Uneven Odds

by Dark_K

Summary

Harvey is having a tough time adjusting to the way things are at the firm right now. Mike doesn't know if he'll ever have Harvey's trust back. Derek is afraid he's made all the wrong choices, and Stiles... well, Stiles may be a little too broken to know what to do anymore.

The one where they are brothers - they just have no idea what that means.

Notes

This story has one more chapter ready, and I know where I'm going, but I feel like I'm stuck without feedback, because I don't know if it's any good. So I decided to post it.

The name of the story, and the little bits before the chapters, are from the song Uneven Odds, by Sleeping at last.

I hope you guys like it!

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

Uneven Odds

Chapter One

I once knew your father well.
He fought tears as he spoke
Of your mother’s health.

Harvey surveys the city through the thick glass of his windows.

Today, more than most days, had been hard. Too hard. He doesn’t really want to think about it, because, honestly, thinking about it would mean wallowing in self-pity and pining over what could have been but isn’t.

He won’t do that. He cared that Zoe wasn’t staying. He cared that he won’t get to see what it could have been, but he won’t stop his life for it – he cares that Scotty will be back in London in just a few days, and they’ll never amount to anything, because he can’t trust her. He doesn’t know how.

And now he has to deal with a whole other level of betrayal. Mike’s, mainly. He doesn’t even know how to handle that.

Or Jessica and her refusal to make him a part of the firm. A real part.

It’s like everything is falling apart – except it isn’t. It’s just… hard sometimes to deal with everything at once.
But he’s Harvey Specter, he can deal with anything, even if it’s just by ignoring it until it all goes away – like his feelings. He can do that.

His phone rings suddenly – it’s late, almost two the morning, and he frowns, knowing that whatever is waiting for him on the phone (his landline no less, which is strange in and of itself) is not good.

“Hello?” he answers, his annoyance clear in his tone.

“Mister Specter?” says a professional voice. Harvey frowns even more.

“Yes.”

“Here is from Beacon Hills Hospital. We have some very bad news.”

Harvey closes his eyes. It just keeps getting better.

He gets to the office half an hour earlier the next day. Not even his usual early, but seven thirty. Donna gets there after him, and she looks at him as if she’s seeing a ghost.

“What are you doing here?”

“I need you to do something for me.”

Donna keeps staring, his voice is somber and guarded, and she’s starting to freak out a bit.

“What do you need?”

“I need you to solve this for me. As soon as possible.”

He turns the computer monitor towards her, and she sees the headlines of some Beacon Hills Gazette.

Sheriff killed in violent attack.

It follows with a small report that doesn’t make any sense, but it does say that the sheriff’s son is still in the hospital. In stable, but serious, condition. The report talks about gun wounds and animal caused lacerations.

“Oh my God, Harvey” she says, her hand on her mouth, but he just shakes his head.

“I need you to assess the whole situation. What needs to be done and all that crap.”

“You mean…”

“I mean if he survives, he doesn’t have anyone else. I’m next of kin. The hospital called me last night, I need this solved as quickly as possible.”

His voice is cold, almost uncaring. Almost too uncaring, and Donna sighs.

She thinks about a thousand things, she thinks about scolding him for waiting till the morning. She thinks about what this will mean for Harvey, and the fragile state of mind he seems to be lately.

Maybe it’ll be good for him.

She’s not so sure about how good it can be for the other part involved in this, though.
Four days go by with nothing else said out loud about the situation. At noon, on the fourth day, Donna slips Harvey a small note over his desk. She’s in and out of the office so fast Mike doesn’t really register her – she’s absolutely quiet too, which is just all kinds of strange.

“I need you to take a trip for me” Harvey says, after he’s done inspecting the piece of paper Donna gave to him. His voice is cold and professional, just like it has been for the past two weeks.

Sure, he wasn’t fired, Jessica had seen to that, but Harvey might as well be in another continent he’s so distant.

And don’t even get him started on the whole Rachel situation.

“Ok” Mike agrees, looking a bit confused – two weeks with nothing from Harvey but direct orders, and now he’s sending Mike on a trip? “Where to?”

“You are going to pick someone up, and bring them here. His name is Stilinski. Vojtěch Stilinski. I need you to pick him up from the hospital and bring him here. Your plane is leaving in five hours, don’t be late” the lawyer orders without even looking up from the laptop he’s working on.

“Okay… who is he? A client?” with a name like that, maybe he’s a part of the whole European clientele this merger has brought them.

“No.”

“Oh. A friend?”

“No.”

“He your secret lover or…?” Mike says smiling a bit, just to get a rise of him.

Harvey levels him with the coldest glare Mike has seen on the man, ever. Not even when Harvey was pissed off at him for smoking weed he looked this… hurtful.

Not even when he was firing him he looked this distant.

“He’s my brother.”

So… Stiles has a brother. It’s not like he ever sees the guy, as if they exchange heartfelt Christmas Cards or spend holydays and family vacations together – they don’t.

He saw the guy once, and he doesn’t remember it. His mom used to tell him he was two, they were in New York for a weekend, and she had looked for her eldest son. She had been trying to make amends, show him his little brother.

The guy had told her to get lost, Stiles had kicked his shin, and that was that.

The second impact of any kind that Stiles’s brother had had in his life had been, well, when his other older brother had gotten sick. Stiles’s brother had known it before their mom did, he paid for the treatment using his tuition money, and when their mom tried to give it back to him, he wouldn’t take it. His mom had been sneaky, though, and everything worked out pretty well. For a while.

The money helped a bit, but his other unknown brother had cancer. He died within two years...
day after that, Stiles started getting money from his brother. More than Stiles could spend as a toddler, of course, and something that his dad didn’t like to talk about, because every month, on the dot, a new sum of money was deposited on an account in his name.

When his mom died, Stiles thought that was it, his supposed brother would never bother with him again, and yet the money kept on coming. He never called, he never showed up, he never even thought to ask what Stiles or his dad were doing with that money – the one time Stiles tried to find him, the guy’s secretary had told him not to call anymore, and Stiles gave up.

For Stiles, Harvey Specter was kind of a giant credit card that allowed him to have a car even though he had no job and no allowance and buy Lydia Martin fourteen different choices for her birthday present. That is to say he was that until the day his father died.

Sheriff Stilinski was dead. And Stiles was all alone in the world.

At first, he actually thought he wasn’t so alone.

He was supposed to have the Pack. To have Scott.

To have… well, to have Derek.

The last month had been kind of hard to get through, because the Alpha Pack hadn’t been really picky – they were out to kill all of them, no questions asked. Scott couldn’t be left out, Allison had to put her mourning and nervous breakdown aside, Chris had to take up guns along the Hale Pack, and Stiles was all in for fighting against the crazy wolves.

They had won. Not easily, not soon enough, but they had.

They had won the fight, and only two of the five Alphas remained. And they had thought themselves victorious until the very night the two last members of the Alpha Pack murdered his father. His father, the last person he had in the world, who would never do anything wrong, had been attacked by the werewolves, and torn to pieces, just because.

They hadn’t managed to do any real damage to Stiles – nothing as permanent as death, of course. He had a broken arm, scratches all over him, stitches crisscrossing down his arms, legs and back. His face was a collection of different bruises, varying from sickly yellow to disgustingly purple, but he was alive.

Derek hadn’t gotten there in time to save the Sheriff, but he had made sure Stiles got out of there alive.

But now his father is dead.

And if that isn’t enough, he has to deal with… with leaving Beacon Hills behind to stay with his brother, who he doesn’t even know. Sure he googled the guy, and he’s some kind of douchebag lawyer in New York. It’s not the same, though.

He hadn’t even deigned to show up for his dad’s funeral.

Stiles needs to wait in the hospital to be discharged by someone who’s legally responsible for him, and while a part of him recognizes that this is the end of so many things, things he doesn’t want to end; another is kind of glad, because he’s not sure he can take this much pain anymore.

He lost his dad, and then…
Them. He lost them.

He puts the last of his things in a backpack with some difficulty, what with having to use only one arm to do it, and sighs. He eyes his things there, the few possessions that aren’t packed up and waiting for someone to make something out of them, take it to New York, throw it away, he doesn’t even know.

He thinks of Derek.

That had been an interesting development during the war against the Alphas. His hate turning into a crush, the crush turning into an impulsive kiss, the kiss being returned.

The feeling of belonging to the pack now that he was with Derek, even if he wasn’t a wolf.

Maybe a month was too short a time to feel like they belonged together, but try living a whole month on the brink of death, and knowing you can count on this single person to always have your back, in a way not even Scott ever had. Derek had turned into kind of the center of his world in the last month, and now he feels as if he’s falling apart without him.

He knows, consciously, that Derek is right. The essence of what his… what, ex-boyfriend? Was what they had even that? But the essence is right. It’s the way he said it, though.

It’s always in the details, isn’t it?

You’re a liability. Your father is dead because you were involved, and I can’t have this kind of thing happening again. I like you, and I respect you, but my pack comes first. As an Alpha, my pack has to come first.

And that’s how Stiles ended up with no father, no boyfriend, no friends, no pack.

No family.

He gets what Derek is saying, but he thought… he thought they were pack. He thought he was a part of it, even if a smaller part than the rest of them. He thought he had a more significant role than a guy who’s a liability.

Or maybe he didn’t so much as thought that, as he wanted to think that. It wasn’t easy, none of it was easy, but he… he wanted to stay so badly, but his last remaining thread to tie him to Beacon Hills had cut him loose just a few hours after he had woken up.

Derek had, well, broken up with him two hours after he’d learned his father was dead.

Who does that? Who breaks someone this way? Why?

He had been alone the day of the funeral. He hadn’t gone either, couldn’t stand the thought of seeing his dad like that. He wanted to keep him in his memory as the man who loved him more than anything, he didn’t want to remember ashen features and fake make up.

He doesn’t want his last memory of his dad to be tainted by death like his mom’s was.

His house is mostly untouched, he knows. Pretty much what his dad did when his mom died – everything is left exactly in the same place it was before, as if that will make the memories last longer.

He’s not taking much from there. He’s taking his clothes. His laptop and phone. Basic necessities.
His home, though, his home is here, and he can’t take any of this to New York – it’s not something you can pack up and take away. It’s a feeling, a sentiment, and that? He’ll never have again.

He’ll never be home again.

He looks at the clock, and knows that his brother is supposed to show up in the next hour. He closes his eyes, and tries to sleep.

He doesn’t think.

He gave up thinking the day he got to the hospital, bruised and bleeding, and in so much pain. He gave up thinking when he finally regained consciousness, and saw Melissa staring at him with tears in her eyes – and they weren’t *because* of him. They were *for* him.

Not thinking, and not going there.

Pain is just like a problem – if you ignore it for long enough, it’ll just go away.

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Mike isn’t sure what to expect. He also doesn’t really know how to recognize Harvey’s brother. He doesn’t know what age the guy is, what he looks like, nothing. He knows he’s in the hospital, and he needs to take him to Harvey, but that’s all.

When he finally makes it to the small town called Beacon Hills, he heads straight to the hospital. He looks around for a bit, then goes to the nurse station, asks for Vojtěch Stilinski’s room, and hopes for the best. He also hopes he got the name kind of right.

The nurse is a thin, beautiful woman, with curls lightly tied at the back of her neck. She looks exhausted, and Mike kind of guesses it comes with working at a hospital, but there’s something about the way her face blanches when he says the surname that makes him think that maybe he’s falling into a small town cliché, and the nurse actually knows Harvey’s brother.

“I thought his brother was older” she comments, instead of giving him his room number. She looks like she doesn’t trust him one bit, and Mike doesn’t quite know how to respond to that.

“I’m Harvey’s associate. He’s my boss. There’s… a big case going on, he couldn’t make the trip to pick him up.”

Which is a lie. Harvey has dozens of big cases all the time, but Mike doesn’t really know *why* he’s coming to pick this guy from the hospital. Ever since that day Harvey tried to fire him, he’s trying to just… do what he’s told. He owes too much to Harvey, he doesn’t want to let him down ever again, and he doesn’t know how to gain his trust back, but that’s not what this is about.

“Right” she answers, shaking her head, “I would have stayed with him, but with the way things are he’s probably better away from here” she completes, looking down, as if she’s not really talking to him, and Mike frowns a bit, waiting. She shakes her head, and offers to take him to the room. Mike follows her down a few halls, and eventually she knocks and enters a room just like all the others.

“How’s my most troublesome patient doing?” she asks, a hint of a smile in her voice, and Mike looks over her shoulder.

It’s a kid. Fifteen… seventeen tops, with a shaved head, a bruised face, arm in a cast, stiches all over, but… it’s a kid.
He doesn’t know why he’s so surprised, because if Harvey’s brother was older, he could have gone home by himself, but he is: he never expected Harvey to have a little brother.

“Aching all over” the kid answers, his almost smile a bit strained, “But I’ll manage. Is he here yet?” he asks, voice eager and looking up, as if he trying to see something behind Mike.

“I’m afraid he couldn’t come. But he did send his associate to pick you up” she says, trying to sound upbeat, and Mike sees the kid smile bitterly.

“Right.”

There’s silence for a moment, and then the nurse sighs.

“I’ll leave you two to it.”

The kid nods, and Mike enters the room as the nurse leaves and closes the door behind her.

“So… you’re Vojtěch?” Mike asks, and the kid pulls a face.

“Dude, I go by Stiles, okay? I can’t even pronounce that monstrosity there.”

Mike looks at him, and yeah, this is definitely Harvey’s brother. They have the same golden brown eyes, the same mouth. The same marks and moles on their faces.

Of course this kid looks pale and worn out, his face is so white he could be a vampire if those were real, and he has dark shadows under his eyes. His clothes aren’t something Harvey would be caught dead in – Harvey’s pajamas have more style than the graphic t-shirt under a plaid shirt. Everything is a bit too loose to be the result of his hospital stay, and Mike thinks this may be just the way the kid dresses anyway.

“So, you’re Harvey’s brother?”

“And you’re… not him. I mean you’re a bit young to be him. When I was born dude was, like, twenty. Twenty-one. You’re not thirty-seven. Therefore you’re not him. Actually, you look nothing like the him I saw on Google, so you’re really not him. Who are you?”

Mike startles a bit at the kid’s motor mouth.

“I’m his associate, Mike Ross.”

“Associate? Like, partner?”

“Yes. In the Law firm he works at” Mike explains slowly.

“Cool” the kid comments, nodding, and picking on the sheet of his bed. He is sitting kind of awkwardly, his posture stiff, probably because of the reason he’s in the hospital to begin with, and if his face is any indication, things are pretty serious, “So… you’re here to…” he starts, and Mike swallows hard.

He’s not sure why he’s here for. All he got was the order to come and pick him up, a text from Harvey that he got when he finally left the plane, telling him to make all the necessary arrangements so they wouldn’t have to come back.

He thought they would have to, well, maybe sell his house? Pack? He didn’t think he’d have to pick up a kid.
“I’m here to take you to Harvey…?” he says, the ending almost like a question, but the boy, Stiles, is nodding a bit.

“Yeah, I thought so. I mean, it’s not like they can let the orphaned son of the Sheriff live alone, right?”

Mike falters at that. Harvey didn’t say anything about that.

“So, you’re taking me to New York, right?”

“Yeah. I mean, Harvey asked me to put everything in order here, so we wouldn’t have to… come back.”

“Okay” the kid says and gets off the bed, pulling a face the whole time, “I think we better head home… My house. I need to get my stuff together and lock everything up. I think. I don’t know, I’m not really sure what the procedure is supposed to be for when you dad dies and your only living relative doesn’t come to pick you up.”

His voice is a little lost at the end of it, and Mike doesn’t know what to do. He didn’t even know Harvey’s brother was a teenager, he didn’t know his dad had died, he didn’t know anything.

“He… is going through a lot at work” Mike tries, and the kid looks up at him – his eyes are almost mocking him.

“I’m sure he is” he says, “Can we go now? If we’re supposed to go, then we should go.”

Mike nods, and they leave the room. Stiles walks a little slower than normal, but waves Mike off when he asks if he wants any help. The nurse from before comes when they are getting to the door, and stops both of them.

“I don’t know what happened, Stiles, but I trust Scott that this is the best for you” she says, hugging him to her, and Mike sees him closing his eyes.

“I know he thinks that. He’s not the one I’m upset about” he whispers, and makes Mike feel bad for listening in, but it’s not like he can help it.

“I know” she says back, and then lets him go, tears in her eyes, “Call as soon as you get there, and we expect updates. Regular ones, okay?”

Stiles nods, and then turns away, as if he can’t stay a single moment more there.

Mike takes the kid to the car he rented, and the only time any of them say anything is when Stiles points the way to his house. It’s a two story place, with a small garden in the front. It looks well lived in, the grass a little out of control, but nothing wrong with it. Stiles takes a deep breath and gets out of the car, taking a set of keys out of his pocket, and opening the door.

He stops for a moment, and closes his eyes, almost swaying in place.

Mike doesn’t really know what to do, because this is not something he’s used to dealing with. He can barely work through his own grief – he doesn’t know how to work with someone else’s.

Stiles doesn’t tell him to get in, but he does, anyway. The kid is still looking around, and he doesn’t look at Mike when he says he’s going upstairs.

“We should…” he starts, but doesn’t really know how to finish. What should they do?
“I just… I don’t think I can stay here tonight” Stiles’s back is still turned to him, but he can hear his voice getting shaky, “So, maybe, I just pack my stuff, the things I have to take, and then we leave? To a hotel or something?”

“We can manage to get a night flight out to New York if you’re up to it” Mike says, suddenly eager to get something – anything – the kid wants.

“That’d be great” Stiles says, turning around a bit, and then heading upstairs.

Mike looks around the house, and tries to think. He pulls out his phone and checks out Beacon Hills newspapers and articles online, and God, did he wish he didn’t have to.

Some of them have pictures, the blood on the old blue Jeep. The Sheriff’s body. Stiles’s, bloody and bruised – small facts about Stiles being an orphan, about the Sheriff regaining his position after being taken out. This is bad. This is so bad he can’t even think straight, and Harvey sent him here? To deal with this? He is not the one this kid needs, he needs his brother. His family.

He’s so angry he actually startles a bit when there’s a knock on the door. He looks upstairs and shrugs, going to answer it, because he doesn’t think Stiles actually needs to come down to do it.

The man at the other side is… weird. Dark hair, green eyes, a scowl in his features, a leather jacket – he’s pretty much the textbook definition of dangerous and bad news, and the kind of guy moms and dads would warn their children against.

“Can I help you?” he asks, and the guy glares at him for a moment.

“I need to talk to Stiles” he answers, and Mike tries to close the door a bit.

“I’ll see if he’s up to it, just wait here—“ but he doesn’t manage to do it, because the guy snorts, and pushes the door open, getting in.

He just stares at the stairs and calls the kid’s name.

Stiles comes to the top of the stairs, looking angry and pissed off, and hell if Mike doesn’t get the full punch of the family resemblance right now.

“What do you want?” the kid’s voice is shaking, and Mike can see it’s from anger. The man seems to deflate a bit.

“I just came to see…”

“To see if I’m leaving? I am, Derek, thanks for showing up. Now go.”

“Stiles…”

“Do you want me to go or not?”

“It’s not that simple, and you know it!” the guy exclaims, and then looks angrily at Mike, but the fake-lawyer isn’t about to leave the kid alone with this guy, “Right now you are…”

“A liability. Oh, I know. Do you want a declaration that I got my dad killed too? Is that it? I’m leaving, Derek. Now go away.”

“I never—“

“GO!” Stiles finally shouts, and the man looks as if he’s going to advance towards the stairs, but
Mike puts a hand on his shoulder, and when he turns, Mike can swear the man’s eyes are just a bit red.

“You should really go” he says, his voice low, but the man looks once more at Stiles, and then turns and leaves.

Stiles is standing at the top of the stairs, breathing in and out deeply.

“Hey, you okay?” Mike asks, and Stiles shakes his head no briefly.

Stiles takes a few shaky steps into a room, and Mike hurries to follow. When he gets there, the kid is hurled at a corner of the room, his head between his knees, and he’s breathing hard but in a controlled manner. He looks up at Mike and raises his eyes, staring at the man for a few seconds, before going back to his breathing focus – after watching for a few moments, Mike recognizes a pattern – five seconds in, hold two seconds, five seconds out. Stiles is counting low along with it, and the fake lawyer recognizes what the kid is doing. He’s fighting a panic attack.

He waits. He can’t help, but try not to disturb the kid. He sits on the chair by the bed, and waits it out – Stiles goes through series of breathing and then starts over. It’s obvious he’s fighting the attack with everything he has, and Mike wants to go and help, but he can’t. He doesn’t know how, and, more than that, he’ll probably make it worse.

Finally, Stiles lets out a deep breath and looks up.

“Fun, right?” he says in a tired voice, and Mike smiles sympathetically, before getting up, and moving closer, sitting on the bed.

“You have them often?” Mike asks, and Stiles shakes his head.

“Used to get them a lot after my mom died. My dad…” his voice breaks, and then he has to take in some deep breaths before going on, “My dad was the one who could help me avoid them. The rest of the time, I just carried an inhaler with me. You know, trick myself into thinking it’s an asthma attack so I won’t have a panic attack. It helped most of the time, but I guess I forgot the tricks after all this time.”

“I’m… sorry about your dad. I lost my grandma a few weeks ago; she was all the family I had left. I… can imagine what you’re going through.”

He doesn’t know what he expects when he says that, just that the kid looks so miserable, all curled up in a corner that he has to say something.

“Thanks” his voice is shaking, and Mike starts to see some tears in his eyes.

It’s strange, in a way, seeing someone who looks so much like Harvey be this desperate, this out of sorts with everything.

“I just… Being here doesn’t help” the kid starts, “I want to be home again. I want to… go back. I want my family back” he whispers by the end, shaking his head, and Mike has to fight the urge to actually hug the kid – for all that he’s still at the place he probably grew up in, Mike gets it. He’s not home. He probably won’t be home for a very long time, because home is family, and he doesn’t have any of those anymore.

Except for Harvey, that is.

“Let’s finish your packing, and then we can go, ok?” he suggests, and Stiles stands up, looking
around his room, as if he’s not sure what to do first.

There’s another knock on the door suddenly, and Stiles looks angry at it.

“Let them knock, I don’t feel like visitors” he says, and Mike shrugs, remembering quite well the mess he was in when his grandma died. If the kid wants to see no one, then let him. The person on the outside knocks a few more times, and then there’s a crack on the door. When Mike goes to check it, his eyes wide, there’s a girl, with long, red hair already coming up the stairs.

“Avoiding them, I get” she starts, even before she’s past Mike, and he doesn’t even stop her, because he’s so shocked, “But avoiding me is pointless, Stiles” she says, coming through the door, and Mike follows.

Stiles is smiling a bit at her, and Mike is a bit relieved.

“I just wanted to see you” she says, her voice quiet, and Stiles shrugs a bit, but doesn’t answer, “Jackson broke your lock, I’ll have a new one installed when you leave, okay? Send you the key. Keep one of my own. I’m very handy with keys” she says, and for some reason that makes Stiles laugh, a bit startled, but it’s a laugh. The girl smiles at him, “Was he here?” Stiles nods, and the girls looks pissed, “I swear I don’t know what he’s doing anymore.”

Again, Stiles doesn’t answer, but the girl looks around the room, opening the closet and taking shirts out, folding them neatly, and putting them on the bed.

“That’s not your brother” she points out, talking about Mike as if he’s not even there.

“No, it’s his… associate. He couldn’t come. Too busy.”

The read head looks pissed again.

“I swear to God, Stiles…”

“Lydia, it’ll be fine. Just… help me pack. I need to leave.”

They look at each other for a long moment, and eventually she nods.

They don’t talk anymore, and yet, somehow, Mike sees himself being ordered around by a girl ten years younger than him.

It does make the packing go faster, though.

A few hours later, they are done. Stiles had to lie down halfway through, and Lydia finished packing mostly on her own, with Mike helping out when she asked. She talked the whole time, about people Mike doesn’t know, but are, apparently, Stiles’s and her friends. Stiles is silent, and Mike has a hunch that this isn’t normal behavior for him – Lydia hugs him tightly before leaving, but doesn’t really say anything anymore.

They get into the car, drive to San Francisco, and catch a night flight to New York. Stiles takes some of his medicine, and falls asleep ten minutes into the flight.

Mike can’t manage to rest a single second, because this kid needs a family.

And that’s one thing he knows Harvey knows nothing about.

Vojtěch means, very loosely, Eager or Happy Warrior. I thought it fitting.
Chapter Notes

So, here's the second chapter - I have nothing else written for this one, but I'll try and update it on the weekend at the latest.

If you have any questions, inputs, or opinions, feel free to look for me on tumblr. I'm darkjan there.

Uneven Odds

Chapter Two

_I guess a part of him just couldn't return._
Forgiveness is the lesson
He cursed you to learn

“What did you say to him, Hale?”

Lydia’s voice isn’t shrill or loud or obnoxious, it’s just _demanding_. She hasn’t called him _Hale_ ever since he saved Jackson form certain death at the hands of one of the Alphas, and Derek now knows her enough to be sure that she’s actually giving him a chance to explain himself, instead of just assuming he’s doing the wrong thing.

Derek is not very good with words, never has been. When he was a teen, even as a child, he was always popular, always had a lot of friends, but he was never the leader of the group, the one that stood out more – that was Laura. Now he has to be the front man, the one people go to for explanations, and he feels lacking – as he well should.

Peter stares at them from across the room, not moving or interfering. He actually tries to behave every time Lydia is around, because he’s not sure the girl will ever forgive him, but they _are_ a pack, and that’s something Peter actually respects. The rest of the pack is gone now. It’s night already, and Stiles must be in the plane, on his way to New York, and his brother, and a whole other life.

It hurts like hell, but it’s a necessity, for now.

“You know what I said, Lydia.”

“No, I know what you _intended to mean_. I don’t know what you said. He’s crushed, Derek. Devastated. Not like you broke up with him and gave the okay for him to go away to keep him safe, because I _know_ Stiles now, and that would have made him _fight_. He’s broken to pieces, and I want to know why. What did you tell him?”

And Derek tells her, word by word, what he said. And as he’s speaking, he actually realizes how that sounds – as if Stiles is not pack, as if Derek blames him for everything that happened to his dad, and that’s not what he wanted to do.

He just wanted Stiles _away_ from here.
“Sometimes I wonder how come you are still alive, Derek” Lydia comments, and Derek doesn’t say anything else, looking away angrily.

He won’t snap at her, though, because she cares about Stiles. She, Derek, Scott and Peter care about Stiles, he’s not alone, he’ll never be alone if it’s up for them, but right now, the safest for him is to be away from Beacon Hills.

“What are you going to do?” she presses and Derek faces her again, sighing.

“What we have to do. We hunt those two down, we kill them, and that’s it. Then I can figure out how to get Stiles back here” he says, and Lydia stares at him for a moment, a mocking smile on her lips.

“I’m sorry, is that your plan? Kill the ones who killed his dad and then just… bring him back?”

Derek doesn’t answer again. He doesn’t want to, because if he opens his mouth, he’ll lose it with Lydia, and he doesn’t want to do that.

He’s lost enough of his pack already.

“Derek, Stiles’s dad is dead. He’s going to New York to be with his brother” she tells him, as if he doesn’t know that.

“He’ll want to come back” he argues, and Lydia frowns.

“You’re not getting it. That man is the last family Stiles has.”

“The pack is his family” he says through gritted teeth, “And he doesn’t even know that man. How can he be family?”

Lydia laughs bitterly, and stares at him with mocking pity in her eyes.

“That thing over there” she starts, pointing at Peter, “killed your sister. You killed him in retaliation. He bit Scott, threatened Stiles, used me to come back from the dead, and yet, here he is. Alive, and part of the pack. Because he’s family. Are you seriously telling me you expect Stiles to just leave his brother behind once you solve this mess, and confess to him you were just trying to protect him? Because that last part? He’ll say he hates it, but he’ll be flattered, seeing as McCall doesn’t seem to compute that Stiles is more fragile than him, and no one actually takes care of Stiles, except for you. And me. But that’s his brother. That’s his brother, and the world Stiles can have by staying there” she pauses and stares directly into his eyes, “Do you get where I’m going with this? Bring him back here, and he’ll never leave. And Stiles is made for so much more, Derek. You know he is.”

“What do you want me to do, then, Lydia, leave him alone forever? Not even try to get him back?”

“No. You get those Alphas, Derek. We find them, and get rid of them, and then we’ll talk. But maybe you should think that family is precious to you, and it may be precious to Stiles too. Think about that when you plan what to do next.”

She leaves after that, and Derek is left looking lost all over again.

Peter, though, stares at Lydia and shakes his head with a fond smile. He looks as if he caught something Derek didn’t, but that’s not exactly news for him.

He goes for a run, trying to track down the scent of the remaining Alphas.
He needs them to pay.

Mike only realizes he’s dozed off during the flight when he startles awake by the plane lowering to the ground. Looking to his side, he sees Stiles staring out the window at the city, as they fly by, lower and lower.

“Ever been here before?” he asks the boy, and Stiles turns to him, a bit surprised, as if he had forgotten Mike was there with him.

“When I was two. My mom was with me. We came because she wanted to try and see him, but he decided he wouldn’t let us in his house, and then he shouted at her, and I kicked him in the shins.”

The kid looks awfully proud of that, and Mike can’t help but smile at him a bit.

“Well, if you’re lucky, you’ll get to kick him again sometime soon.”

“Yeah” he agrees, looking out the window again.

They keep mostly quiet through the rest of the landing and baggage claim, an uncomfortable sort of thing that seems to weigh heavily on both of them, but none of them knows how to break.

Stiles seems to be the kind of person who can’t stop moving. He’s always fidgeting, and it’s very distracting to Mike.

All in all, it’ll be great when he can relieve the boy onto Harvey.

They are already heading to the line of cabs, Stiles carrying his backpack and a bag, Mike helping with another two bags full of clothes and some books and such, when Mike’s phone rings with a text.

_Bring him to the office_ – it reads, and Mike can only stare.

Stiles is hurt. He got out of the hospital not even a full day ago. They had to drive to San Francisco, and then catch a plane in the middle of the night to New York. It’s barely eight in the morning, and Harvey wants his first meeting with his brother to be in his office?

What the hell?

Mike is very tempted to call Harvey and call him on his bullshit, at the very least ask for an explanation, but he’s not sure he’s allowed such liberties anymore. He sighs heavily and turns to Stiles with a smile so forced it’s almost a grimace.

“It looks like you’ll get to know the office first thing” he says with fake cheer, and Stiles snorts.

“Wow, really?” the boy answers, with a mocking impressed voice, “Seeing as I think all lawyers are conniving douchebags, you can see how thrilled I am that I’m heading to an office full of them first thing after a four day long stay at the hospital and a six hour long night flight. It’s like Christmas has come early this year.”

Mike doesn’t really try to answer to that – he just hails a cab and they get in.

This is going to go _so-badly_.

X
They get to the office and Mike guides Harvey’s brother to Harvey’s floor. Donna is staring at them as soon as they’re out of the elevator, and Mike points to Harvey’s office, letting the kid walk a few steps ahead of him. Donna looks at him with her eyebrows raised, and Mike shrugs, feeling helpless. He doesn’t think there’s anything he can do to make this not awkward.

Or painful, for that matter.

Stiles stops at the glass door, nodding to Donna slightly, and biting his lip – chewing it would be an appropriate description too. Donna nods back.

“You can go in, he’s waiting for you” she says, and Stiles stares at her, takes a deep breath, and gets in.

They see the kid come to Harvey’s desk and stop there, staring. Unmoving for the first time since Mike’s seen him.

Harvey looks up from his work, and then stands. It’s like watching a train wreck, they can’t look away.

“Oh my God, it’s like there’s two of him, except one is a poorly dressed teenager” Donna comments, and Mike has to agree – for two people who barely even know the other, they sure are alike.

Harvey looks at the two of them and raises an eyebrow, and they try to make it look like they aren’t watching them. Stiles starts talking, and Mike watches as his boss’s face gets angrier and angrier.

Oh, man, this is going to be bad.

X

Harvey looks up from his work to find his brother staring at him.

It’s a bit… unnerving. His mother’s son looks too much like him for him to be comfortable right now.

“So… you’re my brother” the kid starts, dropping his backpack on the floor.

Harvey stares at the backpack, raises an eyebrow, but doesn’t go there.

“And you’re mine.”

The kid nods briefly.

“Thanks for the bank account. I think that between that and my dad’s life insurance money I won’t have to work a single day in my life.”

Harvey doesn’t know how to respond to that. He knows teenagers are supposed to be annoying, but he didn’t think they’d be this much this soon.

“Thanks for having your lackey come and get me too. I can see you’re very busy here with your computer and stuff. How’s this going to work?”

Harvey can only stare at the kid, because what?

“What do you mean?”
“I mean you haven’t seen me once ever since I was two, and I believe I kicked you that day. I’m sure you’re not exactly dying to have a sixteen year old in your hair for two more years. How is this going to work? Did you bring me here as a formality, like, know thy brother before giving him to the system, or emancipating him or something? One of my friends was emancipated when his dad died last year, is this one of my options too, now? Are you going to look for some other family who can take me in?”

“You have no other family. That’s why we’re here” Harvey says, and Stiles looks so completely angry for a moment, Harvey feels the urge to get defensive.

“I have friends. Back home” he starts hesitantly, as if he’s not very sure of what he’s saying, “I could go back there if you wanted. Look, you don’t have to give me any more money – actually, you can get all the money you did give me all these years back. Just… let’s not pretend you actually want me here. I could just go back home” he finishes.

“From now on, you are home” Harvey replies, because this doesn’t sound right.

“You office is my new home?” the kid replies, in such an obnoxious voice Harvey wants to shake him. By the gods, he does.

“Look, Stiles, you are family. I’m trying to do the right thing here. You can’t just live alone for two years, and I have to do what is right.”

Stiles raises an eyebrow and looks completely unimpressed.

They stare at each other.

On the other side of the glass, Donna almost shivers – two of those… TWO of those, she can’t handle. One stubborn Harvey? Yes. Two? Not so much.

The thing is, Harvey is actually tempted for a moment there. He doesn’t need a teenager in his life – sure, someday in the future he thought he’d have kids, but he wanted the training wheels first, you know? The whole part where they adore you, before turning into disagreeable monsters? He doesn’t need this.

And then Stiles sighs deeply and looks down – his mask falling apart just for one second.

“Look, you don’t want me, okay? You don’t even know me. You don’t need this.”

He looks lost and afraid, way too young for the bruises on his face, the cast on his arm, the way he’s still standing up, and looking as if he’s in pain, certainly from the rest of his injuries. Way too young to have been there when his father died, attacked by God only knows what. He’s young, and he looks almost pleading for Harvey to contradict him, to say that yes, he does want him. He reminds him of himself and Mike and every single bad moment he’s had in his life. The train wreck he was when his own father died – the way he felt as if his life had no meaning anymore, and he was a lawyer already by then. Just made into a Junior partner, happy and healthy, and his dad had died at home, somewhat peacefully.

Stiles had seen his mom waste away from cancer, and been present when his dad was murdered.

His brother has no one, and yes, maybe, he’s a jerk most of the time, but the kid is family, and he has little enough of it as is.

“Mike!” he shouts, and sees his associate jump up and run to his office, “Take Stiles home, please. I’ll be home by nine, we’ll talk then.”
Stiles snorts, and takes a deep breath, trying very hard to pick up his bag again, but Mike gets to it before he can, lifting it up with half a smile at the kid.

“Who’s gonna stay with him?” Mike asks, because Harvey isn’t really trying to send an injured sixteen year old home alone, in an unknown city, right?

“You are” Harvey asks, already looking back to whatever is on his screen right now.

Mike can’t quite believe his own ears.

“Stiles, can you wait outside with Donna for just a moment, please?”

The boy doesn’t so much as acknowledge him, but he does go outside.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” he demands as soon as the door is closed (and knowing Donna won’t be listening in, because of Stiles).

Harvey doesn’t look impressed by his outburst.

“I don’t know, but you seem to be wishing to test how long you’ll last in this job.”

“Harvey, that kid is hurt, both physically and psychologically. His dad is dead. His whole family is lost to him, and you are the only thing he has in the world now, and you sent me to pick him up? To babysit him at your place? He doesn’t need a babysitter, Harvey, he needs family. He needs you.”

Harvey only stares at him expressionlessly, giving nothing away.

“Is this supposed to be some sort of punishment for the whole thing with the merger? Are you trying to teach me a lesson in humility, or something? Showing me I’m not really a lawyer? Is that it? Because you’re not punishing me. It’s your bother who’s suffering for it, and if you don’t care about that, then you’re not half the man I thought you were.”

The lawyer looks down for a second. When he looks up again, he leans on his elbows on the table, staring at Mike intently.

“When your grandmother died, my idea of helping you was letting you jeopardize your whole life, put some of our clients in danger, and then smoking weed with you. I don’t know how to deal with grief. He needs someone who knows how to show they care. He needs someone who’s good at it. He needs you” he looks straight into Mike’s eyes then, speaking very softly, but still audible, “And I trust you to do the right thing.”

Mike doesn’t really know how to answer to that, but he nods. He wants to… fix this. Keep this moment with them, so Harvey won’t hate him anymore, so they can go back to how it was before, when they’d joke and quote movies at each other as they solved impossible cases, and always did the right thing.

He can’t, though. They can’t. Because Stiles needs someone, and because Mike somehow knows that, even if they get back on track again, something will have changed.

He can only hope it’ll be for the better.

He leaves then, helping Stiles with his bags again, and Harvey is left staring out his glass walls at his brother and Mike.

Donna comes in as soon as they disappear down the corridor.
“I don’t mean this in a bad way, but you’re not ready for this” she says, and Harvey laughs roughly.

“Oh, I know.”

She looks at him for a moment, and leaves.

Harvey puts the case he’s working on on hold for just a moment, and decides to call in a few favors.

He needs to know a little bit more about his brother before facing him tonight.

He feels as if he’s preparing for battle.
Chapter The Third

Chapter Notes

Happy Easter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Third

As your guardian, I was instructed well
To make sense of god’s love in these fires of hell.

Stiles doesn’t say anything on the ride to Harvey’s apartment, and to be completely honest with himself, Mike isn’t very sure he’d have encouraged any kind of conversation in case the teen did try to talk.

Thing is all of what Harvey told him a few minutes before isn’t true.

He isn’t good at caring – he is actually really, really bad at it. He always makes a mess of things, and he is always trying to help in the wrong way. Plus, he kind of is an awful person. He knows that. It’s just… the past few months, working with Harvey, everything had been amazing, and for the first time in his life, Mike actually saw that he could have a future, something good to come to him, but it hadn’t always been like that.

Not even a year ago his days were spent on a dead end job, and his nights smoking weed and getting drunk with Trevor. He was smarter than his ex-best friend, yes, and he was a better person than him, but that didn’t turn him into someone good, not by a long shot.

And yet, Harvey thought he wasn’t the right person to deal with Stiles. He thought Mike was.

And the saddest part is that he doesn’t want to let Harvey down again. He wants to help. Things haven’t been easy for him at the firm, and Jessica seems to take a certain pleasure in showing him just how short a leash he’s in, and Mike isn’t helping anything with his existing there, but he can’t just… leave. Not least of all because leaving would actually leave Harvey open to even more attacks, but also because he doesn’t want to give up.

He wants to do the right thing by Harvey and help him, no bad consequences to deal with later. Just help him. Just this once, with nothing going wrong on the side.

Just once.

They get to Harvey’s place a few minutes later, and Stiles is quiet and looks dead on his feet. Mike had been there before, sure, but he’d never actually come in, looked around or anything. They get in with the key Donna slipped him when they were leaving the firm, and Mike sees a small note on a table, saying Stiles’s room is ready.

Pretending he actually knows where he’s going, he takes the kid further in the apartment, and shows him his new room. Stiles doesn’t thank him, he doesn’t even talk. He looks around the room,
impersonal, cold and strangely gray, and snorts quietly, closing the door behind him.

Mike hopes he’ll sleep some, because he sure needs it.

Something else he needs is food.

The man goes into the kitchen, for some reason expecting to find it completely empty, but when he opens the doors to the cupboards he finds a strange mix between extremely healthy food – boxes of high fiber levels cereal boxes and healthy snacks – and food that would make a five year old extremely happy.

The things that are obviously unhealthy and sugary, (like pop tarts. Mike can’t even imagine Harvey eating pop tarts) are new and recently bought.

For Stiles.

Mike shakes his head a bit and looks around some more, curious as to where Harvey actually lives, but he can’t find much. He doesn’t go snooping in his room or anything, but the rest of the place is… impersonal, just like Stiles’s room. It’s got less personality than Harvey’s office, for instance, because there you could catch a glimpse of what Harvey loves and likes, the basketballs, the vinyls, the books, but the apartment is classy, sure, and amazingly decorated, true, and yet, it’s… empty.

Mike frowns when he sits down, bored almost out of his mind. He is almost tempted to go out while Stiles sleeps, or leave him a note and go back to the office, but going off-script with what Harvey asks him to do is what turned their relationship into the mess it’s in right now, so he’s going to give the whole doing what you’re told thing a try.

The apartment is absolutely silent, and he takes out his phone, playing a bit, reading e-mails, diving into Wikipedia and reading link after link after link, just so he can have something to do.

He really hopes Stiles is sleeping.

At about one he gets out of the couch (and the damn thing is way too comfortable) and makes some sandwiches, putting them on the table, along with some juice he found in the fridge. He would have gone with coffee, but he’s not sure it won’t interfere with Stiles’s medication.

He goes to Stiles’s room and knocks politely on the door, opening it before the boy answers.

