniture, sniffing everything and rubbing himself all over the furniture like a cat. Stiles laughs when the wolf drops to the floor and starts rolling on the carpet. It’s a nice house. The floors are a dark wood and the walls a warm cream color. It’s modern and open, the living room opening right into the kitchen and dining room. The stair case up to the second floor is wide and spiraling, painted an off white with the steps the same dark hard wood as the rest of the house. He can see through the large glass doors the open to the backyard that they just came through from his seat on the couch.

It’s never been a secret that the Hales have always been well off. Stiles has seen pictures of what the mansion in the Preserve looked like before the fire ripped the family apart.

“So Stiles, how’s everything been? How’s my brother doing?” Cora flops into the couch across from him, sinking into the cream cushions and curling her bare feet under her. Stiles is just happy she’s finally clothed. He’s gotten used to naked werewolves because of Scott and the department but he’d still rather avoid looking if he can. Unlike some people Stiles is modest.

“He’s good. He was a little weird after yesterday. I think seeing and smelling the ashes and the bones got to him. I know it got to me. It was a weird night but he’s doing much better now.”

“Of course he’s doing better. He’s with his pack now.” Peter sits next to Stiles and Stiles is a little creeped out by the leer he gets from the man. Derek doesn’t seem to approve because he comes trotting over and shoves his way onto the couch to sit between the two. Peter seems happy with the new arrangement though, and he just leans into the alpha a little bit instead of complaining.

“So that’s it? You guys are back to being pack again? What happens now? Does he have to come live with you guys? Is he your alpha?”

Laura practically floats into the room she’s so graceful. Stiles envies her a little bit. She sets a tray of snacks on the table and Derek licks his chops hopefully. She laughs and tosses him a couple of cubes of cheese. “He’s always been our alpha. The alpha power should have gone to me after the fire, but it’s gone to him for some reason. I don’t know why we didn’t feel the bond until recently. Maybe it was always there and we just didn’t recognize it until recently. It doesn’t matter now, our alpha is here and we’re whole again.”

Stiles thinks about that because, yeah, it’s weird that they couldn’t even feel that Derek was alive. Packs have such a strong connection amongst their members that usually they can feel how each member is doing from long distances. Especially their alpha. Stiles thinks about the collar Derek had been wearing and wonders if there was more to it than just electrical shocks. He’ll look into it when he gets home, maybe he can stop by evidence and have a look at it again.

“You’re not here to talk about our pack though, right? You wanted help with the full moon tomorrow.” Laura throws another cube to Derek whose jaws close around it with an audible click.

Stiles nods, “Yeah, I’m just afraid he’s going to regress. He’s been doing great, but I know the full moon can bring out the wolf inside of you guys. Seeing as he’s already pretty wolfy I just don’t want him to stop being Derek. Does anything I’m saying make any sense?”

Peter scoffs, “Well, first off, he’ll always be Derek. The wolf and the human are the same.”
“It’s not the same, Peter, and you know it,” Laura frowns at them. “Stiles’ concerns are justified. However, seeing as today is the day before the full moon and Derek is acting perfectly in control of himself I’m not sure we need to worry so much about him changing during the full moon.”

They all look at the wolf in question. He’s eyeing the tray of snacks like he’s thinking about just jumping onto the table and eating the whole thing, but there’s an intelligence in his eyes that Stiles expects you wouldn’t find in a regular wolf, let alone a feral one. As if sensing that they’re talking about him Derek jerks his eyes away from the food to sweep around the room at the people sitting around him. He chuffs happily, his tail thumping once on the couch. The Hales smile and Stiles can see how happy they are to have their alpha, their brother and nephew, back amongst them.

Stiles feels his heart lurch at the thought of leaving Derek behind. It’s where he belongs, no doubt, especially on the full moon. It isn’t hard to imagine Derek running at the head of a pack, howling into the night.

“Should I bring him back here for the full moon? Or should I just leave him today?”

Cora eyes him like she heard the hitch in his heart, which she probably did, but Peter is the one to answer him. “It would be best to let Derek choose. Forcing him to do anything on the full moon won’t end well, seeing as he’s been caged for so long. They no doubt locked him down tight on full moon nights.”

They growl a little bit at that, at the thought of their alpha caged when wolves need to be free.

“I guess we’ll see when it’s time to leave’ whether he wants to go with me or stay here.”

“You should stay for dinner! Peter makes a mean burger and we always cook out the night before a full moon,” Laura smiles at him, voice hopeful.

Stiles doesn’t really understand why they would want him to stay. From what he understands it’s weird for nonpack members to be around so close to the full moon. Maybe they’re afraid that if he leaves Derek will leave too? He nods anyways, because he’s afraid of the exact opposite being the case.

What if Derek wants to stay?

"Great! We usually spend the day together, trying to get rid of some of the excess energy before the run tomorrow night. You’re welcome to join us in this, but you don’t have to. We can get kind of rough in wolf form.”

“I’ll stay with him,” Cora volunteers from where she’s sitting on the couch, scrolling through her phone.

“You really don’t have to.”

“What’s wrong, Stilinski, afraid I’ll bite?”

“Not exactly.”

Peter claps his hands and stands up, shedding clothes as he heads for the backyard again, “Well it’s been lovely, Mr. Stilinski, but I believe I’m going for a run before I have to start dinner.”

Laura follows him but she disappears into mudroom to shed her clothes. Stiles is grateful. Derek looks after them forlornly, then turns to Stiles.
“Go on, you doof. I’ll still be here when you get back.”

Derek yips and bounds off the couch and out the door after his pack leaving Cora and Stiles alone in the living room. The only sounds are the distant barking of the wolves and the tapping of Cora’s fingers on her screen.

“So, Stiles.”

“Cora.”

“How’d my brother react to the beta they found at the scene?”

Stiles frowns, “I don’t know? He snapped at snarled at him a lot. Isaac submitted though so there wasn’t really any fight. I think Derek was more wolf at that point. Why?”

She’s quiet for a moment before she sets the phone down and looks at him, “There’s a little nub in the pack.”

“What.” Nub? What does that even mean?

“It’s like a pack bond, but it’s so new and undeveloped that it’s not a full bond yet. So, nub.”

“And you think it’s Isaac?”

“I think Derek is going to need Isaac around pretty soon or he’s going to go looking for the kid. I also think it’s weird that we found him in a pit of burning wolf remains.”

“Well yeah it’s weird. I haven’t heard anything though about a possible connection. It hasn’t really even been a full day since we found him though. I don’t really know anything about what’s going on with Isaac. I’ve been too focused on Derek.”

“We’d know if something was wrong with Isaac, Derek would be acting weird. We may only feel the beginnings of a bond, but Derek will feel it more strongly since he’s the alpha,” She throws her head back and complains, “Can’t believe my brother has been free for such a short amount of time and he’s already trying to expand the pack.”

“Isn’t a big pack good?”

“Of course, but it’s a little weird that he’s taking in a wolf we know nothing about. Usually there’s a period of getting to know someone before inducting them. We don’t know anything about this kid.”

“Maybe it’s more primal? Like an instinct?”

“Maybe. Alphas,” she snorts, “they’re so weird.”

Stiles sighs and nods, “Yeah, they really are.”

The pepper grey wolf Stiles assumes is Peter comes wandering back into the house a couple of hours later. Stiles yelps and shields his eyes when Peter walks into the living room naked, clothes in hand. "You're doing this on purpose!"

"I'm almost insulted that you're so horrified to see me naked," Peter remarks as he pulls on his clothes and heads into the kitchen. "One would think that you're of the opinion I'm ugly."

"You're ugly, Uncle Peter."
"I'm afraid I don't care about your opinion, Cora."

Stiles isn't touching that with a ten foot pole. "Where are Laura and Derek?"

"Still running, hopefully not eating any wild animals. I'd hate to make dinner only for them to be full on deer and rabbit."

Stiles would be disgusted, but he's got a stomach of steel after the skunk incident. The memory makes him snort in laughter and Peter looks at him curiously.

"What's so funny, Mr. Stilinski?"

"Stiles, please, just call me Stiles," Stiles waves his hand flippantly, "what does it mean if a wolf brings you dead animals?"

Peter pauses and even Cora looks up at him. "Is Derek bringing you dead animals?"

"Well, there was this skunk incident and the dead animal before that. So yeah. He's leaving me dead animals."

Cora snorts a laugh and she seems like she's about to answer him but she and Peter exchange glances before Peter answers instead. "It means he thinks you're terribly weak and wants to make sure you don't starve to death. Congratulations, Stiles, my nephew likes you but thinks you're pitiful."

Stiles frowns, "Really?" He's not sure he trusts Peter. Maybe he'll ask Laura, or even better, Scott. He'll just ask Scott the next time he sees him.

Peter prepares the burgers and takes them outside to cook on the grill. Stiles helps Cora carry out plates and the corn so Peter can grill that too. They bring out fruit salad and set everything up on the table that's outside.

"How bloody would you like your burger, Stiles, on a scale of just slaughtered to burnt to ash?"

Stiles looks at Cora, more than a little disturbed. She just shrugs in a what can you do about it? kind of way. "He's always like this."

"Uh, a little pink, please?"

Peter hums and flips the burgers.

Derek and Laura get back just as the burgers are finishing. Laura is pretty clean, but Derek is unsurprisingly muddy and gross. There are bristles stuck in his fur he has a small tree sticking to his tail. Stiles doesn't even understand how he manages to get so dirty. "Oh man, he's going to need a bath when we get home. If he comes home with me."

"We'll be sure to hose him down if he stays," Peter says with a nod, as though that's supposed to be comforting. Stiles is not comforted.

They dig into the meal when Laura finishes dressing. Derek eats his burger raw, licking his massive jaws when he done and watching Stiles eat with his big, red eyes. It shouldn't be cute, but it is and Stiles sneaks him a couple of pieces of his second burger. He suspects he's not the only one giving in to the alpha puppy eyes though because Derek disappears suspiciously from his side for a minute before he returns, looking awfully satisfied with himself.

Stiles doesn't want the meal to be over, because that means Derek will have to choose who he's
staying with and he's afraid Derek will choose his pack. Stiles knows he can't compete with the pack; there's a bond there that he'll never have.

They all stand in the driveway at the end of the evening, Derek between them. Stiles stands next to his jeep with the passenger door open. It feel like a divorce: like parents trying to entice the kid to either side to see who they spend Christmas morning with. The Hale pack is the parent that gives awesome gifts, Stiles is the strict parent that make the kid eat their vegetables.

Laura watches him and smiles softly, "Stiles, it's okay. No matter if he stays here or goes back with you Derek is always going to have a special bond with you. You pulled him from a really bad place and cared for him."

Stiles looks at his feet and shuffles, a little embarrassed to be caught red handed feeling insecure.

Derek walks up to his pack members, tail wagging a little bit, chuffing happily. Stiles tries not to feel devastated, doesn't know why it hurts so bad. Derek was never his in anyway: not his alpha, not his wolf, not his friend. Not really, anyway. Stiles sighs a little, feeling miserable and sorry for himself, turning to close the door to the jeep so he can leave and go curl up in bed to forget about the whole thing.

Except Derek is climbing into the passenger side like he belongs there, licking Stiles' hand and face when he gets close enough. Stiles twists to look back at the others but they don't seem surprised, not even disappointed. They just smile and wave him off.

Cora rolls her eyes, "You're an idiot, Stilinski," she states before turning and heading back inside. Peter follows her, leaving behind a trail of his laughter. It should be mocking, but it isn't.

"We'll probably see you tomorrow, Stiles. I suspect Derek will want to run with us, but he'll let you know. Thank you taking care of him and bringing him back to us. You'll never know how much that means, how much we owe you."

"You don't owe me anything."

She just smiled, a small, secretive thing, "Have a good nigh, deputy." She too disappears into the house.

Stiles climbs into the driver's side of the car and sits there in the Hale driveway for a minute. Then he turns to Derek and smiles, "Thanks for coming back with me, Derek."

Derek cocks his head to the side and yips like he thinks going back with Stiles was never even a question.
Running in the Night (No Light, No Light)

Chapter Summary

Derek feels the pull of the moon, but that's not what has him looking over his shoulder.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Derek wakes the morning of the full moon feeling alive. He inhales deeply; feels his ribs expand, his lungs inflate, his blood sing. The moon isn’t even out yet and he’s itching to run.

Stiles is snoring loudly beside him, sleeping through the wailing of the alarm. The sound grates on the wolf’s ears and he takes matters into his own paws by leaning over to the night stand and gnawing on the offending object. It stops making noise, Stiles, unfortunately, continues to make noise.

The human rolls off the bed with a thud when Derek shoves him. Brown eyes glare at Derek over the edge of the bed as the wolf peers down at his human, tongue lolling out innocently.

“I know what you did! Disrespectful, Derek! You don’t throw a man out of his own bed, especially if said man is generously allowing you to sleep in it.” Stiles pauses and his face screws up into an expression Derek hasn’t seen yet and can’t name. “That sounded kind of dirty. Not that it would be dirty. I mean, it could, but not yet. Because you’re a wolf, and that would be gross. Not that wolves are gross, just that I wouldn’t, in wolf form, this one-sided conversation is going places I’m not sure I’m comfortable with but I get the feeling I’m doing this to myself.”

Derek has no idea what the human is referring to, but the smell of embarrassment is thick in the air. Derek can smell something cooking in the kitchen though, something that smells an awful lot like those delicious little sausage patties Stiles sometimes makes for breakfast. Stiles whines after him as Derek leaps off the bed, scratches open the door and bounds down the stairs. He misses the last couple of steps and ends up gracefully thunking down to the first floor, legs askew. The eldest Stilinski pokes his head out to check on the noise but Derek is already scrambling back to his feet.

“Well, if you’re a little moon-drunk now before the moon is even out I’m a little scared to see what you’re going to be like when it’s actually at its peak,” he follows Derek back into the kitchen where he’s cooking a full breakfast of sausage, eggs and hash-browns. There’s even a bowl full of the patties for Derek in the dining room.

Stiles comes down the stairs more sedately, slinking into the kitchen to pour some coffee.

“Son, awake as always I see.”

“Father, as put together as always I see.”

The Sheriff chuckles and sets a plate at Stiles’ chair before getting his own food. “Sit down and eat, I have something I want to talk to you about before you run out with Derek.”

“How’d you know I was going out with him?”
“Well I hope you weren’t planning on letting him loose in the backyard. He’s already been hell on the local squirrel population, I can’t imagine what he’d do to the neighbors’ pets on a full moon night.”

“That was one time dad, and you know Ms. Linda’s cat was egging him on!”

“Yes, Stiles, I’m sure Mr. Flaky’s intimidating stare from across the road really egged Derek on.”

“He’s a big cat, okay? Like, nineteen pounds! He scares me,” Stiles defends weakly, pushing his eggs around his plate. Derek agrees, that feline menace is rather large. It might be part panther.

“The point is I know you’re taking him to the Hales, because that’s the most obvious decision. That’s fine, but it’s not what I wanted to talk to you about.” Derek pops his head up, staring at the Sheriff with bright, red eyes. The Sheriff shivers a little. “I wanted to ask you about the day Derek came here. Specifically the raid. Was there anyone there that seemed a little off to you?”

Stiles sets his fork down carefully and stares at his dad like he doesn’t get what’s being asked, “The hunters always seem a little off to me. That’s it though. I was so busy noticing Derek that I hardly noticed anyone else. Except for—oh yeah, Deaton, when he was trying to have a person with mental health problems humanely euthanized.”

The Sheriff sighs and rubs a hand over his face. “I know that that was wrong, that he shouldn’t have even suggested it without giving Derek a proper evaluation first.”