Stiles isn’t sleeping. He’s stretched out on the bed, on top of the covers, with the same clothes still on, staring at the ceiling, and blinking slowly.

“Hey” Mike greets, and the teen sighs in answer, “I have lunch ready. I think you should eat something, because of your meds” he says, and Stiles nods briefly, sitting up in stiff moves, getting up and passing by Mike obviously in pain.

“You okay?” Mike asks, “I mean, it’s a stupid question, but, physically? Are you taking your medicine, do you have enough, should we get some more?”

Stiles shakes his head a bit, wincing as a result.

“It’s all good, Melissa made sure I had enough to last me until I actually have to take it” he answers, sitting by the island in the kitchen, and looking around a bit.

Mike can swear Stiles is thinking the same thing he had been earlier – too impersonal.
“Melissa is the nurse, right?” Mike inquires, more to have something to say than anything else.

“Yeah. She’s my best friend’s mom.”

Well, that explains it, it’s not all nurses in that town who treat people like they are old friends.

“She looks nice.”

“She’s really great. She raises Scott all by herself, ever since his dad left. It’s just the two of them, like me and…” he stops suddenly, looking down at the sandwich he hasn’t yet taken a bite out of, swallowing hard, blinking fast, “I guess it’s not like us anymore now.”

The last part is barely a whisper, and Mike wants to hug this kid.

He can’t, he knows that, because he doesn’t know if Stiles would even allow it, and mostly because it’s not his place.

Or maybe it is. Harvey did trust him with this, didn’t he?

“I know it’s empty right now, and that you’re too raw, your pain is too fresh, and it doesn’t get better, but it gets easier.”

Stiles snorts, and stares at Mike with a skeptical look on his face.

“No, it doesn’t” he answers, taking a bite of his sandwich.

Mike shakes his head a bit.

“It does. It gets easier to live with it, even if it’ll never go completely away, you move on.”

“No, you don’t” the kid answers again, a strange smile on his lips, “My mom died five years ago. My dad never stopped mourning her. I never stopped mourning her. Every Mother’s Day, every birthday, every meeting at school, every Lacrosse game, every party I didn’t get invited to, every time the girl I liked that snubbed me, every time I wanted a hug and my dad was at work – she was always present. Always with me. Haunting me, in a way, haunting my dad. And I know it’ll sound awful, but I could do it, I could live with it, because my dad needed me. I was there for him when she wasn’t. And now he doesn’t need me anymore, because he’s gone.”

Mike stares at Stiles for a long moment, and he wants to say so many things – starting with how he said his dad needed him, that he was there for his dad, but not the opposite, but he can’t. The kid needs time.

So he follows up with something that maybe will help all of them a bit.

“You still have family, though” Mike says, and Stiles raises an eyebrow at him.

“Blood doesn’t equal family.”

“You could try with Harvey, though” Mike starts, and Stiles looks at him with such a disbelieving look that for a second Mike thinks Stiles actually knows Harvey, “Look, he’s a great guy once you get to know him. He’s your brother. Why not give it a chance? You’re here already, and it beats anything else you have now. I know this sounds cold, but Harvey cares, even if he’s not open about it. You’re here, and you could not be. You could be in the foster system, in the care of some stranger, or alone. But you’re here, with Harvey. Just give it a chance” he says, trying to be persuasive, but Stiles sighs loudly, and he looks a bit angry.
"I’m not sure I can" he says, as if he’s just figuring this out himself, and Mike stares at him, confused.

"Why not?"

Let it not be because he doesn’t want to try.

"Because he hated my mom" Mike startles a bit for two reasons: one, he wasn’t expecting this as an answer, and two, he sure wasn’t expecting the anger in the kid’s voice “She had cancer” Stiles starts, and Mike almost asks him to stop, because he knows the bits and pieces Harvey has told him, but until Stiles said anything, he wasn’t even sure their mom was dead, “I was eleven and my dad had to work. I was home all the time while she was sick, and I know how many times she called him, and tried to talk to him, and he never once answered. She died asking to see him. She never got to see my other brother when he got sick. Harvey didn’t go to her funeral, to her burial, nothing. I’ve never even seen him” he stares at Mike, as if willing him to understand, “My dad, he…” his voice sounds as if it’s locked in his throat, but Mike waits it out. Watches him take a sip of his juice, close his eyes, take in a deep breath, “My dad worked like mad after she died. He was elected Sheriff, and he thought half his votes were for pity for losing his wife and having a son like me, and so he worked twice as hard. He was everything to me, and… And now he’s dead. I can’t get him back, I can’t see him again, and the house is there, just like it was before, and I keep thinking it’s just as if he’ll come back, and I feel like there’s no home anymore. Anywhere.” his big, golden eyes are full of tears, and Mike feels his heart break a little.

Mike nods, his own eyes burning, because he knows. God, he knows. He remembers losing his parents, his grandma, losing everyone, and just wanting to be where they used to be, because maybe it had all been a mistake, and they’d come back. Maybe they’d return, and if only he didn’t change, then maybe everyone could pick things up from where they left them before.

He gets it. He knows it doesn’t work, and that the pain never really goes away, and that staying doesn’t help any, but he gets it.

“I know it’s irrational” Stiles continues, “I know it’s not really possible, and I know Harvey is trying to do something good for me here. I know that. I don’t even think I’d have been able to stay in Beacon Hills, even if he emancipated me or something, because things there are… well, bad. You saw it. But even if I’m grateful, it doesn’t stop me from thinking that here is not home, and that it’ll never be.”

He gestures with his cast a bit, and Mike can see his point a bit.

They’ll have to work for it, sure, but it’s doable.

He has to believe it is.

“When you say things are bad, did you mean the guy that went looking for you? Tall, dark and broody?”

A small smile passes through Stiles’s lips before it’s completely gone.

“That would be one way of describing Derek, I guess” he mutters, before nodding, “Yeah, him and the rest of them, my friends. And the people who actually killed my dad. They escaped, they are still out there, my friends wouldn’t let me stay in town with those… monsters still on the loose.”

Mike wants to ask what Stiles’s friends could do about it. Why would he think they actually have any power to stop him from staying if he wants to, but he guesses this is not what he’s trying to
achieve here.

Plus, convincing Stiles he can go back is counterproductive since what he wants is for him and Harvey to become the brothers they are supposed to be.

“So that guy is your friend?” he continues, and Stiles looks at him, really looks at him, as if he doesn’t want to miss a single expression.

“Ex-boyfriend.”

By the way the kid looks awfully smug for someone still bruised and with an arm in a cast, Mike understands he wasn’t able to hide how surprised that made him feel.

“That’s illegal” it’s his comment, and that actually startles a laugh out of Stiles.

“I guess it is. We talked about it once, though.”

“Once?” Mike asks, and Stiles smiles again.

“Yeah. We got distracted.”

And the smugness is back. Maybe under the depression and the sadness, Stiles is a bright kid, Mike thinks, ready to laugh, and taking a laugh out of his past relationship.

“Is that why you broke up?” he asks, and every single sign of positivity vanishes from Stiles’s face.

“No.”

And that’s the end of the conversation.

No matter how much Mike prodded and tried to get the kid to talk again, he answers in monosyllables and nothing else.

They settle for the afternoon in front of the TV, and Mike lets Stiles have the control of the remote. He flips through the channels, watching a bit of everything, except the cop shows. He practically runs away from them, and Mike remembers his dad was a Sheriff.

Night falls, they eat some Mac and Cheese from a box, and both of them start to get anxious with the perspective of Harvey coming home.

As soon as the man comes in, Mike gets up, gets his things, nods goodbye and leaves.

It’s not that he doesn’t want to stay and talk. It’s not even that he doesn’t like Stiles, but he feels as if he got to know a bit of Stiles, and Harvey can’t learn Stiles through him. He has to do it by himself.

This time, the best he can do to help is actually go away.

So he does.

X

Let it be said that Harvey’s experience with teenagers is even smaller than his one with small kids, and he interacted with children a total of five times after he was a child himself.

And three of those times had something to do with his cases.
He is a bit nervous about going home, and what he’ll find there. He hadn’t meant to say all he had said to Mike before his associate left, and even though he’s still angry and betrayed, he gets what Mike did, why he did it. Not many can go against Jessica Pearson and win, and Mike had done it before. It’s surreal of Harvey to expect Mike to do it again, when he himself couldn’t do it.

But this is not the problem now. The problem is what to do with his teen brother, who’s just survived an attack that killed his dad while he watched it.

He’s worried about this part. Awfully worried, because he can’t even imagine what Stiles must be going through.

Maybe he’ll need therapy. That should help some, right?

Or maybe not. If he’s anything like Harvey he’d rather die than tell anyone what’s really bothering him, and won’t that be a whole new set of problems?

He takes a deep breath and opens the door to his own home feeling as if he’s entering enemy territory.

As soon as Mike sees him, he’s up and out the door before Harvey can even manage to ask him anything – is his brother so annoying the younger man can’t bear to be near him for any longer than he has to, or is this some sort of attempt to make them bond?

Either way, now he’s home alone with his younger brother.

“Hey” he says, leaving his suitcase on the table, and coming into the living room. The kid is watching TV and turns to look at him – he looks nervous and afraid, and Harvey doesn’t even know what to do with that. He’s no good at comforting people. He can fight their battles for them, but he doesn’t know how to do the whole you’ll be fine thing.

“Hi” the kid answers, staring at him expectantly.

Harvey can’t think of anything else to say, and his brother keeps staring at him.

He already sucks at being a big brother and he’s been at it for twenty seconds.

“Everything okay with Mike today?” he ends up asking, because Mike is safe territory, and something they have in common now.

“Yeah. He even gave me food and everything.”

“That’s good.”

Silence again.

He sits down by the kid on the couch, staring at the TV – what the hell is the kid even watching? Before he can ask, the kid’s phone starts ringing. He stares at it for a moment, then turns to Harvey.

“Do you mind if I answer it here? I really don’t want to get up.”

“Go ahead” Harvey answers, and then has a small internal debate. Should he leave so his brother can have his privacy? Or is it okay if he stays? Why did the kid even ask? Did his dad have any kind of rules set against phones?

While he’s busy having his internal debate, the teen is already talking, so Harvey decides to just stay where he is.
“I got here okay, Lydia, don’t worry” he says, and Harvey starts to pay attention. Who’s Lydia? A girlfriend? Friend? “I don’t really want to know if you talked to him or not. Honestly, I don’t think I can even… Okay, you go ahead and do that, but I don’t want to know” another pause, “Tell Scott I’m fine too, okay? Yeah, you too. Bye” he hangs up and sighs, closing his eyes and leaning his head against the back of the couch.

“Your friend checking up on you?” Harvey says, and immediately regrets it, because it feels as if he’s snooping. He’s good at this. By God, he’s a freaking Lawyer, the best one in this whole city, and here he is, with a line like that to pick up information. What is wrong with him?

“If that’s your line to fish for information, I have no idea how you can afford this place as a Lawyer” his brother says. Harvey turns to glare at him, but the kid is smiling a bit, so he lets it go, “That was a friend, yeah. She’s worried, I forgot to call when I got here.”

“I’m sorry you had to leave them behind” Harvey says, because it’s easier than saying I’m sorry your father is dead, and that your mom is dead too. I’m sorry I wasn’t there for you, but that woman was awful, and I couldn’t stand to see another one of us get hurt. I’m sorry I was wrong.

“Not your fault” he answers, and then there’s silence.

Harvey doesn’t try to break it, and neither does Stiles.

They watch TV, eventually Harvey gets some food, and Stiles takes his pain meds, drifting off to sleep on the couch.

Before going to bed, Harvey sets him in a more comfortable position and puts a blanket over the kid.

It’s awkward, and stiff, and they have a lot of ground to cover before they even start to get close to being comfortable around each other, but Harvey thinks it feels more real than if they immediately started getting along.

He knows that if you have to work for it, it feels a million times better once you get it.

Chapter End Notes

REVIEW!
Chapter The Fourth

Now I don’t expect you to understand,
Just to live what little life your broken heart can

Stiles wakes up way too early and in an entirely wrong manner. What the hell?

Looking around he notices that he slept on the couch. At Harvey’s place. There’s a blanket over him, one that wasn’t there last night, so his brother doesn’t want him to freeze to death – which would be hard, seeing as it’s the summer, but hey, he’s counting it was a win.

He stays just like he is, not moving for a few seconds, just absorbing the atmosphere. By the light coming in, it can’t be later than six, so he supposes Harvey is still asleep.

He should be too, but now that he is awake he notices his arm is aching something bad, and that’s probably what woke him up. He’s supposed to have his medicine for the pain once every six hours, and he took his last one about ten last night, which makes him two hours late – he might not be feeling all that well, you know, psychologically speaking, but he sure as hell doesn’t want to be in physical pain too.

Groaning, he gets up from the couch, and sits, very carefully. Taking a few deep breaths, he goes to his room, digs a bit around his backpack and takes his medicine out, taking the pill, and hoping the
pain will just go away already.

If only this… ache he feels inside would disappear with a pill too, that would be just, you know, great. He sighs, running his hands through his hair, and feeling out of sorts. This is not his house, it’s not his home, he is an awkward person by nature, and he doesn’t know what he’s supposed to do here. He doesn’t even know if Harvey actually wants to be his brother, or if all that Mike said the night before was just, you know, a kid who really looks up to his boss and wants to believe he’s better than he actually is.

Eventually, he realizes he can’t just sit on this bed all day long, so he goes to the kitchen, intent on finding something to eat that wouldn’t require much work – he can only move one arm, anyway, and everything hurts still. From the way the car crashed, and the Alphas throwing him out, and the beating, and…

Stop.

He takes a deep breath and walks to the kitchen. Just as he’s getting there the front door opens and in comes his brother, in sweats and headphones. He sees Stiles and takes the headphones out.

“I didn’t think you’d be up this early” the man comments, and Stiles shrugs, standing in the middle of the kitchen, in yesterday’s clothes, feeling inadequate and wrong.

“Pain woke me up. I should have taken my medicine, like, two hours ago.”

Harvey actually looks guilty for a second.

“I guess I should have woken you up, I…”

“Hey, man, this is not your fault, okay? I’m sixteen, not six, I can take my own medicine on time, I just forgot. Don’t worry about it.”

The lawyer doesn’t look convinced, but lets it go.

“Why don’t you take a shower while I make us some breakfast?” his brother asks, and Stiles stares at him skeptically.

“You can cook?” his voice sounds a little suspicious, he knows it, but Harvey only raises an eyebrow at him.

“Shower. I’ll have something ready for you to eat when you’re out” he says, holding out a roll of food wrap for him to take, “Put your cast in this.”

Stiles nods and leaves.

They need to work this out.

X

When Harvey Specter woke up that morning, he had a whole five seconds of peace of mind before he remembered his younger brother was now living with him.

He has full responsibility over another human being. A person – a real, living, breathing person depends on him.

It’s not like he isn’t used to responsibilities – he is. He is a lawyer, people’s lives are always hanging in the balance and he is the one who makes things happen, but this is different. This is not a case of
distant concern or a case he can solve by having Mike run around. He can’t worry about it, find a solution, get his billables and then declare it to be all over – this is going to be a work in progress for a very long time. For the rest of his life. The second he decided to take Stiles in, he signed up for having him forever in his life, as his brother: a relationship he’s been trying to deny ever since the kid was two and kicked him.

Yes, he remembers that, it’s not as if you can forget the day your mom comes to visit with her brand new son. The resentment he felt, the way she protected the kid, the way she looked at the baby with nothing but adoration in her eyes, and even after she left, after he told her he didn’t want to ever see her or her son again, he would remember the hatred he felt – because it should have been him. Him, and his brother Howard, and his father, not some small town Sheriff and a weird baby – him. His family.

It’s not as if he’s blind or stupid, and he knows that for a marriage to fail there must be something wrong on both parts, but she was a horrible person while she was with his father, and he just can’t accept those two other men in her life as a part of his family.

But now he has to. His brother needs him.

When Howard was sick, Harvey had put his whole future at risk to save him, just so he wouldn’t have to ask for money from his mother. Now he had the means to make Stiles happy, give him a good life, but he knows this is not enough – blood doesn’t truly make a family, but neither does money. He needs to work for it, and what Mike told him last night is true: Stiles needs a brother.

Harvey just isn’t sure he knows how to be one.

He stops, halfway through his normal running course, and calls Mike. The man answers on the fifth ring, his voice heavy with sleep.

“Yes” he mumbles, and Harvey takes a deep breath.

“Do you think I can do it?” he asks, and waits.

He can almost see Mike sitting up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, and actually thinking before answering.

“I think that if you want to, you can do it. But you have to know, Harvey, that if you’re not going to give your best then don’t try at all, because I don’t think your brother can take another hit right now.”

Okay. So maybe Stiles did open up to Mike a bit the day before, that’s good.

Does he want to try it, though? Can he take this kind of responsibility for real? Care about someone this much, let someone in this much?

“Tell Donna to reschedule my appointments for Monday, and let Jessica know I’m taking a long weekend. Call me if there’s an emergency, but otherwise I’ll be home with my brother” he makes a pause, “Stop feeling smug about this” he says, and hears Mike snort.

“I’ll do that. Good luck.”

“Yes” he answers, but doesn’t hang up.

Neither does Mike.
“I trust you, Mike” he ends up saying, and then he actually hangs up, because it’s too many feelings this early, and he has a whole three days of dealing with this crap ahead of him.

He can be a big brother for Stiles.

He totally can.

When he gets home, Stiles is in the middle of the kitchen, looking… teenager-y.

His hair is okay, because is way too short to be made a mess of, but his clothes are all wrinkled, and his face is all marked from sleeping on his side on the couch, and he’s in his socks on the kitchen floor.

The kid looks skeptical about him cooking them breakfast, but goes to take a shower without protest, which Harvey really appreciates, because he knows there’s a whole phase in which kids are averse to showering or bathing, and he’s grateful his brother is past that.

When Stiles comes back he’s in some clean sweatpants and a t-shirt that is too big for him. Harvey doesn’t comment, though, because commenting on his brother’s fashion sense is not the way to form a bond, right?

Not this soon in their relationship, anyway.

He sets a plate with eggs on the table, toast, jam and cereal. A pot of coffee is already sitting there, and there’s juice too – he hopes it’s enough.

“I don’t know how you take your coffee, so just help yourself” he says as they sit on the table, across from each other.

“I don’t drink coffee usually.”

“Why not?”

“ADHD. Coffee makes me sleepy, so I avoid it as a general rule.”

“Do you have to take any medicine for it?” Harvey asks, already planning on taking his brother to a trusted doctor as soon as possible.

“Yeah, I’ve been taking it ever since mom died” his brother makes a pause after it, looking at Harvey through his lashes, his head still down, where he’s spreading jam on a toast, “I was diagnosed with ADHD when dad took me to a doctor to see about my panic attacks.”

“You had them because of your mother’s death?” the lawyers says, and sees Stiles staring at him at the your mother part, but the teen apparently decides to let it go.

“Yeah. For a couple of years. Had a bit of a comeback yesterday at the house, but being away, I think… it’ll help, I guess. Not being there. I feel as if I’m betraying him, though, not having them – I did it with her, why not him?”

Harvey has a feeling Stiles isn’t actually aware of what he’s saying, as if the words are just coming out of him. He also thinks that telling his brother that his mother probably didn’t deserve to have anyone having panic attacks for her isn’t going to go over well, so maybe he should try and change the subject.

“We’ll schedule an appointment with a doctor here when you’re feeling up to it, have your
prescription looked at and renewed.”

“Okay.”

They eat in silence for a bit after that, and Harvey watches his brother, trying to get a feeling for him – what he notices is that Stiles is the kind of person that never really stops. He jiggles his legs, taps his fingers on the table, hums a bit to himself, always moving. Maybe it has to do with his ADHD, maybe it’s just who he is. He also looks down still, bags under his eyes, pale and bruised. So many bruises.

When they are done, Harvey sighs, and puts his hands on the table, trying to appear comforting and firm – he’s not sure he can pull this off in a situation like this, though, but he’s going to try.

“I’ve been thinking since yesterday about what you told me in the office, that I don’t need this, that you could find another way of dealing with this whole… situation” he starts, and has to make a pause, because Stiles actually takes a breath as if he’s being hurt and, again, Harvey has to stop and realize this is a kid. A hurt kid, and a wrong word can break him so completely.

He’s so not the person for this.

“I wanted to say that I’m aware of all that. I know I don’t have to do this. I choose to do it, Stiles. I need you to know that. I’m not taking you in because you’re an obligation, because you’re a burden. I’m taking you in because you are my family, and when they called from that hospital I realized I was making a huge mistake by not getting to know you as I should have.”

The kid looks at him for a long moment, searching his expression for some sort of sign, Harvey guesses, and he looks old right then. Seen too much, done too much, been hurt too much to be innocent, and yet he’s not jaded – just hurt, but not broken.

“So you decided you want to be my brother now?” the question is loaded with more meaning than Harvey actually gets. But he swore to himself he would try.

Mike thinks he can do this, so he can do this, right?

“I’ve always been your brother” he starts, and Stiles smirks at him – a full on mean smirk, and whoa, he hadn’t seen that expression before.

“But you decided to wait until my dad died to step up to it? That’s just weird, man.”

He could be baiting Harvey, and he knows it. But Harvey also knows enough about the game not to see this for what it is: Stiles is playing him. Testing him. Trying to actually see how far Harvey is willing to go, how much he’ll put up with for this relationship they have to build together, how willing he is to be honest about their past, and they reasons they haven’t been brothers from the very beginning.

His kid brother is trying to make sure he won’t get hurt in this, and Harvey has to appreciate that – survival instinct.

Harvey stares at the kid for a long moment before speaking again, leaning on the table a bit, as Stiles leans back, folding his arms as much as he can with one of them in a cast.

“Our mom and woman who raised me were very different people.” This beginning seems to surprise the teen, but he keeps quiet, waiting, “Maybe she loved your father more, maybe he made her really happy, or maybe she just felt guilty about how wrong things turned out in our family, but she was a horrible person when I was growing up. She cheated on my dad, and I knew it, and she
didn’t care. When she left, I chose to stay with him and I cut her off – and the next thing I know she’s at my dorm, with a cute little kid with her. An actual physical proof that she had moved on, not caring that my dad never got to be really happy again in his life.” He breathes out harshly, knowing this might hurt the kid, but he believes in honesty, and this is him being honest. If his brother is going to trust him, he’ll do it knowing why Harvey never looked for him before, “It was hard, and I had a very hard time accepting that. When Howard died, I realized you were all I had left, except for my dad. I needed to keep some kind of contact with you, and I tried, once – but you looked so much like me, and I look so much like her, that I couldn’t. That’s why the money was put in your bank account every month. When my dad passed away, I thought about looking for you, but she had just died, and I… couldn’t do it. If all of this hadn’t happened now, maybe I would look for you when you weren’t living at home anymore. I would have. Not now, but I would have. So, yeah, I’m stepping up as your brother now, because the circumstances made me, but I have always been it. I was hurt, and it was hard, so you can’t actually blame me for wanting to wait until you were your own person, and not just her other son, before looking for you.”

Stiles doesn’t say anything for a long while after that, and Harvey doesn’t comment on the fact that the teen is crying silently – tears are sliding down his cheeks, and he isn’t even trying to stop them or anything. He’s not making a sound either, so Harvey leaves him to it, and starts cleaning up the kitchen.

Eventually, Stiles comes too, putting his dishes in the sink, and leaning against a counter – his eyes are still red, but he’s not crying anymore.

“She was amazing, most of the time. Dad had to tell her, sometimes, that he didn’t care she was older than him, and once or twice I remember hearing him tell her that all of that was in the past. That she was a different person then. I always suspected what that was, but no one ever told me the truth until now, and I’m… sorry” he looks right into Harvey’s eyes as he says this, “I’m sorry your mom wasn’t the same woman my mom was, because she was amazing, and caring, and loving, and you should have had that too.”

Harvey is surprised by that, because he wasn’t expecting this reaction – he’s not sure what he was expecting, but it’s not this. This mature acceptance of their mother’s flaws, and this resignation in Stiles that says he knows he can’t change the past, that Harvey was hurt by someone Stiles loves, and nothing will change this.

“I’m sorry you lost her too” he ends up saying, and Stiles looks down, sighing.

“Is Mike coming to stay with me today again, or am I allowed to be alone while you work?”

Subtly is obviously not his brother’s strong suit, but Harvey won’t comment on it.

“I’m staying home from work till Monday. Get to know my brother and all” he says, and Stiles frowns at him.

“Are we going to be talking feelings for three days? Because I’m not up for that, man.”

Harvey smiles at that – oh, they are brothers alright.

X

Mike gets to the firm at exactly eight o’clock, and Donna is already staring at him as soon as he gets out of the elevator.

“What happened last night?” she whispers harshly as they walk to his cubicle.
“I took the kid home, he spent most of the time in his room, we talked a bit, Harvey came home, and I left really fast.”

“Why?” she asks suspiciously, “And what’s the kid like?”

“Because,” he starts, setting his bag on his desk, “Harvey has to get to know his brother for himself, and not based on what I learned. And the kid is okay. There are a few things I think Harvey will be a bit startled when he learns, but the kid is fine.”

Donna looks as if she wants to ask more, but Mike doesn’t let her.

“I have to go and talk to Jessica.”

“Why?”

“Because Harvey isn’t coming today, and you have to reschedule his appointments for Monday” he says with a smile at the redhead, and leaving before she can answer.

He takes a deep breath on the way to the office, since doing it before knocking is stupid: glass doors. She merely raises her eyes when he steps in and closes the door behind him.

“Yes, Mister Ross?” she asks uninterestedly, and he comes nearer her desk.

“Harvey asked me to let you know he’ll be out of reach until Monday.”

At that Jessica actually stops typing, and looks at Mike with a bit of anger.

“Is this another tantrum he’s trying to throw? Because I have no patience for that right now” she says smoothly, and Mike shakes his head.

“His half-brother’s father died five days ago. It’s not a tantrum, it’s a necessity.”

“I didn’t know he had a brother” she says, and Mike turns to leave.

“Well, it goes to show that no one really know everything” he throws as he’s closing the door behind him.

He just hopes these three days will be worth it.
Chapter the Fifth

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Fifth

Maybe your light is a seed
And the darkness, the dirt.

After breakfast, Harvey is the one to shower and put on some comfortable clothes. He is well aware of what he’s doing, putting himself in a position where he’ll be forced to interact with Stiles with no distractions between them – he can’t take the boy out or anything: he’s hurt, and they’ll have to stay at home, and stay together.

This will either make or break their relationship, but at least they’ll know where they stand.

When he gets to the living room, Stiles is there – a laptop on his lap as he types awkwardly with a single hand.

Harvey sits on the same couch, but with space between them, and turns on the TV. There’s silence again, the typing and the people talking on the TV the only noise in the room. After a few minutes, Stiles closes the laptop with an annoyed sigh, and stares angrily at the screen of the TV.

“Is it bothering you?” Harvey asks, because he hadn’t meant for the TV to annoy his brother, just to, you know, have something to do.
“What? The TV? No, dude, it’s okay” he’s quiet after that for a few seconds, and Harvey waits.

He has a feeling there’s going to be a lot of waiting in his future, but also that Stiles is not the kind of kid not to talk when something is bothering him. That’s good, right?

“It’s just… things at home are bad. My friends aren’t talking to me, and Lydia is the one sending me updates, and now my best friend asked her not to tell me anything anymore and she agreed. It’s annoying.”

What to focus on first?

“Lydia is… your girlfriend?”

“Ha” Stiles says, a small smile on his lips for a few seconds, “I wish. I actually did wish it for years, she’s amazing, but no. She’s in a very serious relationship with another one of our friends. She’s… I don’t know, one of my best friends, for sure, now.”

“Young love is fickle” Harvey says, shrugging and turning to the TV again – this is a subject he really knows nothing about, “Maybe she’ll fall out of love with him in a few years.”

“She won’t.”

There’s such a certainty in his voice that Harvey turns to stare at his brother with an eyebrow raised. They are teenagers – there’s no forever as a teen.

Stiles looks at him, his good hand flails a bit in the air, as if he’s trying to catch the words he wants to say.

“Look, my friends and I, we’ve been through some… serious shit this past year. Lydia? She saved Jackson’s life. We all thought he was gone for good, dead as one can be, and she brought him back, she saved him. They love each other. For real.”

“Did you know the people who attacked your father?” His voice is serious now – and worried. Could they be coming after his brother?

“I wasn’t their target if that’s what you’re asking. Neither was my dad, I don’t think. He just… he was the Sheriff in a very small town, where crime rates have escalated in the past year. It wasn’t easy, and he was swamped, and those two were part of a… cult, I think it’s the best way to put it. They were actually after my boyfriend, but that was over. Those two came back to get revenge, and my dad was in the way.”

“Your… boyfriend” Harvey repeats, and Stiles turns to him with an incredulous look on his face.

“Well, that certainly clarifies that we really share some very screwed up genes, because I just told you people killed my father for revenge, and you focus on the part where I have a boyfriend.”

“I’m… I just wasn’t expecting it” Harvey answers, because he really wasn’t.

Stiles smirks.

“I’ll show you a picture sometime.”

He’s not sure he wants to be shown this picture now.

“Are you safe, though? How did you get caught up in this, anyway?”
“Yeah, I am. That’s why my friends all thought I should really come here, and not, I don’t know, throw a tantrum and be unbearable until you kicked me out. I’m far from them, and I’m not their target. As to how I got caught up… well, my dad was the Sheriff, and I’m very curious. I may or may not have listened in on his radio from time to time, and hung out in crime scenes with Scott.”

Harvey snorts.

“So, you’re a trouble maker.”

“No, I’m a trouble finder, very different concept. The trouble is already there, I merely go to it, and watch it.”

Harvey stares at his brother for a moment, but the kid grins at him, and turns to the TV again.

It’s a weird, weird concept, but he finds that he likes Stiles.

“You’re a Junior, right? We’ll have to find you a school soon.”

“Yeah” he answers, fiddling with his the hem of his shirt, “That’s gonna be weird. I’ve been going to school with Scott ever since I was, like, eleven. He’s going to drown academically without me. All he’ll think about is Allison.”

“Scott is your best friend?”

“Yes. And Allison is his insanely out if his league girlfriend. I mean, he’s cute and all, like a puppy, really, but she’s really hot and smart and badass. They’re totally in love, though.”

He’s smiling a bit at the end, as if he’s really happy for his friend.

“What about your ex-boyfriend? What happened?”

Stiles goes quiet for a moment, and looks down.

“He broke up with me as soon as I woke up after… it. I don’t want to talk about it.”

And there goes the smile, the grin and the good disposition – it’s like a bucket of cold water was thrown over them, and it stayed there.


“Do you play any sports?”

“Just running for my life” the teens answers with a snort, “And Lacrosse.”

“Lacrosse?” Harvey repeats, because that’s not what small town schools offer – football is much more common.

“Yup. Track team, Lacrosse and Swimming were the main sports in my school. I’m a bit… awkward, though, while playing, so I wasn’t first line or anything. More of a bench warmer, really.”

“Physical fitness is important, but what you learn is way more vital for your future. How are your grades?”

Stiles stares at him as if he can’t quite understand where this is going – didn’t the kid’s father ask about this stuff?
Isn’t he supposed to?

“Straight A’s. Behavioral issues out the wazoo, but most of it was reported by Harris, and he hated me. The worst part is I actually like Chemistry, but he was really mean. And last year dad had to take him in for interrogation, it’s been hell ever since.”

“That’s not fair to you. Didn’t you complain about it?”

“No.”

And he says nothing else.

Okay. Maybe Harvey has some insight in the way his brother works now, and they are way more alike than he would like to believe – he’s open about his friends and superficial information, but what really bothers him, what really hurts, what really matters he doesn’t talk, doesn’t say.

It’s just what Harvey does. And this won’t make it any easier on any of them, because, in all honesty, Harvey knows that he’s a pain in the ass of the few people who actually care about him. He believes he can fix everything by himself, and that if he can’t, it’s not worth trying. Stiles seems to be the same, and Harvey really doesn’t want that, because it’s not healthy.

“Well, he won’t be here. Maybe you’ll enjoy having chemistry class without a bad teacher for once.”

“Yeah, silver lining of all of this: Chemistry will be nice again, yay.”

The sarcasm is so thick Harvey can almost see it dripping on the floor.

He focus on the TV again.

One step forward, two steps back, right?

“What about you?”

The question comes after long minutes of silence between them, and Harvey startles a bit.

“What?”

“If we’re playing twenty questions, it’s only fair I have a shot. What about you? Girlfriend, wife, fiancée… Boyfriend?”

“No.”

The kid turns to look at him, an almost smirk on his face again, because obviously it’s clear this is not a subject Harvey wants to talk about – his kid brother is likeable, yes, and a bit of a jerk too.

“Why not?”

“Focusing on my career. I’ll worry about relationships when I’m a partner at the firm.”

“Okaaaaaay.”

“I’m not a very easy person, and I don’t like wasting my time, that’s all.”

“Hey, man, you don’t have to explain yourself to me. After Derek, everyone is normal to me, to be honest” he makes a pause, “What about Mike?”
“He’s my associate, he works for me at the firm.”

“But you trust him, right? I mean, you did send him to pick me up, and I really don’t want to think of you as the guy who would send, I don’t know, the lawyer you hate to pick your brother up at the hospital. Plus, he said some very nice things about you yesterday.”

“I do trust him. He’s… a friend.”

“He’s a nice guy” Stiles says, shrugging, and watching Harvey like a hawk – it’s making him uncomfortable, really.

“I know” Harvey answers, staring at the kid. He looks as if Harvey is the one being weird.

What the hell?

It’s not that Donna is snooping – she isn’t. She really isn’t.

Okay, well, yes, she is. But only because Harvey clearly doesn’t know how to handle personal affairs, and that includes family, and Mike is all about giving them space to bond or whatever, clearly missing the point that, if not watched carefully, this is going to blow up in their faces very, very soon.

So, she snoops. Gets out of work a bit earlier than usual, and, for lack of a better word, lurks around Harvey’s building waiting for him to leave – and she knows he’ll leave, because he won’t want to be in the house all day long, so dinner is her best bet for him to go out, with the excuse of getting food, and so she can go and do a little… research.

She knows Harvey, that’s for sure.

At around seven, just like she predicted, there he is, leaving his building. She goes in, greets the doorman, and smirks a bit as the elevator doors are closing.

Time to know the little brother, then.

The doorbell rings, and she hears the kid let out a what?

He finally answers the door, and Donna smiles a bit, but before she can say anything, the kid is already talking.

“Ahm, hi. If you’re looking for Harvey, he just went out to pick up some food, though why he didn’t use the phone I have no idea, even though I guess there’s something to do with not going to work today, I think it’s driving him a little insane.” He makes a small pause, “I’m Stiles, by the way. I’m his brother. I have permission to be here.”

Donna is a bit… startled. She’s not sure what she was expecting, but it wasn’t quite… this.

“I’m Donna, his secretary. I just came by to get his signature on a few things, and then I’ll leave. Can I come in and wait?” she asks, with her best smile, but the kid looks, now, suspicious.

“He didn’t say anything about a secretary coming by. Maybe it’d be better if you waited in the hall?”

Smart kid.

“Or we could call Mike and he can confirm that I actually work for Harvey, and that I’m not here to steal your kidney, and you’ll let me in” she tries, again with a smile.
“If we’re making phone calls, why don’t we call Harvey directly, then?” he shoots back, almost smirking, and Donna can so see the family resemblance now. He knows what she’s up to, doesn’t he?

“Because then he’d hurry back, and I wouldn’t have time to actually get to know his brother” she finally says, with a small sigh. Defeated by a teenager, she’s getting old.

The kid stares at her for a few moments, and finally opens the door, gesturing her in.

“Do you want anything to drink? ‘Cause if you do, you’ll have to make it, I only have one working arm, and my brother is a Lawyer, I can’t touch alcohol.”

Donna smiles a bit, and sits on the couch, putting the files she’s carrying on the coffee table.

“I’m fine, thank you. It’s Stiles, right?”

“Yeah. And you are Donna… Noble?”

The woman’s smiles broadens a bit more.

“I wish” she answers, and she knows she has this kid now.

“Oh my God, my brother’s secretary knows Doctor Who, this is the coolest thing ever” he exclaims, and Donna keeps up the fan talk.

She works with Harvey at a Law firm, for God’s sake, she doesn’t need to ask him questions to get to know him, she just has to let him talk, so she does. Comments on regenerations, and who’s his favorite companion, and what’s he thinking about Matt Smith, and so on and so forth, for a good ten minutes.

Stiles seems to be a nice kid, innocent enough, careful with what he says, and obviously hurt, but a good kid nonetheless.

They talk for a little longer, Donna being careful not to ask any personal questions, before the teen actually turns to her on the couch, and his eyes get a little… colder than they were before.

“So, did I pass your test?”

“What?” she asks, a bit surprised.

“Your test to see if I’m normal or whatever? Dude, my dad is a Sheriff. I know all about let the prisoner talk so he’ll hang himself with his own rope.”

She looks at him to answer, but he’s swallowing hard and looking down.

“Well, was a Sheriff. This whole tense thing keeps getting mixed up” he says with a small smile at her, and that’s when Donna starts to feel bad for doing this.

She wants to protect Harvey – that has been her goal for a very long time now. She’s literally committed crimes for him. Coming here and talking to the kid seemed like a good idea then, but now she perceives that coming here and using Doctor Who as a way to let the kid expose himself may even make her job of protecting Harvey easier, but it doesn’t exactly take the kid’s best interests in consideration.

“I’m sorry for your dad” she ends up saying, and Stiles shrugs.
“Thanks” he makes another pause, looks around the living room for a bit, and then looks back at her, “It’s nice to know someone is looking out for my brother. He doesn’t seem to the type to do it himself.”

Donna smiles back at him.

“Thank you.”

“I’m sicing Lydia on you when she comes to visit, though” he says with a smirk, and Donna is about to ask who’s Lydia when the door opens again.

“What are you doing here, Donna?” Harvey’s voice is annoyed, but he seems… okay. Not like he wants to die, or kill the kid, which is a good sign.

Maybe he can make this work.

“Just came by to give you some papers to sign on.”

“And chose the exact time I wouldn’t be home so you could harass Stiles” he accuses, putting some bags with food on the table.

Donna turns to look at the kid, but he’s smirking and not saying anything.

“Well, can you blame me? I wanted to know your brother, and you didn’t even have the dignity of calling to let me know you wouldn’t be coming in today, you let Mike tell me. So I came by, yes.”

Harvey shakes his head and puts his hand out, waiting for the papers. He signs the things, and Donna gets her stuff together, turning to Stiles before she leaves.

“It was nice to meet you, Stiles.”

“You too, Miss Noble” he answers, and she smiles.

Oh, they’ll get along just fine.
Chapter the Sixth

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Sixth

In spite of the uneven odds
Beauty lifts from the earth

It’s not that Peter doesn’t like the pack he has to call his own – it’s just this isn’t exactly what he would have chosen for himself.

Scott had been a feral bite – instinct. He was recently turned Alpha, he knew he needed a pack, his instincts were to bite whatever fit human he could find, and, that night, it had been Scott. His next two attempts, though, those were choices: Lydia and Stiles. Unfortunately, one of them had turned him down – and by then he was sane enough to know that he had to respect it -, and the second had turned out to be an immune, which was unusual in and of itself.

Fortunately, they turned out to be pack anyway – it was the rest of the choices made by his nephew that he kind of despised. Not that he had anything against teens per se: any self-respecting Alpha knew that the best time to turn a human into a werewolf was during their teen years, when they were at their healthiest, and yet not fully developed. Their bodies were still growing and changing, and the toll the change would take on their systems would be unlike to kill them. The teens Derek chose, though, were severely lacking.

It wasn’t because of who they had been when they were turned – he can understand why Derek would have thought they’d be good choices. People who had everything to gain and nothing to lose. People who would fight to be at the top once they tasted the savor of success. People who would be loyal to the one who gave them that opportunity – except they didn’t.

The blond girl and the tall boy – disloyal. Ready to run away at the first sign of trouble, and to this day Peter could not begin to understand why they had actually returned to them when the Alphas let them go. The Isaac kid? Fickle. At one moment a good little soldier, a very trustworthy Beta, the next a rebelling teen, all leather jacket and bad attitude. Five seconds later a defiant wolf, who is more likely to follow Scott’s orders than Derek’s.

And then there is, well, Jackson. That one is, for the lack of a better word, a pickle. The boy had so many character flaws it wasn’t even funny, and yet, Lydia trusted – and loved – him, and that lent him a strength someone like him was never really supposed to have. And that, right there, is the part that Peter actually thinks may yet get him the exact pack he’s been dreaming of for months now.

Jackson is a good enough Beta. A bit whiny, and a bit bitchy on his bad days, but, you know, dying had gone a long way to show him that not everything in the world revolves around him. Lydia trusted Jackson, and would never, ever, leave him. Now, Lydia had once been friends with Allison, but that had faded a bit since the whole psychotic break the older girl had gone through, and, strangely (and luckily) enough, Stiles had slowly stepped up to the role of the redhead’s best friend.

And then Stiles, despite the state of their relationship now, loved Derek.

Derek, no matter how emotionally stunted he was, loved Stiles back.

And Scott, may God have mercy on his soul, actually liked not only Beacon Hills, but also the rest of
the pack.

It’s not very hard to see where Peter is trying to go with this, right?

Well, apparently, for Derek, it is. Which is why Peter is feeling like pulling his whole hair off with his bare hands – because Derek is more likely to spend his days wallowing in angst and self-hate than do something, except to hunt those damn twins who screwed everything up. The “plan” – and, please, to call it a plan is an insult to any plan, anywhere. Harry Potter is a better planner than these people – is to hunt them, and kill them, and then think of a way to bring Stiles back and have him forgive them.