“Evaluation? Dad, the whole thing is wrong to begin with! They’re not animals! They’re people!”

“I know that! I know they are, this isn’t what I’m trying to ask you about. I know how you feel about the system already, okay? Please, just, listen to me for a second alright? I’m not asking about Deaton, I’m asking about the FBI, or even the volunteers. Did anyone seem suspicious to you?”

“No, why are you even asking about this? You can just read the reports—” Stiles stop abruptly and Derek recognizes this look. It’s the same look Derek imagines he has when he caught the scent of a particularly menacing squirrel. “Except you have read the reports. You’re asking because you don’t like or trust the reports. The FBI wrote them this time, not our people. Are worried they’re lying about something? What’s going on?”

Stiles’ father look pained, “I have read the reports. They’re in perfect order. Nothing is out of place or even remotely suspicious.”

“But something’s suspicious enough for you to be asking me this. I’ll bet you’ve asked Scott already too, and the other teams.”

“I have.”

“Well now you have to tell me!”

“When Derek found those bodies I thought it was strange that he’d found them so soon after the raid, that they hadn’t been noticed before. Autopsy reports show that the bodies had only been there a short time, the carcasses still had flesh on them in places. Meaning scavengers hadn’t been through yet, there weren’t even any maggots. Those bodies were fresh.”

“But that’s impossible, we would have known if there had been any other rings in the area. The hunters wouldn’t have been able to dump any bodies anyways, we caught them all from the Hale House raid, there weren’t any escapees. We even accounted for all the wolves based on the roster they had and their collars. Dad, what are you trying to say?”
Derek whimpers and shoves his nose into Stiles’ hip, plate of sausage forgotten. He doesn’t want to hear about the bodies, doesn’t want to smell the crisped, burnt flesh in his nostrils anymore. Stiles grimaces and places a hand on his head, covering his eyes. The darkness is oddly soothing. “Sorry big guy, how about I let you outside, yeah?” He gets up and Derek follows him to the back door. Anything is better than listening to whatever they’re going to talk about.

The moment the door is open Derek is gone, shooting into the yard and to the back fence as far away from the house as possible. He knows Stiles leaves him by the sound of the door slamming shut.

Usually the backyard is a place of comfort. It’s his territory, marked by his scent. Today though, Derek can’t seem to stop pacing. He feels an itch in his spine and something like electricity crackling along his fur. There’s a tingling at the back of his skull too, like someone is watching him. Derek is crawling out of his skin back here. It could be the call of the moon pulling at him, but this doesn’t feel like that. It doesn’t feel good.

He has to be safe, he has to know his pack is alright. Derek throws back his head, opens his massive jaws and howls into the sun. It doesn’t feel right because the sun doesn’t call to him. He feels naked beneath it; he’s vulnerable and exposed right now. The fence around the yard is small, he could jump it. Derek doesn’t even think about it after that, just does it. His paws touch earth again and he darts into the forest beyond his territory.

The forest is not a familiar place to him. He’s only been through here a couple of times. Once, when Stiles was carrying him, another when his pack was with him, and now he runs through the woods to find them again. There are no answering howls yet so he throws his head back and bellows out another cry. The forest settles around him after it, not even the forest life makes a sound. Someone returns his call. It’s not one of his own from yesterday, but Derek feels himself drawn to it all the same.

A human meets him. Or rather, a wolf in human form. He’s young and smells nervous. He’s new to Derek’s pack though, not fully brought into the alpha’s safe envelope yet. Derek will change that though, right now. They’re stronger together.

“Do you remember me? I’m Isaac.”

Derek cocks his head to the side, waiting. Isaac licks his lips nervously and shifts into Beta form before dropping to his knees and lowering his eyes. This isn’t what the alpha wants though; it’s close, but it’s not enough, not when he’s been strung so high today. Derek approaches the Beta, sticking his nose into the other’s ear and sniffing. Isaac chokes on laughter and manages to not flinch back and away. Instead, he seems to take the suggestion and tilts his head to the side, offering his neck to Derek.

The wolf practically purrs and licks at its Beta’s throat in happiness.

“I-I heard your call. I’m uh, staying with an officer until I can get my own place. My dad is gone now, and there’s some money but I have to wait for it. It’s funny, actually. The bastard’s better to me now that he’s dead. It was horrible when he was alive,” Isaac slowly sinks into the alpha, nuzzling at the soft fur around the wolf’s neck. Derek allows this and listens quietly, licking at the Beta’s hair to encourage him to continue.

“But this place is nice! I don’t want to think about that place, or the hunters anymore. Tonight’s the full moon, I just want to think about that. Hey, do you think I could run with you? I know I’m not really pack or anything, but maybe I could go? I’ll stay out of the way,” Isaac looks hopeful, his eyes big and watery. Derek chuffs and thumps his tail on the ground before licking a long, wet stripe up Isaac’s face. “I’ll take that as a yes. Thank you so much.”
Derek doesn’t understand what the big deal is; Isaac is pack, of course he’ll run with his alpha on the full moon.

The itch beneath his fur hasn’t completely settled yet so he snags Isaac’s shirt in between his teeth and pulls him up.

“Are we going somewhere? Oh, okay, you don’t have to do th—” Isaac yelps when Derek snaps his teeth playfully at him, herding him in the direction of the Hale house. “Okay! I’ll go! Don’t bite!”

Derek snaps his teeth again, chasing after Isaac when he runs. The Beta is laughing breathlessly though so Derek knows no harm has been perceived by his Beta.

They run all the way to the Hale house, bursting from the trees and into the yard with Isaac in the lead and Derek nipping at his heels. The Beta collapses into the grass next to the porch, lungs heaving. “Slave driver! That was the hardest I’ve run in a long time!” He laughs when Derek buries his snout into Isaac’s belly. “You know, you’re a lot nicer and more cuddly than I thought you’d be. You weren’t really all that friendly when I first met you. But I guess circumstances being what they were it makes sense…”

A pepper grey wolf comes lunging at Derek from the door, tackling the larger, black wolf into the grass. Derek yelps and quickly asserts himself. Of all his Beta’s, this one is the only one to continuously challenge him. Peter, his mind whispers, Uncle Peter. Derek pins the older male to the ground, mouth around his neck.

Peter shifts into his human form and Derek is suddenly standing over a naked human instead of a wolf. It doesn’t bother him as much as he thinks it probably should. At the very least he’s happy to see his pack mate again and he licks at the older wolf’s chest and neck, grooming the human happily. Peter is less enthused but permits it. Isaac finds it awfully funny judging by his laughter.

“Laugh it up, pup. I bet you’re next. Stop that Derek, what are you, a mother hen or an alpha?” Peter shoves at the wolf’s face and crawls out from underneath him.

“That’s what you get for always attacking him like that, Peter,” a woman—Laura, sister, friend—calls out from the porch.

“I’m not attacking him, just making sure he’s still got what it takes to be alpha.”

Derek chuffs grouchily, of course he has what it takes! Derek’s never not going to have what it takes to be alpha.

There’s the squeal of tires coming from the front of the house, door slamming and feet running. “Cora! Laura! Peter! Anyone here? I lost your brother, I need your help finding him, I didn’t mean to lose him—please don’t eat me!” Stiles wails through the house before he appears in the doorway under the porch, looking sweaty and anxious.

“Not to worry, Stiles. You haven’t lost anything,” Peter comments dryly.

“Oh sweet mother, please put some clothes on! I’m scarred for life!” Stiles turns his back to the older man, “Why must you always be naked when I’m around? I don’t like you like that Peter. No offense but you kind of creep me out.”

“I take my previous statement back. You appear to have lost your sense of taste. In men.”

Stiles gags before he’s tackled to the ground by Derek. It’s not that Derek really forgot about him. It’s more like Stiles sat on the back burner in Derek’s mind until the itch beneath his fur had settled
some. Now that he’s seen his pack, is sure that they’re safe, the itch has simmered down into the usual full moon fever.

“You scared me when I couldn’t find you in the yard, Der. I’ve been looking all over for you,” he holds Derek’s face in his hands and looks him in the eyes, “you can’t do that to me man.”

Isaac catches his attention by nervously wringing his hands in the grass and Stiles whips his eyes over to the Beta. “And you! Scott’s been going crazy trying to track you! I have to call him to let him know where you are.”

“That’s fine,” Isaac shrugs, “I wasn’t trying to run or anything. I just heard Derek calling and I had to come.”

“That’s true. Derek, why were you howling?”

“It’s not like he can answer the question, Laura,” Cora says from just inside the house. Derek whines because he can smell her but he hasn’t seen her yet. “I’m coming, I’m coming, you big lump. Don’t get your tail in a twist.” Sure enough she too pops out onto the back porch to greet Derek.

Derek’s whole pack is here, and, well, they’re whole. Of course, it’s true, Derek can’t tell them about the strange feeling he has. That someone is watching him.

They let it go for now because they know he can’t answer. The quiet conversation turns to talk about the moon. Derek isn’t particularly interested, not when Stiles scratches just behind his ear like that. Even the sound of Scott’s voice through the phone doesn’t make him growl. Stiles has magic fingers. The first time Derek had heard Scott through the phone he’d been sent into a snarling fit, trying to eat the offending device right out of Stiles’ hand. This, of course, was hardly appreciated.

He’d been banned from Stiles’ presence whenever the human talks to Scott on the phone since.

“Yeah, he’s at the Hale house. The new one. No, he’s fine. Apparently he’s pack now. Yeah, Derek seems to like him. No I don’t know why Derek doesn’t like you. You have to ask him that. I dunno man,” he pulls the phone away from his ear, but it’s too far away for Derek to reach without leaving Stiles’ scratching. Not worth the effort, then. “Hey, Isaac, what’d you do to make Derek like you?”

Isaac looks offended. Derek is offended for him. “I didn’t do anything. He’s an alpha, if he wants you in his pack he’ll let you know.”

“You hear that? Sorry Scotty, there doesn’t appear to be a secret password. Maybe you should make him a meat casserole or something. He loves pork best, so maybe get him a pig.”

Derek imagines hunting a pig and eating it. Unfortunately, he can’t imagine it being a very thrilling chase. There’s no way to express this to Stiles though he just sighs and nuzzles into his human’s hip; shoving his cold, wet nose into the patch of skin there has Stiles swearing and almost dropping the phone.

Peter brings out some food for them, but Derek is too worked up to eat. The itch has settled back under his skin, but this time for different reasons. The pull of the moon grows stronger with each hour as the sun begins to settle in the sky. The pack grows edgier too and everyone except Stiles begins shifting restlessly.

Finally, the human hangs up and pockets his phone. “Alright so, tonight, do you think you guys—and girls, don’t look at me like that Cora—will be sticking close to the house?”

“I imagine we’ll go wherever Derek goes,” Laura says, “and that could be just about anywhere. I
think he’ll stick close to what’s familiar though so I wouldn’t count on him crossing county lines or anything. In fact, I’m not sure if he’ll even leave city limits.”

“About that, you think he might visit the old house? We’re so lost in instinct during the full moon that I was thinking he might go back there. Especially if he’s starting to remember.” Cora’s already on her feet, long since having grown restless and needing to pace.

“It’s…a possibility I guess. But I don’t think it’s a strong one,” Laura looks thoughtful though, like the idea is new and interesting.

The group grows quiet after that. Eventually Derek gets up from his comfortable spot and looks off into the woods. The sun hasn’t quite set yet, and the moon hasn’t quite risen, but he doesn’t think he can sit any longer. It’s time to hunt.

The others acknowledge this with quiet murmurs. Stiles yelps and covers his eyes when the pack begins stripping and leaving their clothes in the grass. “Seriously? Can we please gives Stiles a verbal warning?”

Cora shifts into her wolf first, Laura follows. Isaac can’t full shift, but Derek hears the bones in his face rearrange into Beta form. Even Peter drops to all fours in his wolf form. Stiles watches them growl and yip at each other. They each greet their alpha in their new forms with a touch to his chin before they all begin bounding towards the tree line.

Derek remains behind though.

“Derek?” Stiles watches the wolf as he walks up. There’s no scent of fear on the human so Derek isn’t surprised when the other doesn’t flinch away from the tongue the licks at the human’s throat. Instead, he laughs. “I know, big guy. I wish I could come with you too. I think I’ll stay here, though, okay? I’ll pick up these clothes and have some food ready for the whole pack when you come back. That sound okay?”

Derek yips at him and licks him again before turning and following his pack into the shadows of the trees.

The quiet of the forest is comforting this time around. Derek can hear the breathing and the steps of the pack around him. It's exhilarating. He jumps on top of a fallen tree, throws his head back, and howls at the moon. His pack howl back to him. They scatter into the trees after where he'll hunt them down instead of wild game. There aren't many deer around here and Derek knows that the prey that does linger is lean and not as plump as he'd like. So he'll chase his pack instead in a massive game of tag. Each one he collects will help him hunt the next.

Isaac's sent is the easiest for him to catch. It's the newest but also the most distinct. The Beta is excited and leaves behind a flurry of broken tree limbs in his hast to run. Derek will have to teach him to be more careful. He also smells like a teenager; like nerves, sweat and sex.

His scent is interrupted though. The smell grows sour and Derek pauses before turning onto a different trail. This one smells of fear, blood and anger. It isn't Isaac's scent though. It's one Derek has smelled before. It's usually followed the smell of Derek's own blood.

Kate's waiting for him. He hadn't even realized he'd been heading straight for his old house. There it is though, the back drop to her imposing figure. Derek snarls at her, spittle flying as he snaps his teeth. She just laughs and coos at him, swinging the electric baton at her side.

"Hey sweetheart, why don't you come quietly, hm? Nice and easy and I won't shock the shit out of
you for leaving me like you did. Daddy's in prison right now, hon, so it'll just be me and you. Doesn't that sound wonderful?"

No, Derek wants to scream, it doesn't. He wants to wrap his hands around her throat and feel the life leave her. Or maybe he'll just use his teeth. Either one works.

"I hear you've been getting cozy with a deputy. What was his name again? Oh, Stiles, yes. Weird name."

Derek sees red at the way she sneers his name. She will never get her hands on him, not if Derek can help it. Derek's not alone anymore, he has a pack, so he won't fight her alone. The howl rips out of him angrily. A call for his pack mates, his family, to come to his aid. They will, of course. Derek won't wait for them though, he digs his claws into the earth and lunges at her.

Chapter End Notes

I'm splitting this chapter into two. It will be a continuation of the full moon. Warnings will be included in the beginning notes for the next chapter, so be sure to read them before reading the chapter. Congrats, you've hit plot.
Head in the Dust (Feet in the Fire)

Chapter Summary

Being human is difficult. Trying to remember how to human is impossible.

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been a while? If I don't update in months it doesn't mean I've abandoned my work. I haven't unless I say otherwise. On that note you're hitting the meat of the story so please pay attention to the tags. You're going to see more of Derek's PTSD here. There's also a shift in POV that sets this chapter apart from the others. Hope this one is worth the wait! PS: there's no error in the chapter summary, I worded it like that on purpose.

Derek’s teeth close around air before he lands neatly on all fours. He spins and rolls off to the side, slipping and sliding through the leaves and grass. Kate’s shot misses and the resulting spray of dirt scatters into Derek’s coat.

"Why’re you running, handsome? You’ve been shot before, it won’t even tickle.” Her voice is like a bell—light and cheery. Derek snarls at her and lowers his body to the ground as he prowls in a circle around her. He only has to hold off on his own until his pack can get here.

The skin beneath his fur itches violently; it feels like something inside is trying to claw its way out. Derek shakes his head, distractions around Kate aren’t something he can afford. Sure enough, just that one moment costs him when a bullet shreds into his hind leg. Suddenly Derek is trying to fight on three legs instead of four. He yelps in pain, staggering off into the brush.