Yes, “hunt them and kill them” because that’s exactly the part that doesn’t need any careful planning, obviously. If it were that easy, they’d have ended with those two beasts the first time around.

But that’s not what’s driving Peter crazy – it’s the fact that Derek is drowning in the future possibility of Stiles not wanting to come back. Which, let’s face it, is a very real one.

A very real, possible, and feasible one.

But the thing is, for things to work out the way Peter wants, that’s exactly what has to happen.

And maybe, just maybe, it’s time for he and Lydia to stop their unease truce and start a partnership – maybe, just maybe, if they meddle enough, things will turn out exactly how they want them to.

X

“Dude, we should totally play twenty questions.”

Harvey looks up from his paper and stares at his brother, who’s eating cereal awkwardly – and Harvey is starting to get that the awkwardness has very, very little to do with the cast and the injuries, and a lot to do with who his brother simply is.

“What?”

“I was joking yesterday when I said we were playing twenty questions, but we should play it.”

The day before had been… doable. They hadn’t gone into great detail about their lives, but they had coexisted well enough that no fights had broken out. Of course, Harvey had, at some point, almost gone crazy, so he left and got them dinner, and Donna had showed up, but everything had gone fine.

Why did his brother want to change things now?

“Why would we play that, if we can just ask each other things?”

“Because we would play reciprocal twenty questions” the teen answers with a triumphant smile, and Harvey actually puts the paper on the table and stares.

“Care to elaborate?”

“It’s like twenty questions, but a bit different – my counselor from school taught me when I and Derek started being together, because if someone needs an incentive to talk is Derek, but it works like this: every question asked had to be answered by the both of us. If I ask the question, you answer first – if you refuse to answer, I don’t have to answer it either. This way no one will ask something just to annoy or embarrass the other, got it? We should play it. It’s fun. We have to tell the truth, though. If you don’t want to talk about it, do not lie, just say you don’t want to answer” the last
part is said in a very serious tone, and Harvey finds himself nodding.

It’s not like they have something very pressing and urgent to do on a Saturday, right?

Soon they are showered and ready, on the living room couch, TV on and sitting comfortably – Stiles is actually facing Harvey, both his legs on the couch, where he’s almost lying down, and Harvey is facing the TV, legs stretched out in front of him.

He wishes he had some whiskey right now, but he thinks that drinking before noon in front of a teenager is not a very good example.

“Can I start?”

“Go right ahead, kiddo.”

“Don’t call me that” the kid says, and Harvey looks at him.

“Why not?”

“Are you staring the game and that’s your first question?”

Harvey has to contain a laugh at the aggression of the whole thing, but nods anyway.

“Yes. Will you answer it?”

“My dad called me that. Don’t do it.”

Harvey swallows hard a bit, but nods again, agreeing silently. Stiles seems to calm down a bit, and then bites his lip before talking.

“As you can’t actually answer that, as it’s something particular to only me, I’ll ask a question related to the same kind of topic, okay?” again, he nods, “Okay, what shouldn’t I call you?”

“You can call me Harvey. I hate nicknames.”

“Noted” the kid says with a small smirk he tries very hard to hide, but Harvey catches anyway. He has a feeling this doesn’t bode well for him, “My turn, why a Lawyer?”

Harvey takes some time to think on that one, because the truth isn’t exactly pretty or romantic.

“Honestly? I wanted money, and I wanted to be someone. But most of all I wanted to see fair things happen, see the bad people pay. I have a very strong moral code I follow, and I always try to do the right thing. I’m not going to lie and say that the status and the money and the… thrill of it isn’t part of the appeal, because it is, it’s a great part of it, but I wanted to be able to see things happen. To make them happen. So, it was either this or a doctor, and I was never really good in Biology. Or with blood.”

Stiles snorts at the last part, and Harvey has a suspicion it doesn’t really have to do with what he said, but he doesn’t pry.

“My related question is: what do you want to do after school?”

“I have no idea” the kid answers with a bright smile.

“Nothing?” he presses, because, well, Stiles is sixteen, and he has to have a dream, “I mean, you don’t even want to be Batman?”
“I used to think I’d be in Law Enforcement, like dad. For a while there, I actually thought I could study Mythology, help my friends, stay in Beacon Hills with them and Derek. I thought about my life, not my career. Now, I honestly don’t know. Nothing is like it was a few days ago, and, well, yeah. I have no idea.”

Harvey nods in consideration, accepting the answer. He’s not sure he likes this Derek person, whom Stiles seemed to depend on and bet on so much, and who had just… up and left when the kid was still in the hospital.

What a jerk of a kid.

“TV or computer?” he ends up asking, an easy one, and Stiles eyes him a bit before answering.

“Computer. You?”

“Books” he answers with a smirk, and Stiles rolls his eyes.

“Why is your apartment so… empty?” his brother asks, and Harvey looks around – it’s not empty. He says so out loud, and Stiles shakes his head, “I don’t mean like, furniture and stuff, I mean… you. Nothing here is personal. Do you spend a lot of your time at your office, and do you just not care that your home looks like it belongs on a catalogue?”

Well, he had never thought about that before. Harvey looks around, and, yes, maybe the kid is a bit right. He does spend a lot of his time at the office, and his apartment is… a bit impersonal.

“I spend most of my time at the office, and I like the décor.”

Stiles stares at him for a bit, and shrugs.

“Our house is a mess” the kid says, looking away from him, “I mean, it’s just me and dad, and he’s always working, and when he’s home, he’s working too, even more so now with… everything going on there. I tried to keep things mostly neat, but two guys living alone, it was hard. When mom was still alive it used to be a mess too, different, because she was always… dancing around, and hiding things from me. I mean, it was more organized, and yet she was always complaining about our messes and how we wouldn’t eat right and things like that. When she passed away, I started to do that too” a tear falls down, but Stiles doesn’t acknowledge it, and neither does Harvey – mostly because he wants his brother to open up, but also because… he wants, a small part of him at least, wants to know this woman, “I would make dad eat healthily, and would hide away the bottles when he drank too much. Make his bed sometimes when things got too much at work, try to keep most of the house clean, and yell at him to buy the right brands of stuff for the house, even though I didn’t even know why we got that brand instead of another one, just because she did that. He used to say that I was just like her, and I loved hearing that and it killed me to hear that, because it would remind him of her, and that was awful and wonderful at the same time. And now no one remembers her anymore, because she clearly wasn’t the same woman with you, and dad is gone, and I don’t know if I’m really like her, or if he just said that because he knew how it made me feel, because he always knew things, you know? Just knew them” he inhales deeply, and tries to dry some of the tears from his face with his hand that is not in a cast, “I just miss him so much, and I… I was trying really hard to deal with this in the Stilinski way, but I’m not very sure I can.”

“What’s the Stilinski way?” Harvey asks in almost a whisper, and the teen shrugs, snorting a bit ad looking down.

“Ignoring it until it goes away.”
“I don’t think anyone can ignore a pain like that” Harvey starts, taking a very deep breath before going on, because this won’t be easy for him either, “When my dad died, I didn’t show to anyone how much it bothered me. I don’t trust very many people, and the ones I do trust know me enough to get that I don’t like showing weakness. I was involved with a woman when it happened, and she just… assumed I didn’t care my father, the man I looked up to my whole life, had just died, because I didn’t show it to her, I didn’t fall apart or break to pieces – but it’s not that I didn’t do it because I didn’t feel it. I didn’t do it because this is not who I am. Everyone feels pain differently, and ignoring it won’t make it disappear, because when it comes it’ll be ten times worse. We grief, Stiles, we mourn, in our way, but we do, because that’s what pain is supposed to do – to make us feel it, and understand it, and learn how to live with it, before moving on with our lives. Never forgetting, because you’ll never forget your dad, or your mom, but moving on because they would have wanted that. I didn’t know your father, and the woman who was my mother is nothing like the one you just described, so I didn’t know her either, but they would want the best for you, and I think that you need to let it go for a bit. Just… feel it, Stiles. Let it go.”

He hears a sob after that, his brother still looking to the floor. A second one comes very soon, and suddenly the breaths are so loud Harvey isn’t sure how Stiles is still breathing. He reaches out a hand and puts it on his brother’s shoulder, and the kid just… launches himself awkwardly at Harvey, hugging him close.

It’s been years since someone has hugged him this fiercely. Possibly since his own father died.

And when he pulls Stiles close to him, tightening his hold on his brother, Harvey has to take deep, deep breaths so he won’t cry too, because it’s just in this moment that he realizes how much he missed it.

X

“So… this is awkward” Stiles starts after a few minutes. His voice is still rough and tight, and Harvey doesn’t really know how to follow this up.

He was never really one to hug it out.

They break apart, and Stiles is flushed red, probably from embarrassment and all the crying.

“Sorry I cried all over your shirt too” he says again, and Harvey looks at his T-shirt and grimaces. Yeah, he really didn’t need that.

“It’s okay. I’m…” he stops talking, because he doesn’t know what to say, exactly. What is he? Is this what he was even supposed to do, anyway? “I’m going to ask my question now” he says, and the kid stares at him as if he’s crazy, before laughing out loud, and shaking his head a bit, moving to his side of the couch again.

“Sure, ask away, bro.”

“What are your friends like?” he ends up asking, because friends are safe. And a happy topic, he hopes.

“Well, there’s Scott, who’s a really nice guy. He lives with his mom, his dad is a total jerk who left them when Scott was, like, eleven. We’ve been best friends for years, and he’s pretty much like a rabid cute puppy. Then there’s Lydia, who I was in love with since, like, the third grade, but then the whole thing with Jackson happened, and Derek happened, so, we’re friends now. There’s Jackson too, which is all kinds of weird, because he was a jerk to me all the time, but now he tolerates me a lot, and I don’t want to actually kill him, so we’re good. There’s Allison, who’s Scott’s girlfriend.
We were closer than we are now, but her mom died last year, and she went through some really shitty stuff, and made some really screwed up choices, so we drifted apart, but she’s cool. There are Erica, Boyd and Isaac too, but they more… hang around us then with us, so I’m not sure I’ll say they’re my friends. And then there’s… well, Peter. He’s Derek’s uncle, the only family he has left, actually, and he was really creepy at first, but now I really respect him. He went through a lot. And, well, Derek, but we were never really friends. I guess that’s it. What are your friends like?”

Harvey is a bit startled at that – yes, it’s a safe topic for Stiles, not so much for him.

“Well, there’s Donna” he starts slowly, and Stiles frowns at him.

“She’s your secretary.”

“There’s Mike too.”

“Who is your associate” his brother helpfully points out.

“Yes” he agrees, and Stiles keeps staring at him expectantly.

“That’s it? You have two friends, who work for you?” his brother insists, looking like he’s regretting Harvey’s life choices.

“Is there a problem with that?” he asks, eyebrows raised, and the kid raises his hands in surrender.

“Nope. Not a one. Who’s your favorite super hero?”

“Batman” Harvey answers, without having to think.

“Iron Man” Stiles says, looking, again, sad for some reason.

“Well, they are basically the same.”

“Except that Tony Stark is an actual genius, and Batman pays people to do things for him. I dig Batman, man, but lately, I think Tony is more honest. Plus, I like the genius thing.”

“You’ll love Mike then.”

“Why?”

“Because he’s an actual genius, eidetic memory and the whole package. He can remember every word of every page of every book he’s ever read. He’s incredibly smart too. I think you two will like each other.”

Stiles is staring at him with that weird face again.

“And he’s your friend?”

Harvey frowns.

“Yes” he says, not getting it.

“Okay, then” his brother answers, excusing himself soon after to go to the bathroom and clean up.

Harvey is left in the living room, thinking about what he’s learned from his brother, his strange reaction to Mike forgotten for the moment. The kid is in pain, and is grieving, but he’ll pull through it, Harvey hopes.
He also hopes he won’t screw this up.

His phone beeps right then, and he picks it up.

“Need anything? :)” it reads. He smiles a bit, thinking about Stiles and Mike interacting. Maybe it’ll be good for his brother.

And maybe he and Mike can work through some of the… stiffness between them form these past weeks with a buffer there.

“Bring lunch in 1 hour?” he types and hits send.

Hoping for the best is his new slogan apparently.
Chapter the Seventh

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Seventh

As the years move on
These questions take shape.
Are you getting stronger
Or is time shifting weight?

“How are things?” Mike ends up asking about half an hour after getting to the apartment, when they are finally alone in the kitchen, cooking.

When Harvey asked for lunch he meant lunch that was ready and edible, not something to cook. But okay, he’ll be more specific in his orders from now on.

“I told you things are fine. We talked. He opened up a bit” Harvey answers, already feeling a bit defensive, because, well, he told Mike he sucks at this. He thinks he’s doing a good enough job, but who knows? Maybe he’s just going to screw up his brother even more.

“He opened up? To you? Harvey I’m-emotionally-unavailable Specter?”

“How are things? I’m-emotionally-unavailable Specter?”

“I’m sorry, I’m just surprised. It’s good, though, that he did. He can’t keep things bottled up, because when they really hit to him, he’ll explode. It’s not healthy.”

Harvey turns to look at the fake-Lawyer, but he can’t see a jab there – it’s he who’s listening to the criticism in Mike’s words, he didn’t really say anything.

“I know that. I think things might actually work. Maybe it’s too soon to say that, I don’t know.”

He’s not used to actually feeling like this – this insecurity thing, this not knowing if you’re doing the right thing or not, this worrying about doing the right thing emotionally. He almost startles when he feels a hand on his shoulder.

“You’re going to do a great job, Harvey.”

Mike’s eyes are honest and open and trusting. Harvey half smiles at him and moves away, feeling all wrong – this is so awkward he doesn’t even know how to begin to define it.

He’s not mad at Mike, not anymore. Maybe he had never really been mad at him, just because he knew the kid was only trying to do the best for him. Not to Mike, but to Harvey, and that kind of excuses any mistakes he might have made in the process. He had been wrong not to trust Harvey to fix things, but Harvey had been a little (okay, a LOT) out of line in those days when he forgot that he refused to do that kind of dirty fighting.

Mike had reminded him of that, and that had hurt – his pride, to be truthful, more than anything else. He was supposed to be the one who makes the right choices, and he had acted like an unscrupulous power hunting imbecile, and that’s not who he is.

He was just so mad, it had been so close to him – being a partner, getting what he had been
dreaming of for so long, and he lost it, so easily. He didn’t really blame Jessica for not trusting him now. Back then, though, that had been a shot to his ego, and anyone who knew him had to know that that’s exactly where it hurts the most for Harvey Specter.

So Mike going behind his back and not being a douchebag because he wanted him to was hurtful.

This whole thing with his brother, though, put everything in perspective. Right there in his room was a kid who had lost everything and who needed him more than anything. That kid needed a brother he could look up to, like he so obviously did his dad, he needed someone with moral fiber and a respectful conduct, and Harvey was decided to be that – at least from now on. No more going power-crazy.

And he needed to be honest right now. He kind of really, really needed Mike too.

“You were right” he says, and Mike turns around, from where he’s digging in a cupboard, looking for plates and glasses to set the table.

“When? Not that I’m not often right, but I’d like to know what moment you’re referring to, precisely.”

Harvey refrains from snorting or rolling his eyes, because that’s just juvenile.

“The merger. You were right; you did make the right choice. Don’t get me wrong, I believe Jessica acted terribly in the way she treated me, because the lawyer I’ve been for years doesn’t deserve that kind of mistrust, but the one I was in that case – that one I wouldn’t trust with a paper bag. You were right.”

He wants to say he’s sorry, but doesn’t quite know how – it’s not that he’s too prideful to say the words, it’s just that ‘sorry’ is what his mother said to him when she left. ‘Sorry’ is what people told him when his dad died. ‘Sorry’ were the words from the doctors when they told him Howard was terminal.

Sorry doesn’t really mean anything, to be honest, and he doesn’t like saying it – not because he doesn’t feel sorry, but because he doesn’t think people should believe in it.

“I just…” Mike stops talking and runs a hand through his hair, sighing before continuing, “I just knew that if you got what you wanted that way? You would regret it for the rest of your career.”

“I know. Thank you” he says, and then leaves the kitchen altogether, because he can’t stand the touchy-feely moment right there.

He goes after Stiles, who escaped to his room when they started preparing the pasta Mike brought over, on the excuse that he couldn’t help in the kitchen anyway. Harvey stops by the door, looking inside – they really need to fix this room, because it’s fit to a guest, sure, but not to a teen.

Not to Stiles.

The kid is sitting on the bed, his back to the door.

Harvey knocks on the doorsill.

“Lunch is almost done” he says, getting in, “You ok?”

“Yeah” his brother answers, running a hand over his face quickly, and putting what’s clearly a picture on the bed by his side, facing down, “Just looking at some stuff. I think I left too much stuff
at the house. I might ask a friend to go over and send those things to me, if that’s okay? I mean, the room is awesome and all, but it’s not very mine yet. Or not, if you don’t want to. It’s your room.”

“No” he says, sitting on the bed beside him and, a bit hesitantly, putting an arm around the kid’s shoulder, “It’s not my room, it’s your room. You could send for your things, sure, or you could leave your stuff there until it comes a time when you’re more comfortable with going there yourself and sorting things out, to just bring home what you really want in your home. We can go out and get you some new stuff when you’re feeling up to shopping. We might also have to do something about your wardrobe, but I’m not talking about that now, because I don’t want to offend you.”

He is very, very aware of the way he’s using the word home here. He’s also aware that he’s giving Stiles a way out of something uncomfortable and painful, but they have time.

This is weird, but he thinks he’s getting the hang of it. He has to show this kid that he cares, that he’s there for when he wants to open up and cry if he has to, but he also has to stop him from dwelling on it too much, of letting this pain consume him whole. Who knows if he’s going to actually manage to do it, but he can try.

“What’s wrong with my clothes?” the teen says, both of them ignoring the tears still trimming his eyes.

“What’s not wrong with them” the replies, guiding him to the kitchen, where Mike is putting the food on the table.

“Look, I have style, ok? You’re just too old to understand it.”

“Watch it, kid.”

Mike snorts as he sits, looking at Stiles with a small smile.

“When I started working for him he made me buy new suits. And when I did, he judged me, and told me to get better ones.”

“You’re a Lawyer. You should behave like one, and that behavior starts with your clothes. The way you are dressed says a lot about you.”

“What do my clothes say about me?” Stiles asks, putting some pasta on his plate.

“That you are color blind, and have no sense of measurements.”

The teen sputters a bit, looking highly offended.

“I don’t know about color blind, but there’s room for improvement” Mike agrees, and Harvey smiles at him – he missed them being on the same team.

“I’m never letting you meet Lydia” the teen mutters, and shoves pasta in his mouth moodily.

Harvey smiles again, and takes a sip of his wine.

He can do this.

“Have you thought about schools, yet?” Mike asks after a few moments of silence, while they are eating.

Harvey looks at Stiles to see the teen go a bit pale.
“Not yet. I think we have to look for something that would help Stiles achieve what he really wants in his future” he answers, trying to be diplomatic about.

The kid turns to him with a shit eating grin on his face.

“You should homeschool me then, I wanna be a househusband.”

Mike laughs, as Harvey just raises an eyebrow at him.

“Really? You want to cook and clean all day? We can manage that.”

“It’s not a bad thing to do. I used to do it all the time – I’m not good at it, but I can totally do it.”

“Maybe he should take cooking classes” Mike suggests, and Harvey actually considers it.

“Would that be something you would enjoy? We can look for it, maybe some of the schools have programs or—“

“Look, just find me any school that won’t be too much trouble for you, and that I can get to with a small amount of disturbance in your life, okay? You don’t have to… disrupt your things for me.”

“You won’t” Harvey answers, without even having to think about it, “Your education is the most important thing you could ever, ever have.”

“Mom used to say that” Stiles answers, and keeps watching Harvey carefully, but the man only nods at him.

“Yes, she did. It’s probably the one thing she managed to actually teach me that I paid attention to. Your school is important, even if you don’t know what you want to be yet” he takes another sip of his wine, shrugging as he puts the glass on the table again, “Or if you want to be someone’s kept man. No one will want an uneducated trophy husband.”

Mike laughs out loud at that, and Stiles seems to have given up on trying to freak his brother out, because he concentrates on eating again.

There’s a strange flutter in his chest when Mike is laughing, as if something gets lighter inside of him, easier, calmer.

He refuses to think about it.

It has been working so far, why would it have to stop now, right?

X

Stiles goes to sleep right after lunch, the pain meds making him a bit drowsy and sleepy. Mike stays in the kitchen for a while, and then comes back with two mugs of coffee, setting one in front of Harvey, sitting on the armchair by the couch.

“You’re good with him, you know. As long as you don’t freak out, you’ll be fine.”

Harvey considers it for a bit, and tilts his head, conceding the point.

“It’s… easier than I thought it’d be. I’m no good at this, but he makes it easier.”

They stay in silence for a while, Harvey staring at the window behind Mike.
“He is a lot like her” he ends up saying, not quite aware that he is speaking, “His eyes and mouth, mostly. But the way he acts and speaks when he’s not being all depressed, that’s what she used to be like when I was really small, before Howard was even born. She changed after that, became more distant and cold, but before… This energy he has, the way he speaks, those were the small things I used to love about her. That my dad used to love about her” he makes a pause, looking down at the mug in his hands, and snorting a bit bitterly, “It’s probably what his dad used to love about her too.”

Mike seems to be gathering courage to speak, and Harvey snorts again.

“Out with it, puppy.”

The man frowns at the nickname, but sighs and speaks anyway.

“Do you resent him for it?” he asks in a quiet voice, leaning forward on the chair he’s in, “That things seemed to be so good for him with your mom?”

Harvey takes a deep breath and actually thinks about it before shaking his head.

“She died when he was still a kid, Mike. When I was eleven, I thought she had hung the moon and the stars too. His dad seemed like a great man, from what I’ve read about him, and from Stiles talking, but as far as I gathered, Stiles pretty much raised himself after mom was gone. He would treasure her memory more than anyone, because it represents a time for him when things were good: when his dad was happy, and the house was bright, and he had someone to care about his grades and school and future. I’m not saying she was a bad mother for him, but his memory of her is way better than she could have been. So no, I don’t resent him. I’m just glad he didn’t have the time to discover her bad side.”

“So you caught that too, huh? That he’s… lonely?” he continues, and Harvey nods.

“He told me a bit about his friends, his ex-boyfriend too, and they seem to be a bunch of jerks to be honest. Except this Lydia girl? She called him twice already.”

“I met her” Mike says, with a small shudder, “Bossy and annoying. A bit like Donna, really, only… meaner.”

Harvey laughs quietly, a smile lingering on his lips for a bit.

“You were bullied by a sixteen year old girl?”

“You did not meet the girl. Just wait until she comes to visit, then we’ll talk.”

“Sure, tough guy. I’ll keep the tissues ready for when she’s mean to you.”

Mike actually gets a small throw pillow – grey and leathery, but still – and throws it at Harvey. The man, feeling a bit immature himself throws it back, and hits Mike on the head.

They laugh a bit, and Harvey doesn’t even realize that he’s staring into Mike’s blue eyes for a few seconds – when did they get so… stunning?

He coughs a bit, setting himself straight on the couch and looking away quickly.

“How are things with Rachel?” he asks, and Mike looks down, shrugging.

“She won’t speak to me at all.”

“Donna told me you told her” he says, his voice neutral, free of judgment. Mike raises his eyes and
meets Harvey’s.

“Are you mad?”

Harvey shrugs.

“I knew it was going to happen one day” he sighs and leans against the couch, “You do know that things won’t ever be the same between you two, right? Not with what happened to her.”

“What do you mean?”

Harvey thinks for a moment, trying to put this in the right way so he won’t hurt Mike more than he has to.

“Rachel is… a lot like me. She doesn’t accept defeat gracefully, so she pretends she never loses. Not getting into Harvard? That was too harsh on her, it would change everything between the two of you already, even if you didn’t tell her, because it would be one more thing you managed to do, and she didn’t. Eventually, it would grow to be something she would see as a total failure to compare to what you are – she would see herself as less than you are. The fact that you didn’t even go to Harvard, and yet you have the job she’s always dreamed of? It accelerated it.”

“Man,” he starts, running his hands on his head, exasperated, “I screwed things up so much this time.”

“Mike, there was no way this could have worked, not with how Rachel is. Don’t get me wrong, she’s an amazing worker, but she’s competitive and has a hard time believing there’s something she can’t do. Why do you think she didn’t try for Harvard before? Because while she could say the problem was her nerves about taking the test, it wouldn’t be because Harvard rejected her. Now she tried, and failed, and you have what she won’t ever have, because she’ll never admit to being second best, so she won’t try for another Law School.”

“I wish I could do… something” the younger man says, looking exasperated.

“You can’t feel guilty about being better than she is, Mike. It’s her own issues, and they are not your fault.”

He doesn’t answer, just sighs, and gets up.

“I should be going. Thanks for inviting me, and call me if you need any help with Stiles.”

Harvey nods, and watches him leave.

And solemnly ignores the ache at watching him leave.

What was that Stiles said? Ignore it until it goes away?

He can do that.

He can totally do that.
Chapter the Eighth

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Eighth

No one expects you to understand
Just to live what little life
Your mended heart can.

The weekend goes by as well as can be expected. Stiles sleeps a lot, Harvey gets bored a lot, but they survive the whole three days with minimum disturbance.

Harvey has a suspicion that Stiles is only this agreeable because he’s still insecure about being at his brother’s place, in a new city – as if he’s afraid that, if he does something wrong, he’ll be thrown out. When the kid is a bit more secure, he’s sure to bring some problems, or at least that’s what Harvey is kind of hoping.

He never thought it would come the day when he would want to see a teen causing trouble, but there you go.

Sunday night finds them watching some sci-fi thing in the living-room – Stiles quite obviously has seen this before, and while Harvey can certainly appreciate the master pieces, like Star Wars, he’s not sure he likes the whole dinosaurs hunting humans thing going on.

“Isn’t this the plot for Jurassic Park, anyway?” he ends up asking, frowning at the screen.

“No. Jurassic Park is about cloning dinosaurs. This is about dinosaurs evolving and hunting the stupid people in the island” his brother replies, his eyes glued to the screen while Harvey shakes his head.

“This is awful.”

“I know!” Stiles replies with glee, “It’s amazing how bad it can be in every single aspect!”

Harvey stares at his younger brother a little longer, chuckling quietly to himself. He’s never been one to enjoy watching bad things just for the fun of seeing how bad they can get, but hey, whatever floats his brother’s boat.

When the movie ends, Stiles stretches and yawns – it’s not that late, but the kid looks dead on his feet, even if he slept for a few hours in the afternoon.

“I think I’m gonna head to bed.”

“We just have to talk about tomorrow first” Harvey says, and Stiles frowns, “I don’t want to leave you alone tomorrow. I know you’re sixteen, and that you are more than capable of taking care of yourself, but I really don’t feel comfortable with just leaving you here, all alone, for the whole day, while you’re still on meds and with your arm in a cast. I just… would feel better if I could keep an eye on you, so I thought you could come to the office with me. You can take your computer and some books, and whatever you may think you need, I won’t have any meetings in my office, so you can set camp there, and I’d be more at ease knowing there’s someone around in case you need anything.”
Stiles stares at him seriously for a few seconds, as if evaluating him, before speaking.

“I’m not going to break, Harvey. You don’t have to handle me as if I’m fragile.”

To be honest, Harvey actually disagrees, but saying that aloud won’t accomplish anything, so he settles for sighing while getting up and stopping in front of his brother, putting a hand on his shoulder.

“I know that. But I also know how bad it can get when the person you love the most is gone, and being alone is not fun. Plus, you can go bother Donna and Mike, and, if you can manage, bother Louis too. That, I’d get you a whole new wardrobe for.”

Stiles is silent for a few more moments, but then he grins a bit, and nods.

“Okay. Just point me this Louis guy tomorrow.”

Harvey smirks and agrees, saying good night and going to bed.

In less than a week he went from having no one he thought he could trust in his life to taking his younger brother to work with him.

If that’s not improvement in the whole feelings department, he doesn’t know what is.

X

Harvey feels comfortable enough leaving Stiles in his office as he goes to a few meetings in the morning. It’s not as if the kid can get into actual trouble, seeing as his right arm is in a cast and Donna is just outside the window walls.

He really didn’t expect trouble to find Stiles, though.

X

He’s actually reading one of the few books he remembered to pick up before coming to New York, glancing up every once in a while, and realizing Donna had left a few minutes before and hadn’t yet returned.

It was okay, though. Nothing could actually happen to him in a Law Firm, right?

Right.

“You are not Harvey” comes a voice from way closer than he thought could be possible, and Stiles startles, sitting upright on the couch suddenly.

There’s a tall, beautiful, dark skinned woman staring at him, and her eyebrows, which aren’t as judgmental as Derek’s, are doing an amazing job of judging him anyway.

“Ahm, no. I’m not him. May I take a message?” he says, not really thinking, because, well, what do you say to something like this?

“And you are in my Firm because…” she starts, taking a step closer to him, and he scoots a bit in the opposite direction, this lady is scary.

“… this is my brother’s office? I’m Harvey’s brother, and he decided I couldn’t be at home alone because of my arm or something, but I know it’s all an excuse, though, he thinks my mind is in a fragile state or something like that, because, you know, I was in an accident, with my father, and he
died, and I was there, and I saw everything, and the arm, and I don’t really know Harvey, so all in all it’s good that he thought to bring me here even though I’m not really that bad, or maybe I am and I’m just in denial, I’m not sure.”

The eyebrows keep going higher and higher and Stiles manages to shut up, finally.

“If you see him, let him know I’m looking for him” she says, already turning to leave.

“Sure, I will. What’s your name, though? Because if I go with pretty and scary lady he might go after Donna.”

He swears he sees a smile cross the woman’s lips for just a second.

“Jessica Pearson.”

“Oh, ok.”

He blinks at her until she leaves, and Stiles shakes his head.

Weird people.

X

“Why is every single person we meet in the corridor staring at me as if I have grown another head?” Harvey asks irritably, and Mike contains a laugh.

“Because there’s a teen in your office, who looks a lot like you. There’s a bet going on that he’s your love child from your home town.”

“That’s ridiculous! I’m way too young to have a kid that big!”

“Harvey, you are twenty years older than Stiles.”

“I don’t look it.”

Mike decides not to answer for the sake of their new found peace after the whole merger fiasco.

Sometimes, silence is the best answer.

They get to Harvey’s office and Stiles raises his eyes from a book when they get in.

“Hey, how were things?”

“Not as bad as they could have been. How are you doing?” Harvey asks, and the kid sighs.

“I’m fine, Harvey. Bored, which doesn’t bode well for you, but I’m fine.” He sits up suddenly, “Oh, I almost forgot, Zoe Washburne was here looking for you.”

Harvey looks at him for a second as if he’s crazy, and then starts laughing so hard, Mike kind of thinks he’s going to collapse.

Of course, this happens to be when Louis is passing by, and the man actually stops to see Harvey having a laughing fit.

“Jessica does look like her.”

“I swear by my pretty floral bonnet that she does” it’s the kid’s answer, and Mike just seems to get
more and more confused.

“What the hell are you two talking about?”

Stiles turns to him with a scandalized look on his face.

“You fiend” the kid mutters, and Harvey just shakes his head, still smiling.

It’s been not even a full week, and Stiles has already managed to make Harvey care more, and show more emotion for someone than Mike has seen in almost a whole year.

There’s a knock on the glass and the three of them turn to see Louis at the door – Donna is still not back, and Mike frowns.

This is not like Donna at all.

“Hello” the man says, eyeing Stiles with curiosity.

“What do you want, Louis?” Harvey asks, his whole demeanor changing to that of a douchebag.

“Just passing by, seeing how my friends are doing, how everything is going.”

“No, you’re here to try and find out who that kid is” Mike answers, and the man doesn’t even deny, he just turns and stares at the kid.

“I’m Harvey’s love child. I was suffering from abuse from my stepfather, and so he came and rescued me” the kid says, and Louis’ eyes widen, while Harvey chokes.

“I’m not your father!”

Stiles smirks.

“You could be, though.”

“I’m not old enough to be your father. Are all people in this firm blind?”

His indignation is so extreme that Mike bites his own hand not to laugh, but Stiles has no problem with laughing at his brother’s expense.

“I was joking” he says to Louis, “I’m his younger brother. Nice to meet you, I’m Stiles” he holds out his hand and the Lawyer shakes it.

“A brother. I had no idea you had a brother” Louis comments, and Stiles lets go of his hand, looking down, while Harvey just shrugs.

“I like to keep my private life private.”

They stare at each other, and Stiles clears his throat after a minute, when things are getting weird.

“You know, the lady that came here before didn’t seem to be the kind to enjoy being kept waiting. You should probably go talk to her before she decides I didn’t give you her message and tries to eat me.”

“Right” Harvey says, and then he turns to Louis and stares at him until the man leaves hurriedly, “I’m going to talk to Jessica. Mike, try and find out where Donna is, she’s supposed to work for me, not walk around the firm all day long and leave my office unattended.”
He hurries out, and Mike sighs.

“You okay?” he asks Stiles, and the boy nods.

“I’m good.”

“I have my cell on me, so if you need anything and Donna is not back yet, just call me, okay?”

The kid nods again, muttering about overprotective lawyers and Mike leaves, trying to find Donna.

It’s not like her to just abandon her post like this – it’s not only because Stiles is in Harvey’s office *alone*, which was exactly the thing they were trying to avoid by bringing him here in the first place, but also because Donna *likes* the whole guardian thing she had with the rest of the people in the firm.

Her disappearing like this is just plain weird.

Which is even weirder is that he finds her soon enough – in Rachel’s office. Where she is *packing her things*.

“What is going on here?” his voice is surprised.

It all pretty much goes downhill from there.

When he gets back to the office, Harvey and Stiles are getting ready to go get lunch, and Mike declines their invitation to go with them.

He has some thinking to do.

X

“So, Mike was weird before” Stiles says, looking sideways at Harvey, who just snorts as he bites into his hot dog.

“The guy can remember every single book he’s read his entire *life*, Mike is always weird.”

“No, I meant… now. He was fine when he came to your office before, and now he’s just… confused. With sad faces and everything.”

Harvey shrugs, not knowing exactly what to answer.

“Aren’t you worried?” Stiles prods some more, and Harvey turns to stare at him with an eyebrow raised.

“Why would I be worried?”

“Because he’s your friend. That’s what friends do: they worry when someone just looks like his dog has died.”

Harvey sighs deeply.

“Look, things between me and Mike are a bit… off lately. He’s probably just heard that the girl he likes quit this morning. I thought you being in the office would help distract him, but he’s kind off a one track mind sometimes.”

“Oohh, he likes a girl?”
“Yes.”

“And you’re cool with it?” Stiles continues, as if this is weird.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” his voice is confused, just as he feels.

“Well, because I thought you two were… you know. An item. Doing the dirty. Getting it on. Together.”

Harvey chokes on his food, and Stiles hits on his back with a casted arm.

“No! I’m not doing it with my associate!”

“Because he’s a guy?” the kid says, and Harvey shakes his head.

“No, Stiles, I have no problems with two guys doing whatever it is they want to do together. But Mike and I aren’t doing anything but work together. Why would you even think that?”

“He’s around you a lot” the teen starts, “Also, he looks at you as if your opinion is the one thing that matters to him, and you do it too, sometimes, when you think he’s not looking. You care about him, and he looks surprised by it when he notices. I just thought that you two were, you know, getting over a fight or a break up.”

“We are. Separately. Him with Rachel, and me with Zoe. Not with each other.”

His brother stares at him for a long moment, and then nods.

“Okay.”

“There’s nothing going on with me and Mike.”

“Okay.”

“I mean, I’ve experienced things at college, but I haven’t thought about a guy like that in years.”

“Okay.”

“Plus, he works for me. This would be completely immoral and illegal.”

“Okay.”

Stiles is starting to sound amused, but Harvey can’t stop.

“We aren’t together, there’s nothing in our relationship that isn’t professional.”

His brother stops and puts both his hands – or one hand and a cast – on Harvey’s shoulder.

“It’s okay, Harvey. I get it.”

Harvey gets back to the office and sends Donna out with Stiles for new clothes and some new things for his room.

The kid leaves, smirking all the while.
Chapter the Ninth

Chapter Notes

Ahm, yes. There's a brief mention to Gossip Girl in this chapter and a few more to come. There'll be no complete ~crossovers~, but the school is, indeed, from Gossip Girl.

Just because.

Hehehehe.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Ninth

You'll always remember
The moment god took her away,
For the weight of the world
Was placed on your shoulders that day.

“You should try and send him to St. Jude’s. It’s a fine institution, and it’ll be good for him, as I have a feeling he won’t exactly be suited for a more formal or disciplined environment.”

Harvey looks up from his work when he hears Jessica’s voice and sighs deeply.

“I’ll look into schools tomorrow, probably. I want to give him some time to adjust here first.”

She looks at him again, closing the door behind her. Jessica takes a seat in front of him, and just stares for a moment, but he’s used to it by now, this is one of her intimidating techniques, and he can just sit and wait.

“You could have told me” she states, and Harvey just keeps looking, waiting to see where she’s going with this, “I know how hard it must be for you to take him in, to deal with a kid. How hard it must be for him, losing his father like this. You could have told me, asked me for more time to deal with this” she pauses and leans forward a bit, her voice lowering a bit more, “And yet I had to learn of all this happening from your associate and the kid himself. Why didn’t you come to me, Harvey?”

“Why would I?” he asks back, and Jessica shakes her head.

“I thought we were more than co-workers, Harvey.”

“So I have a brother that I didn’t talk to in sixteen years of existence, because of a mother I didn’t want any contact with. He wasn’t a part of my life at all until a week ago. now that he is, you know he exists” it’s his turn to lean forward now, a small smirk playing on his lips, “You, however, were married and I didn’t even know about it. Do you really want to compare notes on ‘we are more than co-workers’?”

“You can trust me, Harvey.”
He lets out a small laugh at that.

“I trust you just as much as you trust me.”

He keeps on smiling at her until she’s out of sight. He gets back to work for a few more moments, and when he looks up, Mike is coming towards his office, looking deeply troubled.

He wants to feel sympathy for the guy, he really does, and yet he really can’t, not very much.

Because even though he wants, fundamentally, to see Mike Happy and well, he knows Rachel can’t be that for him. Neither can any of the girls he got involved with this past year.

They are all… wrong for him somehow. No one quite gets his potential, and they want to hold him back, like Rachel did. He has such a bright future ahead of him if only he can stop for two seconds and think things through, and these girls just make him stupid, and…

Harvey stops, because all he’s ever wanted to feel for Mike is brotherly affection – but now he has a brother, and the longer he spends time with Stiles, the longer they actually get along as two brothers do, the more he realizes what he feels for Mike is so completely different from brotherly love that can’t even be measured the same way.

Stiles’ smirk comes back to his mind, and he shakes his head hard, trying to focus on what Mike has to say.

They work a few more hours – Mike quiet and withdrawn – and when it’s time to go, Harvey gets his things together.

“Want to go back to my place? Donna took Stiles shopping, so it could be fun to see him squirming a bit with clothes that actually fit. We can grab dinner on the way there.”

He stops for a second after speaking, because he can’t quite believe he made the offer.

“You don’t mind me there?” the younger man asks, looking uncertain.

“If I did I wouldn’t have invited you. Plus, it’s always good to have some back up with that kid. One weekend is more than enough to see that he’s a handful.”

He can’t stop the smile from spreading on his face, and Mike is pretty much the same.

“Okay. Let’s go.”

They grab some food along the way, and Mike is, in fact, quieter than normal, seeming to be lost in his own little world for most of the ride.

When they get home, he whistles at the number of bags that are in the living room – Donna certainly knows how to go on a shopping spree.

“Your secretary is crazy. Deranged! Screaming, blindingly mad!” the kid accuses, and Harvey just tilts his head to the side.

“Well, you do have a new wardrobe, can’t say she can’t accomplish a mission.”

The kid looks at him and bites his lip for a moment.

“It’s too much, Harvey.”
“No, it’s not. What you spent today, I can probably make up for in a matter of hours. Money is really not a problem, Stiles, don’t worry about this. The thing is, did you like what she got you? Because I was kidding before, you don’t have to change the way you dress.”

The kid looks at the bags again – Christ, he hasn’t even taken the things out of their bags yet, what did he think Harvey would do? Make him take his new things back? – and sighs.

“Nah, it’s cool. She has good taste, and apart from being threatened and yelled at to try on things, I actually enjoyed it. It was fun.”

“Good. Go wash up for dinner.”

Stiles nods at him and goes, and Harvey turns around to see Mike smirking a bit.

“What?”

The fake lawyer just stares at him a bit more and shakes his head.

“Nothing.”

Before Harvey can ask for more, Stiles is back, and they are eating while listening to the horror tales of shopping with Donna.

They put their dishes into the dishwasher, and Stiles announces he’s going to bed, because he’s beat.

He takes his bags from the living room, and actually smiles at them, so Harvey is counting it as a win.

“You know, I’m not half bad at this” he comments, pouring himself and Mike some whiskey, and handing the other man his glass.

“Stiles doesn’t seem like a difficult kid” the blond answers, taking a small sip, “Have you talked to him about schools yet?”

“Jessica suggested one today. She probably has some sort of interest in it, but I’ll look into it. She does have a point that Stiles doesn’t seem to be the type to fit in into a traditional one.”

“He really doesn’t.”

They stay quiet for a while, and Harvey swallows hard before saying anything.

“I’m sorry Rachel left” he says, looking at his glass and not at Mike.

The blond doesn’t answer for a long while, and Harvey risks a look at his face, and sees he’s shaking his head.

“She said she’s not going to tell anyone. That I would fuck it up on my own, and end up being arrested, and, well, it’s quite a possibility.”