"Your new friends are bit occupied at the moment, I’m afraid. So if that’s what you’re waiting for then I’m really sorry sweetie, you’re just going to be disappointed,” Kate coos to him as she stalks closer, “You should know that everyone else is just going to disappoint you. Haven’t you figured it out already? I’m the only one who would never disappoint you!”

Derek scoffs in the back of his throat and rounds on her again. His leg fails him though when he tries to make another leap for her throat and he’s forced to hunker down close to the ground and wait for her to come closer. She doesn’t.

Kate manages to maintain a perfect distance from her prey. Close enough to blow his face off but far enough to be out of range of his jaws. She’s just waiting for him to submit. Derek will never submit, not to her, not to anyone. Stiles’ voice rings in the back of his head like a poorly timed hallucination. Derek’s not sure if it’s the pain or the blood loss but he swears he can hear Stiles calling for him.

Unfortunately it’s neither.

“Derek! Derek, where are you?!”
Kate pauses in her pacing. Her mouth twists into a curious smile and she cocks her head to the side. “Why, Derek, I do believe your master is calling for you. It’d be rude for me not to introduce myself to him, after all, he’s been taking such nice care of you in my absence.” Derek snarls a warning because no, Kate isn’t allowed to touch Stiles. Kate and Stiles were never supposed to meet.

The calls get louder as the sound of footsteps gets closer. Kate brings her shot gun up, her finger resting casually on the trigger. The moment Stiles steps into the clearing she’ll be all over him.

Derek wants to howl in rage, but he knows it’ll only bring his human running into danger more quickly than if he keeps silent.

There are times when the wolf knows that the human side is a better fit for a situation. The wolf will fight until it dies and the wolf can’t talk—but the wolf has been protecting its human side for so long that it’s not sure its human side will know how to be human. It’s a chance it’ll have to take because their human is in danger.

When Stiles pops into the clearing Kate turns to face him, aiming quickly and firing off a shot. Stiles sees her and dives off to the side, scrambling in the loose leaves to find cover. Kate won’t let him recover though and she fires off another shot before she has to reload. Stiles is still scrambling away from her when she suddenly goes down with the gun in hand.

There’s a naked man on top of Kate, covering her back with his body. Stiles gapes for a minute, not quite sure what happened, but he’s always been pretty quick to put the pieces of the puzzle together and it doesn’t take him long to figure out that the dude on Kate it Derek. Except Derek was a wolf not thirty seconds ago and now he’s a man. Stiles’ mind is a little blown. The sound of the shot gun firing into the dirt pulls him from his stupor and he runs over to the two struggling on the ground to kick the gun away from Kate.

Derek, being a werewolf and therefore stronger, pins her beneath him quickly. He roars in her face, teeth elongated and eyes shining red. There’s no fur on his definitely human face so he hasn’t even shifted into Beta mode. Kate struggles with his grip until Derek head butts her—then she just goes limp.

He’s panting and trying to get control over his fangs and claws while Stiles calls for help.

“Derek?” Stiles tries approaching slowly after he gets off his phone, “Hey man, you back with me?”

Derek growls lowly and turns to look at Stiles with a scowl on his face. Stiles bites back a chuff of laughter because that’s exactly what the wolf would look like right now if Derek were still in wolf form. The laugh makes Derek scowl even harder and he pointedly looks away from Stiles.

“Aw, hey, no don’t do that. It’s just you’re not so different form the wolf you, are you?” Stiles takes a deep breath and comes close enough to put a hand on Derek’s cheek. “Still my wolf, right?”

Derek’s eyes flick to Stiles’ face—his eyes, his nose, his lips—before he nods slowly. He opens his mouth like he going to talk but quickly clamps it shut. Stiles watches his face get cloudy again with an emotion Stiles can’t name. Human, but not over the trauma from his time as a wolf.

“Alright, well, my dad’s coming with some back up so let’s get you off of her, okay?” Stiles kneels and gently takes one of Derek’s hands before standing back up and tugging gently. Thankfully Derek follows. There’s no way mundane human Stiles would be able to make heavily muscled, small tank/wolf Derek Hale do anything he didn’t want to do. A now standing Derek also makes it just apparent how muscled the werewolf really is—the lack of clothes doesn’t really help either. Stiles shrugs off his jacket and hands it Derek. He coughs pointedly, “please put this on.” The
werewolf eyes it like it's a snake but takes it and puts it over his shoulders.

Stiles finally notices the bloody mess that Derek’s left leg has become.

“Holy shit! Der, man your leg! Sit down, what are you doing standing up, is that wolfs bane? Oh man, I’ll call Deaton,” the phone is suddenly shaking really hard and Stiles can’t seem to punch in the number correctly. It’s really frustrating until someone grabs his wrist. He stops and looks at Derek—who is still not sitting down. Those red eyes have turned into a normal hazel. The color calms Stiles enough that his hand stops shaking enough that he can operate a cell phone now. Derek only lets go when the shaking stops completely.

Stiles takes another deep breath to settle himself before he calls.

The sound of the police approaching has Derek rising to his feet again from where he settled down while Stiles called Deaton. If he’s going to deal with people on edge, who have guns, then he’s going to do it while he’s on his feet. The Sheriff has always been kind to him, and he doubts that’ll change now just because he’s walking on two feet instead of four. It’s not the Sheriff that he doesn’t trust.

John Stilinski leads the group of eight officers that he brought with him through the trees and into Derek’s line of sight. Stiles immediately waves his father over to handcuff Kate Argent. Derek watches impassively, never taking his eyes off the officers securing the area around them. He’s so intent on watching them that he startles when Stiles touches him. The scent of his human washes over him though so he manages to pull in his claws and not snap his fangs.

“Son? You wanna come with us to the car so we can get some pants on you? I keep some clothes in the trunk,” the Sheriff arches an eyebrow at them, no doubt eyeing their close proximity while Derek is naked. Stiles blushes and marches ahead of them towards where Derek can smell the stink of engine grease and oil. The police cruisers have always carried a nasty smell with them.

Walking on two feet is different from walking on four paws. The dirt feels different, the rocks hurt his feet more and trying to balance is a nightmare. He ends up leaning too far over himself and stumbling into the Sheriff who has to grip his elbow so he doesn’t fall over. Stiles loops back to grab his other elbow. The feeling of being trapped between the two should have his heart rate sky rocketing and his flight or fight instincts kicking in but it doesn’t. Derek is mostly just tired.

By the time they actually do make it to the cruisers Derek's bum leg has already given out twice and he’s sweating. It’s a sensation he hasn’t felt in a long time.

Dr. Deaton is waiting by his mobile vet truck. Already Derek can see him preparing a needle and the sight has Derek’s skin crawling. Stiles seems to feel the werewolf readying himself to run, so he tightens his grip around Derek’s bicep.

“No way, big guy. Dr. D is here to have a look at your leg. I’m not even going to let him take you anywhere if you don’t need it, okay? We’re just going to deal with this right here, right now.”

Derek grunts and doesn’t try to run, but he can’t seem to unclench his muscles either. The vet smiles blandly at him. “Mr. Hale, so good to see you standing upright. I just need to make sure the bullet went clean through.” It’s a struggle to not kick the vet in the face when he gets too close to Derek’s crotch, but somehow he does manage to restrain himself. The vets as he prods around the entry and exit wound with his gloved fingers. “Looks like a very weak strain of wolfs bane. I should be able to counter it and you’ll be fine.”

So Derek gets a shot and the wound starts closing not even five minutes later. It’s pretty anticlimactic
considering Stiles had thought Derek might be dying from wolfs bane poisoning. Now though—now that his werewolf is safe and the villain of the day apprehended—Stiles can’t help running his eyes over Derek Hale the human version. He’s broad in the shoulders and there’s a fine sheen of sweat over his muscles. Stiles is too scared of his dad catching him so he pointedly keep his eyes above the waist. He doesn’t have to be so careful when his dad hands Derek a pair of sweats to put on.