“It isn’t. I wouldn’t let that happen” Harvey answers quickly, and Mike smiles at him – a strange sort of thing, bitter and sad and fond, all at once.

“She had some points, though. I love what we do, Harvey. I love helping people, solving their problems. I’ve always wanted to be a Lawyer, but where can I go from where I am now? Jessica would never let me grow inside the firm, and… I wish I could… actually be a Lawyer. Not just behave like one.”
“You want to go to Law School?” he asks, incredulous.

“I would have to go to college first” the other one answers, a self-deprecating smile on his face now.

“Then go to college” Harvey says, shrugging, “Make it happen, Mike, if that’s what you want.”

“I can’t even take my SAT’s, Harvey. I was banned from it, for cheating.”

“We are freaking Lawyers, Mike. We’ll find a way. Do you want to go to college?”

“I really, really do” he says, looking down, and Harvey can see a whole word of frustration and pain on his face.

“Then we’ll make it happen” he answers, and he really, really means it.

The smile he gets back makes him think it will be worth all the trouble.

Oh, man, he’s got it bad.

X

After Mike leaves, Harvey spends some time working his way through some papers, and then goes to bed too.

He wakes up suddenly, when he hears someone moving in the living room – when he gets there, he sees Stiles sitting on the couch, his legs up, arms around his knees, a blanket over his shoulders, staring unblinkingly at the screen of the muted TV, as if not really seeing it.

“Hey, kid” he greets, and the boy jumps a bit, before focusing on Harvey, his face a mask of regret.

“I didn’t mean to wake you up.”

“No big deal. What’s going on?”

He sits by his brother, and can practically feel Stiles shivering – it’s not a cold night, they are in the middle of the summer, after all.

“I had a dream about…” he swallows hard before continuing, “About my dad. And the night he… When they attacked.”

“Who attacked?” Harvey asks quietly, because he hadn’t wanted to approach the subject before Stiles was ready to do it, but if he’s saying something now, then it’s because he can, maybe needs, to talk about it.

“The people who were after us, they were gone. Two of them escaped, we thought they had left. We thought we were safe. And then it was just me and my dad, and they attacked the car, we hit a tree. They went straight for me, but dad got in the way” his voice breaks a bit with the last sentence, and he shivers again, seeming smaller in the blanket around him, “The monsters, they… tore him apart” he snorts a bit, shaking his head, “Animal attack. Just like a whole lot of other deaths in that town. Dad tried to defend me, but he couldn’t, and when they turned to me, Derek showed up, and they left, ran away. He called the ambulance, went with me to the hospital, stayed there till he was sure nothing bad had happened to me, physically, and then he just… vanished for days. And when he came back, he broke up with me” tears are running freely down his face now, and he wipes at them angrily before going on, “I mean, I get why he did it, because he thought I’d be safer away from there, and I agree. I am. But he was so mean about it, and I’ve just… I’ve just lost my dad, and I miss
him, and I miss Scott, and I miss Derek. They aren’t answering my calls, the only one who talks to me is Lydia, and they are keeping her in the dark too. They won’t even tell me what the police is finding out, and I know they think they are protecting me, but it’s driving me crazy.”

He buries his head in his good hand when he says that and Harvey, very slowly, puts an arm around his shoulders.

He’s never been really good at comforting anyone, he has a feeling he would always be the kind of parent that ends up buying something shiny to their kid instead of hugging them, and freely telling them they love them, but he has to do this now, because his brother needs it.

“Did you try to talk to Derek?” he asks quietly, and Stiles shakes his head.

“I didn’t call him. I don’t know if I want to, you know? What if I call and he tells me not to call him anymore? Or what if he tells me he never loved me?”

“He could just be trying to keep you safe, Stiles. If those people who attacked you and your dad were after him, maybe this is his way of keeping you out of danger, and even if I don’t know what a teenager could do to stop these sort of people, you have to trust that they are doing what they think is best for you.”

Stiles goes very still at the mention of this boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, being a teenager, but he takes in a shuddering breath and nods.

“It’s just hard, sometimes. I don’t want to, like, talk about it. I don’t want to even remember that night, and I deal better when I ignore the fact that he’s gone, when I can just pretend that I’m here because we decided to get to know each other. And I know it may not be healthy, and that it’ll probably not be a valid technique once school starts, and things get more real, but it’s how I know how to deal. Except when I remember.”

Harvey doesn’t really know what to say to that, so he just pulls Stiles a bit more tightly against his side, and sighs.

“I’m here, kid. I know I’m not much, but I’m here.”

Stiles doesn’t say anything, but leans against Harvey’s shoulder and stays there.

His brother falls asleep long before he does.

X

“Donna, I need you to schedule an appointment with a traumatologist, the best in town, to see to Stiles’ arm. Also, call St Jude’s and make sure the Principal can meet with us, so Stiles can see the school, and we have the necessary paper work for the transfer. We’ll also need to see a doctor to reevaluate the medication for his ADHD, so get on that too. I want all of this by the end of the morning” Harvey says as soon as he’s out of the elevator, going fast as he talks. After he’s done, Donna looks at Stiles, who’s trailing after them, and the kid just shrugs.

“I have no idea, he woke up on mission mode today.”

“I heard that” Harvey says, already sitting in his office, and Stiles just shrugs one more time, before settling in in his spot on the couch, for another day of reading and not much else, “Is Mike here yet?”

“Yes, he passed by, looking like he hadn’t slept all night, and then went to his cubicle, and is currently burying himself in pro-bono work. Do you want me to call him?”
“No. We need to strategize without him knowing, just so we won’t get his hopes up.”

“Uh, intrigue. Can I help?” Stiles asks, and Harvey doesn’t even bother answering.

Donna closes the door behind her, looking interested.

“What are we planning?” she asks, and Stiles snorts.

“Duh, Harvey’s plan to seduce Mike.”

“Shut up, or I swear to God I’ll put you in board school” he says to his brother, who just smirks at him, while Donna hides a smile behind his hand.

“We need to find a way to make it possible for Mike to take his SATs.”

Stiles frowns, as Donna just raises an eyebrow at her boss.

“What for?”

“So he can get into college and be a Lawyer. A real one” Harvey answers, his voice determined.

“Mike is not a Lawyer!?” Stiles exclaims, looking at the other two in the room, and Donna smirks.

“I’ll let you two talk about this alone, I have some strings to pull.”

Harvey looks at Stiles and sighs.

If the kid thought he was in love with Mike before, it was nothing compared to what he’ll think now.
Chapter the Tenth

Chapter Notes

I have no idea how SATs work, when they can be taken, and for how long before a semestre start you can apply to an institution, because I'm not American, so I'm sorry for any gross mistakes in this chapter and the next, okay?

Let's call it poetic licence and leave it at that.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Tenth

Maybe your light is a seed,
And the darkness, the dirt.

“So, basically, you saw the cute kid—“

“I didn’t say cute, Stiles.”

“—and you decided to hire him, even though he’s not a Lawyer, he just has a really good memory __“

“He has an eidetic memory. He remembers everything.”

“—and then you proceeded to try and validate everything he’s been doing. Also, you two are always almost getting caught. Oh my God, did you not put any thought into this at all? You could lose everything!”

Stiles’ eyes are wide, and he’s staring at Harvey with his mouth wide open.

When someone puts it all like that, though, everything together, it does sound kind of stupid.

“Well, it’s done, and now I’m going to try and find a way to help him get what he wants. It certainly beats him getting high and dealing drugs, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah. Sure” the kid answers, long at him for a moment, “Except that… well…”

“What?”

“Except that if you do help him get his SATs and get into college and everything, you’re not going to be able to work with him anymore. I don’t think Mike would even try to get into Harvard, because of this whole thing with Rachel. It would feel like he’s rubbing it in. And even if he did, he wouldn’t be able to work here again, because then everyone would find out, and I’m guessing that would be really bad for everyone involved.”

“Your point being?” he asks, but he knows his brother’s point.

“Can you give that up? Working with him every day? I mean, I’ve been joking about you two, and,
let’s be honest here, I barely know you at all, and Mike even less, but it seems to me that he’s a big part of your life now, and you are a great part of his. Can you lose that? Without making sure he’ll still be a part of your life?”

“He’s my… friend.”

“Sure” the kid says, his voice dripping sarcasm.

“Look, even if anything at all that you are trying to imply is true, Mike doesn’t… He… He is in love with Rachel. I need to give him some time to get his act together.”

“Right. And this has nothing at all to do with your fear that, if you do feel the way I think you do about him, there’s a chance he doesn’t feel the same way?”

Harvey stares at his brother for a long moment, trying to understand how someone so young can be so perceptive.

“This conversation is now over” he says instead, and Stiles snorts, getting up.

“I’m going to go and get some coffee. Do you want anything?”

“Yes. Peace to work.”

The kid sticks out his tongue and vanishes into the corridor.

The thing is he’s right. If Mike stops working for him, then he’ll have no reason at all to put up with Harvey anymore.

He looks at all the papers scattered on his desk and takes a deep breath before continuing to look into it.

If you care about something, set it free, right?

X

Harvey takes his brother to the doctor that afternoon, and the woman tells them Stiles can have the cast out before the school year is about to start. The next doctor sees to his prescription for his ADHD, sets up a bunch of tests, and after that, they head out to the school he’s supposed to attend when the holidays are over.

All in all is a freaking eventful day, and both brothers are ready to just get home and rest.

Of course that’s when something goes wrong in the office, and Harvey has to get back there, leaving Stiles alone at home for the first time.

They get into somewhat of a routine after that – Stiles doesn’t particularly feel the need to go out and explore the city yet, Harvey working his cases while trying to find a way for Mike to take his SATs, Donna helping him when she can, and more than one meal is shared at Harvey’s apartment among the four of them.

Stiles is adapting, slowly, but adapting, and the pain he’s feeling grows a bit smaller every day, even though he knows it will never completely go away.

Harvey is proud of himself, but most of all, he’s proud of his brother, and the way he’s been dealing with everything. Not only losing his father, but falling into a new life, a new rhythm – Beacon Hills is certainly different from New York, and none of it is easy for him, but he’s adapting, and Harvey
has great hopes that everything will be okay.

He still has nightmares, sometimes, bad days when he gets quiet and withdrawn, but he works over them, he struggles not to let the sadness get the best of him, and mostly he does fine.

It makes Harvey feel like a bit of a coward when, two weeks after he promised Mike he’d find a way to allow him to take his SAT’s, he actually manages to do it – and then proceeds to spend a whole night freaking out about it.

Stiles gets into the living room, in the middle of the night, and Harvey snorts at the role reversal, because it’s usually him coming to Stiles when he can’t sleep.

“You found out a way, right?” the kid asks, taking a seat beside him and sighing loudly.

They are supposed to take him to the doctor the next day to take his cast out, finally.

“Yes, I did. I’ll give him the paper work tomorrow morning.”

“You know, he might not even take this chance, Harvey.”

“Are you insane? Of course he’ll take this chance. It’s his life’s dream.”

“When he was younger, and didn’t know you, maybe, but not now. Plus, you’ll have to hire a new associate, and he’ll feel the weight of it too. Maybe he doesn’t want to be free of you.”

“And maybe he’ll be thankful I helped him, but even more thankful for not having to put up with me anymore. I’m not exactly a great person, you know?”

“Well, I disagree” Stiles says, his tone sarcastic and dry – different from those first days when Harvey thought that it was just a defense mechanism, he’s learned that it is actually the way Stiles communicates with the world, “You are a great person, even if you can’t really go out there, to work every day, showing it. People would see it as a weakness, and I get that in your line of work, this is the last thing you want. But you’re a good guy, Harvey. You helped Mike when he was in trouble, gave him a chance, helped him build a life for himself that is way better than what he had before” he turns to stare at Harvey, who refuses to actually look at his brother right now, staring at the carpet, “You took me in, and that is no easy feat. You care and you do. In your own way, you do. And Mike sees that, just as much as I do, if not more.”

Harvey turns his head to stare at Stiles then, the kid’s eyes sincere and honest.

“Have you ever thought about being a motivational speaker? You’d make a fortune.”

Stiles pushes him away with a small laugh then.

“Jerk” he says, getting up, “I’m going to bed. You should stop freaking out and do the same. Mike is going nowhere without you.”

He disappears at the end of the hall, and Harvey finishes his whisky and tries to get some sleep.

Either way, he’ll know tomorrow if he’s setting himself up for a real friend, no work attached, or for
losing Mike.

Sleep takes a long, long time to come to him that night.

If Mike is completely honest with himself, he’s been kind of a jerk to everyone these past few weeks. He doesn’t mean to – it just kind of happens, because he just… he just doesn’t know what to do anymore, at all, with his life or anything else.

Everyone just keeps… leaving him.

He and Trevor had been friends for years, and seeing him go, while not exactly a surprise, still hurt. Then there was Jenny, and his grandma, and Tess with her husband, and Rachel finally admitting she felt about him the same way he thought he felt about her, just to turn her back on him when he did what she asked and stopped lying.

She asked him to stop lying. She did. He never wanted to deceive her, and she took it as an attack, just leaving him and then leaving the firm. The things she told him before going hurt, but what hurt the most was the way she seemed to blame him for not getting into Harvard, as if he was to blame that she didn’t get the chance while he could.

She resented him for being… who he was. Just like Harvey told him she would.

Harvey, on the other hand… well, he didn’t want to think about Harvey right now, because it would only add to the mess. Either he was getting a whole lot of mixed signals, or things are about to get even more messed up between them, and he just… doesn’t know.

He likes Harvey – always has. The man saved his life more than once, gave him a chance, saw the potential he had and made him do something about it, and not just sit around and screw his life up like he had been doing ever since he was caught cheating on the SATs. Everything he had right now he owed to Harvey in a way or another, but he had never let himself even consider the possibility of anything else, because Harvey was… Harvey. Emotionally unavailable, cold, distant and work-only. He had to make himself thing about Harvey the only way it was safe for him to: as his boss, sometimes his friend, but also like the jerk, who would say that life was this and he likes this, douchebag hand gestures and all.

But then Stiles comes along and… it changed something. It changed something that Mike didn’t even want to think about because it was easy to admire Harvey from afar, his work ethic, and how hard he worked to achieve everything he had, but also it was easy to just pretend that all Harvey had was work, and his personal life was a mess – which, of course, it was, but a cold, uncaring mess.

He cared about Mike at work, not as a person, and he could deal with that, until Stiles comes along, and with him, a whole lot of feelings that Mike isn’t really ready to admit he has.

He is caring towards his younger brother. Loving, even. Gets up in the middle of the night to comfort him, takes him out into shopping trips, and is there when Stiles finally takes him up on his offer to decorate his own room how he wants it. Spends Sundays afternoons not working, but learning how to play Black Ops and Bioshock, and invites Mike over for dinner, asks him if he wants to spend the night, answers Donna’s calls with more than orders.

It’s changed him so much in such a little time that Mike has to admit that Stiles didn’t really change Harvey, he just opened up the opportunity for him to show that he’s not made out of ice and smarts, he’s a great guy.
Towards whom Mike can’t let himself feel anything other than gratitude, or friendship, because he might mess everything up again, and he can’t afford that. He wants Harvey in his life, and he doesn’t know what he’d do if he were to lose him, now that he and Stiles are pretty much everyone he has.

So when he gets a text from Harvey, at three am, when he can’t sleep, and Harvey clearly can’t either, saying that he has great news to tell him the next day, Mike decides to call it quits and gets to some cases he brought home, because he definitely can’t sleep anymore.

He just has this weird feeling that something is going to change, and he’s not sure if he can take any more changes right now.

X

He doesn’t really know if he dares to believe the stack of papers in his hands right now, but, well, it’s Harvey Spector, so he probably should.

Oh my God.

“How did you…” he starts but can’t go on, because this is amazing. It’s amazing and frightening, and so big, it changes… it changes everything.

“I am the best Lawyer in this town. I just had to pull some strings – so did Donna – but it’s there. You’re free to take your exams and go to college and become a real boy, Pinocchio.”

“Harvey, I…”

“If you want, of course” the man adds, and Mike raises his eyes to stare at him.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that if you don’t want to go, you don’t have to. You have the option there, Mike, but it’s not an ultimatum. If you want to stay, I’ll still protect you to the best of my powers, you’ll still be my associate, always. But now you can… take the other way. Become a real Lawyer instead of a fake one. You have the choice.”

Mike takes a deep breath, because this is a lot to take in all at once. He hadn’t even thought about Harvey’s promise so many weeks ago, he hadn’t really considered this at all, because it was just… a promise. Harvey had so many things to think about, even more now than before – things with Jessica were still shaky, and now with Stiles and everything they had going on, and suddenly, he just… made Mike’s dreams come true.

It was too much.

“Do you want me to go?” he ends up asking, because this is what it comes down to. If Harvey wants him to stay, he will. If he wants him gone, well, “I mean, I know it can’t be an easy position for you, and I know I’ve caused more than my fair share of problems, but…”

“Mike, I don’t… I can’t make that decision for you. You helped more than you caused problems, and I doubt I’ll ever find a Harvard douche that works half as hard as you do, but it’s your decision.”

He’s looking down when he’s saying that, and Mike takes a minute to actually look at him before nodding and gathering the papers in his hands.

“Okay, I… I have to think about it.”
Harvey nods, and then leaves, saying something about taking Stiles to the doctor.

He could take his SATs, he could apply to any college he wanted. He could become a real person instead of a made up one.

He could lose Harvey.

He really didn’t know what to do.
Chapter the Eleventh

Chapter Notes

HERE'S THE DEAL: forget about S3 for both Suits and Teen Wolf, okay?
I've watched all of S3 for Teen Wolf and I'm traumatized. Maybe bits and pieces of it will make an appearance, but mostly, it's AU from now on. I haven't watched anything in S3 of Suits yet, so, pleeaaassee, don't send me spoilers in comments ._.

Sorry about the delay to post it too, I just couldn't write anymore because... OH MY GOD, WHAT IS TEEN WOLF DOING WITH MY LIFE.

Here we go, I hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Eleventh

In spite of the uneven odds
Beauty lifts from the earth

“So, you’re freaking out, huh?”

Mike startles at the voice and looks up from his cubicle, looking around the office – the whole thing is empty by now, but he was so caught up in the case he had been studying he hadn’t noticed.

“I’m not freaking out” he answers to Stiles and the teen merely raises an eyebrow at him, shaking his head.

“Sure you’re not. We just came by to get some things Harvey thought he needed – I’m free of the cast at last” he says, raising his uncast arm and waving it around a bit.

“A free man before school starts, huh?”

“Beacon Hills High starts on Monday” the teen says, looking down, “I mean, I know St Jude’s is a private school so I still have, like, a week, but they’re starting now. It’s weird, knowing I won’t be there.”

“I bet they miss you” Mike answers, and Stiles smiles bitterly at him.

“Oh, if they don’t already, they will. It’s in my blood, you know. It’s okay to miss us folks.”

“Stiles—“

“Look, I know Harvey is weirdly closed off and stuff, but, Mike, he wants you to be happy. And he doesn’t want to lose you. He spent half of last night awake trying not to freak out completely because he thought that because you had your freedom to go wherever you wanted to, then you’d leave him. Just… let him know what you want. Don’t leave him hanging.”
“How can I be sure? I mean, he could just be waiting for me to leave, so he won’t have to deal with me anymore.”

“Well, if you think that, you’re stupid” the kid tells him plainly, “Sometimes we think we know what other people are feeling, and we really don’t. And sometimes we can’t guess, we just have to take the plunge. Even if it hurts later, it’s still worth it.”

“That’s what you did with Derek?” he ends up asking, because Stiles sounds older than any sixteen year old has the right to sound, and the kid snorts.

“Not really, but you see, to be as screwed up as Derek, you and Harvey would have to try a lot harder than you are” he sighs then, and shakes his head, “I know I’m nosier than I have any right to be, but you are something good in Harvey’s life, and he’s in yours. I don’t want to see you guys hurt, because you don’t deserve that, and I think I’ve seen enough hurt to last me a lifetime by now. Just… do something, he’s too much of a coward to do it himself, and I think my mom might have something to do with it. Just go there and tell him you’ll still be your friend, if that’s what you want, or go ahead and straight up kiss him right on the mouth, and if he rejects you, well, you have your SATs, and you can go anywhere, so it won’t be as bad as you’re thinking. Just… do something. There really is nothing to lose, Mike.”

Mike takes in a deep breath and, well, Stiles is right. There’s nothing for him to lose, is there?

“I’m going to go and… yeah” the blond said, and Stiles smirked at him.

“You go right ahead, I’ll be here in your cubicle, sniffing around.”

Mike lets out a nervous laugh and left, taking firm steps all the way.

He can do this.

Harvey is looking around his office, standing and clearly almost ready to go.

Mike gets in and closes the door behind him – not that he had to, what with the office being empty and the door being glass. It wouldn’t make much of a difference.

“I made my decision” he says, and Harvey looks at him sharply, not saying anything, “I’m going to try and get into college. I mean, I saw the documents, and I could probably use my past results and… Well. This is it” he keeps staring at Harvey, trying to find an answer in his eyes, but the man is completely still, his breathing calm and steady, his eyes serious as he stares at Mike, “I’ll still work with you until--”

“You don’t have to” Harvey interrupts and Mike raises an eyebrow, “If you don’t want, you don’t have to. I can deal without you, Mike.”

The man is nonchalant saying it, shrugging and turning his back on Mike as he says it, grabbing random papers that Mike knows he doesn’t need, and it’s so carefully careless, so completely calm and steady that Mike knows he’s lying.

This is it.

This is the time to take Stiles advice.

“Well, maybe I can’t deal without you. Maybe I need you in my life, because you’re the only one who’s stayed, Harvey. Who’s seen the good and the bad and the worst and still stayed. Do you want me gone?” he asks, coming closer, and the man frowns, rubbing the bridge of his nose.
“No, I don’t want you gone, but I also don’t want you to stay because you feel as if you owe me anything. I don’t want you to stay because of some sense of obligation or—“

“It’s not—“ he starts and then takes a deep breath, “It’s not obligation. I just want to be sure that I’m not losing what we have because I choose to do this.”

Harvey stares at him for a long moment, his briefcase in his hand, posture rigid and face calculating.

“What do we have?” the older man asks, and Mike for a second can’t breathe quite right.

“Our… Our friendship. Companionship. You’re like—“ he stops again, afraid to put too much into words and screw everything up, or not saying enough and losing whatever he could keep right now. Stiles was wrong, he has something to lose, and it’s better to have a piece of Harvey than losing him completely, “You’re like a brother to me. You’re family. I don’t want to lose that.”

Harvey smiles, small and bitter and almost sad, and shakes his head briefly.

“You won’t. Get the paper work going, I’m sure if you work right you can get a chance to start this semester. I’ll clear things up with Jessica first thing in the morning.” He walks right by Mike, opens the door and turns back, smiling briefly, “Good luck, Mike.”

And then he’s gone.

Mike sighs loudly, running his hands through his hair, and feeling so completely stupid – but then again, what could he do?

What should he do?

He can’t just… kiss the man, as if they had something all along – they didn’t. Plus, Stiles is sixteen, everything he sees is a bit romanticized, that’s how it works for teens.

He did the right thing.

He feels wretched, and he feels betrayed by himself, and he feels as if he’s lost a good opportunity to have every single thing he’s ever wanted, but he can’t risk it.

If there’s one thing he’s learned in his time working at the firm is this: sometimes, you just can’t risk it.

Harvey is quiet in the ride home, and it amuses him a bit that his brother is trying to show him some solidarity by not talking either.

Of course this marvelous plan of his works for about five minutes, because Stiles just doesn’t possess the ability to not say anything.

“What did Mike tell you? Is he leaving?”

“Yes. I think there’s a good chance he’ll make the right thing, and start college this semester. If he’s smart and sneaky enough, he’ll pull the right strings.”

“Maybe you could help him?” the kid more asks than suggests and Harvey just looks out the window, pursing his lips.

“He has to make his own decisions in this. I can’t grab his hand and pull him along. He has to do
what he wants to do.”

“Maybe he wants to do things he doesn’t know he can?”

“Stiles…” he starts, his tone dry and warning, but the kid isn’t listening.

“No, listen, maybe he just wants something that you know you can give him, but he’s afraid to do anything about it, because maybe he thinks you don’t want it. Maybe he really wants to… have you in his life in more ways than just his boss, and he doesn’t even realize he can have that” his brother pauses and moves a bit, as if he’s considering climbing over him just to look him in the eye as he answers, “He can have that, can’t he?”

“Why do you care so much, anyway? You are a bit too invested in your older brother’s love life” he says instead of answering, but the kid is already smirking.

“Aha, so you admit it, there is a love life to be had.”

“You didn’t answer my question” he replies, and Stiles looks down, biting his lip and shrugging slightly, playing with his hand, now that it’s out of the cast.

“I’ve been where Mike is. Of course, I’m way braver than he is, or just a bit more stupid, because I did something, and it got me something back” his voice is quiet by the end of it, hurt and sad, and Harvey feels the urge to hug his brother but stops himself, at least until they get home. He might give Ray a heart attack if he starts hugging people, “Of course it ended terribly, but I did have it for a little while, and it was worth it. Except Derek… needed me. He would need me around even if things didn’t work out between us, but Mike knows you don’t really need him. Maybe he’s afraid.”

Harvey looks out of the window again for a long moment, and Stiles seems to give up, sighing softly.

“Maybe he isn’t the only one” he admits when Ray is pulling up in front of their building, and Stiles doesn’t say anything – just puts a hand on his shoulder as he sighs.

This sharing feelings thing is only going to bring him problems, he just knows it.

Mike goes home and just… frets. There’s no other word for what he’s doing. He looks at the papers in his hands, lets them fall on a coffee table, paces his small apartment, thinks about smoking, about going out and getting drunk, about the fact that he’s quitting, he’s going to college – and how is he going to pay for college, anyway, if he spent all his savings on his Grandma’s apartment, and has no job anymore? – and thinks about Stiles telling him to do something, and thinks about Harvey’s disappointed face. He frets and overthinks, and works himself into a right panic until he can’t take it anymore.

He has to go see Harvey and at the very least, make things clear between them.

For better or for worse, he’ll know if Harvey is glad to be rid of him, if the man sees him as a brother, as no more than a friend, or if what he wants, really, really wants can actually ever happen.

He gets to the building faster than he expected, and goes up in a hurry. The doorman recognizes him and smiles, letting him up with no questions asked, and he gets to the door and just rings the bell before he loses his nerve again.

When Harvey answers the door with a confused look on his face, his hair all over the place, a thin
grey t-shirt, boxers and *nothing else*, Mike’s mouth goes dry and he has the decency of looking a little bit sheepish.

“What happened?” Harvey asks, his tone worried and he gestures Mike inside.

Stiles is just a few steps behind his brother, in similar attire, except his is a Batman t-shirt, and his eyes are wide and fearful.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have come this late, I didn’t realize” he stops talking as Stiles takes a deep and relieved breath.

“This is too much drama for me. For Christ sake close the door if you’re about to get noisy” the teen says and goes back to his room.

Harvey stares at his brother until the door is firmly closed and then looks back at Mike. His stare is not confused anymore, it’s assessing, as if he’s trying to gather enough information with a look that he can predict what’s going to happen, and what his response is going to be.

“I don’t want to stop being a part of your life, but you’re not my brother. You’re Stiles’s brother, and I think you have enough on your plate in that department that you don’t need another one. You are my friend, but I don’t want you to be my friend either. It’s not… It’s not what I want.”

He stops talking, and Harvey has an eyebrow raised at him.

“Thank you for letting me know all of that at two in the morning. Did you just come here to tell me that I’m nothing to you, or…”

But he can’t continue, because Mike has had *enough*.

He grabs Harvey by the shirt and pulls him in, taking his mouth in a kiss – it’s messy and strange, mainly because Mike hasn’t kissed a guy since he was fifteen and very curious, and Harvey isn’t the kind of person who *gets* kissed, he *kisses* instead, but Mike is tired of it.

This is it.

He doesn’t get pushed away, so he takes it as a good sign.

With his eyes open he pulls away a bit, and waits.

Harvey’s move now.

The man stares at him for a long moment, his hands, Mike only now notices, are grabbing the lapels of the jacket he hadn’t bothered to change out of ever since getting home.

“You call that a kiss, puppy?” Harvey asks, his mouth in a smirk, before pulling Mike to him, one of his hands going to the back of his head, pulling him in, taking away his every breath.

Being kissed by Harvey is nothing like Mike had imagined. It’s consuming, breathtaking, because Harvey doesn’t do anything by half – he’s throws everything he has in it or he does nothing at all.

The man turns them around and pushes him against the wall, Mike makes a sound that he’d be embarrassed by if he had a working mind to be embarrassed, but he doesn’t, not now, not with Harvey’s mouth on his, biting his lip teasingly, his hands pressing closer and closer, their breaths mingling in the living room of Harvey’s apartment.

“I should have listened to Stiles sooner” Mike whispers, and Harvey arches an eyebrow at him, not
letting him go.

“Really now” he says, going for another kiss, and Mike smiles into it, because he can. Right now, he can.

Maybe later things will get complicated again, but now, at this right moment, he can.

“Uhm, not to interrupt or anything, I’d just like to let you guys know that I’m still here, still awake, and seriously, I don’t mean to be a bother, but I’d be really glad if you moved this to Harvey’s room. I’m young and impressionable.” Comes a voice from the door, and Mike makes a move to get away, but Harvey holds on.

“Go back to bed” Harvey almost growls, his eyes never leaving Mike’s, and the younger man smiles at him.

“Did we just get scolded by a sixteen year old?” Mike says, not really believing it.

“He’s my brother” Harvey answers, smirking proudly, as if that answers anything.

“He did just imply that…” he starts, and that’s when Harvey lets him go – not really pushing him away, but just letting his arms fall down his sides, staring at Mike.

“I think we should talk” he looks freaked out for a moment, but then he shakes his head, “I never thought I’d actually say that, but you… you have the chance to make your own way now, and I can’t risk losing whatever it is we can have just because I don’t like using my words.”

Mike smirks at Harvey at that moment.

“Did Stiles coach you into saying that?”

“I’m not answering that question” it’s the man’s answer, and then he turns around, heading for the one room Mike has never been into in this apartment.

Harvey turns around when he’s at the door.

“You coming?” he asks.

And Mike can’t do anything but follow.

He’s freaking nervous, which is saying a lot. He’s faced this man with a case full of weed, he’s lied to Harvard graduates and Jessica Pearson, he’s gone to trial, he’s disobeyed his boss and bullshitted his way through more messes than he can count, but the thought that this night might make or break his and Harvey’s relationship is more than he can take without freaking out.

He finally gets in, and Harvey calmly closes the door behind them, sitting on the bed. Mike does the same, taking a deep breath.

This is it.

“I… I don’t want to lose you” he finds himself saying, without much thought, without even realizing how desperate his voice is, how broken his eyes seem to be, “I can’t continue lying like this, but I don’t want to lose you. I don’t even… I want a small office, Harvey. To help the people who can’t pay for it. I want… to help the small people around me, I want… I want all of that, but I don’t want to lose you. And if leaving now and making my own way is going to cost me you, then we’ll just continue lying until one or both of us ends up being arrested for fraud.”
Harvey is very quiet for a long moment, and Mike worries that maybe he read this wrong. Maybe they have this weird attraction to each other, yes, but maybe that’s all there is.

He kind of… he’s kind of in love with Harvey, and it takes a lot for him to admit it, but he is, and he can’t lose him like this.

He has no one else left.

“Are you sure you won’t be relieved to be free of me?” Harvey asks, his tone teasing, but his eyes don’t leave Mike’s and for the first time Mike is actually able to read Harvey like an open book – he is afraid too.

“I don’t want to be free of you. I mean, you suck as my boss, but maybe that’ll change.”

Harvey doesn’t really answer him then. He pulls him in for another kiss, sweet and slow and gentle, and Mike sighs when they pull away.

Harvey’s brown eyes are searching as they stare at each other, and Mike just doesn’t know that to say. He doesn’t know if he can say anything else, because it’s so strange.

He is where he wants to be, and at the same time he doesn’t know if they are anywhere at all. He’s in love with Harvey, and Harvey likes him enough not to want to let him go, is attracted to him enough that they have kissed, and there’s definitely something in there, but where are they?

“It’s two in the morning, and I have to work tomorrow. You have a lot of begging and digging around to do for college too. We are… fine” Harvey says, looking around the room, as if for inspiration, “We don’t need to have all the answers now, but we are fine.”

Mike smiles a bit, looking down.

It’s enough for now.

Chapter End Notes

REVIEW!
Chapter the Twelfth

Chapter Notes

SMUTT AHEEEEEEEEEEEAD.
Just thought you should know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twelfth

*You’re much too young now*
*So I’ll write these words down*

When Mike wakes up the next morning, he’s alone in bed – not that anything happened the night before. He’s not exactly disappointed by it, he doesn’t think his and Harvey’s situation would be one to be solved by jumping into bed straight away. Still, it was nice just... sleeping by Harvey’s side.

Even if he’s not there in the morning after.

He follows the sounds and finds the man in the kitchen, reading a paper, already showered.

“What time did you wake up?” he asks, incredulous, and Harvey stares at him with an eyebrow raised.

“It’s eight in the morning.”

“You say that like it’s early.”

“You and Stiles have more in common than I’m comfortable with” it’s his reply, and Mike doesn’t even know how to answer to that, so he sits down, and accepts the cup of coffee being put in front of him.

“I’m going to talk to Jessica as soon as I get to the office this morning. I’ll explain everything to her, why you’re leaving, and also why you won’t be coming back. So this is your last chance to go back in it, are you sure you’re leaving Pearson Darby?”

He takes a sip of his coffee, while nodding.

“I’m sure. I don’t want to lie to everyone I know anymore. I want to be the real thing.”

“Good” Harvey says, smirking and setting his cup on the table, “Because if you were still my associate, this would be all kinds of wrong” he says as he takes Mike’s face in his hands and kisses him, tasting of expensive coffee.

Mike smiles into the kiss, running one of his hands on Harvey’s hair.

This—*this* he could get used to.
“Oh, geez, is this how it’s going to be now? I walk into a room and you two are going to be smooching?”

Mike chuckles as Harvey just turns around, grabbing his cup on the way.

“You set us up. This is your punishment.”

Stiles just shakes his head, muttering something about being too early for this shit, and Mike gets up, trying to find something to eat that it’s not a protein shake, as Harvey reads the paper.

“What are the plans for today?” Harvey asks, and Mike turns around to answer, but realizes the question is actually for Stiles.

“I have to buy a bunch of stuff for school. There are, like, fifteen books in that list, plus uniforms. Who enlists their dear, precious younger brother in a school with uniforms?”

“I do” Harvey asks, smirking again, and Stiles huffs.

“Yeah, anyway, there’s that and that’s it. School stuff.”

“You going soon? Ray can drop you off after he leaves me at work.”

“Harvey, I’m sixteen, not six. I don’t need a driver to buy school supplies.”

“You don’t know the city yet.”

“And I never will if you keep making Ray take me everywhere. Plus, I have to get used to it, school is next week.”

“Ray is taking you to and from school” when it looks like Stiles is going to argue, Harvey actually puts the paper down, and stares hard at him, “This is non-negotiable.”

Stiles takes a deep breath and nods.

“I can take Stiles with me today” Mike offers, “I’m unemployed, apparently, and I have to settle things for college, so he could come with, and we’ll get his stuff on the way there.”

Stiles nods eagerly, and Harvey sighs, nodding.

“I’m gonna go get ready” Stiles says, leaving the kitchen, and Harvey stares at him curiously.

“”You are being vague about college. You keep saying college, not specifying where.”

“…” didn’t realize I was doing that” Mike confesses, shaking his head, “I’m… I actually had a spot at Columbia before the whole mess. If I’m no longer in trouble, I’ll try to get that spot back.”

Harvey nods, smiling a bit, as if he’s pleased.

“What, you thought I was going to leave New York to study?”

“It’s crossed my mind” Harvey answers, draining the rest of his coffee and putting his cup in the sink, “Stiles has his credit card with him, make sure he spends some of the money I’m giving him. Don’t let him buy the cheap stuff only, I hear St. Jude’s is a bit of a stuck up place, he doesn’t need to have a hard time just because he doesn’t want to bother me.”

“Will do” he answers, and Harvey kisses him again.
“Thanks for this” he says quietly, and then leaves, apparently to get ready for work.

He could get used to this.

He could totally get used to this.

X

He leaves Stiles at the uniform tailor as he goes to try and get his place at college back. It doesn’t hurt that he has four letters of recommendation with his files, from Harvey and a few of their clients.

He gets it. He actually gets his place back, and he’s so happy he doesn’t even know what to do with himself.

Stiles is sulking by the time he gets back to pick him up, but has three bags full of what Mike can only think are uniforms shirts and coats and pants, so he won’t complain.

“So you got it?” the teen asks as they head back to Harvey’s place to drop everything, planning to head out again, have lunch and buy the rest of Stiles’s school supplies.

“I did” he answers, smiling wide, “Thanks. You know, for suggesting all this stuff in the first place, and for… the whole thing with Harvey too.”

Stiles snorts a bit.

“You’re welcome. You guys are just too easy.”

“You used to manipulating people, by any chance?” Mike shoots back, only half kidding, and Stiles shakes his head.

“Everyone manipulates everyone, Mike. It’s human nature. I just mean that you and Harvey, you’re good people. You have easy problems that, while still a hardship, are easily solved” he stops talking a bit, looks down to the bags on his hands and shrugs, taking in a deep breath, “No one is dying on your watch if you screw things up.”

“Stiles…” he starts because, suddenly, Mike realizes that Stiles is the same kid who had a panic attack in his room, a month ago. The kid who saw his dad die, who lost his crazy boyfriend – and is Mike trying very hard not to think about that man and Harvey’s kid brother -, who had his whole life turned upside down.

It’s bound to catch up to him sometime.

“It’s okay. I’m just a bit morbid, I think it’s… you know. School. Draining the life right out of everyone. Ha, and you have to get back to it, after being a full-fledged adult. How does that feel, huh, Mike? Being a college kid again?”

Mike lets the change in subject slide and answers playfully.

They do have lunch, go out to buy Stiles’s stuff, and he thinks about going back home, but Stiles convinces him to stay for dinner.

All afternoon long, though, he has been worrying about one thing: while he got back into Columbia again, he has no idea how he’s going to afford it.

It’s exactly the reason why he had been banned from college the first time: he had no way of affording his studies and paying for his Grandma’s care. That’s why he turned to illegal stuff. Now,
he has no way of actually paying Columbia and continue paying his rent, and afford other things, like, you know, food.

He won’t make the same mistakes again, though, so he’ll have to figure something out.

It’s not like everything in his life can go right. What’s the fun in that, right?

X

When Harvey gets back home, it’s a little over eight, and Stiles is cooking. He can hear his brother and Mike talking in the kitchen, and goes there.

As soon as his brother sees him, he stops talking to Mike, puts the spoon he had been stirring something on the stove down, and crosses his arms over his chest, glaring.

“Yellow, red and gold, Harvey.”

He puts his case over a counter and smiles at his brother pleasantly, as if he has no idea what he’s talking about.

“Excuse me?”

“Don’t you dare play dumb here. Yellow, red and gold. I told you, the day we went for my room stuff, that I abhorred Gryffindor colors, and that’s what you do to me.”

“I didn’t do anything, kid. It’s the school’s color scheme. What can I do? It’s not like I chose it.”

“You chose the school!”

“I know” he answers, finally allowing his smirk to show, and his brother glares at him some more.

“You know, there will be revenge for this. When you’re least expecting it.”

“Duly noted.”

The kid shakes his head and goes back to cooking, while Mike asks him how work is going now, without him there.

“I didn’t linger on the subject, to be honest with you. Just let Jessica know that you were leaving, and as you were my associate and, let’s face it, more likely to cause trouble staying than leaving, and she has a whole new set of problems to deal with, now that Darby is there to keep looking over her shoulder, she didn’t really make a fuss.”

“Which means you probably just told her I was leaving, buried yourself in work and told Donna not to let anyone through the doors.”

Harvey smiles at him.

“Touché.”

Stiles announces dinner is ready and they eat somewhat quietly – he can just feel there’s something bothering Mike, but he also has more sense than try and make him talk in front of Stiles – he is a kid, after all.

When they are done eating, Stiles tells them that, as he cooked he won’t clean, and goes to his room, play something, or maybe talk to the two friends Harvey knows he has kept in touch with.
“So, what happened today? Did things work out at Columbia?”

He’s loading the dishes in the dishwasher, and Mike is scraping the rest of the food out of the plates, and handing them to him.

“Yeah, it did. I’m officially enrolled again.”

“Then what’s with the kicked puppy face?”

Mike hands him the last plate and sighs heavily, leaning against the kitchen counter and running a hand over his face.

“A couple of things, actually. But, most of all is that… I have to figure out a way to pay for it. I don’t have a scholarship, they authorized my return to school, but they won’t give a full ride to the guy who had to appeal to loopholes just to get back in. And as of today, I have no job. All my savings from this past year went into buying my Grandma’s apartment.”

Harvey nods at him, getting that, yes, that’s serious, but they can work through it. Worst case scenario, he somehow, probably enlisting the help of his brother and Donna, coerces Mike into accepting a loan from him, that he can pay back when he’s working again. God knows it won’t be easy, but they can work with it.

“You said there were a couple of things” he prompts, giving his… whatever Mike is a way out.

“Have you…” he looks out the door of the kitchen briefly, as if to make sure Stiles won’t hear them, and lowers his voice, “Have you thought about taking Stiles to see a professional? About what happened to his dad?”

It’s Harvey’s turn to sigh now, shaking his head briefly, and leaning against the counter beside Mike.

“He won’t hear of it. I tried talking to him a few times, but he just… stops responding. He won’t talk to me about it, and he refuses to see anyone. I don’t think forcing him to go is the way, either, because after these weeks living with him, I already got it that Stiles will do what he thinks is right, and nothing else. If he doesn’t want to go and I make him do it, then he will go there, and spend a whole hour talking about the history of circumcision.”

“History of circumcision?” Mike repeats, confused, but Harvey just waves a hand dismissively.

“Stiles” he says, as if that’s an explanation, and in a way it is.

“He is different, isn’t he? From the other kids?” Mike asks, looking right ahead, and if mentally comparing other teens to Harvey’s brother.

“He is. He’s incredibly perceptive, and he sees things in a different way. I’m not just saying that, I actually dug around a bit, talked to a few of his dad’s coworkers, they were all shocked by what happened to the Sheriff, and they are glad Stiles is out of that town. He was in with a very weird crowd, from what they tell me, but strangely enough, they all seem to think he was trying to help them” he stops talking and snorts, “One of them told me she used to help him with Math when he was little, and that now they all knew he helped his dad with his more complicated cases. That he would talk like a cop half the time, and the rest he would just run away with his theories faster than anyone could follow. He had some trouble last year, a restraining order that was later called off, being frequently seen in crime scenes with his best friend, attacks on his friends. I don’t think whatever happened to his dad was a coincidence, I think he knows that the guys who attacked them were after them both, and he knows why, and feels guilty for it. And I know he should really see someone, but I can’t force him.”
Mike nods, and Harvey sighs again.

“There’s also the fact that he’s incredibly well-behaved.”

Mike looks at him funny for that.

“Oh, yeah, that must be a burden to deal with” he comments, but Harvey shakes his head.

“Did you listen to what I just told you? Crime scenes, restraining orders, playing cops with his best friend, circumcision essays in his Econ Class, and now… nothing. It means he doesn’t feel safe enough here to… let go. To be himself. To get into trouble and not be afraid of being kicked out, abandoned.”

“Or he just has no need for it here” Mike suggests, and Harvey turns to face him.

“What do you mean?”

“We just had a dinner where the two of you kept talking all the time about your days. You teased him about his school uniform, you asked him this morning what his plans were, you called him this afternoon to check up on him, you… You are showing him you care. You worry. He knows he’s safe here, he’s away from crazy friends who have restraining orders against him, and boyfriends who break up with him a few hours after he sees his dad die. He doesn’t need to be trouble to be paid attention to here. I don’t… It’s not that I think his dad did a bad job, because no one raises a kid like Stiles if they did, but maybe Stiles had to grow up a little too fast when your mom died, and he had to get his attention from somewhere when his dad stopped checking up on him so much. He doesn’t need that here. You are actually doing a great job.”

“You don’t have to sound so surprised about it” he answers, trying to joke, but he’s actually a bit overwhelmed by it. He almost doesn’t want to believe it, but truth is that… it could be the truth.

Maybe his brother is being the least annoying teenager to ever teenage because Harvey is giving him what he needs right now.

Wow.

He feels ridiculously accomplished by that.

“I’m not surprised” Mike says, and Harvey snorts.

“Please, anyone would be surprised. I am surprised. I didn’t even go to the kid’s town to pick him up, and here I am, doing this parenting thing right.”

“Well, congratulations” Mike says softly, a small smile on his lips, “I should get home soon” he adds, and Harvey frowns at him.

“Why don’t you stay?”

“Because I have no clothes.”

Harvey shrugs at him.

“So borrow some of mine. It’s not like you have to work early tomorrow morning.”

They stare at each other, and Harvey starts to get nervous about this. He thought it was okay to invite him to stay. They are together, even if he’s not sure in what capacity. On one hand, they have been… this for a long time. Mike being the one to call him on his bullshit in a way not even Donna
could, and him grounding Mike, and making him see the immense potential he had. They balanced each other out in a great way, and he had actually thought that it meant they’d be able to skip a lot of the crap that he knew was involved in starting a relationship, but maybe he’d been wrong.

Maybe Mike is not there yet, or maybe he’s rethinking this whole thing, now that he has Columbia and a future ahead of him.

“You really don’t mind?” his ex-associate asks, and Harvey arches an eyebrow, staring.

“You have met me before, right? I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t want you to stay.”

Mike smiles at him then, brilliant and happy, and, well, apparently now Harvey is a master of the feelings, because he’s doing all kinds of right things in that department.

It’s a bit awkward in the sense that it’s not as awkward as he thought it’d be. Mike showers first, and Harvey sets a shirt and some shorts for him on the bed, and then he gets into his bathroom (thank God his and Stiles’s rooms are suites, God forbid sharing a bathroom with a teen), taking special care not to stare.

When he comes out, Mike is sitting on the bed, already dressed, staring at him. He feels strangely naked considering he is, actually, wearing a t-shirt and boxers.

He puts his towel down and stares too, and this is different.

There was always a layer of protection against this before. Against them. They were just kissing, they were just testing the waters, Stiles was present, or they were tired and emotionally spent. But now? There’s nothing stopping them from doing anything. The walls are thick enough they don’t have to worry about the teen in the room across the hall, and they are two adults, with no ties to each other except the ones they want to have. They aren’t employee and employer anymore, they are…

Mike and Harvey and they can do whatever the hell they want.

And what Harvey wants is to kiss the man sitting on his bed, because he has been denying himself even thinking about it for months now, and it’s enough.

Smirking just the tiniest bit, he grabs the bottom of his shirt and pulls it over his head, slowly, seeing Mike’s cheeks getting redder by the second, and throws the piece of clothing on the floor before going to the bed, kneeling on it, each of his legs on a side of Mike’s.

He smiles smugly, noting how hard the other man is breathing, and threads his hands into Mike’s hair, biting his lower lip slowly before taking his mouth in a kiss.

Mike lets out a sound that is half a groan and half a sigh, and Harvey runs his right hand down Mike’s neck and back, pulling on the bottom of his t-shirt.

“Take this off” he whispers, breaking the kiss for a second, and Mike leans back, falling on the bed, trying to get the shirt off and get himself up at the same time.

Harvey laughs and moves off him, settling further down the bed, leaning against his headboard.

“Not everyone can be smooth all the time” Mike mutters, crawling on the bed to Harvey, and the older man laughs again, pulling him in, having Mike straddle him this time. Mike is the one to lean forward and kiss him, biting his lip and going down his neck, sucking on it.

“You are going to leave a mark.”
“I wouldn’t be doing it if that wasn’t what I meant to do” Mike answers, and Harvey can feel the smug smile against his skin. He takes hold of Mike’s hair, and pulls his head back, seeing the exact smile he had been imagining.

“I have work tomorrow. Meetings with clients.”

Mike doesn’t bother answering, his hands run over Harvey’s naked chest, as if mapping his torso, and they are kissing again, desperate this time, as if they are running out of time.

“FUCK” Mike mutters a few minutes later, moving slowly against Harvey’s lap, “I want… I… fuck.”

“That’s pretty much the plan, yeah” Harvey says back, kissing him again, trying to pull Mike closer. He can feel the other man’s erection brushing against his, and he just wants to… have him, and never let him go.

Mike pulls away a few seconds after that, resting his forehead against Harvey’s neck, taking in deep breaths, his hips moving slightly, as if he can’t not move.

“Do you… Have you done this before?” he asks, breathless, and Harvey shakes his head, left hand running over Mike’s back.

“Not with another man.”

Mike’s laugh is hot against his skin, and he laughs too.

“This is… interesting” the younger man says, raising his head and meeting Harvey’s eyes, “I feel like a teenager right now. It’s so embarrassing.”

Harvey tries to answer, but what comes out is a somewhat desperate laugh, so he pulls Mike against him again, kissing him hard.

“Let me just…” he says, his hands letting go of Mike’s hair and back to pull at his shorts.

“Oh, yeah, because jerking each other off is going to make me feel much more mature” Mike comments, and Harvey stops his quest to take his boyfriend’s matter in his own hands to glare at him.

“You’d rather be sexually frustrated then? Because I don’t want to do something wrong here and hurt you, and I don’t want you to hurt me either, so it’s either this or a cold shower.”

Mike’s eyes widen and he actually moves closer, biting Harvey’s neck.

“Don’t you dare stop” he says, and Harvey snorts.

“I thought so.”

It’s ridiculous and extremely hot at the same time, because he has never jerked anyone else off before. Had this done to him before, of course, when he was younger, but not with a guy.

He thinks he’s doing okay if Mike’s sounds are any indication.

“Harvey, I’m… Shit, I’m so close” Mike says, moving his hips against Harvey’s, Harvey’s wrist aching, but he doesn’t want to stop, because watching Mike like this, his blue eyes half closed, his mouth open, breathless and desperate, and so fucking beautiful is amazing, is addictive. When he comes, he actually bites Harvey on the neck again, and the older man senses this is a sort of pattern.

“Oh my God, I had forgotten how nice this sort of thing could be” Mike says, against his neck, and
Harvey snorts.

“I’d like to experience that myself sometime” he replies, a little breathless too, because if anything, jerking Mike off like this has only made him even harder.

Mike raises his head and the smile he sends Harvey is definitely *pure evil*.

He sits back, pulling Harvey’s boxers off him with a little help, and then slides down the bed, eyes on Harvey all the time.

“Oh, God” the lawyer whispers when he gets what Mike is doing.

“I’m making no promises, because I’ve never done this before either” Mike says, shrugging a little, before licking the head of Harvey’s dick. He covers the rest of it with his hand, jerking him slowly, teasing the tip with his tongue and, while Harvey has gotten his fair share of blowjobs in his life, this is different, because it’s *Mike*.

His Mike.

And it’s awkward, because he obviously has no idea what he’s doing, just like Harvey didn’t, and yet it’s better than anything he’s ever done.

He comes with a groan, and Mike curses, pulling back too fast and almost falling off the bed.

Harvey laughs breathlessly, and Mike can’t keep a straight face. They just stare at each other for a few seconds, and then look to the bed they’re on.

“This is a whole new set of cleaning up to do, you know” Harvey mutters, and Mike nods, getting up and picking the towel Harvey had discarded earlier, cleaning himself up, before throwing it at Harvey, so the man could clean himself too.

They lie down together, deeply satisfied, and just bask in each other’s presence for a while.

Harvey isn’t one for cuddles, and Mike can’t sleep if he’s trapped, he needs space, and even here they just… work.

“You should move in” Harvey says suddenly, a few minutes later, when the lights are off, and Mike turns on the bed to look at him, barely able to make him out with the light coming from the window. Harvey knows he’s about to protest, but stops him before he can, “No, hear me out. Let’s be honest here, I can’t possibly keep up the great work with Stiles all the time, and I need someone to ground me. You could sell your grandma’s apartment, keep the money to keep you afloat until you graduate, for the things you need, and you won’t have to worry about rent. If it doesn’t work, then it doesn’t work, but we started this in all the wrong ways, and yet, here we are. I think it’s the best way to solve all of our problems.”

Mike is quiet for a long moment before answering.

“You just want a 24/7 babysitter for your brother.”

“That and a sex slave” Harvey answers, chuckling, “If we ever get to the real sex thing.”

“I’m getting books tomorrow” Mike says, his voice hard and decided, and Harvey laughs again.

“You do that, and memorize the whole thing” he smirks, turning his head to look at Mike, “You can teach me later.”
Mike snorts, closing his eyes slowly.

“I’ll think about it” he says quietly, and Harvey hums in agreement.

All in all, everything is pretty perfect right now.

Chapter End Notes

REVIEW!
Chapter the Thirteenth

Chapter Notes

A lot gets done in this chapter, and a few things are just mentioned in passing - whatever is important will be seen again, don't worry, but mostly it's just... well, things.

Also, there are mentions of a few POs here, because Stiles is in a whole new school, but none of it will be really important for the plot. The whole thing with the Met steps and the queen... well, I just out them there because they make me giggle. Hehehehehehe.

Hope you like it!

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Thirteenth

*Darkness exists*

*To make light truly count*

Harvey has to tie his tie for him, and Stiles can already tell, just by this very small, almost insignificant fact, that the day is going to suck.

He can't tie a tie. At the dance, the year before, his dad had done it for him. And now Harvey did it, showing him how, not being patronizing, just... teaching him how to do it, calm and steady, and Stiles has come to love his brother so freaking much these past few weeks it's a bit overwhelming.

To tell the complete truth, he feels a bit like a douchebag in this uniform. At least his hair is longer, and Mike, who'd moved in two days before, after finally selling his grandma's apartment, helps him style it into a sort of purposeful mess, and he thinks he looks okay.

Or as okay as one can look with a yellow and red uniform on.

He dons the school jacket, looks himself in the mirror one last time, pulls the shirt out of his pants and loses the knot on the tie. Now he's ready.

"You look like you slept in your uniform now" Harvey tells him, staring at him with his perfectly aligned hair, and impeccably pressed suit.

"Now I match my hair" he says back. His brother starts to reply, but Mike is coming out of *their* bedroom just then, jeans and a t-shirt, a book bag and All Stars, and just smiles.

"If the school has a problem with it, they'll tell him. You look great" the blond says, and Stiles smiles widely at his brother.


"You're a terrible influence" he hears Harvey say, and then they're off to school.
Harvey is actually late for work. He’s almost a whole hour late for work, because he wanted to be there for Stiles when he started his new school. And it isn’t even all that surprising, because the man is always there. He can’t help but feel guilty sometimes, because at first, things were just… confusing and in the most awful way possible.

Harvey was distant, and he hadn’t even gone to Beacon Hills to pick him up, and Stiles had resigned himself to the fact that, well, his brother just wasn’t going to care about him, and that’s it. He even tried to let the man know that it was okay with him if he didn’t want Stiles as a part of his life, but things weren’t exactly what he had expect them to be.

Harvey was actually a lot like him. He cared so much, and worried so much that it consumed him – it was what happened with him and Mike, even before they got together. But Harvey had this way of never letting people close enough for them to see, as if he was afraid he would get hurt just by allowing himself to feel, and Stiles got it that it was somehow their mother’s fault. So he gave it time, and he started to see that, yes, Harvey was his brother, and Harvey would be there for him, and he could trust him.

And it was strange.

Because his dad loved him more than anything in the world, Stiles knows that for sure, had never, not even for a single second, doubted that – but at the same time, his dad trusted him to take care of himself most of the time. Rationally he knew that he had let that happen too, and he also knew that, at first, in those first few weeks when his mom was gone, his dad didn’t want to look at him too much, because he looked so much like her. He could see it now, every time he stared at his brother: their eyes, their mouth, their freckled and moles, it was all her.

And he could take care of himself, of course he could, but sometimes he just wished that he didn’t have to be the extremely bothersome kid he had become just so his dad would take some time off work to talk to him. Some days, when he was younger, he felt that if he was in no trouble at all, then he would go on for days without seeing his dad for more than a few minutes every day. As he grew up, it became a pattern, and he hadn’t known how to break it – he was a trouble maker, but sometimes he didn’t know if he was actually, naturally like that, or if his need for attention had turned him that way.

And even if it was an awful thing to think, even if his breathing seemed harder whenever he thought about it, his life here was so much easier. So much… better.

But he never quite allowed himself to think of it, because even if, rationally, his life was better, nothing that his dad wasn’t a part of could be better. A world where his dad didn’t exist would never be a good place.

Whenever he got in too deep in this line of thought, though, he would think about his mom telling him, with her very last breath, that he deserved to live. He would think about his dad telling him that he better get out of this alive. They wanted him to live, and he was trying. He could do things now, he had helped Harvey and Mike – even if they would have gotten there by themselves eventually, and now he was going to go to school, and find some purpose for his life that wasn’t… well, that wasn’t helping werewolves.

They seemed to be doing just fine without him, anyway.

He talked to Scott and Lydia almost daily, but it wasn’t the same thing. It just wasn’t. Lydia tried to keep him updated on what was going on, but he had banned her from mentioning Derek, so things were very limited. He was really pissed off at Jackson, who had apparently up and left a few days before school was to start, but Lydia was okay, mostly. Scott told him they were still hunting those
damn twins, but asked him to stay safe, to stay in New York, and not do anything stupid, and for once, Stiles was decided to actually listen to him.

He had lost his father because of this whole supernatural mess. He refused to lose his brother too.

Strangely enough, Peter sometimes e-mailed him. Nothing serious, but small notes, telling him about good places to visit in New York, pictures of places in Beacon Hills. It made him smile and feel creeped out at the same time.

From Derek, though, there was absolutely no news, and Stiles just... refused to think about it. He couldn’t... deal with it right now.

“You okay?” Harvey asks when Ray pulls up in front of the school, and Stiles checks his book bag, a leather thing that Mike had picked for him, nodding.

“Yeah, I’ll be okay.”

“If anything happens, you call me. Ray will be here at four to bring you to the office, okay?”

“Harvey, I’m sixteen. I’ll be fine” he says with a small smile. It’s unnecessary, but it’s endearing.

His brother sighs and smiles back at him.

“Good luck.”

He snorts in response.

“As if I’d need it” he shots back, and leaves the car.

To tell the truth, he would need it. A lot.

X

“School sucks” is the first thing out of his mouth, eight hours later, dropping his book bag on Harvey’s office couch, and then throwing himself on it too.

Harvey actually stops reading the reports Donna had sent him earlier, and looks at his brother.

“How badly?”

Stiles snorts, and gets his face out of the leather, sitting up a bit, but still slouching.

“People cared about status in my old school. It’s what teenagers do, right? Well, not in St Jude’s and Constance Billard. Those kids are insane, okay? They take their quest for popularity to a whole new level. There was this whole thing at lunch, because we can actually get out of school grounds for it, and somehow I ended up at the Met steps? I haven’t even been there as, you know, a tourist yet, and I get told I can’t sit higher than some girl, because she’s the Queen. And I’m not even joking.”

Harvey looks like he’s trying very hard to contain a laugh, and Stiles narrows his eyes at him, almost daring him to laugh.

“The girls are all dumber versions of Lydia from freshman year. They are mean, and I don’t like them.”

He knows how childish he sounds, but, really. The whole thing with the steps had really pissed him off.
“I’m so sorry your day was such a disaster” his brother says, with the straightest face he can manage, and Stiles just looks at him, one of his eyebrows raised.

“It wasn’t a disaster, I’m telling you it sucked. I already signed up for Lacrosse, which I’m fairly good at, and I intend to never even think about going near those crazy girls again. Some of the boys are nice enough, even if two of them asked if I was really Harvey Specter’s brother, and if I could help them get an internship here when they got out of Harvard. We are in our Junior year. They are planning for after Harvard Law School. So you see why I’m not exactly thrilled.”

Harvey shrugs at him, leaning back on his chair.

“I was told this school is a bit competitive, but it also has a great reputation.”

“I know. People were telling me that all day long. Also heavily implying that I would never catch up. They’ll see me catching up. They’ll see all the catch up” he mutters, looking mad, and when he looks up, Harvey is actually staring at him, almost looking worried.

“Should I wait for a call from your principal, telling me you’re expelled in the next few days? Just so I can start looking for another school?”

Stiles snorts.

“As if I would ever get caught. My dad was the Sheriff, Harvey. If it were that easy to catch me, I would have never been not grounded.”

“Point” his brother concedes, and Stiles smirks at him a bit, trying very hard not to let it show that his easy remark about his dad was actually on the verge of having him panic.

It was becoming easy to pretend that it was getting easier, so, really, it was only a matter of time before he stopped feeling like drowning every time he thought about his dad. He knew very well that everyone around him was expecting some sort of progress in the getting better thing, and he was going to damn well show them some progress.

If he had managed to hide werewolves from his dad for a whole year, he could very well hide his freaking feelings from his brother for a while.

“If you wait around for about an hour, we can leave early, pick Mike up and go for dinner” Harvey offers, and he nods at his brother.

“How did your boss take the whole Mike thing?”

Harvey smirks at him.

“She has no comments about it.”

“You didn’t tell her!” Stiles exclaims, “How could you not tell her?”

“It’s none of her business” Harvey replies.

“Man, you’re losing some serious opportunity of getting her completely freaked out here!”

“Who are we freaking out?” Donna asks then, putting some documents over Harvey’s desk, and turning to Stiles with a smile, “And how was your first day?”

“About to get better. I have a few matters I’d like to discuss with you, Donna, Queen among women.”
Donna raises an eyebrow at Harvey and smiles at Stiles again.

“This is how you treat a woman like me. Come on now, younghling, we’ll talk over coffee” she says, and Stiles waves at Harvey, leaving the office.

He has some serious planning to do.

X

“Harvey Specter, leaving early for a family dinner. I never thought I’d see the day.”

Harvey looks up to find Jessica staring at him from the door and he looks back to the files he’s putting into his briefcase to take home with him – Mike might not be working with him anymore, but he’s damn good at spotting things other people miss, and Harvey needs the help.

“All my work is in order, so I don’t see why I can’t leave now to have dinner with my brother to celebrate his first day at his new school.”

His voice is cold and hard and he knows it, but he also doesn’t care. He’s hurt by the way Jessica treated him before, and he has no interest in kissing her ass now. She wants a good little soldier, she’s getting one, but she won’t have her right arm anymore, not with the way things are now.

“I wasn’t recriminating you for it, Harvey. You’ve changed a lot these past few weeks, but I honestly think it’s for the best. I’m glad things are working out with your brother” she pauses and gets into his office fully, coming to stop by his desk, “And with Mike” she says quietly, and Harvey stares at her sharply, but she’s smiling, “You honestly didn’t think we all had noticed the tension between you two? Although, I have to admit, I didn’t think you would have moved in so soon.”

Harvey’s answer is to raise an eyebrow at her.

“I needed the help with Stiles, and he needs to save money to pay for Columbia.”

“I’m glad things are working out for you.”

Her tone is gentle and sincere, and Harvey sighs, nodding at her in thanks but not saying anything else.

“Harvey—“

“Hey, you ready yet? Donna gave me a few ideas, but I’ll have to stop at a store to get some stuff before we pick Mike up, can we go?” Stiles interrupts whatever she was about to say, and Harvey looks at him gratefully – Stiles has a thing for knowing when to interrupt things.

Except when it comes to him and Mike and sex, then he is the absolute worse.

“Do any of these things will have you in need of legal help, or will have to be purchased by me, because you’re not yet twenty-one?” he shoots at his brother, and Stiles pretends to be offended.

“As if I’d do anything as plebian as that. No, just some stuff to sweeten the girls, and make my life easier a school. Can we go?” the kid answers, picking up the book bag he had left there earlier, and Harvey nods.

“Have fun” Jessica says as they pass by, and Stiles actually turns around and salutes her.

“Miss Washburn” he says, leaving, and Harvey hears the woman laughing as they go down the hall.
He puts one arm around his brother’s shoulder as the kid tells him about Donna’s plan to win the Queen of the school over, and Harvey listens with half an ear as he thinks about his life.

Things are good.

They could be better, because his name could be on that freaking door, but things are good.

He hopes it’ll last.

X

That first week turns into two, and then month and soon enough, Stiles is overwhelmed with school work he has to do so he wouldn’t have to study during Thanksgiving.

Things are easier, in a way, mainly because half his attention doesn’t have to be directed towards saving his life seven times a week. Scott’s calls had stopped coming every day to every two days, and then Stiles got busy with school work and Lacrosse training and even ended up in the committee of a few things at school, because he is good at it, Donna always had great ideas to help him, and it kept the reigning queen of Constance off his back.

She actually liked him quite a lot, and was mildly disappointed when he told her he wasn’t interested in her like that because he was getting over a bad relationship. They weren’t friends, not really. Not like he was with Scott, or even Lydia, but they were allies, as she liked to call it, and it made his life even easier. She had even invited him to some party the day after Thanksgiving at Chuck Bass’s hotel, and when he told Harvey that, the man had looked impressed and worried, which could only mean it would be something he doesn’t want to miss, even if he isn’t sure he was up to parties yet.

Maybe he is. He isn’t really sure, anyway, and has a few days until he has to actually decide.

All in all, though, things are good.

Scott called him in the middle of the night, two weeks into the school year, to tell him that they had caught the twins, and that things were calm in Beacon Hills after that.

He was relieved for a while, then he was afraid, and finally he was so angry that it didn’t really solve anything. Killing the two Alphas left didn’t bring his dad back. It didn’t change what had already happened, and that was the week he agreed to talk to someone about it – he didn’t want to see a therapist, but he talked to Mike a lot, about losing his dad, and about Derek, which was a topic he didn’t want to bring up with Harvey any time soon, and Mike had enough sense not to say anything either.

For Harvey, Derek was a douchebag teen who was a bad influence and had the worse timing ever to break up with someone, and that’s it. Mike knew better, if only because he had actually seen the man before, but he didn’t want to think about Derek.

Because for about a week after the whole Twin Alphas being dead thing, he had actually expected some news. A phone call, an e-mail, something, anything, that would tell him what had happened, where they were now. He thought they could maybe talk for real now that he was, well, not okay, but mostly there, and Derek had gotten rid of Beacon Hills latest problem, but he hadn’t. Derek hadn’t said a word, and it was driving him crazy, so four days after Scott’s news about the twins, Stiles had stolen Mike’s phone and called Derek – he had a better chance at being answered if it wasn’t his own number, right?

The phone had ringed four times before someone answered – a woman.
“Hello?” her sleepy voice had said, and Stiles had to admit, it was pretty late in New York, not so much back in Beacon Hills, but late enough that Derek could be sleeping.

Sleeping near a woman he trusted enough to let her answer his damn phone.

“Who is this?” he had asked, irritated, and he could hear an annoyed huff at the other end.

“This is Cora. Who do you want to talk to?”

“Sorry, wrong number” he had said, and hung up.

Except it wasn’t the wrong number. He knew Derek’s number by heart, would probably know it until the day he died, because he had come to associate that particular phone number with safety, with rescue, with never being hung up on – and now it was being answered by a freaking unknown strange woman with the sexy voice in the middle of the night.

The next day he had talked to Elizabeth, the queen of Constance (very fitting, if he said so himself), and become a part of three different committees at school, as the St. Jude’s representative.

Better to keep busy.

Right now he is actually feeling the weight of being so busy, trying to find some files Lizzie had sworn she had given him when he was sure she hadn’t. Ray had picked him up at school half an hour ago, and Stiles was on the phone ever since then.

“You didn’t hand them to me, or I would have them. Check with Tony, maybe your underlings gave them to him and he forgot to pass it on” he says as the car finally stops in front of his building, “Wait, hold on a sec” he tells her, “Thanks, Ray, see you tomorrow” he tells the driver, and leaves the town car, closing the door behind him, and trying to close his coat at the same time, “I told you I didn’t have them” he answers when the girl tells him Tony does have the files, “Have him drop them by later, I’ll be home all evening” he continues, walking fast towards the entrance, “Bye.”

He is trying to put his phone away when he finally looks up and stops dead on his tracks.

Because Derek Hale is a few steps away, and apparently waiting for him.
Chapter the Fourteenth

Chapter Notes

I little bit of S3 of TW shows up here, but not much.

Also, Peter isn't evil. Devious, yes. But not evil. Because that's how I roll.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Fourteenth

To tell the complete and absolute truth, Derek’s life hadn’t been easy ever since he turned fifteen.

And it’s not like it was always tragedy and despair, but since Paige’s death things had just gotten worse and worse and the worst of all had been his family’s death – that is, until the day he had sent Stiles away.

For a guy who was constantly accused of never showing any emotions, who was called stoic, and brooding and not much else, Derek felt a lot. He just wasn’t very good at showing things anymore, because Laura hadn’t deserved the burden of having to put up with his angst when he had gotten their family killed, and so he had made it a habit out of not showing anyone what he was really like.

Before the fire, his mom used to call him sweet. Laura would tease him for being romantic, even Peter would joke that he was a giant marshmallow, and really, he pretty much was.

Time, though, has a way of changing things, and while he still felt all of that, he didn’t allow any of it to come to the surface, because, usually, when he did that, people died. Everyone around him was always getting hurt, and yet he had allowed himself to get close to Stiles, allowed himself to hope that, one day soon, they could be together, and he could be more than just the angry Alpha he had known, to be a little more like the old Derek perhaps.

And then the twins happened, and the Sheriff had died, and he had sent Stiles away, and hurt him in the process. After that, he had a single thing in mind: he needed to kill the twins, and a little after a month after Stiles left, they did it.

They were dead, Scott was mad at him, Lydia refused to tell him how her friend was doing, and Peter seemed to be the only one who actually got why he had done what he did, and the thought depressed him. When the psychotic uncle is the only one who gets you, things are not very good, are they?

The night they killed the twins had been a crazy one, because they had gotten help from someone they didn’t really expect: the kids’ English teacher, who turned out to be an Emissary bent on revenge. She was a bit pissed that they had killed the other Alphas before she had the chance, but had happily dealt with the twins for them, so it was all good. Before leaving town, though, she had left them with two things to think about: the location of where the twins were still keeping two teens, and the fact that Lydia was a banshee.

For a few seconds he let himself think that this would be it, that he could have a few days of peace to
try and put his life in order; they would rescue Boyd and Erica, they would finally stop chasing things around Beacon Hills, they’d be able to just… breathe.

He would be able to try and convince Lydia to tell him something about Stiles, he would talk Scott into helping him get the boy’s best friend’s forgiveness, he would make things right again, convince Stiles to get back into town.

Maybe, maybe, he would finally get the chance to be, not happy, because that was asking too much, but at least to make Stiles happy.

Of course that’s when everything went wrong again.

When he and Scott got to the vault in the abandoned bank, Erica was dead and Boyd was locked up with another girl: his sister.

His baby sister, who he had thought was dead for six, almost seven years. Last time he had seen her, she was eleven, and now she was mad with rage, and ready to kill any and everything because she and Boyd had spent so long without changing.

He had to put off the whole plan, because family, his very own family, was a priority. He was sure, though, that it wouldn’t take long. He and Cora would talk, he would understand why she hadn’t contacted him or Laura before, and things would be okay again.

That was, of course, when people started disappearing again. It took them a while to realize that it was a pattern, mostly because the one who was good in this line of thinking was Stiles, and Lydia had forbade him and Scott from even mentioning this to him. He, of course, couldn’t even if he wanted to – he didn’t think that he and Stiles should talk on the phone about everything, they had to be face to face -, and Scott understood that it was a necessity to keep his best friend safe, so he didn’t mention it. Once they realized what was going on, Deaton and Morrell helped them hunt down the culprit, which turned out to be the very Emissary who had helped them before. She wanted the power of the sacrifice, and they were in her way.

Another month was wasted with this, another four weeks of battle, and fights, and losing blood and almost dying. He had known that he wasn’t very good at this Alpha thing, but as time went on, and Scott started taking a leadership position more and more, his eyes bleeding red every so often, Derek actually understood something that Peter and Lydia seemed to be considering all along: he didn’t have to stay in Beacon Hills.

He could leave.

The pack here had an Alpha – Boyd was more than okay with staying in town, Jackson had left, and Isaac was already way into Scott’s pack to be Derek’s anymore.

He could leave.

He could leave for New York, he could go and make things right with Stiles again, and not feel guilty about it, because Scott was doing a better job at taking care of the pack he turned than he could ever hope to.

He could leave.

And yes, maybe it seemed strange that he was so set on making things work with Stiles, but with that boy he felt something he never thought he would feel again – something light and bright, something that made him want to be better, to overcome his fears and his insecurity, and become a good man, a good person.
He had lost Paige when he was too young to understand what love really was, and he had been blinded by lust to see that what Kate was offering was not what he wanted, but with Stiles he could go in with his eyes wide open, because he had seen the best and the worst, and he still thought he was perfect.

He just hoped it wouldn’t be too late.

They defeated the freaking Darach, which was pretty much a Druid gone bad, and then he was… free.

Free to leave Beacon Hills behind, to restart somewhere new, to get back to Stiles, to win him back, even if it was the last thing he did – and from what Lydia told him, that could be just it.

The first person he talked about this plan of his had been Cora. She was older, a little bit colder, but she was his sister, and he needed to think on what was best for her too: turns out she was all aboard with leaving for New York, and was actually pretty curious to meet Stiles. After that, he told Peter, who smirked at him, told him that it was obvious they were going to New York, and said that he had already started making some plans – which Derek didn’t even want to know.

Last, he told Lydia.

She had just stared at him for a long moment, and then asked him if he was stupid for having taken this long to realize that this was what they had been planning to do all along – she would have to wait until she graduated, of course, but that’s where they were headed, and the fact that she apparently could sense violent death and scream about it wouldn’t stop her from doing it at all – especially now that Jackson had just decided he needed space.

It took them a few days to set everything in order – a good, long talk with Scott; a meeting with the Argents, letting them know the Hales were leaving, a few meetings with realtors so they could look at apartments in New York so they could move, but finally, finally, they could leave Beacon Hills behind.

He, Cora and Peter were planning on finding a big apartment for the three of them, and Lydia, after having him promise that he wouldn’t give up just because Stiles sent him away, gave him the address for his building.

It took them a few days to settle everything, find Cora a school to enroll, find Peter a job he actually wanted, and then all that was left was for Derek to actually go after Stiles.

After all, he had moved here to do it.

It was a week before Thanksgiving that he gathered all the courage he had and, with a good luck from Peter, who as awfully smirky about his latest job interview, he left for the address Lydia had sent him.

All the way there the only thing in his mind was that Lydia had refused to tell him anything else but the address. Her argument being that Stiles didn’t know anything about what had happened to him all this time, it was only fair if he didn’t have any knowledge either.

Finally, he gets to the address, a fancy building on the Upper East Side, with a doorman and thick glass doors. It’s a little after five when he gets there and Derek is anxious, nervous and a little bit terrified – it’s been almost four months since he last saw Stiles, and his heart is aching with the anticipation of seeing him again.

Rationally, he knows it won’t be what he’s envisioning. He knows Stiles won’t be happy to see him,
knows he’ll probably be angry, scared, maybe even think that Derek came here to take him back to Beacon Hills, but this time he’ll do whatever he needs to make this right, to make this work, even if it takes a very long time.

He’s just desperate to see him again. Hug him, see his eyes, smell his scent, be completely sure that he’s fine.

He misses him so damn much, and just now, a few minutes away from seeing him, is that he allows himself to actually realize how much he misses the teen - his short hair, all the plaid, the funny t-shirts, the flailing gestures, everything.

He misses Stiles, all of him.

It’s almost six when a town car parks in front of the building and, when the door opens, he catches the scent before even seeing him: anxiety, something sweet and woody, much less chemistry than the last time they saw each other, but still the same: his Stiles.

The boy who’s coming out of the car, though, is not the same who left Beacon Hills at the beginning of August.

He’s talking on the phone with a bossy girl, whose voice is sharp enough that it already annoys Derek to no end. His hair is longer, he seems to have filled out a bit, is a little bit taller too.

He hangs up, looks ahead, and sees Derek, before the werewolf has an actual chance of realizing what he’s seeing.

Stiles freezes just a few steps from him, and Derek can’t move either. For all that he thought about this moment, for all that he has wanted nothing more than to see this boy for the past four months, now that he is here, Derek isn’t sure what to say, what to do, how to act.

He takes a few more steps, and Stiles still isn’t moving, just staring at him with his eyes wide, his heart going a mile a minute.

“What the hell are you doing here?” the boy demands, his voice hard and cold, and Derek stops, looking at him again.

“You’re wearing a school uniform” is what he says, and Derek would slap himself if he could.

This is not what he wants to say right now!

“What?!” Stiles replies, just as confused as Derek, apparently, by what has come out of his mouth.

“With a tie and everything. I… You look great” he offers, finally, and the teen now isn’t looking angry anymore, just completely confused, “We need to talk, Stiles.”

The teen snorts at him, and shakes his head.

“No” he says, moving forward, towards the building’s door, where the doorman is actually staring at Derek as if he’s bad news.

“Stiles…” he tries again, but the boy looks at him, and it’s cold again, angry.

“No.”

And then the doorman actually comes out and ushers Stiles inside.
The man glares at Derek until he starts moving, stealing one last glance at Stiles’s disappearing form inside the elevator.

That sure went well.

X

The whole way home, he’s stuck with the image of Stiles in coat and tie, messed up hair and the winter coat falling off one shoulder.

What had really brought him to Stiles weren’t his looks first, but his persistence in never, ever, giving up. From the very beginning Stiles had been at a disadvantage in their world, with werewolves and Kanimas and Alpha packs, and yet, he refused to be left behind.

As time went on, he saw Stiles for what he really was, brave and caring and loyal, with a mean streak a mile wide, but ready to forgive and forget when need be.

In all the time they spent apart, he kind of thought he had built Stiles’s appearance up in his head, making him out to be more gorgeous than he really was, just because he missed him so much – turns out he had been severely downplaying it, if his eyes were to be believed right now.

A private boy school uniform.

He… he couldn’t even go there right now.

When he gets home, Peter is calmly reading in their living room, Cora can be heard in the kitchen, clearly preparing a snack after her classes.

“So, how did it go?” Peter asks, and Derek sits on an armchair, burying his head in his hands.

“He said a total of three things: what the hell are you doing here, what and no. No he actually told me twice.”

Peter doesn’t say anything, but he can feel the judging from afar.

“Not even a chance to tell him your side of things?” Cora asks as she comes into the room with a sandwich, sitting on the couch.

Derek shakes his head.

“I think he was just getting home from school. The doorman in his building looked like he was ready to call the Police if I insisted on staying” he says, and sighs deeply, “He was wearing a tie.”

“A tie?” Cora asks, scrunching up her face.

“Uniform. School uniform. His hair is longer. He’s taller. He’s so freaking angry” he finishes, and Peter snorts, but it’s Cora who replies.

“Wouldn’t you be, if things were in reverse?”

Derek doesn’t deign that with an answer, just leans back on the armchair.

He knew it wouldn’t be easy, but he wasn’t expecting things to be like this.

He’s not sure what he had been expecting, really.
“Are you giving up?” Peter asks then, looking at him intently, “I don’t mind moving here at all, but if you are giving up this easily, then I don’t see why we even bothered to come.”

“I’m not giving up” he says, his eyes angry, but determined, “I just have to figure out how to… talk to him. See him without him running away.”

He’s so focused on thinking about that that he misses the smirk on his uncle’s face.
Chapter the Fifteenth

Chapter Notes

This chapter got away from me. Some things in here were not planned, but it actually makes more sense like this, so I left it.

Also, I said in a few answers to some comments that I'd tell you what's up with Peter in this chapter, but those things happened, and I felt it was better to end the chapter where it does, so... Peter on the next one.

Sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Fifteenth

The ride up to his home is not long enough for Stiles to actually get himself together, so when he does get home he’s still pale, shaking, and feeling like something very heavy has fallen on his head.

He really shouldn’t be surprised that Mike takes one look at him and comes rushing to his side.

“What happened?” he asks, and Stiles shakes his head, letting his book bag fall on the floor and running his hands on his hair.

“Derek” he says, still shaking his head, “Derek was here. Downstairs. In front of the building, just here. He’s freaking here.”

When he stops looking around, a little lost, he sees Mike is staring at him wide eyed.

Yeah, being a genius has its perks, because the ex-Lawyer sure understands why Stiles would be upset.

“What did you say?” Mike asks then, and Stiles snorts.

“I said no. Just… no. And then Mark kind of got out of the building and glared at Derek until he went away. God, what is he doing here? How could Lydia not tell me he was coming? I’m going to kill her.”
“I think you should calm down a bit first” Mike suggests.

“You calm down first! He has no right! None at all!”

Mike actually takes a step back and raises his hands, in mock surrender.

“I know that. I agree with you, but Lydia is not to blame. No one is, really. I mean, do you know why he came here? He did travel a whole lot just to see you, apparently, and he didn’t need to do that. Maybe he wants to explain things.”

“Yeah, or maybe he needs me” he says, angrily, and Mike looks at him curiously.

“What would he need you for?”

Stiles opens his mouth to answer, but he can’t, can he?

Harvey and Mike know nothing about his life before his dad died. They don’t know about the werewolves, the Kanimas, the things hunting him and his friends down to actually kill them. They don’t know about the hunters, the crazy grandfathers kidnapping kids to torture, their friends turning against each other. They don’t know about the sleepless nights spent researching what was supposed to be just fiction, and the hours spent worrying about every single person he cares about. They don’t know about the crazy families, about the dead/undead uncles roaming the town and dating his best friend’s mother.

They know nothing about any of that.

He takes a deep breath instead of saying anything, and shakes his head.

“I don’t know, Mike, but why would he come here?”

Mike is silent for a long moment, before sitting on the couch and looking at Stiles, waiting for the teen to sit down too.

“When I saw Derek at your place, I have to confess I thought he was there to kill you or something similar. The fact that the two of you were together honestly boggles my mind, because I can’t seem to put the visual together. You’re a great kid, Stiles, you’re easy and caring, a bit of a jerk, but mostly in a fun way. You’re on a Winter Dance organizing committee, for Christ sake! And that guy looked like nothing but trouble. However, I’d like to think that if you were with him, if he matters to you enough that you almost had a panic attack just by seeing him, then I’d like to think that something in my first impression of him was wrong. And if he came here with the honest intention of seeing you, talking to you, then maybe you should do it.”

“I don’t want to get back together with him” Stiles says, his voice quiet, and Mike’s eyes widen.

“No! I never said that! I meant for you to have some kind of closure. You can’t tell me that you don’t want to yell at him a bit about the way he ended things. The look on your face when he showed up at your house, Stiles, the look in your eyes when he left… he deserves to be yelled at, and you deserve the right to do something about it. I’m not telling you to give him a chance, I’m telling you to give you a chance to end this right. To end it on your terms. And maybe move on.”