It’s probably been a while since the poor guy’s worn any clothes though, because he looks at the pants like he’s not sure if they’re poisonous or not. Stiles can’t help smiling because for all that Derek’s appearance has changed, his personality is still the same.

“Need some help?” Stiles takes the pants from Derek’s hand without waiting for an answer. Deaton and his dad are talking by the cruiser as the other deputies busy themselves with detaining Kate in the back of a police cruiser. He avoids his proximity to Derek’s nether regions and focuses on helping the man balance as he sticks a leg through a hole before doing the same for the other leg. When Stiles pulls them up to settle around Derek’s hip he can’t help running his fingertips over the man’s sharp, taper hipbones. He doesn’t think he imagines the full-body shudder of the werewolf.

The look on Derek’s face is priceless as he looks down at the pants. Derek glares at Stiles when he laughs, but it has just as much effect on Stiles as wolf-Derek’s glares. That is to say, no effect at all. Pants are apparently, very uncomfortable for someone who is technically used to walking around in fur or naked.

“Ah-hem,” the Sheriff coughs, Stiles whips around to face him looking as innocent as possible. That look has never worked on his father, unfortunately. The man has a Stiles-trouble-o-meter built into his brain to detect when his son is up to something potentially scandalous.

“Afraid we’re going to have to take him to the station, son. His pack is being collected as they return to their house. Seems they ran into some trouble in the woods too, we’d like to talk to all of you in one place,” he directs the last sentence at Derek but Derek hasn’t spoken a word since turning human and even the mention of his pack in trouble doesn’t seem to have him any keener on talking.

Stiles frowns but gently takes Derek’s hand and leads him over to his dad’s car. Derek doesn’t seem to know what to do with himself once he’s inside though, so Stiles pushes him over and settles down next to him. It’s the right thing to do because Derek presses himself up against Stiles’ side, growling softly.

It’s odd that Stiles know exactly what has the werewolf riled up. “I know big guy, it stinks in here. It’s just for a little okay? Maybe my dad will lower the window while he drives?”

His dad does indeed lower the windows for Derek as he drives them to the station.

The whole pack isn’t in the station when they get there; Peter and Cora are missing. Isaac is sitting in a chair by the Sheriff’s office, shoulders curled in defensively with Laura standing by his side. Laura’s the first one to notice Derek. She’s shocked, if the strangled noise she makes is any indication. It’s doesn’t take her long to recover though, and then she’s just ecstatic. She throws herself at him, crying happily. Derek doesn’t seem all that comfortable with the gesture, doesn’t know what to do with the crying woman in his arms or what to do with his arms at all. Stiles stands behind Laura and makes a hugging motion so Derek follows it and wraps his arms awkwardly around Laura’s shoulders. Laura’s dwarfed by him.

“Derek you idiot! Why’d it take Kate Argent to make you turn into a human, huh?” She laugh-sobs into his chest. Derek makes a curious noise in the back of his throat, the same noise he would have made had he been in wolf form. Laura sniffs and pulls away, accepting the tissue Stiles hands her. “I
heard over the radio that one Kate Argent had been apprehended.”

There’s a commotion coming from the back of bull pen. Stiles can hear Scott’s voice and he doesn’t sound happy. Derek frowns as well and moves in front of Stiles, all teeth and snarls.

“Easy, Derek.” Stiles tries to get around the man, but he won’t be budged.

Agent McCall rounds the corner, Scott hot on his heels. He has several other FBI agents following behind them.

“Dad, are you serious? You can’t!”

“Watch your insubordination. We’re at work, I’m not your father here. I’m sorry Scott, I’m just doing my job,” Agent McCall catches Derek’s eye and his back straightens instantly. “Mr. Hale, just the person I wanted to see.”

Even Stiles’ dad is on edge now. The glint in the agent’s eye has his neck prickling uncertainly.

“Agent, what can we do for you? I thought the FBI was just about done here.”

“We were. Then we got new evidence. I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to ask Mr. Hale to come with us. We’d like to speak with him.”

“Woah, woah, woah! He just got a voice box back, and I’m afraid he’s not really up for talking right now. Can’t this wait?” Stiles manages to get around the hulking wall in front of him.

“I told you I would need to speak with him again, Deputy. This is me needing to speak with him. I’m not asking, I’m ordering,” he motions for the other agents to come forward. They step around their boss and come for Derek. Stiles recoils at the cuffs in the hands of one, and the collar the other one is holding.

“Oh fuck no! You’re going to collar him? You’re out of your damn mind if you think we’re just going to let you put a collar on a non-aggressive man who was just recently rescued from a highly stressful and abusive situation! Didn’t you get any sensitivity training?” Stiles is ready to beat these agents, ready to scream at Scott for not giving him any warning, at his dad for not stepping in right now. Derek feeds off of him and the moment the agents take another threatening step he’s set off.

Scott gets between him and the FBI fast enough that no humans get involved. Both were’s stay in human form, snarling and snapping at each other on the ground where they fight to be on top. Scott won’t win, Derek’s an alpha. He doesn’t have to though, because the agent with the collar steps in to try and snap the clip around Derek’s neck. Isaac stops him though, snarling for his alpha and shoving the human away.

A gunshot startles all of them except for Derek. The alpha finally pins Scott to the ground and roars in his face. It’s a demand for submission, one that Scott can’t bring himself to refuse. He whines and tilts his head, exposing his throat with his eyes flashing gold.

“This is why he needs to be brought in! He’s not stable!”

“Shut your mouth, McCall. That’s enough instigating an agitated alpha werewolf in my building. Derek, get off Scott,” John snaps his gun back into its holster just as Derek slinks off of Scott and sniffs indignantly. Stiles is just impressed his father actually got Derek to follow an order.

“Sheriff—”

“I said that’s enough, agent! You’ll tell me exactly why you want this man cuffed and collared. That
little incident just now doesn’t qualify as a good enough reason.”

“We’ve got evidence that Mr. Hale is involved in the wolf murders, the bodies we found a couple of days ago. At the very least he needs to be brought in for his own protection—we know Gerard Argent is looking for him. He’s not safe here and he’s a key witness. We can’t afford anything happening to him.”

“Oh that’s such a load of—”

“Stiles, take Derek and get him a sweatshirt from my office,” Stiles knows not to argue with that tone so he’s grabbing a reluctant Derek and dragging him away before his dad can even finish the sentence.

With Stiles and Derek out of sight John regards the agents coldly, “I’m not letting you take that man into custody. First because your custody is inhumane for no reason, that boy’s been through enough as it is. Second, he won’t be safe with you—listen for once in your damn life Raphael, don’t talk until I’m done. BHPD left the care of those wolves to the FBI. They were to be sent to sanctuary, instead we found over a dozen corpses burnt and decaying out in the woods. Those were the same wolves left to your agency. How the hell did that happen, huh?”

Scott rounded on his dad, horrified, “Dad?”

“That’s an internal matter, Sheriff. We’ve got an investigation going. Want to tell me how you know that? Beacon Hills doesn’t have a forensics department and I know your vet wasn’t used for something like this. You shouldn’t have been handling evidence at all, it was and still is a matter for the FBI.”

John shook his head, “It happened in Beacon Hills, it’s still my jurisdiction. Until you clean up your agency, I’m not letting you talk to Derek Hale. Protective custody? He’s in my protective custody. You’re done here.” He turned and headed for his office to collect his son and his ward.

Scott glanced at his father, biting his lip, before turning and heading after the Sheriff.

“Sir? If it’s at all possible I’d like to help with protecting Derek. I know I haven’t been around lately and Stiles is probably mad at me but I don’t want anything happening to either of them and—”

“Son, you know you’re always welcome in my house,” John patted Scott on the shoulder just as Stiles came storming out of his office.

“Derek isn’t going with them. I don’t care if I have to quit and flee to Mexico!”