The last part is said in almost a whisper and Stiles turns to his brother’s boyfriend sharply.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Mike gets up and shrugs.
“Look, I’m not saying anything, really, just that, well, you’re sixteen, Stiles. You live in New York, you go to a great school, where I know there’re at least three other boys who are out, I also know you’re bi and that Elizabeth has asked you out at least twice, and yet you do nothing. You should be dating, having fun, not… burying yourself in projects that you don’t really care about just so you’ll be too busy to think about your ex-boyfriend.”

“Hey, those projects will look great on my college applications. I care about those projects.”

“Really? You care about the color scheme of the Winter Dance?”

Stiles doesn’t answer, because even he can’t lie that much.

“I’m just saying, you should get closure, and find out what he wants. That’s all.”

“You may have a point” he concedes. He gets up, takes his bag and starts walking to his room, when he realizes something, “Hey, could you not… tell Harvey about this? I mean, about Derek being here?”

Mike laughs at that.

“Oh, I don’t plan on telling him. I haven’t even told him I met the guy. For all Harvey knows, Derek is a moody teenager with bad timing.”

“Thanks” the teen says gratefully, and takes his stuff to his room.

If he had stayed, he would have seen Mike shaking his head.

“You’re the one who’ll have to introduce the two when you get back together” the college student says, getting back to his book.

X

Stiles takes a shower and puts on some comfortable clothes, before getting his homework to get a move on. He doesn’t want to work on the weekend, so he’ll just get the stuff out of the way.

St. Jude’s isn’t exactly a hard school – it is demanding, yes, but the teachers have to be careful with a lot of things, especially the mini-douchebags who think that just because their family has loads of money and a famous name they don’t have to actually do any work to get good grades.

Sometimes he actually feels as if he is in a school full of Jacksons, and it isn’t a good feeling. Sure, he gets on well enough with the people in there, mostly because he doesn’t care enough to get on their nerve. He plays Lacrosse and is pretty good at it – turns out that not having werewolves on the team nor a crazy teacher as his coach helps him a lot – and he gets good grades – it is enough that the other boys don’t want to bother him too much.

When he started hanging out with Elizabeth, though, that’s when things changed for him at school, and while he didn’t care about it, he could realize now that it made him change a bit too. The day he asked for Donna’s help with the Met steps thing, she told him that you can’t go after one of these teens with a frontal attack. They are used to it – turns out that not having werewolves on the team nor a crazy teacher as his coach helps him a lot – and he gets good grades – it is enough that the other boys don’t want to bother him too much.

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She had smiled at him after that, and invited him to sit by her, and that was that – she realized he
wasn’t really into the power game as she was, and, therefore, was no threat to her. She stopped bothering him, the other girls stopped too, because that’s what they did, they followed their leader, and the boys mostly just shrugged their shoulders, and that was that – he was popular because he had manners, and, well, Donna. And was Harvey’s brother, which always helped.

But the real thing was he didn’t care about any of it. Sure, he could help Lizzie in her projects and parties, even hung out at her place a time or two; gave her small advice when dealing with what she called wanna-be-usurpers of her throne, but he didn’t care a lot about it, because it all just seemed so easy. Everything here seemed too easy.

He had never realized how much the whole werewolf business had managed to complicate his life because he was living it – it just happened, and he had to deal with it, he had to help Scott and Lydia and Derek and all of them, and he was always running – sometimes literally, sometimes against time, or against his own fears, but now… he didn’t have to.

The worst thing that could have happened to him did happen to him.

He lost his dad. Nothing would ever be as bad as that, and yet here he was, alive and on his way to being happy, maybe, someday.

His place here is just so easy – and he doesn’t care. Maybe that’s why it is this easy. He had wanted to be popular and have girls ask him out, maybe boys too, but he cared so much about it that it seemed to matter that it didn’t happen, but now… well, he could do it, he just doesn’t want to, because it isn’t important enough in comparison to what he knows life can be like.

Life isn’t cool parties with Constance’s and St. Jude’s alumni. Life, real life, isn’t just homework, parties, color schemes and sabotaging some girl so her dress wouldn’t be as pretty. Real life is hard work and dedication, and fear and fight, all mixed up in one, and he had had that.

He had had someone who had promised him he would always keep him safe, who would understand his moods and his fears. He had had that, and Derek had taken it all away, and now he is pretty much lost.

He had to be always busy, always moving, because if he stops, even if only for a second, things will be too much and he’ll never move again.

And it had been working too! He was always okay when he was with Harvey or Mike or both, he was doing great at school. He had enough things going on that, even though he wasn’t exactly partying it up, his brother didn’t worry that he was depressed, and he was doing just fine.

And then Derek shows up and with two sentences and a leather jacket, he just… makes his whole world crumble around him.

What does he want, anyway?

According to Mike, he possibly wants to talk, set things right, maybe even apologize, but truth is that Mike doesn’t really know Derek, or Stiles, for that matter. He doesn’t know the whole other layer of things that have been going on in Stiles’s life for the past year, and it makes a difference in the way he sees things between them.

Yes, maybe, maybe, Derek had come here to apologize and try and make things right between them, even if just as friends, or acquaintances.

But, if he was honest with himself, chances actually are that Derek needs Stiles for something werewolf-related, and that he can’t quite bear.
When they were together, Derek would often tell him how useful he was. How amazing, and thoughtful, and good at noticing the little things that could possibly get them killed, and back then, Stiles thought that was a good thing – it meant he was good for the pack, he was good for Derek, he was useful.

But then they broke up – or, actually, when Derek broke up with him – Derek had said that his pack was more important. It made Stiles feel as if he were never a part of it – and worse, that now he wasn’t even useful anymore. He had nothing to offer. Derek didn’t need him anymore, that’s why they broke up.

While Stiles definitely wants to know why Derek is here, why he came all the way from Beacon Hills to New York to try and talk to him, he isn’t brave enough to actually let him.

His bravery kind of died a bloody death in that car, with his dad. Or maybe a little later on, in a hospital bed.

What if Derek is only here for something he needs, and not for something he wants? What then?

The teen groans and drops his head on his Chemistry book, giving up on homework. It’s pretty obvious he won’t be getting anything done any time soon.

In the living room, Mike is actually watching TV, and Stiles raises an eyebrow at the man.

“I heard that college students have to, you know, study” he comments, dropping on the couch beside the man, while he snorts.

“All studied up. Mostly I just read the stuff and then I’m done with it, because the theory is easy. The application of what I learn sometimes gives me trouble, but listening to the teachers is enough that I don’t have to go back and see it again at home. All the time my classmates spend cramming, I can actually just get the work done, and then I’m free. Like now” he turns and stares at Stiles, “Unlike you, who actually have homework to do.”

“Can’t focus” Stiles answers, and Mike doesn’t say anything. He doesn’t really need to.

They are debating the pros and cons of watching Jurassic Park again – on the pros you have that Harvey would be annoyed to no end when he got home in about an hour; on the cons there was the fact that they pretty much know the movie by heart now – when the doorman calls, asking to let Stiles’s classmate Tony up.

“You’re expecting him?” Mike asks when he hangs up on Mark and Stiles nods.

“Kinda. Lizzie gave some files to one of her helpers, and they gave it to Tony, and he forgot to give them to me.”

“Don’t you think it’s weird that you never call those girls Lizzie’s friends?”

Stiles snorts.

“They are not her friends. So no, it’s not weird.”

The doorbell rings by then, and Stiles goes to answer.

Tony is a football player for St. Jude’s. He’s not the sharpest tool in the box, but he’s kind and fun, and, most of all, laid back. He doesn’t care about popularity all that much, and he gets as bored as Stiles with the whole power struggle thing most teens in the school seem to find amusing.
He needed some extra-curricular activities for his college applications, Stiles needed someone to help him contain Elizabeth’s madness, and there they were.

Tony is also tall, really strong and ridiculously muscled for a teen who isn’t a werewolf. His dark skin, short hair and light brown eyes make more than one girl (and guy) sigh after him, but Tony is not one for dating much, apparently.

“Hey, man. Sorry to make you come here just to bring me those things, but if I don’t look them over, I think Lizzie will somehow make this dance cost more than the land Constance is built on” he says as he gestures his classmate in.

The other teen laughs brightly and nods.

“I totally get it. I’m just glad my job is, you know, hand you things and look pretty” he answers with a winning smile and Stiles laughs too.

“Well, you are doing an amazing job of both. Do you want something to drink? I and my brother’s boyfriend were just about to watch a movie, do you want to stay?” he asks, because he actually likes Tony. It’s something different from all of his other acquaintances from school.

“I can’t, sorry. Mom is waiting for me for dinner. But I actually want to ask you something.”

“Shoot” Stiles replies without really looking at him, leafing through budget projections and, yes, there they are, color schemes. God. Four months ago he was chasing a lizard-man and a Pack of Alphas, now he’s thinking about white-silver or bluish-silver or grey-silver for a party.

“You know that party at Chuck Bass’s hotel?”

“Yeah, Lizzie got me an invitation, for some reason.”

“Oh, you’re going with her?” Tony asks, and his tone is somehow off, so Stiles looks up, frowning.

“Dating Lizzie? Are you insane? No, she just got me an invitation, and told me to come. She actually has a date for that. I’m not very clear on the who, but I do know she sabotaged some girl’s haircut for him.”

Tony chuckles at that, and Stiles smiles at him.

“So, I was wondering if you’d like to go with me. As a date, just so we’re clear.”

Stiles freezes. He did not see this coming, and, well, what does he do? What should he do?

“I…” he starts, and then looks behind him, where Mike is still sitting, and looking at him with his wide-eyed thing of encouragement, nodding.

He can do it, right? He’s supposed to be moving on, and Derek is in town, and what better way to show him he’s moving on than having a date?

There is no better way.

He won’t just be the guy who sat around for four months, pining after the one who got away. He won’t be that guy.

God, he’s starting to sound like Lizzie.

“I’d love to” he says, smiling easily now, “It’s on Thanksgiving, right?”
“Yeah” Tony answers, smiling back, and it seems easier now, more relaxed, “The thing starts late, though, so people will, you know, have time to do the whole family thing first. This guy’s parties are supposed to be legendary.”

“Good. There’s a thing with my brother’s Law Firm I’ll probably have to go to first…” he stops, and smiles at Tony again, “Maybe you’d like to come too? I mean, if you don’t have big plans with your family? Then we could just slip away when the grown-ups start to get boring, and get to the party.”

“Perfect” Tony answers, his smile getting wider, “Well, I’ve got to go. See you Monday, Stiles.”

“Yeah, you too.”

The boy leaves, and Stiles closes the door.

When he looks at Mike the man looks, well, concerned and impressed.

“You told me to move on” he accuses, and Mike just raises his hands, surrendering, and presses play on Jurassic Park.

He is moving on.

That’s the only reason he said yes to the date.

He swears it is.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Sixteenth

Chapter Notes

I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THE CLIFFHAAAAAAANGEEEEEENNNNNNNNNNNNER

Also, Sharp Teeth is an actual book, and it's AMAZING. The author is Toby Barlow, and you guys should really check it out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Sixteenth

The fact that Mike is no longer working with him is, much as Harvey is loath to admit, a problem that just refuses to go away or be solved.

The first week the man hadn’t come to work had been filled with the weirdest questions – after all, everyone knew Mike Ross was the star of the new associate’s team, and they were all expecting him to be the new Junior Partner as soon as a position was available.

Then, out of the blue, Harvey Specter not only starts bringing a kid to his office – a kid who, by the way, many of his co-workers still don’t buy as his brother and actually think it’s his son -, and then Mike quits.

Somehow, and Harvey doesn’t know if he dares blame it on Donna, although it’s a possibility, the fact that Mike has moved in with him makes it to the office, and the rumors, that up until that point had been quite evil (Mike had been stealing money, Mike was a serial killer, Mike was working with the competition to bring the firm down – the real thing no one could even hope to guess, because they were all way too stuck up to even think that a kid who wasn’t even a real Lawyer could be better than them at their jobs), had taken the mantle of a sex scandal.

Mike, the star beginner Lawyer of the firm, had quit because he was sleeping with his boss, and now they were raising a child together.

The fact that Stiles was just as tall as Harvey, was sixteen years old, and more than capable of raising himself didn’t quite register with the people at Pearson Darby.

Of course, this was just one of the many problems that Mike quitting had caused Harvey – there was also the fact that, once things had settled down, and even Louis had found himself a new associate, Harvey needed a new one too.

Harvey, the guy who despised the whole thing so much, he had hired the blond kid with the suitcase full of weed.

Donna started a screening process, and they put out the notice that Harvey Specter was hiring, and things were just as bad as the first time – inexperienced Harvard douchebags, who didn’t have the good sense of not trying to show up your future employer.

By the third day of interviews, Harvey was ready to get home and beg Mike to come back to the
office – of course he’d never do that, not only because he had more pride than to beg people to do anything for him, but also because Mike is happier now than Harvey has ever seen him, and while he’d like to take all the credit, he knows it has a lot to do with actually going after his life’s dream.

And then a miracle happened.

Sure, the guy was a little older than what Harvey had envisioned as a perspective associate, but he had an interesting life, was fun and a bit mean, but, hey, they were Lawyers, Harvey could sure use that in a work partner.

Donna shook her head, but he could tell she was a bit charmed too by the smirks and double entendre speech.

All in all, when Friday came around, and he finally headed home – betting with himself that he would find Mike and Stiles watching that damn dinosaur movie again – he was content.

Not really happy with his choice, because what would make him happy was to get Mike back in time and then get him into Harvard Law, so that he could actually hire him now, but content.

Just as he predicted, the Tyrannosaurus Rex was running after a Jeep when he closed the door behind him.

“Don’t you two have anything better to do than watch this again?”

“Considering it annoys you to hell and back, not really” Stiles answers, looking up from his spot on the couch and smirking.

“I expected this from him, seeing as he’s is my baby brother. Being annoying is in his job description, but you?” he answers, looking at Mike, who doesn’t even bother to look away from the screen.

“I’m being a supportive adult figure in his life. I have to take his side so he knows we love and support him always.”

Harvey doesn’t bother answering and goes to his room, for a shower and change of clothes. When he comes out, half an hour later, Mike and Stiles are cooking, and he goes over to the kitchen table, kissing Mike on his way there, ruffling Stiles’s hair, just because he can.

“How was your day?” the kid asks, chopping up something.

“Good. Finally found an associate. A bit older than my last one, but young people are so fickle. Rumor has it that my last associate quit because he was having an affair with his boss.”

Stiles bursts out laughing, and Mike looks startled.

“They think that? They think that’s why I quit?”

Harvey shrugs.

“It was either that, or let them think you were stealing money from the firm. Lesser of two evils. I am quite a catch, anyone would give up their career for me.”

Mike throws a carrot at his head for his comment.

“What did you two do today, apart from watching dinosaurs eat people?”
“Nothing much. Classes, studying, that’s all” Mike answers, and Harvey turns to look at Stiles, who’s very carefully staring at his knife and chopping board, and not looking at Harvey.

“I have a date for your work thing on Thursday. We’re going to Chuck Bass’s part after that.”

Harvey is very quiet after that, and Mike is watching him very carefully, as Stiles just refuses to turn around.

He totally thinks they are overreacting, it’s not like he’s going to freak out. He knows, for instance, that Stiles already had a boyfriend, so it’s not like he’s an inexperienced kid – except that, as far as he knows, that other boyfriend was right in the middle of the trouble that got Stiles’s dad killed, which means that maybe, possibly, Stiles has a terrible taste in people to date.

“Who is it?” he asks, his voice neutral, while calmly taking a sip of the whiskey he had brought with him from the living room.

“Tony? You know, the one who helps me with Lizzie’s crazy projects? Him. He came by today to drop some stuff, and he asked me out, and I said yes. I have no idea what the protocol is here, though. Do I need to ask your permission? I never asked dad’s permission for anything before, not even to date Derek, although, well, dad didn’t really know about Derek, so.”

“Your dad didn’t know you had a boyfriend?” Mike asks, surprised, because this is news for him too – although not that much, seeing as Sheriff and Derek don’t really seem to make for a sentence that makes sense.

“Not so much, no. Anyway, it’s okay, right? You know Tony, he’s come by here before, and we’re going to your party, anyway. It’s not like we’re running away to an orgy together.”

Harvey snorts.

“If you’re going to Chuck Bass’s party afterwards you might as well be, but no, sure it’s okay. Tony is… ahm… a nice guy. Good going.”

Mike is looking at him with a weird face and he shrugs at him – what is he supposed to say?

Stiles looks accomplished for having freaked out his brother a bit, and they eat calmly and quietly enough.

Things are good.

X

Stiles gets flowers every single morning of the following week.

Flowers. As if he’s the heroin of a romance novel from the Romantic period. And not just, you know, generic flowers, but sunflowers, which were, by the way, his mother’s favorite.

The cards aren’t signed, although there is a small verse of a poem with every one of them – a poem he doesn’t recognize, and, when he looks up, is a part of Sharp Teeth. Which is just a huge poem about werewolves.

Seriously, Derek’s sense of humor is something to be studied.

Thursday morning comes, and he’s eating a late breakfast with Harvey and Mike, when Mark buzzes the delivery boy up. He goes to the door, gets his sunflowers, tips the guy, and puts them on the
Mike, of course, knows very well that the flowers are from Derek. Harvey, on the other hand, has just assumed they are from Tony, and Stiles and Mike both had been very careful not to dispel that notion while at the same time not outright lying.

The first little bit of poem had been a bit creepy and made Harvey arch his eyebrow. Stiles had played it down, saying it was just an internal joke.

What would you do
to protect the love you have?
Would you kill?
Would you hunt to kill?
Would you kill without mercy?
And if you wouldn’t
then how precious is your love?

That morning’s wasn’t as macabre, but, strangely enough, creeped Stiles out more than the first.

We are all china barely mended
clumsily glued together
just waiting
for the hot water and lemon
to seep through our seams.

He stared at it for a long moment, before shaking his head, and folding the card, not showing it to his brother or his boyfriend. It was just pieces of paper, copied words from someone else. Maybe even chosen by Peter – now he Stiles could see quoting creepy poems to try and win someone back.

Mike stares at him, but he just smiles at the blond, and they let it go.

He has a meeting with Elizabeth, he has two parties to go to, and he has a long weekend ahead of him.

He would try and deal with it after that.

Or later.

Or maybe never.

He’s cool either way.

After being reminded not to be late to come home, so they could get ready for the party, Stiles leaves for lunch and planning with Elizabeth.

Now, Harvey’s place is quite amazing – all glass doors and windows, and full of decoration stuff that Stiles doesn’t get. But it’s, you know, one apartment, he lives there.

Elizabeth’s place is extravagant and beautiful – and extremely impersonal, like Harvey’s used to be before he and Mike moved in.

Elizabeth herself is not all that impressive when someone doesn’t know her well enough. She has light blond hair, and is quite short. Painfully thin, at a first glance you would think she’s a fragile creature in need of rescue, and then she starts talking and you realize that the one who needs rescue is you.
She’s firm and a bit cold, doesn’t care about much that isn’t related to herself, but she will also defend the few people she trusts, and Stiles is, now, one of them.

When he tries telling Lydia about Elizabeth, the other girl had asked if he had befriended her because she reminded him of Lydia, but the thing is she really doesn’t. Lydia is a true genius. She’s also kind and loving, she just doesn’t show those things to other people – Elizabeth is not hiding who she is. She is showing who she is, and that’s the thing that sets them apart.

The maid lets him in, and he gets to the living room that is already covered with samples of fabrics – he’s not sure if they are for decoration or her dress. He’ll wait to ask that question until he needs to give an opinion.

“You know, it’s like the only two people in that whole school who care about this event is me and you” she says as a way of greeting, and Stiles sits on the floor, looking around for a moment.

“Actually, you care about it. I’m just here to make sure reality doesn’t completely escape your grasp.”

She turns to look at him with an icy smile, her mouth already open to give him a scathing remark, and then she stops and actually looks at him, leaning her head to the side a bit.

“What happened?”

“What?” he replies, surprised.

“Something happened, and I have about four minutes to spare for you, and then it’s back to the fabrics of the tablecloths. You have been acting strange all week, but something else happened, and I want to know why.”

He looks at her and, well, why not? It’s not like she’ll be able to do anything about it.

“My ex-boyfriend is here.”

“I didn’t know you had an ex-boyfriend” she says, and Stiles shrugs.

“It was… It’s not a part of my life anymore. He was there the night my dad died. He was actually the one who pulled me out of the car. And then he broke up with me. Now he’s here, and he’s sending me flowers all week.”

“Did he try to talk to you, or is he just sending you stalkery flowers?”

“He tried, I told him no, the flowers came.”

“You told him no for what?”

“Just… a general no. I stared at him and said no, and then I got into my building.”

“He went where you live?” her eyes are wide now, “That is dangerous. I mean, how did he get your address?”

“Scott or Lydia could have given it to him, they were his friends too, for a while there. I’m just… out of sorts.”

“That’s why you agreed to go to the party with Tony.”

It’s not a question, so he doesn’t answer.
“Good strategy. Don’t let him think you’ve been in here, pining for him. Don’t let him think he can just come in here and send you flowers and you’ll get back to him. Let him work for it.”

“I don’t…”

“Sure you don’t” she interrupts before he is even done speaking, “Have you kept the flowers? Have you read the cards? Do you know what whatever he wrote to you means? Because if you do, then you still are hung up on him. There’s no shame in that, unless he is a complete loser, then he has to go.”

Stiles shakes his head at thinking about Elizabeth ever meeting Derek.

“Can we work now?”

“Sure” he agrees easily.

It’s much easier to think through the perfect table sets than his situation with Derek.

X

At seven they are all ready to go to the firm’s party. Harvey is wearing an impeccable suit, Mike is wearing something very similar, and Stiles is dressed a bit more casually, because he is, after all, a teen, who is going to leave the office’s thing to go to an actual party afterwards.

Ray picks them up at seven thirty, and they pick Tony up on their way.

The second the kid steps foot on the car, Stiles starts talking and doesn’t really stop until they are being greeted by Jessica and the short, plump fellow by the door.

“Harvey!” the woman greets with a wide smile, and Stiles can see his brother gritting his teeth, “And Mike. We missed you” she continues, as Mike smiles a little disconcertedly.

“Good evening, Jessica” the older man answers tersely, nodding at Jessica’s partner, “You remember my brother Stiles, and this is his friend, Anthony” he introduces. Anthony shakes their hands very politely, while Stiles grins at both of them.

“Mrs. Washburne” he says, staring at Jessica and then turning to Darby, “Varys” he nods and then gets into the room, Jessica laughing quietly behind them.

Harvey shakes his head at the teen, but leads Mike away, toward the bar. Stiles turns to Tony, who’s chuckling a bit.

“You do know we have classmates who have wet dreams about meeting that woman, and not because she’s extremely hot.”

Stiles shrugs.

“I never wanted to be a Lawyer, and seeing my brother work now, I’m sure I don’t want to be one. Plus, they were kind of jerks to Harvey, the least I can do is bother them.”

“Fair enough” the other teen seems to want to ask something, but doesn’t know if he can.

“Ask away.”

“In the car, why were you babbling like that?”
“Because Harvey still hasn’t decided if he wants to play big brother, so there was a small chance he’d try and intimidate you for going out with me. So I talked all the way here, now we are already at the party, there’s nothing he can do, so he can’t just ask you embarrassing questions, and threaten you. It was a preemptive strike to defend you.”

“Thanks for that” Tony says, smiling, and Stiles can only grin back at him, “Although, you know, there’s no pressure in this. Let’s just… see where we end up, but if we don’t work as, you know, a couple, or even as dates, it won’t make our friendship fall apart, right?”

“Of course not! I like you a lot, and if we don’t work then we don’t work” he answers, shrugging and a bit relieved, because the theory of moving on is all well and good, but the real thing is a bit scary.

“Okay, I need you to come and rescue me” Mike says, appearing suddenly by Stiles’s side, looking a little desperate, a few minutes later, “Harvey wants to introduce you to his new associate, and the man has already made four inappropriate jokes in ten minutes. He went to get his family, so you better come and counter his humor with yours.”

He grabs Stiles by the arm, and Stiles grabs Tony’s hand, holding on, and pulling the other boy, who’s laughing, along.

“My sense of humor is not that bad” he mutters, and Tony laughs even harder.

“Sure it isn’t. You made Mr. Moore blush in class last week, Stiles. He’s the coach.”

They get to Harvey’s side, and the man looks just as relieved as Mike.

“Good. Now, don’t judge him too harshly for his age, he had some health problems, that’s why he’s an associate” Harvey instructs and the other three nod at him.

Tony, curiously enough, doesn’t let go of Stiles’s hand, and the teen stares at his date, smiling a bit.

“My, my, what a small world! Stiles, it’s so good to see you!”

Stiles freezes.

Very slowly he turns from Tony to the voice, and his breath catches in his throat.

Peter Hale is right there, right by his brother’s side, smiling at Stiles as if it’s Christmas.

And Derek is right behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Seventeenth

Chapter Notes

Let's all CELEBRATE, because there's no cliffhanger in this one.
YAY!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Seventeenth

His tie is too tight, and his pants are itchy. He’s never been one for ties and stiff clothing, and Peter freaking knew that, but of course that, when the time for the dinner party with his office colleagues had come, his uncle had managed to guilt trip him into coming along, because they were a family, they were having a new beginning, and Derek was their Alpha, how could he not support one of his Betas in such an important moment?

So, here Derek is, in a suit, tie and all, feeling miserable.

At least he’s not the only one, because Cora is a fan of dresses just as much as Derek is of ties. They trade a look when Peter moves to greet his boss, and silently agree to leave as soon as is as polite.

“Great party” Cora mutter, eyeing the people around them as if they are predators, and are ready to attack the Hales.

“We have to show support. I’ll get us out of here in an hour” he says back, grabbing a glass of some drink just to have something to do with his hands.

“It’s not fair that you can drink and I can’t.”

“We can’t get drunk” he points out, and she huffs at him.

“Which is unfair too.”

“And also not my fault” he says, because it sounds like she’s going to start blaming him for her lack of drinking perspectives, and he won’t let that happen again.

“I know” she answers with a sigh, “I’m just bored, I guess.”

He doesn’t say anything back because there’s nothing much to say – they are here for Peter, because he too deserves a fresh start. And if coming with him to a boring party is the way to do it then they will do it.

It beats being hunted down by Argents as a bonding exercise.

Peter is clearly in his element – the whole Lawyer thing really does suit him. Back then, before the fire, he had been one of the first in his Harvard Class. It’s good that he has found a new way to manipulate and deceive people. And he’s even being paid for it.
They are at the party for about forty minutes when Peter comes towards them, smiling away as if it’s Christmas, and Derek *knows* that whatever is coming their way won’t be good, because anything that makes Peter this happy is very likely to make a large number of people miserable, Derek included.

“I want you two to meet my boss” their uncle says when he gets close enough, still smiling, “Come on, I promise I won’t embarrass you, and it may be good for both of you. Specially you, Derek. You’re starting a business, it’s good for you to build a network, and the people at this party are some of the most powerful lawyers in New York.”

“I’m an engineer. I have no need for lawyers.”

“I have no idea how we’re related” Peter says to Cora, who snickers a bit, until her brother glares at her.

Even if they don’t really want to, both younger Hales turn around and follow Peter when he starts walking towards the man they had seen him talking to earlier.

The man is obviously well dressed, and is accompanied by a blond younger man who, judging by their proximity, is his boyfriend. Derek thinks he’s familiar, but can’t quite place him yet.

When they get to the man, he offers them his hand, smiling all the way.

“Harvey Specter.”

Derek shakes his hand, and Cora nods at the man coldly, already looking as if she wants to get out of there and *fast*.

Peter makes introductions, and Derek turns his back to the Lawyer to talk to Cora, and ask her to behave for ten more minutes.

And then it all goes to hell.

“*Good. Now, don’t judge him too harshly for his age, he had some health problems, that’s why he’s an associate*” Peter’s boss is saying in a whisper, and Derek has to contain a snort. Yes, if you count being crazy as a health problem, sure.

“My, my, what a small world! Stiles, it’s so good to see you!”

Derek turns around so fast he could get whiplash from it.

Stiles is *right there*, looking as if he’s seeing ghosts, staring at Derek with a look that is not fear, but it’s very, very close.

“You two know each other?” Specter asks, and Derek can almost *hear* the smirk in his uncle’s voice when he answers.

“My family is from Beacon Hills. I even dated Stiles’s best friend’s mom for a while. We were all so saddened by what happened to the Sheriff, it’s one of the reasons why I and my family moved here.”

“Small word” says Harvey in a tone that would have worried Derek, but he can’t quite manage that – Stiles is right here.

And there’s a freaking *boy holding his hand*.

They stare at each other for a long moment, Peter and Harvey talking, and then the blond guy with
Stiles’s brother looks at Derek firmly.

Now Derek recognizes him – the guy who was there to pick Stiles up, the day he left.

Derek takes a deep breath and thinks of something to say – it’s up to him, right? He’s been sending Stiles flowers, he thought he had a shot – maybe not that they would get back together now, but sometime in the near future.

“Cora here” Peter calls, just as Derek is opening his mouth to talk, “refused to sign up to a private school. Kids these days” he’s saying as if Cora hadn’t lived for years on her own before getting back to them.

Stiles’s whole body freezes again when he hears her name, though, and Derek is extremely confused by it – they don’t know each other, what could Stiles have against his sister?

“Harvey” he calls, and Derek feels his heart beat faster, he doesn’t even know why, “I and Tony are leaving, okay? We’ll get something to eat before going to the party.”

Party? What party? This is a party, they are at a party, why are they leaving?

Harvey stares at the teens, his expression almost stern, but Derek can tell he’s having fun at playing the responsible adult right now.

“Call as soon as you’re ready to go home and Ray will pick you both up. Do not get a cab in the middle of the night, do not attempt to come home by yourselves, and for Christ sake do not get near Chuck Bass. I want you home before sunrise.”

“Got it. Bye” the teen says, pulling the Tony behind him, and just... leaving.

There’s a weird ringing in his ears, like when you are exposed for too long to a sound too loud, and then when everything gets quiet you feels as if you can’t listen to the silence.

He’s vaguely aware of Cora calling his name softly, of Peter and Harvey talking about teens and wild parties, of Mike staring at him all the time, but he can only follow Stiles with his eyes.

He can’t just let him go like this. Without a word, an explanation of why he’s here, about how this is a coincidence, how he’s not stalking Stiles.

“Excuse me” he mutters when he sees the two boys get their coats and leave the room.

He runs after them, and sees the doors of the elevators closing. He looks for the stairs and takes them two at a time, getting to the lobby just as the doors are opening.

Stiles still looks shaken, and the Tony guy is holding his hand still.

“I didn’t know” he blurts out, and Stiles snorts, staring at him angrily.

“That I’d be here? My brother is a Senior Partner at the firm. What did you think, that I wouldn’t come? Is that why you two were here, all happy?”

“I had no idea that Peter’s boss was your brother.”

“Oh, so that makes everything okay, right? I mean, you send me flowers all week, after coming to freaking New York after me, but as long as I didn’t see you two, it was okay?”

“What the hell are you talking about?” he asks, confused and angry and hurt, because Stiles is acting
as if his very presence is an offense, and Derek doesn’t really know why.

“Why don’t you ask your Cora?” he shots at him and walks past, Tony following behind and glaring at Derek for all that he’s worth.

The glass doors close behind them, and Derek can only stare.

He’s missing something here.

X

“Are you okay?” Tony asks as they walk towards a café that it’s open on Thanksgiving night, a few blocks away from the building the office party was.

Stiles shakes his head a bit, bites his lip for a second, and stops walking altogether.

“I don’t know! I mean, we’re on a date, but my ex-boyfriend shows up and he’s there with her, and now this night is going to suck, and I’m sorry!” he says in a rush, and Tony chuckles once, getting closer to the boy who’s flailing around as he talks.

“Hey, there’s nothing to say that the night will be bad, and plus, we’re friends too, right? What is going on here? Why are you so upset?”

Stiles takes a deep, calming breath.

“That was my ex-boyfriend. He’s been here for a week. He looked for me last Friday, I told him no, and that’s it. He’s been sending me flowers all week, and I thought… I mean, I’m hurt, you know? Who breaks up with a guy two hours after he finds out his father is dead? But Derek is full of issues, so I thought, well, maybe he does have an explanation. Maybe there’s a reason. Maybe he’s not that much of a jerk. And then he shows up here with that… that… Cora.”

“The girl who was with him?”

Stiles nods.

“What about her?”

The teen sighs and they start walking again. Tony, once again, takes one of Stiles’s hands in his, and it seems to calm Stiles down a bit.

“A week after class started, I called him one night. I just… missed him, you know? Then this girl answered his phone, and it was late, Tony, like, middle of the night late, and I asked who it was, and she said Cora. And that’s that girl’s name. The gorgeous, tall, beautiful brunet by his side.”

“Hey” Tony starts, stopping them again, and turning to face Stiles, “Yeah, she’s pretty, but I’m sorry, she’s got nothing on you.”

“We are on a date. You have to say that.”

“I didn’t even have to ask you out, and I did. Derek is a jerk, and even more if he is actually with her and is sending you flowers. I mean, okay, he’s a jerk by showing up to your brother’s office party with a new girl, but you guys broke up. If he is with her and sending you flowers, what does that make him?”

Stiles’s eyes widen.
“Oh my God, I didn’t even think of that” they resume walking, and he shakes his head, “This is such a mess. I mean, New York was supposed to be easy, you know. No more trouble, just… school. And stuff. No Derek business, he complicates things so much” he finishes quietly, and Tony squeezes his hand.

“Well, your first friend at school was Elizabeth. I don’t think you can have an easy life with instincts like that.”

He snorts in response and they walk to the café, intent on killing time until is socially acceptable to go to the party.

Tony is clearly trying very hard to take his mind off of Derek, and Stiles lets him.

He can’t focus on Derek right now.

He just can’t.

X

He doesn’t really feel like going back to the party, so he just sits at the couch, puts his head in his hands and allows himself to feel just the tiniest bit of despair.

Maybe he’s wrong.

Maybe Stiles is better off without him. Maybe whatever they had in the Summer isn’t supposed to grow.

Maybe Stiles doesn’t even love him anymore.

If only they could talk properly, but apparently, that’s not supposed to happen.

“Hey, what was that?” Cora’s voice doesn’t startle him, he could hear her coming, but he refuses to look up.

“That was Stiles.”

“Yeah, I heard. What are the odds, I mean, your ex-boyfriend being Peter’s boss’s brother?”

Derek snorts.

“Knowing Peter? Very high. I bet he and Lydia made this happen.”

Cora is quiet for a moment, sitting by his side and putting a hand on his arm.

“Did you talk to him now?”

He shakes his head.

“He’s so angry. He told me to ask you something. How does he even know you? Or about you? I know Lydia didn’t say anything, I asked her not to. Scott either. So what now?”

Cora is quiet for a long moment, then, and Derek looks down again, taking deep breaths.

“Hey, you remember that night, when you passed out after Jennifer cursed me?” she asks after a minute.
“What about it?” His voice is tired, he is tired, and he doesn’t want to remember the very, very long week that one had been, searching for a way to cure Cora when Jennifer, the only one who knew what was going on, was dead.

It had been almost enough to turn him into a Beta again, but not quite.

“Someone called you. They asked who it was, and when I said it was Cora I could hear their breath catching. Then he said it was a wrong number, but what if Stiles is the one who called, and I answered? He would think all sorts of wrong stuff.”

“He wouldn’t. He wouldn’t think that I’d moved on from him so fast.”

“You sure? Because the way Scott tells it, you were a complete jerk. I mean, I don’t know Stiles, and you are my brother, but you can be a little hard to read sometimes, Derek. Even… before everything, you were always so closed off. Maybe he doesn’t even think you love him as much as we know you do. And I was against this whole silent treatment thing you’ve put that boy through – I think he’ll be pissed when he finds out about Jennifer, and knows you guys lied to him, and didn’t tell him about it.”

“Better him pissed off than dead.”

Cora is quiet after that, and Derek knows she agrees with him, at least in that point.

“He was pretty angry when he heard my name, though” she says after a while, smirking.

Derek looks at her with an eyebrow raised.

“Is that supposed to be a good thing?”

“Yes, you big lug. If he thinks I’m some girl who answered your phone in the middle of the night, and he’s angry I’m here, then he isn’t over you. He still has feelings for you, it still bothers him that you could be with someone else. It’s a good thing.”

Before he can actually allow himself to feel the smallest bit of hope, the elevator doors open again, and the blond guy from before comes out of it, and he looks pissed.

“Hey” he calls, all angry tones and a look that seems to spell out that he wants Derek to suffer, “Is this your idea of a joke?” he stops in front of Derek and Cora, his arms firmly at his sides, his hands closed into fists.

Derek leans back, because the last thing he needs if Stiles’s… whatever this guy is to him pissed at him.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about” he says instead of rising to the bait, but it only seems to anger the guy even more.

“I have no idea how you managed to get your uncle that job, but if you’re doing this just to mess with Stiles—”

“I’m not!” he protests, finally standing up, and is glad to notice that he’s even matched with the guy, “I didn’t even know Peter was working at this firm, he didn’t tell me anything, and no one told me even Stiles’s brother’s name, okay? I was just as surprised to see him here.”

The guy’s anger deflates a bit, but he doesn’t back down, so Derek keeps standing too.
“What do you want from him? He’s just a kid, and he’s been through too much. He doesn’t deserve any more pain.”

He’s earnest saying that, protective and caring – the kind of instincts that Stiles seem to always bring out in people without even noticing – hell, Peter is protective of him.

Derek takes a deep breath and meets the guy’s eye without flinching or looking back.

“I’m here because I love him. And I’m going to get him back.”

The blond stares at him for a few more moments, and then he seems to relax a bit, smirking at Derek after a few more beats.

“Yeah, good luck with that. And oh, by the way, Stiles’s brother? Your uncle’s boss? He still hasn’t connected the dots that you are the Derek who broke up with his baby brother two hours after the kid’s dad died. So good luck with that too” he finishes with a smirk, going back in.

Derek looks at Cora, and she’s staring at him with a look that says I told you so.

Sighing, Derek gives up on the party, and gets out of the building.

Suddenly, he feels as if another round with the Darach would be easier than this.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Eighteenth

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Eighteenth

“What was that all about at the party?”

“What do you mean?” Mike says, his voice casual, but he knows exactly what Harvey is talking about.

He introduces them to Peter, who knows Stiles, and not only do they know each other, but the guy has a nephew named Derek, who apparently has Stiles running for the hills.

Mike guesses it was a bit too much to ask that Harvey wouldn’t ask him anything about it, and would wait for Stiles.

He sighs, sitting on the bed, and toweling his hair.

“I... think you should talk to Stiles about this.”

“And I think you should just tell me, because Stiles is at a party right now, and I’m about to freak out.”

Harvey’s voice is a bit weird at the end, and Mike turns around, staring at the man, who is already in bed, having started to read a book as Mike showered.

“What?”

“He’s sixteen, Mike. And that Derek fellow looked a whole lot older than that. He’s sixteen, and on a date, at a party where wild things happen – things that people in the office only ever whisper about. So just tell me what the hell was that at the party, so I can put my mind at ease.”

“I’m not sure telling you anything will actually put you at ease” he says quietly, getting in bed, and sitting cross-legged across from Harvey.

“So that Derek is actually the Derek. The Derek who broke up with him?”

“Yeah” Mike confirms with a big sigh, “That’s him. When we went to his old place, to get his stuff, Derek showed up, asked to talk to him, and Stiles sent him running. He had no idea the guy was back in town until about a week ago, when he showed up at our door. Stiles sent him away again, accepted Tony’s invitation to go to the party, and that’s it.”

“Why didn’t you tell me any of this?” his voice is a bit angry, but Mike just stares at him reproachfully for a moment.

“Harvey, Stiles is still learning to trust us. I would never let him do anything that would put him in danger, and he asked me not to tell you. I knew it would come up eventually, and I was kind of hoping he’d be the one to tell you. Neither of us expected what happened tonight.”

“And the flowers?” Harvey prompts with an uneasy air, and Mike shrugs at him.
“Derek sent them. Although the whole thing with your associate and all, that wasn’t a part of Derek’s plan.”

“No, I don’t think it was. He was much too surprised to see Stiles there” he pauses, shaking his head a bit angrily, “He is at least twenty-three, Mike. He has no business dealing with my brother.”

Mike is quiet for a long moment, thinking things through before actually putting them into words.

“I don’t think things were easy for Stiles back in his town, and I don’t mean all that we have gathered from his home life. I think there was something else going on, something dangerous, and I think Stiles was in the middle of it, and I think this Derek… protected him somehow. Even with the way things ended between them, there’s still a fondness when he speaks about him, the way he seemed shaken when the guy showed up here – and how angry he was tonight, when Derek showed up there. There’s a lot going on between them, and I think age is not a part of it. It’s something else, something big, and I honestly think that until we find out exactly what was going on, what makes Stiles seem so much older than he is, we can’t judge Derek.”

Harvey just stares at him with an eyebrow raised, and Mike gives up, turning his light off, and lying down. Not soon after that, Harvey lies down too, the room now bathed in darkness.

“I can judge him, though. It’s my baby brother.”

Mike smiles at the whisper, and intertwines his fingers with Harvey’s.

Things are going to be bad tomorrow.

X

When Stiles finally emerges from his bedroom it’s almost one in the afternoon, and he finds Mike and Harvey in the kitchen, apparently trying to prepare a late lunch.

“Hey, Sleeping Beauty. How was your first New York party?” Mike teases him and the teen groans, sits on a chair and puts his forehead against the table.

“Those people are insane. I mean, insane. The party was amazing, but the amount of alcohol my classmates consume kind of makes me dizzy.”

“Sure it wasn’t the amount of alcohol you consumed that made that?” Harvey says, putting a plate with a sandwich on it near Stiles’s head, and the teen snorts, muttering a thanks.

“I didn’t really drink. We got there, we danced, Elizabeth made her date cry of all things, Tony didn’t really feel any sympathy for her plight, he disappeared after about an hour of us going in, I spent the rest of the time with Lizzie and her minions. And, boy, were they drinking.”

“So… your date didn’t go well” Harvey’s voice is carefully neutral, and Stiles looks up from the sandwich he’s about to take a bite out of and stares at his brother carefully.

“Not so much as a date, no. I mean, Tony is great, but I’m not… there yet.”

Harvey nods along, and Stiles notices that Mike seems to be trying to become one with the sink.

“Why? Is Derek’s presence stopping you from moving on?”

Stiles’s eyes widen and he looks back at Mike.

“You fiend!”
“He didn’t tell me anything, Stiles, I have eyes. And I’m the best Lawyer in this whole freaking city, which translates into the best Lawyer anywhere, and I can connect the dots.”

“Well, I wasn’t the one who hired his uncle and invited him to the party!”

“And how was I to know that the guy I was hiring was your ex-boyfriend’s uncle? I don’t share and care with my employees.”

Stiles snorts at that and pointedly looks at Mike, who’s sitting on the kitchen counter now, wearing one of Harvey’s sweatshirts.

“You know what I mean. I had no way of knowing. And by the way, since we are on the subject of knowing things, why did you lie to me about Derek’s age and the flowers?”

“I didn’t lie to you. Not even once did I mention Derek’s age or who those flowers were from. You assumed those things, and I let you. But I didn’t lie.”

Harvey keeps staring at him for a long moment, and it’s clear he’s torn between angry and proud for that argument.

“Be that as it may, Stiles, that man is way too old for you. You’re sixteen. How old is he, twenty-four?”

“He’s twenty-two” Stiles answers, for some reason getting angry with Harvey for talking about this, “And you really want to talk about age here? You are a Senior partner in one of the biggest Law Firms in New York, and your live-in boyfriend is in college. You really want to talk about age difference?”

Harvey is quiet for a moment, his eyes wide, and Stiles thinks that maybe he’s gone too far, that this is when things get real, and Harvey will be so pissed off that he’ll probably send him away.

Instead of yelling at him, though, his brother takes a deep breath, clearly calming himself down, and sits across from him, staring into his eyes, his face serious and grave.

“Mike and I are both consenting, legal adults. I’m aware of the fact that the age difference between me and him is bigger than the one between you and Derek, but the fact that you are a minor is the big issue here, not really how much younger than me my boyfriend is.”

Stiles swallows hard at that, and looks down, blinking back tears. There’s no freaking reason to cry, geez.

“I know. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that, it’s just… people are always judging Derek because of what he looks like, the way he behaves when he’s feeling threatened, and no-one seems to care that I know him, I know… him.”

“Everyone thinks they know who they fall for, kiddo” Harvey’s voice is gentle, but Stiles shakes his head, looking up and meeting his brother’s eyes, even though he knows Harvey can see the tears in his.

“Derek doesn’t let just anyone in, Harvey. He knows he can’t. When he was sixteen, this… crazy bitch burned his whole family down, and she seduced him to do it. He knows what the bad touch is, he’s lived through it, he’s fallen for it, and one of the reasons I never told my dad about him is that I knew he’d judge Derek just like you are now, and he’d never do that to anyone. We were together, but we never went… that far” he says quietly, with a sigh at the end, “He wants… wanted to wait. He wanted me to be sure, and not regret any decisions, and he… He cared about me” he finishes
with a shrug that has something of protective in it, his shoulders folding in, as if he’s trying to hug himself, “I don’t even know why we are talking about this, anyway. It’s over.”

“He came from Beacon Hills to New York after you” Harvey points out, “I don’t think that exactly spells an ending.”

Stiles is quiet again, looking away from his brother, because he doesn’t even know what to think right now. He can’t exactly keep hoping that Derek actually is here for him, when that Cora was there last night.

“Can we change the subject, please?”

Harvey looks as if he really doesn’t want to just let this go, but he and Mike trade a look and he sighs.

“So, the party. You came home at three in the morning, are you sure it was just you, Lizzie and your lackeys?”

“They aren’t my lackeys” he shoots back, looking offended while feeling incredibly relieved that Harvey had decided to drop the subject.

“Sure, they aren’t” Harvey teases him with a small smile, and Stiles smiles back.

This year has been hell, yes, but he’s damn lucky his brother is Harvey Specter.

X

The weekend goes by as well as can be expected. No more mysterious flowers for his baby brother, no more wild parties, no more weird new associates – a subject he’s going to deal with on Monday.

Mike insists they go out on Saturday, after having spent Friday doing pretty much nothing useful. They go out to eat, watch a movie, and generally have fun – something Harvey is still getting used to actually taking the time to do it – and Sunday has him revising some cases with Mike. Just because they don’t work together anymore doesn’t mean he’ll stop getting use of his boyfriend’s talent.

Monday morning rolls around, and Harvey is getting ready to go to the office when Stiles knocks on his door – Mike has already left for Columbia a few minutes before, to hit the library before classes.

“Don’t fire him” his brother asks, a frown on his face as he fiddles with his badly tied tie, “He’s been through a lot too, and he’ll be a damn good Lawyer, I just know it. He deserves the chance, and he’s not at fault for this whole mess.”

Harvey stares at Stiles for a bit, sighing and going to the kid, pulling him into a quick hug.

“Don’t worry about that” he says, not promising anything.

He’ll talk to the guy first, and then decide what to do.

Stiles nods at him and leaves for school.

He gets to the firm with some time to spare before a meeting with a potential client. Peter Hale is obviously waiting for him at Donna’s desk, while apparently trying to charm the woman into letting him in the office – which is not so surprising, after all.

What is surprising is that it seems to be working.
Damn, but the man is really good.

Harvey gets his best game face on and stops by Peter, meeting his eyes calmly.

“While I am aware that we have a small matter of family to discuss, we’ll do so after our work is done here. My last meeting is at five. Come by at a quarter to six and we’ll talk.”

Peter nods at him, and they slip into the easy work relationship they had developed in the last week – nothing as smooth running as he and Mike, but the man is competent and ruthless, and Harvey can respect that.

They work all day, and when the time for his meeting with Peter rolls around, Harvey is tired and already desperate to go home.

What is it with this firm that they can never just solve their cases, there’s always some internal conspiracy at work? Damn it.

He sits at his work desk and sees Peter approaching. Harvey sighs and waves to Donna to send the man in. She stares at the both of them, clearly picking up on the weird atmosphere, but does let Peter in without a word.

More likely than not, she’s already listening in.

Peter gets in, closes the door behind him and sits across from Harvey, his posture calm and assured, dominating the room in a way that not even Harvey can quite accomplish so easily.

There’s something… different about the man now, something that he doesn’t see in his employee every day.

“Can I assume this conversation is between Stiles’s brother and Derek’s uncle, and not between an employee and his boss?” he asks, his voice smooth, the barest hint of a smirk playing on his lips.

Harvey nods and leans back, watching as the man seems to be gathering what he wants to say.

“I’m Derek’s uncle” he starts, calmly, leaning forward on his chair, his blue eyes fixed on Harvey’s, as if looking for a sign of weakness, “Derek was Stiles’s boyfriend, but I’m sure you know that by now, what with the fact that for all that I adore your brother he can’t hide his emotions to save his life.”

“I am quite aware of that by now” Harvey replies drily.

Peter nods.

“Good. Then I’ll just have to tell you that whatever I or my nephew do while we’re here is for the sole purpose of making Stiles’s life a better one. He isn’t just important to Derek, he’s important to me too, to his best friend Scott, to Lydia, even to Jackson, even though the airhead moved to London. Stiles is a part of our family way before he was a part of yours, blood ties aside, and we are here because we want him back. We won’t try to take him away from you, of course,” he hurries to say when he sees the storm in Harvey’s expression, “but Stiles is a part of our family, the closest thing I’ll ever have to a son, really, because Derek just doesn’t let me in.”

Harvey doesn’t say anything to that, because what does one say to something like this?

“I knew the Sheriff just briefly. He was never around when Stiles was in trouble, and when he was, he let that boy deceive him so easily one has to wonder if he didn’t do it on purpose just so he
wouldn’t have to see just how much danger his son was in. By the time he was killed, Stiles was protecting him, and little as I know about parenthood, even I that’s not how it’s supposed to work. I can see that Stiles is being taken care of here, and that’s the main reason why I’m trying to do this the right way, coming to you to talk instead of just swooping back into Stiles’s life. You care for him. You help him. But I really think that, to really help Stiles, you have to know the whole truth. And then, well, then, after I tell you everything, maybe we will be the only family Stiles has again, after all.”

“What do you mean, Hale?”

Peter smirks widely then, and it’s clear to Harvey that he’s having fun.

“How much do you know about Derek and his relationship with your brother before they started dating?”

“Not much” Harvey says, not liking this.

“Did Stiles ever tell you that Derek was arrested twice by the Sheriff, when they first met? Because Stiles himself accused him of murder? Or that they used to loathe each other until they saved each other’s lives so many times their barriers had to fall down? Did he tell you that Derek hunted down and killed the people who killed the Sheriff?”

Harvey is stunned into silence for about a minute. Sure, he had gotten a few records on Stiles, but it all seemed, well, teen trouble. The restriction order thing was a bit extreme, but it had been withdrawn in less than a month, probably a prank gone wrong.

“How can I be sure you’re not lying?” he ends up asking, and Peter smirks.

“I was hoping you’d ask that. Could we talk somewhere more… private? I think it’s better if I just show you.”

Harvey stares at the man for a moment, before getting up and heading out.

He leaves, Peter Hale following.

He knew teenagers were trouble.

He just has no idea how much trouble Stiles is.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Nineteenth

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Nineteenth

By the time Monday rolls around, Stiles is feeling as if he just can’t pretend to be okay anymore, so it isn’t exactly weird that he feels relieved when he can just wake up and go to school.

Being away from home means being away from Harvey and Mike and their constant worrying – which is, of course, touching, but also overwhelming.

Don’t get him wrong, he loves the fact that they care for him so much – he’s just not really used to it yet. Even four months of this is not enough to quite shake the feeling that someday soon they will get tired of him, and then what will he do if he gets used to it?

Everything will be so much harder once he’s used to this easy life. He’s not really sure he’s a part of it yet. And truth be told, Mike and Harvey don’t really know him – they don’t know his past. His past that is back now, in the form of Derek and Peter and freaking Cora.

He spent the whole weekend toying with the idea of calling Scott or Lydia for answers, but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. They are keeping radio silence too, so maybe it is all a part of their plan – surely in the four months he’s been away things had changed some.

He isn’t there anymore. They talk, sure, but it’s not the same.

What if they’ve forgotten him? Or seen that he really isn’t all that useful and decided he doesn’t have to be a part of their lives anymore?

But, on the other hand, isn’t this exactly what he wants, to be at peace, not put the people he loves in danger anymore? Be able to have a calm, easy, normal life?

He can do it. He can do it and be good at it. Hell, with the connections he’s making at school right now, he could get an internship anywhere, be anything. Away from werewolves and Kanimas and the woods of Beacon Hills.

He could be happy.

Normal happy.

He doesn’t really know what he wants here, to be honest.

“You look like your dog died and you don’t even have a pet” Elizabeth tells him in lieu of good morning and he shrugs, making her frown – because shrugging is undignified in her opinion.

“Just… a lot went down this weekend.”

“Was your brother mad because you got home late?” she asks, sitting at one of the tables in their patio and looking for something in her bag.

“No, that’s not it. I just don’t want to talk about it.”
“Suit yourself” she tells him with a small smile, “Now that you totaled your chances with Tony, who are you going to the dance with?”

“What dance?” his tone of voice is really confused, because he should know if there was any kind of dance going on soon.

“The Winter Dance. The one you’re helping organize? God, Stiles, you are slow today. Do you need some coffee or maybe some Adderall?”

“I’m fine. And the dance is, like, three weeks from now.”

“Yes. And I was hoping you would have noticed that Tony was the ideal pair for you. None of the other boys who are out are nearly as cute, and you can’t really go with any other girl, because somehow it leaked that I asked you out, and if you turned me down, then you better not be seen with another girl. Plus, you deserve the best of the best.”

He smiles at her, genuinely happy she cares so much.

“Oh, Lizzie, thank you. That’s really sweet.”

“There’s nothing sweet about it, Stiles. You are always seen with me, you are cute and intelligent, and your brother is the wet dream of half our classmates, be it because he’s really hot or because he is the contact in a network they are all hoping to get into at some point. We can’t have you going to the first main event we plan together with a loser.”

He stares at her for a long moment, and is saved from having to answer to that by the bell ringing.

“Meet me at the Met steps for lunch” she says, clearly an order, and disappears into Constance as he shakes his head and wonders how this has become his life.

The morning goes by slowly, and by the time lunch finally comes around, Stiles looks for Elizabeth automatically.

News of the party have already made the rounds at school, and everyone knows he and Tony went together but came home apart, and as gossip is the one thing that matters most in this school, Stiles is already sick of getting asked why he and Tony broke up.

“We went out once” he complains to Lizzie as they make their way to the top of the stairs, where she sits down, glaring at her minions until they sit two steps down from where she is. Stiles pulls out the little mat he bought for her from his bag, and she graciously allows him to sit by her side.

One day he’ll explain the complicated politics of High School hierarchy in St Jude’s and Constance to Jackson, and show him that by sitting where he is sitting right now, he is basically the most popular boy in school.

He hopes Jackson cries at the very thought.

“People don’t know that” she points out, rolling her eyes at him as he just stares at her, “You were always together, talking, hanging out, and then suddenly you go to a very coveted party together. People think you two had been together the whole time, and something went wrong when you two finally decided to out your relationship.”

“People here have way too much time in their hands, that’s what it is. I’m not going to say I miss Beacon Hills, because being a social outcast was never fun, but some days, I swear to God.”
“You could swear to *that* God” one of Lizzie’s helpers says quietly, and Stiles turns to look at where she’s looking, and all air seems to rush out of him.

“Take out that biker look and we could talk” Lizzie says.

The girls keep watching, with growing curiosity as the man keeps coming their way, and Elizabeth seems to be the first one to actually *realize* it, probably by the way that the man’s eyes are focused on Stiles.

He climbs the steps effortlessly, and Stiles takes a deep breath, staring coldly at him.

“She is my sister” it’s what Derek says, and anyone could tell the girls sitting a few steps from them are incredibly confused, “Cora is my sister. The *people* who were around when you came here had her. She is my sister. I wasn’t with anyone since you. I was waiting.”

His green eyes are hard as he speaks, and Stiles doesn’t really know what to say.

“How do you know where I study?” it’s what comes out of his mouth, because he can’t let that small spark of happiness take him over, he just can’t, “That’s stalking, Derek, I thought those days are over.”

“People at your brother’s office talk” it’s the man’s only explanation.

“And that makes it okay for you to come after me?” he asks, getting up, tired of having to look up to see Derek’s eyes.

“No. Being your *boyfriend* makes it okay for me to come after you.”

“You’re not my boyfriend. You broke up with me.”

“I had my reasons.”

He laughs bitterly at that, and shakes his head.

“I’m not doing this” he whispers, looking down.

“I can call security from school so fast your biker… acquaintance will get whiplash, Stiles. Just say the word.”

Stiles turns to Lizzie with a small smile – she’s a bit of a bitch, but she *always* comes to the rescue when needed.

“I’m not his acquaintance, I’m his ex-boyfriend, and I have a *lot* to explain. And maybe grovel. Peter told me groveling is a good thing when you mess everything up. That when we make a mistake so big no apologies will make up for it, we just stop begging for forgiveness and start trying to work towards rebuilding what we lost” Stiles swallows dry hearing that and turns to stare at him again.

Elizabeth seems to catch on and disappears, dragging her minions with her.

“Please, just let me talk to you. Please.”

It’s not the words that really make Stiles sigh and just sit back, staring at Derek until he sits too – it’s how *broken* he sounds when he says them, as if he doesn’t even believe Stiles will give him the chance.

“You have fifteen minutes until I have to be back at school.”
“In fifteen minutes I don’t even start to tell you what happened these past four months” Derek replies, sitting beside him – not too close, but close enough that, if one of them moves just the tiny little bit, they’d be touching.

“Then give me the cliff notes version” he says, his voice hard.

Derek takes a deep breath and then lets all the air out in a rush, running a hand over his eyes before talking.

“We looked for the twins when you came here. I wanted to eliminate the threat, because I couldn’t bear the thought of you getting hurt like your dad did. I saw him, Stiles. I… every time I closed my eyes I could see your face in his, and I couldn’t… I couldn’t even think straight. I wanted to lock you up in a room and not let you out until they were dead, and when I heard they were calling your brother, who lived on the other side of the country, I thought that was my only chance to keep you safe. I thought I could find them while you got better, then come and get you and explain everything while things were still fresh” he makes a pause then, looking down and smiling the small smile Stiles had seen so many times, the one he uses when he thinks he’s being stupid and will get someone hurt, “It was never my intention to hurt you like I did. I’m… emotionally stunted, Stiles. It wasn’t until Lydia pointed out to me how what I said to you sounded that I realize the damage I had done was way bigger than I could have imagined, but by then you were gone, and all I could think of was that you were okay. You were alive, and healing, and I could hear their whispers, Lydia’s and Scott’s and even Allison’s, that you were okay. You loved your brother. You were falling in love with New York.”

Derek stops and looks ahead, as if trying to find the words to go on and Stiles doesn’t say anything, just waiting, until the man can talk again.

“It took us way longer than we expected to find them, but we finally did it, just as the school year was starting. But then, well, things went to hell again.”

“What do you mean?” he asks, frowning.

“A Darach attacked the town.”

“A what?”

“A Darach. A Dark Druid. A Deaton gone bad, let’s put it like that. She showed up the night the twins were killed, and she told us she wanted to kill the Alpha Pack, and that, as a gift for us having already done that, she told me there were two kids still trapped by the twins in an abandoned bank vault.”

“Boyd and Erica” Stiles whispers and instantly feels guilty, because he never even asked about them to Scott or Lydia.

Derek nods.

“Yes, that’s what we thought. Without Deucalion, the twins were just muscle, and they didn’t know what to do with their hostages, so they just kept them. We went there and found Erica dead, and Boyd and another girl alive, but moon deprived. It took them a few hours to come out of it, but by then I already knew that… this, that us would have to wait, because the girl was my sister Cora, whom I thought had died when she was eleven.”

“Oh my God” the teen whispers, staring at Derek in horror.

Does nothing ever go right to this man?
“Oh, it gets better” he says, smiling sardonically, “Cora had run away. When she managed to get out of the house she was hurt and confused, a bit mad with the fire, like Peter had been, but in a lesser degree. We don’t know why the rescuers didn’t find her like they did Peter, but she only just registered that her whole family was gone, and she deduced it had been hunters, so she ran away. Somehow she ended up in South America for a while – when she came back, to try and find out what had really happened, she heard that the Hale pack was back, that someone had survived and was taking care of our mother’s legacy. Deucalion found her before she could find us, and trapped her to use her as bait. He died before he could do that, though, so it was only a matter of waiting for her to get her control back, and then I’d come and find you.”

“I sense a but in there somewhere” he comments ironically and Derek flashes him a small smile.

“People started dying again. It wasn’t natural, Lydia was getting weird premonitions every time someone was about to be found dead, and… she’s going to tell you all about her part in it when you see each other, she doesn’t want to get into it on the phone, but things were bad. We all agreed not to call you because not only it would put you in danger, but also because we didn’t know how you’d react.”

“You had no right to make that decision. I thought I was a part of your pack, or at least Scott’s pack, and you just decide I don’t need to know when you are dealing with another serial killing creature?”

Derek shakes his head.

“That’s the whole thing – under normal circumstances, we would. I would be the first to call you, Stiles, because I know how much faster we could have solved all of that with you helping us, but this time it was different. Your father had just died, Stiles. You needed the time. You deserved to heal. To be taken care of without having to watch your back every five minutes. And also…” Derek stops talking and Stiles snorts.

“And also, if you had died while solving this mess, than I wouldn’t be around. I would still be mad at you, so you think I wouldn’t suffer as much.” Derek doesn’t answer, just looks away and presses his lips in a thin line and Stiles punches him in the arm, “God, you don’t even try to deny it! You can’t make those decisions for me!”

“This time I could. I had to. You lost too much, Stiles. It was about time it stopped.”

Stiles doesn’t answer to that, just shakes his head, exhaling angrily.

“What then?”

“Then we found out it was the Darach – she had decided she didn’t want to give up the power she had gained on her quest to finish the Alphas, and, well, long story short, she’s dead” Stiles just stares at him, eyes wide, “And Scott’s an Alpha. Which brings me to this moment, and what I really wanted to tell you.”

Stiles doesn’t even say anything, because he’s already planning on how much he’s going to scream at Scott as soon as he gets home.

“Isaac is definitely a part of Scott’s pack. He has an agreement with Argent, and, as you know, he and Allison are back together. Lydia is planning on going to MIT when school is over. Beacon Hills has an Alpha, and he’s going to be great at it. So I’m free to… come here.”

“Here?” Stiles repeats, because talk about a lot of information in a short time.

“Here, wherever you are. Wherever you want to be. New York is not the mess Beacon Hills is, I can
be an Alpha here not meaning anything else than just having a bit of a mood on a full moon. Cora has managed to be on her own for years, and as long as I’m here to ground him, Peter is settled. No more running for our lives, no more crazy stuff happening at every turn. Just… us. I came here for us. I finally realized that I am free to do whatever I want, wherever I want, and what I want most is right here, so here is where I came. I’m here for you” he stops and stares into Stiles’s eyes, a small, gentle smile on his lips, “If you’ll have me.”

Stiles feels as if he’s paralyzed.

It’s not even a bad sensation, it’s just… this isn’t like Derek.

“This isn’t like you at all” he whispers, staring at the man, and Derek laughs sadly at that.

“What isn’t?”

“The feelings thing, Derek. Are you being possessed?”

Derek shakes his head.

“No. I’m just… I know what my life will be like if I really lose you. I won’t let my fear of speaking or my inability to trust people take you away from me. There’s no threat now. Nothing to hide behind and deny what I want, and I want to be with you. And if you need some time to think about it, then so be it. I can wait” he shrugs, “You had to wait for me to get my shit together. I can wait for as long as you want.”

Stiles smiles at him, having to contain a laugh.

“You know, I had dreams where you said some stuff a lot like what you just did.”

Derek smiles back and pinches his arm playfully.

“Not sleeping.”

He shakes his head and when he looks up again, he sees Elizabeth staring at him from a few steps away, tapping her watch.

“I have to go. I…”

“I’ll call you tonight. To talk. If you don’t want to answer yet, then just… don’t. No pressure.”

“Okay” he says and just stares at Derek for a moment.

“You’ll be late” the man points out, smirking, and Stiles pushes him away before running towards the school.

He has a lot to think about.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Twentieth

Chapter Notes

I'm SO, SO SORRY.
That's all I'm saying.
Also, there's a mention of a panic attack in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twentieth

The door closes with a bang so loud Stiles drops the plate he is holding to set the table and turns to the kitchen door, his eyes wide. Mike turns too, clearly worried – things aren’t the best at the office right now, but that bang is scary because Harvey isn’t one to physically demonstrate anger.

“Werewolves!” he bellows as soon as he shows up at the door.

“Where?” Stiles asks, a bit panicked, paling.

“What!” Mike says, clearly coming to the conclusion that Harvey has, finally, gone mad.

“How could you not tell me this? The whole him being older than you I get, I understand, maybe I even respect – but WEREWOLVES, Stiles. With the fangs and the hair, and their… WEREWOLVES, STILES” he finishes in a yell, and Stiles takes a step back, swallowing dry.

Of course.

Of course something like this would happen now, when he’s somewhat happy, when he had convinced himself that maybe, just maybe, he could talk to Derek – maybe not even to get back together, but to clear things up.

Of course that’s when his brother finds out and flips.

“Peter told you.” It’s not a question, and Harvey knows it.

“Damn right he told me. He took me to the parking lot and changed in front of me. I don’t think I had a choice but to believe it.”

“I didn’t want you to know because they weren’t supposed to be here, Harvey! That’s all… that’s all stuff from the past, I didn’t know!”

“Stiles, something this big happens, YOU TELL ME” he screams again, and Stiles starts feeling as if there’s not enough air in the room, not enough room for all of them, not enough people around for him to feel safe.

Harvey knows. He knows, and Peter is here, and Derek is here, and bad things are going to start
happening again, and he can’t keep them safe, he can’t. They are going to die – he’s going to lose them, lose them like he lost his mom and his dad and everyone else, because Scott clearly doesn’t need him, and Lydia never needed anyone, and he’ll be all alone, and where will he even go right now? He could probably stay at Elizabeth’s for a few days, but then he’d be putting her in danger too, wouldn’t he?

“STILES” he feels the scream more than hears it, because there’s so much ringing in his ears, he can’t really listen, “Stiles, listen to me, breathe with me, okay? Just breathe with me. Everything will be okay. I swear to you it’ll be okay” it’s not Harvey’s voice, and that blue is all wrong to be Mike, “In, slowly, and out. Look at me, everything will be okay, I’m here. I can’t just let you have a panic attack when I’m about to make a great entrance, breathe with me.”

Slowly, very slowly, he starts registering that who is talking to him is Peter.

“Pe… ter?” he gasps out, and sees the man smirking.

“To the rescue. Now, in and out, very slowly, can you do that?” the man’s voice is gentle, and the shock of that combined with the startling idea of where did Peter come from help snap him out of it.

“I can breathe, you asshole” he says, his voice a bit weak, but Peter smiles at him – the one smile Stiles sees so very rarely. Not the psychotic one, or the smirk he so often uses, but the one when he’s actually pleased and no one died to make him so.

“Now there’s my boy.”

Stiles smiles at him, in spite of himself, and then looks up, seeing Harvey and Mike hovering a few steps away, looking worried and, in Mike’s case, really confused.

“What the hell are you doing here?” he asks, trying to get up – apparently, during his very comfortable breakdown, he slipped to the floor, huddling at a corner of the kitchen.

Very dignified.

“I followed your brother home. As soon as I heard him screaming I broke his door, and came in. I wasn’t sure how he was going to react, and I wanted to let you know you can stay with us if things get bad” he offers, as if it’s the most normal thing in the world.

Peter-world must be some place, man.

“Stiles isn’t going anywhere!” Harvey’s firm voice comes and Stiles turns to him very slowly, his hands still shaking.

“I’m not?” he asks, and is completely pissed at himself for the way his voice sounds so weak and broken, “I mean, I’d understand. It’s… I’m already a lot, and then this, and…”

“Kid,” Harvey starts, coming closer and putting his hands on Stiles’s shoulders, “one day soon you’ll have to get through your thick skull that you are family. The only one I have left, and not even Jacob Black can keep you from me, got it?”

“I resent that comment” Peter pipes up.

Harvey glares at him, and Stiles takes in a deep, shaky breath.

“I didn’t want to tell you. I couldn’t tell you. I’m sorry.”
“You have to trust me, Stiles. I know it’s soon, but you have to at least give me the benefit of the doubt, because so far I haven’t done anything not to deserve that trust.”

“It’s not enough.”

It’s Peter who says it, but it’s exactly what Stiles is thinking.

Harvey only glares harder, but Peter doesn’t even try to look intimidated.

“It’s not. You don’t know what he’s been through, what all of us have been through. For normal people, trust is a given, for us, it has to be earned every single day.”

Stiles can see that Harvey is gearing up for a comeback when Mike takes their attention away from their argument.

“Someone in this kitchen has got to stop talking crazy and explain to me what the hell is going on before I freak out.”

Well, won’t that be a fun talk to have?

“I, my nephew, who you know as Stiles’s ex, and soon the be present, boyfriend and my niece are werewolves” Peter says, his eyes shining that cold, electric blue, and Mike looks from him to Harvey and back again, as if trying to catch one of them lying.

“Stiles?” he asks, clearly deciding that from everyone in the kitchen he is his best bet for a straight answer.

“It’s true” the teen answers, shrugging a bit.

“How did you even get caught up in something like this?” Mike asks, staring at him incredulously, as if he can’t quite decide if Stiles is awesome or just plain old insane.

“That’s a long, twisted, crazy story” he answers.

“And it’s my fault” Peter completes.

Stiles turns at him with his eyes wide – he’s heard Peter say some really crazy things, but he’s not one for admitting guilt of any kind. The man simply stares at him, unimpressed.

“I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, don’t look so surprised. You are the best thing that happened to Derek’s pack, and it affects me too. I could forgive you for helping torch me to death, Stiles. I can admit that you being in this mess is partially my fault.”

“I need a drink” Harvey mutters, and Stiles watches a bit helplessly as his brother wonders into the living room.

He looks at Mike, and the blond tries to smile at him reassuringly, but it’s not really helping.

“Tell them. Tell them everything. They are your family, and this is, after all, the most important thing you can have. You can’t lose us, so don’t worry about anything” Peter tells him, and Stiles takes a deep breath, nodding, “And that’s my cue to leave. Call me if you need anything.”

“Thanks… I guess” he answers, and Peter smirks at him before leaving.

It’s surreal.
He and Mike just stare, and then go to the living room, where Harvey is sitting on the couch, a healthy dose of whisky in a tall glass.

“I want you to tell me everything. From the beginning. I don’t care if it takes the whole night and we have to call in sick everywhere tomorrow, I need you to tell me everything now” he tells his brother, staring straight ahead. He then leans forward a bit, looking up at Stiles, who is still standing, staring into his eyes, “But first, I need you to tell me why didn’t you tell your dad, Stiles. This is… this is huge.”

“I tried” he whispers, sitting down on the floor, his back against the coffee table, as Mike takes a place beside Harvey, “The night they… I knew something was wrong. Derek told me to be calm, that if anything happened they’d go after him, not me or my dad, but I knew something was wrong, and I told him. Everything” he swallows hard, remembering his father’s anger, the disappointment in his voice, “He didn’t believe me” the last part is said in a whisper so quiet Stiles himself can’t quite hear it, “He didn’t buy a single word of it. We were heading to Derek’s, so he could show him, to prove it was the truth. I think that’s why Peter decided to just… show you. He must have guessed what we were doing that late in that road.”

Harvey takes in another deep breath and nods, as if reassuring himself of something.

“Tell me everything. From… from the start.”

“I intercepted a phone call from dad’s work one night. They had found a body in the woods, and I decided to go and find it. I took Scott with me, Scott, who was asthmatic and wouldn’t be able to run if something went wrong, but I didn’t think of that. When dad saw me, Scott hid behind a tree, and had to find his own way home. He was bitten, then. A huge, awful bite, that by the next morning was gone. That’s when Derek shows up, all weird in a leather jacket, and… things were bad. Scott fell for this girl, Allison, and they hit it off, but at the same time, people were dying, and after we understood that Scott was actually a werewolf, Derek would show up, trying to steal Scott away from me. He told us there was an Alpha werewolf in town, he was killing people, and they didn’t know who he was. Things were a mess, I don’t even know how to tell everything. Turns out the girl Scott was dating was from a family of werewolf hunters. And wasn’t that fun. Also, Allison’s aunt was the crazy woman who set fire to Derek’s house, with his whole family inside, after seducing him. She came back into town, kidnapped Derek, tortured him… the Alpha, who was Peter, by the way, he had been in a vegetative state for years after the fire, but werewolves can… heal, a lot faster than humans can, so, eventually, he got better. He killed the old Alpha, Derek’s older sister, Laura, and then he was set on revenge.”

He stops to try and set his thoughts into order, but Harvey is staring at his door, which is still slightly open because of the broken lock, with horror in his eyes.

“My new associate killed people? His own niece?”

“It’s not like that” he mutters, and Harvey just stares at him, as if he can’t believe what he’s hearing, “It isn’t, Harvey. A pack is… it’s more than family, because you don’t just love the people because they are your blood, or because you chose them to start a family with. You feel them in your soul. They are with you, always, you are a part of something bigger, something… theirs. Peter and Derek… and I guess Cora, they lost their whole family in that fire. Everyone. Their whole pack. Derek had Laura, and Laura grounded him, but Peter was left alone in a clinic, healing piece by piece, locked inside his own mind, with nothing and no one to help distract him from the fact that he was alone. He had been left behind. When he woke up, he didn’t even know who he was, or what he was doing, he was acting on instinct. It doesn’t excuse what he’s done, but I guess him dying helped us accept that he’s not the same man.”
“Dying” Mike repeats, as if saying it out loud would make it make sense.

“Well, we couldn’t just let the crazy Alpha kill everyone, could we? We kind of caught him, and I and Jackson tried torching him, but Derek… put an end to Peter’s suffering. He was dead and buried, until, well, until Lydia brought him back.”

“Your friend Lydia?”

“Yeah…” he says, looking down again, and feeling unsure of himself because saying everything out loud made it sound so much worse, “Ahm, that was after we thought everything was okay… Derek made some crappy decisions when he became an Alpha, he was never meant to be one, he didn’t know what he was doing, really. He bit Jackson because the jerk asked him to, but it didn’t take. And then people started dying again, and being paralyzed by this… lizard thing. We finally found out that it was another one of our classmates, with an unhealthy obsession with Allison, who was controlling the thing, who turned out to be Jackson. He had so many issues he couldn’t turn into a werewolf properly. That was after Allison’s mom tried to kill Scott, because, you know, he’s a werewolf, they are hunters. Derek ended up biting her to save Scott, she killed herself not to turn into what she saw as a monster. The Kanima first showdown happened in the Police Station, everyone who was on shift that night got killed, except my dad, who didn’t see anything. Scott’s mom found out that night, though. It was also the night Lydia brought Peter back, he bit her before he died, the bite didn’t take, but it formed a sort of… link between them, I don’t even know. By then I was still in love with her, and when they managed to kill Jackson – who, after Matt drowned was being controlled by Allison’s grandfather, who is a freaking zombie by now, Lydia and Jackson got together.”

“I thought Jackson was killed” Mike points out, frowning.

“He… came back.”

They don’t even answer to that, it’s very clear by the way their expressions seem to be stuck on disbelieving.

“That’s when things… changed. For me and Derek, I mean. Allison and Scott were broken up, because of her family, and she kind of tried to kill a lot of us in the process. Her grandmother kidnapped me too, it was all… it was horrible. And then the Alphas showed up. A whole pack of them. There are three kinds of wolves, an Omega, who is weak, because they have no pack; a Beta, who follows their Alpha, and belong somewhere; and an Alpha, who are the strongest of them all – this pack? They were all Alphas. When Derek called us to talk strategies, I thought for sure we were dead, but Allison came through with her dad, and Jackson decided to stop being such a jerk and helped, and Lydia helped a lot too. I and Derek just sort of… drifted together in that. He told me I became his anchor, the one thing that keeps him human when the full moon hits. It was a short time, but after running for your life so much every second has the importance of a lifetime, because it may be all you get. We only got to the three Alphas we did because we worked together. Then the twins ran away, and… I’m here.” He shrugs a bit, unsure, “I left a lot of stuff out, of course, I can’t… I don’t even know how to tell you everything. I don’t think I could if I wanted to.”

He looks up then, and Mike looks as if he’s torn between yelling at Stiles and pulling him into a hug. Harvey, though, his face is impassive.

“When I first came here, I thought I’d never fit in. I wanted you to take me in just as much as I wanted you to send me away, and when things got weird with me and Lydia and Scott, I kind of… I started thinking I could run away from all of that. That I could find a new place for me. I’m sorry I couldn’t keep it all from you, that you had to see that, and that you had to listen to this. I’m so, so
“sorry” he finishes, his voice even, because he’s looking down, and he’s trying so very hard not to break down.

When he looks up again, Harvey is staring at the window. He looks at Mike, who’s watching Harvey too, and then the man is moving, not saying a word, to his room.

He closes the door forcefully behind him, and Stiles turns scared eyes to Mike.

“I’ll… I’ll go talk to him” the blond says, going after Stiles’s brother.

Stiles stares for a moment at the door where the two people he least wanted to disappoint in the world disappeared into and takes in a shaky breath.

He’s not going to cry.

He’s not even going to panic.

He knew this was going to happen, he knew it the second he saw Derek at his door – you can’t run away from your past forever.

He looks around the apartment, feeling his eyes burning – the door is still almost halfway open from where Peter had broken in.

He doesn’t even register the fact that he’s moving until he’s outside, big, fat snowflakes falling all around him – he forgot his coat, and he can’t go back.

If he looks back he’s lost, he thinks a bit hysterically.

His phone is ringing in his pocket, the one thing he had with him, and he pulls it out, staring at the number without really seeing it, and he’s walking, just walking.

He’s also freezing, but he doesn’t think it matters all that much.

His phone rings again and he looks at it, pressing the little green button on the screen.

“Stiles, where are you?”

He takes a deep breath, feeling the tears coming, and he can’t stop them. Maybe they’ll freeze over and only melt away with the snow in the morning sun.

“Stiles, talk to me, where are you?” the voice is frantic right now, and Stiles lets out a breath, the air shaking around him.

“I really, really need you” he whispers.

“Don’t move. I’ll come to you.”

He hangs up and sits right at the curb, not daring to move.

It’s over, isn’t it?

Chapter End Notes
Please, let me know what you think!

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Chapter the Twenty-First

When Mike gets in their room, Harvey is pacing the length of the room, his face a mask of fury.

“Harvey?” he calls, a bit scared, because he doesn’t think it’s fair of Harvey to be mad at Stiles. The kid is not at fault here – not really. Who would have believed him if he had told them this whole thing before Peter had, apparently, turned into a werewolf in front of Harvey?

“I can’t… be in the room with him right now, or I’ll say so many things I'll regret” he answers, his voice tight, and Mike frowns.

“That’s not fair. He’s just a kid” he says, his voice firm, and Harvey laughs bitterly.

“Exactly, Mike! He’s just a kid! It’s not his fault and this is not fair! Where was his dad when all of that was happening? How can someone not see in how much pain that kid was in, or see it and not do anything about it? It’s not surprising that Peter took him in like that, that he was involved with a man so much older than him – they were apparently the only people who took care of him! I can’t… go there and tell him his dead father, the man he worships, was doing a lousy job!”

Mike swallows hard, because while that’s true, Stiles looked terrible not a minute ago.

“You have to go and tell him everything is okay, though, Harvey. He’s going to assume the worst.”

The older man sighs, running a hand over his face.

“I know, I just… need a minute. God, it’s…”

“Too much. I know.”

Mike watches as Harvey paces some more, and then he leaves the room.

The living room in empty. So is the kitchen, when he checks there, and is with a growing sense of dread that he opens the door to Stiles’s room – which is also empty.

“Harvey!” he calls, and something in his voice must have been a warning, because the lawyer comes out of his own room in a rush, “Stiles is gone.”

Mike can’t be too sure, but he thinks this is what a heart attack must feel like.

X

Derek takes a deep breath, cursing New York traffic even at almost ten on a Monday.

He can feel a sense of such a complete despair burning in his chest, and it’s not his – it’s Stiles’s.

It’s not that he can feel whatever Stiles is feeling, it’s just that, even being a human, Stiles is his pack. Maybe in more ways than Peter or Cora will ever manage to be again, Stiles has always been there.
Stiles, who was hostile and a jerk, but held him two hours above the water; Stiles who looked so scared after they first kissed; Stiles who could stand toe to toe with him on any matter; Stiles, his anchor, and the reason he could actually try and hope for a life not filled with death and despair anymore.

Stiles needs him, and he can feel it – the same way he could feel it the night the Sheriff was killed.

He goes towards Harvey’s apartment, guessing that’s where Stiles is, and has to brake abruptly when he sees a dark shape on the curb.

Stiles, with a light sweatshirt and his school pants, no coat in sight, is sitting on the curb.

He stops the car, not caring that he’s in the middle of the street, and just rushes to him, pulling him up easily.

The boy stares blearily at him, his eyes unfocused. He’s freaking freezing.

“What happened?” he asks, taking his own coat, and putting it on Stiles’s shoulders.

He doesn’t answer, though. He takes a step forward, his hands fistig on Derek’s shirt, and buries his face in Derek’s neck and … cries.

Huge, unashamed sobs making his whole body shake, and Derek can only pull him closer, trying to warm him with his own body.

“What happened?” he whispers again, but Stiles doesn’t seem to hear.

A car horn sounds nearby, followed by a series of curses, and Derek moves them towards his car, putting Stiles in it and getting in impossibly fast. He turns up the heat and keeps turning towards Stiles at every second.

The ride to his place is not long, as he doesn’t live too far away, but all the way there Stiles is quiet and it worries him.

Stiles is not quiet like this. This is wrong, so very, very wrong.

They get to the apartment he, Cora and Peter live, and, again, has to manhandle the boy into moving. Once they are inside, he guides him to the couch and sits him down, sitting beside him, pulling him close, and Stiles just… buries himself in Derek, hiding himself from whatever is causing this.

Cora and Peter stare from the doorway – Peter with anger, Cora with uncertainty and pity, and Derek doesn’t say anything, just holding Stiles, because maybe, right now, this is just what he needs.

He feels the boy’s breathing calm after a few minutes, clearly crying himself to exhaustion, and falling asleep.

He extricates himself from Stiles’s hold, grabs a blanket and pulls it tightly around him.

Leaving the living room, where he knows Peter will keep watch, he takes out his phone.

“Stiles needs the both of you here, now. You better find an excuse and show up” he says as soon as the person answers.

He hangs up, angry despite himself.