“Stiles, you don’t have to flee to Mexico. I’m not letting Derek go anywhere.”

“I hear Mexico is great this time of year, we could just relax until it settles down here and Satan returns to hell—”

“Stiles! We’re not going to Mexico! Derek is staying with us!”

“Damn right he’s staying with—oh. That’s great! Derek you hear that?”

Derek poked his head out of the office, reminding the Sheriff so much of when he was in wolf form that it made John smile. “That’s right Derek. You’ll be safe with us. You and your pack.”

Isaac and Laura had gone quiet after the scuffle, watching everything play out. No doubt they’d been ready to run at the first sign that Derek would be taken away. They probably would have carried
their alpha out if they’d had to.

Scott cleared his throat and shuffle on his feet, “Dude I promise I had no idea that my dad was going to do that. I swear I would have told you. I’m sorry I haven’t really been there for you and Derek lately, but I’d really like to help with protecting him if that’s okay.”

Stiles chewed on his lip before throwing an arm around Scott’s shoulder. “Scott, my man, you are always welcome. That’s not your style anyway, I know you’d never just take a wolf away in a collar.”

Derek let out a low growl from the doorway, his eyes flashing red again. Scott laughed, “No worries Derek, it’s not like that.” He gently dislodged Stiles’ arm from around him and kept his eyes down as he approached the alpha. “Please let me help you.” He tilted his head again, turning his eyes up to the ceiling and exposing his throat again. Derek grumbled but reached out with a big hand and wrapped it around Scott’s throat.

He felt the beta swallow, the nervous jump in his pulse, but when Scott made no move against him Derek relaxed and dropped his hand. It wasn’t complete acceptance but it would do for now.

“All right,” Stiles drawled, watching the two with a curious interest, “who wants Chinese take out?”

“We’re going to wait for Peter and Cora. We’ll meet you back at the Stilinski household if that’s alright, Sheriff?” Laura allowed Derek to nose at her throat before he moved on to Isaac, checking that each one of his pack was alright.

“Of course, I’ll wait with you two. Just in case there’s anymore of that nonsense about collaring. Stiles go home. I don’t want any of that tofu crap you keep getting me!”

“Sure thing dad! Veggie platter it is!”

“Stiles! I want meat, you hear me? Meat!”

Stiles just laughed all the way out of the station.

“I can drive us?” Scott offered once they were in the parking lot.

“Please! I left my car back at the Hale’s place. I ran to find Derek, which man, I’m going to be hurting tomorrow from that.”

Derek made a soft noise and Stiles smiled at him, “No worries, I’ll be alright. Plus we’re getting Chinese food! Super excited to re-teach you about chop sticks.”

Scott laughed at Derek’s face as they loaded into his car. He didn’t ask any questions when Stiles clambered into the back with Derek. It was enough of an explanation when Stiles had to show Derek how to buckle his seat belt.

“No, what are you doing, that’s not how it goes! Don’t look at me like that, Derek. Seat belts are important. I’m an officer of the law so you have to wear. Just because you might survive plowing through the windshield you still have to follow the example of us squishy humans. No, stop trying to unbuckle it! Haven’t you heard the saying, ‘when in Rome...’”

Scott snorted, yeah, no explanation needed.
Chapter Summary

Derek invades Stiles' space; this time as a human. Also, McCall Senior needs to stop being a Creepy McCreeper before Stiles tases his ass.

Chapter Notes

What's that smell? Something burning? My muse for this fandom up in flames? It was, but it's back like the phoenix now so we're good. My bad y'all, my bad.

The chop sticks are a failure. So is the fork. Absolutely no one is surprised.

In the end, Derek just ends up shoving his face into the plate of Chinese food. When he comes back up, Stiles has to shove his fist in his mouth to stifle the peals of laughter at the fried rice sticking to Derek’s face. Scott just looks a little horrified, but quickly returns to his lo-mein when Derek throws him a dark look like he knows Scott is making fun of him but can’t quite figure out why yet.

After Scott leaves, Stiles is left with the mess that is a very feral human Derek Hale. The pack hasn’t turned up yet, so Stiles is assuming they got held up at the station.

Unfortunately he doesn’t think the remnants of Derek’s fried rice and the duck sauce are going to get any easier to scrub off if he waits. Stiles wants to think that Derek will magically remember how to bathe himself and will spare the poor human having to bathe him. He wants to think this, but he knows this isn’t the case.

Derek dislikes baths as a human just as much as he did as a wolf. Stiles has to wrestle him to the ground which gets awkward when Derek loses the pants he’d been wearing.

So. Naked wrestling on the bathroom floor. Stiles can say with confidence that he’s done worse things than wrestling a hot, naked man on the ground. It’s also not the most compromising position his father has found him in. Which is why when his dad does poke his head in to let Stiles know he’s home he just frowns, shakes his head, and leaves without asking.

Stiles is a little insulted. “I could use some help here you kno—ow! Derek, no! No hair pulling, that’s cheating!” Derek chuffs a little but reluctantly releases his grip on Stiles’ hair.

By the time they actually finish the bath the pack has turned up and Stiles has somehow managed to coax Derek into a pair of sweatpants. Cora spits out her soda when she sees Stiles trailing after Derek. The latter bounding down the stairs to happily greet his pack while the former tries to pat down his hair in an attempt to tame it again.

“Rough night, Stilinski?”

“Shut up Cora, your brother hates baths,” Stiles bemoans, throwing himself onto the sofa. Peter and
Laura are sharing the remains of some sesame chicken, while Cora lounges in the armchair with the container of fried noodles.

“Oh ho ho, so you two were having a bath together, huh? Moving a little fast isn’t it, Stiles?”

Stiles chucks a pillow at her.

“Be nice, Cora, and yes, hello Derek,” Laura ends up with Derek shoving his nose into her neck and inhaling happily. “Nice to see you too. You up for talking yet?”

Derek either doesn’t understand or chooses to ignore her because he only gives the spot he’s sniffing an affectionate lick before turning and doing the same to Peter. Peter who is less than amused and ends up shoving Derek away before he can get to the licking.

Never let it be said that alpha were-wolves don’t pout. Derek ends up moping over to Stiles and putting his head in the human’s lap like he’s expecting Stiles to scratch him behind the ears.

“So uh, this is all very domesticated behavior—for a wolf. Any idea when we could see some more human Derek?” Stiles reluctantly gives Derek a little scratch, even if it feels bizarre petting a human like that.

Peter looks skeptical, “Who knows. He was shocked back into the change before he was ready to change on his own. Mentally we don’t know what’s going on up there. Maybe he doesn’t even understand what we’re saying right now.”

Stiles looked down at the man resting his lap and brushed his fingers through Derek’s hair. Derek titled his head to peer up at Stiles through his long lashes. Stiles thought he saw comprehension there at times, but it was difficult to say whether it was wishful thinking or not. “It doesn’t matter. We’ll get him back to what he used to be. I don’t care how long it takes. He’s come this far already, there’s no way I’m giving up on him now.”

The pack looks at him with varying expressions. Peter looks mostly skeptical, or amused, Stiles can’t really tell. Laura and Cora both look satisfied. “We know. We’re all going to do our best for him. He could be dead, so any kind of Derek is a good Derek so long as he’s breathing.” Laura’s eyes lock onto Derek who is peacefully oblivious. He even pokes his tongue out between his lips when Stiles scratches just right in the spot behind his ears.

It shouldn’t be adorable, but Stiles is so gone on the big lug that he thinks it’s about as cute as a bunch of puppies snoring.

“Will everyone be staying the night?” Stiles’ dad emerges from the kitchen with a couple of mugs. The smell of hot chocolate has his mouth watering as he takes a mug. Derek tries to shove his nose into the hot liquid, and Stiles barely manages to keep from spilling it.

“No! This is mine, get your own!” Stiles ignores the chatter of the others talking as Derek continues to try and get at the mug. There’s a flash of horror as Stiles imagines all the terrible scenarios of hot chocolate burning his wolf’s face. Sure enough it sloshes over the side and lands right in Stiles’ lap. He hisses and jumps, shoving Derek off his lap before setting his cup down. Before he can make it to the kitchen for an ice pack Derek is on him again. This time his nose is right in Stiles’ crotch where the chocolate landed.

Later—at after he’s in his most comfortable Star Wars boxers and staring at the ceiling of his room from his bed—Stiles might be able to laugh at the sound he makes when Derek gives the affected area a firm lick. For now, though, Stiles gives a manly shriek to cover the warm shiver the act gives him.
and physically throws himself over the couch. This barrier lasts only seconds as Derek assumes their playing and happily throws himself over the couch onto Stiles. Stiles, being the soft and squishy human he is, wheezes as 200 pounds of muscle and wolf land on him.

The living room goes quiet before someone starts snapping pictures of Derek whining happily and yipping into Stiles’ throat.

“Oh man, that’s gold right there. Super cute!” Laura fawns over them, her phone clicking with every shot; every shot that Stiles can feel like a buckshot to his ego.

Luckily his dad is still on his side as he helps haul Derek off of Stiles. Derek goes pretty willingly, head cocked curiously like he’s trying to figure out what all the excitement is for. Stiles is just so done though that he firmly tells himself it’s not adorable.

“I’m going to bed! You,” he pokes Derek right in the chest, “are sleeping down here tonight.” Stiles doesn’t make it up the stairs fast enough to not hear the bets being made on whether or not Derek will actually spend the night on the couch.

Peter wins $50, because it’s not even an hour after the pack has left that Derek is pawing at Stiles’ door. Except instead of an actual paw he’s using his finger nails and Stiles is a little creeped out by the sound it makes. So for the sake of actually getting enough sleep to go to work tomorrow to figure out what’s going on with Scott’s dad and the wolf bodies, Stiles lets Derek in his room.

Of course instead of a wolf he’s now got a full grown man trying to plaster himself to Stiles’ side. Eventually they’ll have to go over what’s acceptable behavior when sharing a bed like this and what’s not. But for now Stiles will tolerate Derek gluing himself to Stile’s back. Never let it be said that Stiles couldn’t be the martyr.

After all, being the little spoon to Derek Hale is such a hardship.

Okay so being the little spoon wasn’t a hardship, but waking up the next morning to said Hale snuffling at his hair and grinding into Stiles’ ass was definitely not what he’d been expecting.

Derek must still be a little bit asleep because when Stiles pushes at him to get away he goes easily.

“No, we do not hump our bed mates, Derek! Lines have been crossed today, boundaries blurred! I might be a little scarred now, if not a little violated. To be honest—hey, are you listening to me?”

One eye opens and blinks blearily at Stiles before it shuts again. Very pointedly Derek flips over so his back is to Stiles and buries his face in what might once have been Stiles pillow, but is now very clearly Derek’s.

“Okay, so we’re going to play that game, huh? I see how it is. That’s fine. You can just sleep in while I go make a living. You know the food you eat? Yeah, I help put that there. I bought those close you’re sleep—oh for the love of—why aren’t you wearing any pants? We talked about this Derek! You gotta wear pants man. I’m team Free Willy too, but when you’re in my bed and you can’t even form coherent sentences you have to be clothed. We need to talk about consent, man,” Stiles glances at clock, “when I’m not running late for work!” He stumbles his way into the bathroom to make himself somewhat presentable before grabbing his uniform and changing.

The Sherriff is sipping from a cup of coffee when Stiles grabs a muffin. It’s his dad’s day off and while it might not necessarily be a good choice with all the mystery that’s surrounding the FBI liaisons in their department, someone needs to keep an eye on Derek. Stiles won’t bring him back to the station until they sort out whatever is going on with the case that originally brought him and Stiles
“Bye dad! Oh, Derek isn’t amendable to pants at the moment, so if you could just manage to wrestle him into a pair that’d be great. Uh, don’t let him eat the leftover Chinese, it gave him pretty bad gas. Oh and try to keep him inside, I don’t trust anything with our resident FBI creeper still around. Okay? Thanks, you’re the best!” Stiles slams the door behind him. He can actually feel his dad’s eye-roll from the inside of his Jeep.

The station is tense when he gets there. The guys from the FBI are still milling about, but sticking together. The Beacon Hills officers clearly avoid them. Obviously word about the incompetency of the handling of some cases has gotten around. Stiles can tell the moment he walks through the front doors that today is going to be a battle. Rafael zeroes in on him instantly and Stiles braces himself as the older man approaches.

"Deputy. Any chance we could speak in private?"

"Sure thing, Agent. Why don't we step outside?" Stiles drawls cheerfully, eyes cold. He opens the door he just came in through and gesture for Special Agent McCall to go first. He'll be damned if he shows this man his back again.

"Stiles-" Rafael starts, but Stiles interrupts him.

"That's Deputy Stilinski to you, Special Agent."

Rafael looks uncomfortable and a little annoyed, "Right, Deputy Stilinski. I was hoping you would have Derek Hale with you. We need to interview him on what really happened in those tunnels and the events prior to his capture as well as his captivity."

"The man can't even talk yet, he's still a little wolf-like, so why would you think he can tell you anything?"

"Deputy, I'm asking nicely. Either Derek Hale speaks to us willingly or we take him into custody. I'll get the warrant if I have to; I don't want to, but I will."

"You're not hearing me, Agent! He literally cannot tell you anything right now, there's no point in taking him into custody! You'll make him worse and then you'll never get anything out of him."

The Agent's eyes do something funny then. Stiles watches as his pupils dilate a little and his eyes narrow just a hair. It makes more sense now.

"Unless that's exactly what you want. You don't want him to ever be able to talk, because he knows something you and your people don't want anyone else to know. Oh my god, are you kidding me right now? You're supposed to represent justice, you're my best friend's dad! Scott's a werewolf, and you're somehow involved in an underground wolf fighting ring!" Stiles knows exactly what he's accusing McCall of right now. So instead of screaming it like he wants to he hisses it at the man.

"Those are some serious and unwarranted accusations, Deputy. I'm going to ask you not repeat them or it's you that I'll be getting a warrant for."

Stiles grits his teeth, because that sounded like a threat and he doesn't like the look in Rafael's eyes right now. Stiles might not have the whole truth, but he's not entirely wrong here either. The problem is that if he's no 100% sure, it could end up just hurting him and therefore hurting Derek. That's an unacceptable outcome. So he bites his tongue and glares at his best friend's terrible, no good father.

"You will bring Mr. Hale in. You will allow us to speak with him. I know alpha wolves that are
semi-feral like this, Deputy. They all snap eventually. It's only a matter of time before this one does too. You don't want to know what happens when they do. Those pits? They aren't the worst of it. Mr. Hale has great genes. Rumor has it he was fantastic at ripping his opponents into shreds. Feral wolves like that can get kind of mindless sometimes, especially when they've been cooped up for a long period of time and need some release. I'm sure I don't need to tell you about wolves who are too sane to be put down, but too feral to be released. So I really hope you'll let us speak with him. It's for his best interest after all."

Stiles shudders when Rafael pats his should and heads back inside. His fingers twitch towards his taser and he thinks about dropping this asshole before tying a cement block to his legs and dropping him in the deepest body of water Stiles can find. What he's suggesting is horrible and Stiles needs to know if there's any truth to that at all; whether or not feral wolves are being bred to produce bigger, better and more aggressive fighters. If this ring is as big as the actual fighting ring. Despite being feral, the wolves still have a human side. There's still something in there that once walked on two legs and talked and had feelings. Stiles doesn't want to imagine something like that happening to Derek, but what if it already has?

Suddenly it's important that Derek learn to talk again. If he can talk, then maybe they can figure out how much he's been through and get him the help he needs.

Despite having the talk outside and standing under the warm sun, Stiles can't seem to shake the bitter cold from his bones that has him shivering so hard his teeth chatter.

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