Whatever it is Harvey Specter has done to Stiles, Derek will make sure he pays.
Harvey didn’t sleep. He couldn’t even sit down for more than five minutes. He called Donna in the middle of the night, and she tried helping him, but for some things not even she holds the answers. He called the Police, and, even though they said they’d help, is not like a missing sixteen year old, who left the house voluntarily, is going to be their top priority.

He was doing so well. Everything was going so fine.

He’s called Stiles’s cell a million times. He called Peter Hale another hundred times, but none of them are answering, and he just… doesn’t know what to do.

The hours keep flying by, midnight and then two and four. The Police have no news, Mike keeps making them tea and coffee, and he’s remotely aware of the fact that Jessica was by at some point, he’s not very sure.

How can no one know where Peter lives? They work with the man!

And worse, what if it wasn’t Peter who took Stiles, what if he’s lost – he himself always insisted his kid brother went out with Ray wherever he went, what if now he can’t find his way in the city?

He can’t think right.

He and Mike are in the living room – Police suggested they stay home in case Stiles decides to come back, as nothing points out to kidnapping, he left because he wanted to, he’ll probably come back the same way. The TV in on, but he doesn’t really register anything.

He just… wants to rewind the last eight hours and handle the whole thing differently.

But he can’t, can he?

“They learn werewolves are real, and leave their doors unlocked. How quaint.”

Both men turn to the door, Harvey already half way out of his seat, when their brains catch up the message that is was a girl’s voice, and therefore it couldn’t be Stiles who spoke.

She has bright strawberry blond hair and the air of someone who measured both of them up and they came up lacking.

“Lydia” another girl reprimands, this one with dark hair, and an apologetic smile on her face.

“Sorry to just… barge in like that. We just came for Stiles’s stuff” she says, shrugging and Harvey walks to them, hands shaking.

“What do you mean, his stuff?”

“Well, since you kicked him out, I don’t see what you could possibly want with teenage junk” the first girl points out with a voice full of disdain.

“Lydia” this time is the boy who says it, tall and dark haired, a sad frown on his face, as if he’s deeply disappointed with what he’s seeing right now.

Did Mike put some sort of hallucinogen in his coffee?

“What is the meaning of this? And why would you think I kicked my brother out? You know where he is?”
“So you… didn’t kick him out?” the second girl asks, her demeanor changed minutely, and only just now Harvey realizes how defensive she was holding herself before, even while smiling at them.

“He… he just took off, we couldn’t find him… Who the hell are you?” he finishes, realizing he’s giving excuses to complete strange teenagers on his still broken door.

“I’m Scott. This is Allison and Lydia. When Derek found Stiles last night he called us, and we came” the kid explains, shrugging, as if it’s perfectly normal to just come from California to New York overnight because a friend called, “Peter asked us to come here and get his stuff before heading to their place” he finishes and Harvey shakes his head.

“I swear to God, I’m going to kill that man.”

“It doesn’t really take. We tried” Lydia says, with a small smile, “So what happened? Derek sounded freaked out when we called him back, because of course he hung up on us as soon as he shouts his orders, and doesn’t even have the decency to show up to pick us up at the airport.”

Harvey looks back at Mike, who nods at him, and he sighs, running a hand over his eyes.

“He told us everything last night.”

“Everything…” Scott prods.

“Everything everything. Peter being dead and the… furry thing. Everything.”

“Oh” the boy replies, smiling sheepishly at Harvey, “I guess it didn’t go very well.”

“You could say that.”

“So… we don’t need Stiles’s stuff…” Allison says, looking at Scott, while Lydia’s eyes are fixed on Harvey – it’s like she’s trying to catch him doing something wrong.

“No. What you need is take me to my brother, before I accuse those people of kidnapping. Stiles is still a minor, they had no right not to tell me where he is.”

“Stiles needed time. And if he left, it’s because you did something wrong” Lydia says, her voice cold, and Harvey stares at her for a long moment before speaking.

“I know that. But doing something wrong doesn’t equal abandoning him.”

She stares at him for another moment, and then nods.

“Okay, we’ll take you to their place. Come on now” she chides, when he hesitates, looking down – he’s in the shirt he was on last night, looking like he slept in his clothes, “It’s better if you actually do look like a worried brother and not like a douchebag Lawyer. Derek is going to be pissed off enough as it is” she completes with a smile, just turning around and leaving.

The other two follow, and Harvey turns to Mike, who hugs him briefly.

“Go. I’ll stay here, call the office and the school, and get this door fixed. I’m getting tired of people just showing up.”

He doesn’t need to be told twice before he’s out the door.
When Stiles finally comes to, he realizes he’ll be in some serious pain the rest of the day, because the angle he was sleeping in is all kinds of awkward. He also notices he’s on Derek, and he has vague memories of crying on him – also, answering his phone just saying he needed him.

Derek holding him as he broke down.

Derek here in the morning after he breaks down.

He opens his eyes and stares at the man who is looking at him too.

“This is what it should have been like” he says, his voice raspy and quiet. He thinks he’s in Derek’s place, and if so, Cora and Peter may be around – not that it’ll stop them from listening, but he can hold onto that illusion.

Derek frowns at him.

“What should have been like this?”

“When you went to the hospital, the day my dad died. This is what you should have done. You should have let me break down, you should have let me cry and yell and deny it, and then you should have been there for me. This is what it should have been like. This is what you should have done.”

Derek is quiet for a long moment after that, looking away.

“I’m sorry” he ends up whispering, and Stiles stares at him – the way he seems to be drowning in guilt.

“I know” he tells him, because he does.

He’s not sure he can forgive him yet, but he knows.

“Your phone was ringing before” Derek says after a few seconds, and Stiles sighs, trying to sit up and wincing from the pain in his back and neck.

“I just… took off last night. Harvey must be…” he stops talking, because he doesn’t know what Harvey must be.

Pissed? Scared? Relieved?

“He called you seventy three times, and left a voicemail in each one. I’d say he’s worried” says a new voice, and Stiles looks at the door to see a girl about his age there – Cora.

“Well, maybe” he mutters, looking down.

“What happened last night?” Derek asks, and Stiles shrugs.

“Peter told him. Not everything, but enough… and by your expression, I’m guessing he didn’t tell you about that, huh?”

“No, he didn’t” Derek answers through gritted teeth.

“Well, I told him everything. He freaked out, left the room, and then I just… I think I had a nervous breakdown or something. I don’t really remember coming here, just… you” he finishes with a shrug, and Derek nods, “Where is Peter, anyway?”
“He left about an hour ago, didn’t say where he was going, just… vanished” Cora answers, and Stiles snorts.

“Typical.”

“Some things never change” Cora says with a small smile and Stiles smiles back. She doesn’t seem to be so bad when he isn’t thinking she’s sleeping with his boyfriend… *ex-boyfriend*. Ex.

“I should probably go and… face the music” he says, but Derek shakes his head.

“You should stay a little longer” he says, his voice almost playful, and Stiles tilts his head to the side a bit, suspicious.

“Why?”

“Just because” the man answers, getting up, “The bathroom is through there. I’ll make us some breakfast, and Cora is going to help me.”

He leaves, and Stiles stares at the door for a few more moments before shaking his head and doing what Derek suggested.

He can wait for a few more hours to be rejected by his brother after all.

He doesn’t really say much of anything, and neither Hale is exactly a talker, so it’s a quiet breakfast all in all.

It almost seems like the quiet before the storm.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on [Tumblr](https://example.com)
Chapter the Twenty-Second

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twenty-Second

Harvey doesn’t really talk on the way to Derek Hale’s place, but he does a whole lot of observing. If these are the people Stiles puts his life on the line for, he better get to know them so he can, at the very least, predict how much trouble Stiles is going to be in in the future.

He will, however, still try to stop that from happening at all costs.

They don’t talk a whole lot, but they do communicate – their body language is loud, except for the tallest girl, Allison, whom, he remembers, is apparently a trained hunter.

He’s riding to meet his brother with Buffy and her friends in the car, and life doesn’t really make a lot of sense right now – finding out werewolves are real, and then the fright of Stiles disappearing, and not sleeping, and this… he just wants this to be over.

He already misses the days when he was worried that Stiles wasn’t getting into trouble.

The apartment building is about ten blocks away from his own, and he doesn’t like it – they are too close to his home, too close to his brother and Mike.

Truth be told, if he could, he’d make all of these people disappear.

Their lives would be a lot easier if he could do that.

They get to the address the red headed girl – Lydia Martin – recites, and follow to the right apartment.

“You should let us talk to him first” the boy suggests, and Harvey just turns very slowly to stare at him, an eyebrow raised and the coldest look he can manage with how tired and overwhelmed he is, “I mean, he doesn’t know we are coming, and he doesn’t know you are coming and—“

“And he’s more likely to be upset with you, because as far as I can tell, you haven’t exactly been the best of friends for him.”

“We were trying to protect him” Allison says, her tone full of indignation, and Harvey not even dignifies that with an answer.

“And while you were doing that, you ignored him. Tell me one thing, and if you can tell me that, I’ll let you go in first: what was the name of Stiles’s date last Friday?”

When they don’t answer, Harvey gives them a cold smile and knocks on the door.

The girl who answers it is the one Peter introduced as his niece at the party, and she doesn’t really say anything as much as just raises an eyebrow and lets them in. Harvey follows the sounds, and finds kitchen, where Stiles is sitting at the table, and Hale is cooking.

For-his-brother.
As if they’ve spent the night together and –

No. He’s not going there.

“Harvey!” Stiles exclaims, eyes wide in surprise.

“We’re going home” he says, voice as calm as he can manage, and the kid opens his mouth to answer, but the Derek fellow flashes his eyes – glowing red, for fuck’s sake – at him, and growls. Honest to God growls, as if they’re animals.

“Save your Cujo impression for someone who might actually be scared of something so primal” he says, barely sparing a glance to the man, and turning his attention back to Stiles, who’s still staring at him and the other three he came with in a sort of overwhelmed way, “Get your things and let’s go, Stiles” he repeats, his voice firm.

“You don’t have to go if you don’t want to” Scott says, taking a step forward, apparently thinking he has any say in this.

Harvey turns to look at the kid – glad that he is actually a bit taller than him.

“Yes, he does. I’m his brother, he’s sixteen, and under my guardianship until he turns eighteen, and he might hate me, and be pissed off, and bang his door and refuse to talk to me, and invite Elizabeth over every single day just to piss me off, but he will come home with me, because I’m telling him to” he turns back to Stiles, not paying attention to the stunned expression on his friends’ faces, “I know this is not how your dad would have handled this, and I know this is the last thing you want to hear, but I didn’t freak out last night and had to leave the room because of you. I was… pissed off to all hell at the way the adults in your life handled things, Stiles. You shouldn’t have done the things you did, not that you couldn’t, after all you’re still alive, you obviously can do them, but because you shouldn’t have to. You’re sixteen, Stiles. You shouldn’t have to deal with all this shit on your own. You shouldn’t have to feel the need to protect the adults in your life, that’s our job. And I was pissed off at me too, for not being in your life before, for not being there when you could have needed me in the past. But I am here now, and I’m taking charge, like any responsible authority figure should. And we’re going home. Now.”

His brother looks undecided for about half a second, then he tilts his head to the side, looking suspicious.

“You’re really not pissed off at me?”

“About what you told us yesterday? No. About you taking off in the middle of the night without a single word, without even taking your coat with you? Hell yes. But we’ll talk about that later. Get your things and let’s go.”

The kid looks down and runs a hand on the back of his neck.

“Just my shoes” he says shrugging, and Harvey stares until he actually gets up and goes to the other room.

“I like you” Lydia tells him with a smile, and Harvey nods at her once, taking the compliment, and trying not to think too hard on it.

On the other side of the kitchen, Hale looks like he’s about to have a stroke.

“I realize you came from very far to see him, so you can come back to his home, and talk to him
there. I can hold off the talk about not disappearing again for a few days.”

The kids look at each other, but Harvey knows they’ll take him up on his offer, after all.

Stiles comes back and looks at Derek, but Harvey doesn’t really give him a chance to say anything.

“Go wait in the car.”

“Harvey…”

“Stiles, just wait in the car. I’ll be there in a minute.”

They stare at each other for a long moment, but the teen does leave, stealing one last glance at the man watching him go.

When they hear the door closing behind them, Harvey takes a deep breath.

“Thank you for finding him last night.”

“He’s… very important to me” the man says quietly, and Harvey sighs, rubbing his eyes and running a hand on his hair after.

“I don’t know what to think about you, Hale. I don’t know what your end game is, and I don’t like you on principle. I didn’t even like that Tony guy, and he was Stiles’s age, and human. I know Stiles enough to know that if he ever wants to… be your friend or anything else, he’ll do it regardless of what I say—“

“He wouldn’t” Derek interrupts him, looking up at Harvey for the first time. His arms are crossed in front of his body, and he leans against the kitchen counter, shaking his head, “I’ve never seen Stiles accept an order without a fight. You… I think he needs you. He won’t risk losing you.”

Harvey lets that sink in for a moment before sighing again.

“I’m not sure he’ll want to lose you either, and I don’t want him unhappy, Derek. I want my brother to have everything he wants, and maybe that includes… you” he finishes, with obvious distaste, “However, right now, Stiles needs space. He needs his family, and he needs to find his footing again. I’m not saying disappear into the night, but keep away for a while.”

He doesn’t wait for Derek’s acquiescence before leaving the kitchen.

“I won’t leave him, you know” the man says, when Harvey is already letting himself out. He hears Derek behind him, but doesn’t turn back, “But I’m glad he has you.”

Harvey knows he doesn’t really have to answer, so he doesn’t.

He’ll deal with this particular can of worms later on.

X

Stiles doesn’t really know what to say, so he keeps quiet on the way to the car.

He greets Ray, though, and the man frowns at him.

“Do not ever scare us like this again” the man says, and Stiles looks down.

“Sorry, Ray.”
The man nods, and opens the door for the four of them, closing it behind them.

Awkward silence doesn’t even begin to describe the situation, he thinks, looking down, and taking his phone out of his pocket.

Elizabeth has just sent a text asking him where he is. He was supposed to get a bunch of stuff for her today, and he, well, forgot, in light of what was going on.

Just as he’s thinking about what to do about it, he gets another text, this one in full caps. Elizabeth, obviously, will not be denied.

“I just…” he says to his… friends, gesturing with his phone, and not bothering to get out of the car, mainly because it’s cold out there, and also because with Scott’s hearing it wouldn’t make a difference.

“Where the hell are you, Stiles? Do you have any idea what school is like with only the help around?”

“Glad to know you still love me, Lizzie.”

“Where are you?”

“Some things came up last night, I won’t be at school today. If you really need me, send one of the minions with the stuff to my place after school, I’ll get it back to you tonight.”

Elizabeth pauses.

“How serious?” she asks in a practical voice, and Stiles can practically see her gauging the situation.

“I kind of spent the night out, Harvey came to get me this morning.”

“At moments like this, I miss Gossip Girl” she says, sighing and hanging up.

Stiles shakes his head, putting the phone back in his pocket.

“New friend?” Lydia asks, with a fake cheerful smile.

“Yes” he says, staring at her, almost daring her to say anything else.

They have obviously decided he doesn’t need to know what they are up to, well, they don’t need to know about his things either.

Of course, they have been fighting the Darach and such, and he has been planning dances.

Strangely enough, he finds that he doesn’t care as much as he thought he would.

The awkward is broken briefly by Harvey coming in, and sitting by Stiles, leaving the other three facing them.

“Here is how this is going to go. I’m going home, showering and heading for the office, because I just can’t afford not to be there with the way things are. Mike will head to class too, so I’m trusting you not to kill anyone or anything, and behave.”

“I behave” he says back, and Harvey just stares at him until he shrugs, “Usually” he adds, and Harvey snorts.
“I’m actually more worried about your… friends. Anything happens, you call me or Mike. You get it?”

“Yup.”

He is a bit annoyed at all the safe talk, but, hey, he kind of deserves it, he gets where Harvey is coming from.

They get to the apartment, and Lydia, Scott and Allison stand awkwardly by the door, their bags at their feet, after they took it out of the car.

“Did you find him?” comes Mike’s voice from inside as soon as the door closes, and Stiles feels even worse for leaving that way he did last night.

Even if Harvey had been pissed off at him, which he wasn’t, Mike didn’t deserve him just… taking off like that.

Harvey just gestures at Stiles and goes to his room.

The blond man looks relieved for about a second before he frowns, pulling Stiles into a hug.

“I swear to God you do something like that again, I’m chaining you to your bed and homeschooling you. I can do that.”

“Kinky” Stiles says with a laugh and Mike shakes his head, pulling away, but still with his hands on Stiles’s shoulders.

“I mean it, kid.”

“I’m sorry” he mutters, and Mike nods, looking at the others.

“So, you guys are back.”

“We’re going to… talk.”

“Right” Mike tells him, “Need me to stay? Not like me missing classes will make a whole lot of difference.”

Stiles laughs a bit, but shakes his head. He needs to talk to these three on their own.

There might be wolfing out and breaking of things involved.

“It’s okay. Just get to class.”

Mike nods, disappearing into his and Harvey’s room, and coming back again not a minute later.

“Behave” he says, before leaving – locking the door behind him. Apparently, they had it fixed.

“So… that was my brother’s boyfriend. His name is Mike, he’s Pre-Law in Columbia.”

“Yeah, you… mentioned him a lot” Scott says, looking around the apartment awkwardly.

Everything about this moment is awkward, hell, Lydia is awkward right now, he’d never thought he’d see the day.

“I’ll just… show you to my room, and then we can talk, okay?” he says, leading them there without
meeting their eyes. Once inside, they settle around, Lydia on his bed, Allison on his computer chair, and Scott on the floor, by Allison’s feet, “I’ll be right back” he says, and goes to Harvey’s room.

The man is dressed and finishing tying his tie in front of the mirror when he comes in.

“I’m really sorry about last night. I don’t mean just the disappearing thing, I mean… everything.”

Harvey doesn’t say anything for a moment, finishing his tie first, before turning to his brother with a soft look on his face.

“Apology accepted for disappearing, though I expect you’ll never, ever, pull something like that off again” he says sternly, and Stiles nods, “And you have nothing else to apologize for. I spent the whole night thinking that everything you told us actually explains a lot about you. What I really need you to know though, is that it’s all over. All of that is in your past, and your place now is here, with us, me and Mike. I’m not saying leave everyone behind, but, Stiles, you deserve to have happiness. You owe them nothing. I want you to understand that before you go in there and talk to them, okay?”

He nods, not trusting himself to speak, and knowing Scott can probably hear every word.

Or not.

He knows he can’t hear Harvey and Mike when they are in there – thank God – maybe his brother has some soundproof magic in his room, he doesn’t know.

Harvey pulls him into a hug, squeezing him tightly, and Stiles closes his eyes, hugging him back.

He needs the strength before going back to his room and facing a part of his past.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Twenty-Third

Chapter Notes

Heeey! Two things:

1. It's very probable that there are some weird typed things in here—I didn't even reread it before posting it, I literally just finished writing and posted. I'll go over it tomorrow, and fix any mistakes I find, but if you'd like to point them out to me, I thank you. Fixed it!

2. I know a LOT of people compare Donna to Lydia, but I really don't see it that way. Mostly because Lydia would NEVER be someone's secretary, even if Donna is awesome, and also because just because they have red hair and are pretty amazing, it doesn't mean they'll get along or even be alike.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twenty-Third

Stiles waits until his brother leaves, and then goes back to his room, where his three friends are looking around, clearly nervous.

“How about we go have this conversation in the kitchen? I don’t know about you guys, but I’m kind of starving.”

There are a few awkward nods, and the other teens follow him, sitting at the table when he gestures them to take a seat, and he starts getting something resembling breakfast ready.

“Your brother’s place is beautiful” Allison compliments after a few more seconds of awkwardness and silence, and Stiles turns to smile briefly at her.

“It was really weird when I got here – all… grey and sleek. Mike moved in a few weeks after that, and we both managed to make it look like home, you know? I like it” he shrugs.

“It’s really nice” she says again, smiling a little, clearly uncertain.

Thing is he doesn’t know how to start either. There’s only so much drama one can actually take before getting tired of it, to tell the truth, and Stiles has had about enough of it these days. It’s Tony, and the date, and Peter at the party, and Derek’s confession at school, and Harvey finding out, and his mental breakdown, and them showing up… he just wants to sit and wait as everything falls into place or falls to pieces, and right now whichever one that happens is fine by him, because he’s kind of tired.

Emotionally speaking.

“So… how are things going here?” Allison asks again, and Stiles looks at both Lydia and Scott and see they look like they want to speak, but don’t have the courage. It kind of makes sense, seeing as Allison is his friend, sure, but she’s his friend because of Scott. Lydia and him? They are his friends
because of them. It’s different.

It hurts a lot more to know they chose to keep him in the dark than it does knowing that Allison did the same thing.

“Honestly? They are kind of great” he says, not to be mean, but actually telling the truth, “I mean, I had a few bad days and all, what with… well, you know, but mostly it’s good. Mike is amazing, he’s an actual genius, he remembers everything he’s ever read, and he really wants to be a Lawyer to help people. Harvey is…I can’t even actually describe him, because he’s everything I always thought a big brother should be, and yet it’s even more amazing, because I know the only people in the world he’s that good for are me, and Mike and Donna. He… cares. He’s here.”

He puts some pop tarts on the table, along with coffee and some juice, and some other food he found in the cupboards, and takes a seat, helping himself to some coffee as he thinks. The others let him keep his silence, just watching, picking on the food.

“I’m pissed. I’m furious, actually, that you chose to keep me in the dark about the stuff Derek told me about, and he told me about them, which means that what went down was actually about three hundred times worse, and I’m… I’m so mad there are no words. I don’t have them. Make no mistake of that, I am pissed” he pauses between each of the last three words and raises his eyes, staring at his friends before shaking his head and going on, “However, being here, with no… you know, things that go bump in the night… I had forgotten what being sixteen is like. What it is like to worry about dances and popularity and classes. About being invited to parties and dates without it involving a life and death situation in the middle. I’m… feeling guilty half the time, because I’m happy more often than not. Harvey and Mike, they… ask me about my homework, they know when my Lacrosse games are, and they are always there. Harvey talked to Lizzie’s mom before I went to her place the first time, they try to show me what options I have in the future, what I can be. They believe in me” he almost whispers the last part, and he can see they get it, “Hell, I’m popular in school here. I get to sit by Lizzie, on the highest place on the steps of the Met for lunch, and, even though I deny it, I kind of have minions too. I have folders with dance costs budgets, and I’m planning events and getting involved in school activities that do not involve being hunted in the school by an Alpha trying to kill me. No one has tried to kill me so far, in the four months I’ve been here. I never knew I missed that until I could… just be here. I miss you, guys. But just as I didn’t realize what it was like to be sixteen normally, I also learned that real life isn’t school, I know there are so many more things out there, and I know that real life is so much more than what I just described, and that is what kind of makes me see that I don’t… I don’t want to live about to die anymore” he stops talking and stares at the other three. He tries to look apologetic, “I… I can’t put Harvey into that kind of danger. I can’t lose anyone else because of what I do in my spare time. I just can’t. I miss you desperately, some days I feel actually sick that I don’t have you guys around, but I’m not… No matter what happens here, I’m not going back to Beacon Hills. I can’t.”

He looks down, then, because he doesn’t know what their answer will be – they kind of wanted him to do this, didn’t they? Or they wouldn’t have kept him in the dark, but on the other hand, it feels as if he’s abandoning them.

“A part of me kind of hoped you had missed us a lot, and you didn’t fit in here, you know” he looks at Scott then, seeing a small, sad smile on his best friend’s face, “I mean, you are my brother. Facing those things without you, I didn’t really think we would have made it. I missed you, and a thousand times I picked the phone to call you and tell you everything, and call you back. But the truth is, Stiles, that when Derek messed up, I kind of thought that you deserved to… be yourself without this crap around. You… needed this time. What happened to your dad was our fault, and we know that, and don’t try saying it wasn’t, because you told us there was something wrong, and we just dismissed it, thinking that if the twins would attack, they would go after me, or Derek, never you or
your dad. And I get it that the worst thing happened – I don’t know what I would do if my mom…”

he stops then, and takes a deep breath, leaning forward to stare into his friend’s eyes, “I’m glad you have your brother, and that you’re happy here. I think that’s what your dad would have wanted you to do. Be happy. And safe. More than anything, being safe. I get it that you’re angry with us, but… just tell me this: if we had told you about the Darach, or Cora even, would you have stayed here?”

Stiles doesn’t answer, because he really doesn’t know.

Odds are that he wouldn’t.

“I… get it” he says, instead, “Doesn’t make me any less pissed, but I get it.”

“I don’t think we can ask for more than that” Allison answers, smiling broadly for once, and Stiles smiles back at her.

“Now, how about you tell me what crap is this about you being an Alpha? Clearly if anyone calls the shots in your pack, it’s Allison” he says, and Scott tries to glare at him, but he really can’t.

“Actually, I think we should start with how Lydia is a Banshee.”

Stiles turns to stare at the girl, who just shrugs and takes a sip of her coffee, as if nothing important is happening.

He knew Derek hadn’t told him everything.

X

“I didn’t think I’d see you here today” Jessica tells him as he comes to her office to discuss a few things about one of their major cases.

“Stiles is safe and sound at home, there’s no reason not to work.”

His boss turns to him with an intrigued look.

“‘You know, Harvey, you are getting harder and harder to read at every turn. I remember you bringing him to the office in the first weeks he was with you just to make sure he was okay, and now he’s gone all night and you’re here in the morning? Did you get tired of playing house?’”

“How is it that you always think the worst of me?” he asks, irritation clear in his voice, and he thanks the gods the door is closed, because he doesn’t want anyone to hear them right now. He’s sick and tired of this attitude coming from Jessica, “Stiles is fine. His disappearing was justified, and we’ll talk about it when he’s over the thing that made him disappear in the first place. Some friends from his old town are here, and they are home, talking things over. Mark is warned to let me know if any of them sneaks out, and Donna is going to bring them lunch soon, so we can check on them, but I trust my brother. He’s fine. I’m giving him the space he needs, that’s what we do when we don’t want our teenagers to hate us. I’m not tired of playing house. I’m tired of you, who’s known me for years, ever since I was barely more than a teen myself, to keep second guessing everything I do.”

“What you did…” she starts, and he snorts.

“What I did six months ago? The one time I screwed up? What about it? Are you never letting it go? I mean, taking Louis back into the fold, as if nothing’s happened, after he was all for Hardman, it’s okay, but forgiving me for not wanting that merger is a mortal sin?”

“I trusted you, Harvey” she says gravely.
He smirks at her.

“And I trusted you. Look where that got me.”

He just puts the files on her desk, and leaves.

He’s too tired for this right now.

Allison and Scott excuse themselves before Lydia can start explaining, claiming they are tired and in need of a shower and some sleep.

Stiles arches an eyebrow at them but shows them to the bathroom, and tells them they can take a nap on his bed, and then goes back to the kitchen, where Lydia is having some more coffee.

He sits across from her and sighs, waiting.

She’ll talk eventually.

“I had a plan, you know?” she starts, looking at him, “I was going to help Derek defeat those twins, and then we would start working on getting here. We would be our own pack. Jackson would be able to be with an Alpha and have a pack, and I would be able to have him and my best friend with me. I mean, I love Allison, and I even like Scott, but they are each other’s world, and they won’t ever leave Beacon Hills, I know that, and I always wanted more. I always disliked the small town life, even if it was easy, I always wanted to get out of there. And then Jackson went away, and that Darach showed up, and she told me the reason I couldn’t be changed when Peter bit me, or how I could help him get back to life, or why I was finding the bodies – I’m… a death omen” her voice is ironic in the end, as if it’s a joke she doesn’t care for, “I had some trouble accepting it, and I wanted to talk to you so much, because I knew you would understand and help, and try to figure out what that meant, but telling you this would mean telling you all the rest and bringing you back into the madness that surrounds Beacon Hills, so I changed my plan. I didn’t tell you, and I didn’t ask for your help, because I wanted you here, happy and safe, because I needed to know that we could still be here after. You became… the reason I knew things would work out in the end, because my plan ends up in New York, and you are here already. And you’re not going back. I am not apologizing for not telling you the whole truth, and I’m not apologizing for keeping you in the dark, because I was protecting you. You are very good at protecting other people, but you didn’t care about getting hurt, and I was doing what you wouldn’t. You can be mad at me, and you can try and replace me with this Elizabeth girl, but I don’t regret it.”

Stiles snorts at the end of it.

“You think I’m replacing you? Lydia, I could never do that. Lizzie is nothing like you, and we are… allies, I think. Not really friends. You are my friend. I think if there’s one thing that this whole… supernatural stuff actually taught me is that friends are the people who would die for you in a heartbeat, and Lizzie wouldn’t. You would, though. Allison, Scott. Even Peter, and, well, Derek. Harvey is my family by blood, and we made it work, but you guys are the ones I made family, because I wanted you to be my family. We’re never losing that.”

“I’m glad to hear that” she says, pretending her eyes aren’t full of tears.

“Now, seriously, someone needs to tell me what the hell is up with Scott being an Alpha, because when I left the boy couldn’t plan his way out of a paper bag.”

She laughs lightly, and starts telling him about the past few months in Beacon Hills. Allison and
Scott, now showered and changed, join them a few minutes later, and, finally, Stiles hears everything about his friends’ lives without him.

It may be a little cruel, but he’s a bit glad that, generally speaking, it sucked big time.

X

It’s half past noon when Donna gets to the apartment, and the scene she finds there makes her smile softly – this is what teenagers are supposed to be like.

The four kids are in the living room, the boys sprawled over couches, and the girls comfortably sitting on the armchair, laughing about something or other.

She smiles at them, greets the kids when she’s introduced to them, and leaves, trying very hard not to interfere.

She has a feeling this is the beginning of good things happening to all of them.

X

The day actually goes by without any major drama – Stiles just lets them tell him everything that happened in Beacon Hills. They even tell him about Jennifer, and how much she tried seducing Derek at first, but stopped, because he was so heartbroken and set on just getting Stiles back.

He can’t say it didn’t kind of warm his heart, because it did.

They eat the lunch Donna brings them, and they finish their story, and, mainly, fill him in on what they have decided to do – how the pack is, fundamentally, still one, because they are kind of stuck together, but that with two Alphas, they couldn’t just keep living in the same town. They also tell him that Deaton has said things should calm down not in Beacon Hills, because news of an Alpha pack being defeated by a bunch of teens and a newly turned Alpha got around, and scared most of the weird stuff away, so they shouldn’t be in any danger any time soon.

Some time in the afternoon, they all doze off, tired from the flight or, in Stiles’s case, tired from running away and all that jazz. When they woke up from their nap it’s past four, and Lydia and Stiles shower and change, before joining Allison and Scott again.

Lydia is actually going through some of the books he left on his desk, and when he comes in, bearing snacks, she holds up a picture, raising an eyebrow.

“You mentioned it was a private school, you never told us about the school uniform” she says teasingly, and he shrugs, a bit embarrassed.

“It’s not really… strict dress code. As long as a few of the pieces are there, they don’t care much what else you wear.”

It’s a picture taken at a fund raiser for the Winter Dance. He, Tony, and a few of the other boys from the Lacrosse Team are on it, him right on the center, his shirt untucked, his tie a bit loose and his hair messed up like Mike taught him to do it – Lizzie calls it his trademark look, and for some reason, a few of his classmates stopped doing the same thing after she talked to them.

There was a long conversation about royalty needing to have a thing, she may have mentioned headbands, but as long as she didn’t try and make him wear one, he wouldn’t actually pay attention to that.
“You look hot” Allison comments, and Scott squeaks a bit, making Stiles laugh.

“Thanks. I think so too” he smirks Harvey’s smirk, the one that apparently people find charming and the girls giggle, as Scott stares, almost openmouthed, “I am, after all, pretty much the king of the school.”

“You have to be kidding me. You couldn’t even get a date in Beacon Hills” Scott says, and Stiles throws a piece of the sandwich he was eating at his head, “It’s true! Lydia is living proof of it!”

Stiles shrugs at him.

“Maybe. Here I’m, honest to god, popular. I don’t know how it happened, but I do guess it was Lizzie’s work. Kids here are insane. If you think Lydia was bad in freshman year? You haven’t met Elizabeth on a warpath. I actually started to try and be her friend so she would stop picking on me. My first day at school she made about a hundred remarks about fresh meat never catching up – and I don’t even have any classes with her. Technically, it’s even another school.”

“How did you even get her to talk to you?” Lydia asks, honestly curious, and Stiles laughs a little before answering.

“Donna helped me, actually” the girls make a sound, as if now they get it, and he huffs at them before continuing, “There’s this thing at lunch, we can leave campus, and the place where everyone goes is the Met steps. And, according to the tradition, the Queen of Constance can’t have anyone sitting higher than she is, and Elizabeth is the Queen. On my second day, I bought her a mat, and told her a Queen wouldn’t sit on the ground. She kind of adopted me after that – about three weeks ago, she actually started allowing me to sit by her. It’s quite the honor.”

Allison is frowning at him when he stops talking, and he looks at her inquisitively, urging her to talk.

“Are you dating her?” Lydia asks, and Allison glares at her, but it’s clear that’s what she was wondering too.

“No. She’s… I don’t think Elizabeth believes in dating someone, as in a relationship. She wants to go as far as her money can take her, and that’s far, trust me. I’m only accepted among them because of Harvey, really. These people believe in old money, in tradition, in knowing your allies since birth. I think she kind of trusts me because she knows I don’t want her place anywhere. That I won’t use her like her other friends would. We don’t even call them friends, we call them minions. She often refers to them as the help.”

“Why would they even take that?” Scott asks, looking confused, and Stiles shrugs a bit, finishing his sandwich before speaking.

“It’s better to suffer on the top than be a nobody, I guess” he answers shrugging.

Before anyone can say anything else, Mark calls him, telling him that Elizabeth and two other girls are asking to be let up. He winces a bit, but tells him to let them up.

“Okay, Lizzie is here, probably to drop some stuff for the dance, so please, don’t… judge” he ends up saying, hurrying to the door, because she hates to be kept waiting.

The other three follow him, obviously curious.

She gets out of the elevator, followed by two minions, and frowns at him, as he’s leaning on the door.
“You look like crap again” she says, passing by him and stopping when she sees the three teens.

“Hello to you too, Lizzie. These are—“

“Are they staying in New York?” she asks, interrupting him, and he shakes his head.

“No, they are just here for a visit.”

“Then I don’t care” she smiles sweetly, “Give him the folders on the bands’ budgets” she snaps at minion #1, then looks back at him, “Are you skipping class tomorrow again?”

“Probably.”

“Fine. I’ll have one of your minions drop off your homework tomorrow night, then. Tony, by the way, asked about you, because he heard about the Leather Jacket incident, and everyone knows you have an older guy on the side. Just thought you should know where you stand. You better get him in a tux and at the dance with you, or you will come with me, as my date, and we don’t want that” she turns to leave, the other two girls hurry to follow, “And Stiles” she adds, already out the door, “feel better soon” her voice making it clear it’s an order and not a well wish.

He closes the door behind her, and turns – Scott is wide eyed and looking offended, Allison looks as if she wants to laugh, and Lydia is staring at him with a smile.

“I get what you mean now” she says simply, looking the tiniest bit relieved, “But I do want to know, what is this about a Leather Jacket incident? And who is Tony?”

He sighs, leading them back to the living room.

His turn to tell stories now.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Twenty-Fourth

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry it took me this long to update! I had family over, and couldn't really just... leave them to write. Anyway, this chapter is a bit shorter, and, truly, it's just a filler. Next one will be up tomorrow!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twenty-Fourth

Harvey’s mood isn’t the best after his brief talk to Jessica, so he locks himself into his office to work, warning Donna not to bother him unless strictly necessary. Because of this, he’s a bit surprised when he hears his door opening, and that surprise quickly turns into disbelief when he sees Peter Hale coming into his office calmly, a small smirk playing on his lips.

“Either you are dangerously confident or just plain old stupid to come in here after what happened in the past few days.”

Peter comes all the way to his desk and sets a stack of files on it, taking a seat on the chair opposite Harvey.

“I never believed in having someone’s trust, or even affection, without proving myself first. I don’t like to get things, I like to earn them; and I also prefer to be needed instead of liked. In the few weeks I’ve been working here, I realized there has been a certain issue with the new senior partner, the one who has his name on what was supposed to be your wall, and I thought to myself: that is something I can help Harvey with. I can’t make Stiles like you if he didn’t, I can’t make Derek trust you, I can’t make your brother a simpler boy, I can’t help you with anything else but this” he says, gesturing to the papers on the desk.

Harvey takes one look at them and then back to Peter.

“How exactly are you planning on helping me?” he asks, his tone patronizing, but the other man isn’t discouraged. If anything, his smirk grows and he sighs, leaning back on his chair.

“People at this office gossip a lot. In just a few hours I got to know the whole problem with you and Jessica and this Darby person, and why, exactly, he is here and your name is not in his place. What is more, I not only listened to gossip, as I could tell apart who is lying and who isn’t – a small perk of being a werewolf, I think we failed to mention this particular trait. What I could gather was that Jessica didn’t trust you anymore because you were willing to do some pretty illegal things to get that merger stopped, and she couldn’t abide to that. She’s honorable. She doesn’t do the dirty law kind of thing” he pauses, leaning forward, and lowers his voice, as if ready to tell a secret, “Well, how do you think she’s going to feel when you show her proof that Darby is as dirty as a public bathroom?”

Harvey stares at Peter for a long moment, dumbfounded.

Well, maybe the man will get to keep his job after all.
When Harvey gets home that night, he listens to the already common sound of someone cooking in the kitchen, but when he gets there it’s the tall girl, Allison, who’s doing the cooking, as her boyfriend helps, and Mike, Stiles and Lydia talk calmly at the table.

“How much can I trust Peter Hale, exactly?” he asks, without really greeting anyone.

“You can’t trust him, unless he wants something from you” Lydia states, looking at Harvey.

“What did he do?” Stiles asks, “This morning he wasn’t there when I woke up, I thought he was running away from Derek, for having told you everything.”

“Well” he starts, pulling a stack of files from his briefcase and setting them in front of Mike, “If what he told me today was true, he just gave me my partnership with Jessica and a way to kick out Darby from the firm, or at the very least diminish his influence in there. Getting him out completely now would be counterproductive, because it would harm the firm’s image, have a partner leave so soon after the merger was announced, but he’d be a ghost partner, no influence at all. The thing is, well, can I trust what Peter gave me?”

“Peter has a vested interest in keeping you happy. I won’t say he loves Derek, but he has several life times of debts with his Alpha, and he has to pay them, if for nothing else, then for his safety. He doesn’t have a pack, and Derek has it – plus, no one would align themselves to Peter to help take Derek down, as we would for Derek to go against his uncle. If it’s something that will help Peter benefit, you can trust him” Stiles explains, and Allison sighs loudly.

“See? This is what was missing from all those pack meeting – someone who could tell apart Peter’s intentions.”

Harvey, however, is looking at his brother in a bit of awe.

“How did you get to know him this well?”

“I didn’t, really, it’s just that… Peter isn’t good. I don’t think he ever was, even before the fire. He just wants to be on top, and right now, being on top means being safe from Derek, and, apparently, Derek came here to talk to me, and get me back, and that means all of them have to be on your good graces, and that’s what Peter comes in. Time will come, in the future, if his plan works, that Peter will remind all of us of what he’s done for us in this moment, and ask for something in return” he pauses, and frowns a little, “He’s a lot like Don Corleone, really.”

“Now, that is a scary thought. Godfather Hale” Scott comments with a shudder.

“I’d like to go over these files later with you” Harvey tells Mike, and the blond agrees easily with a nod, “And how about you four? How was your day?”

“Oh, it went fine. We talked” Stiles answers vaguely, and Harvey doesn’t press the issue, knowing better than to push right now.

“Are you going to skip classes tomorrow again?”

“If that’s okay with you? I mean, their flight is Wednesday morning, I can go to the airport with them before class.”

Harvey nods, agreeing.
“You’re lucky your school actually accepts social engagement as a reason to miss classes and not make a fuss about it.

Dinner is a calm affair, and Harvey is pleased the kids decided to come and visit his brother – he feels as if another piece of their lives finally got into place.

The four go to Stiles’s bedroom, after arranging something like beds on the floor for the boys, and the girls taking his brother’s bed, and he retreats to his room with Mike.

When he gets there, the blond is already reading the files, and his eyes are wide.

“So, what do you think?” he asks, and Mike looks at him in wonder.

“I think if this is all legit you have Darby dancing can-can for you in your office if you want him to.”

Harvey grimaces at the mental image, and takes a seat beside Mike on the bed.

“I can confirm things this week, it won’t take all that long if I know where to look. It does look legit, though. And what Stiles said about Peter is right – if he was doing this out of the goodness of his heart I wouldn’t trust it, but he benefits from it” he looks at Mike, and they stare at each other, Harvey hardly believing what is happening, “I actually think we have a shot at this.”

Mike smiles broadly at him and leans forward, kissing him deeply for a moment, before Harvey pulls away.

The younger man stares at him with a frown, and Harvey shakes his head, heading for the bathroom.

“Werewolf in the house. I don’t think any wall is thick enough.”

He laughs when he hears Mike cursing in the bedroom.

X

Stiles wakes up to a small beep on his phone, informing him of a new text message.

We still need to talk.

It’s from an unknown number, so he assumes Derek changed his, and sighs a bit, thinking about what to answer.

He wants to talk to Derek, he really, really does, but he’s not sure what he’s going to say. He already knows he’s not going back to Beacon Hills, he also knows he still has feelings for Derek, and that, come time, he may manage to forgive him fully, maybe even give him another chance, but what would that mean?

He can’t risk bringing all the crazy from Beacon Hills to his life here, now. He won’t.

And he’s not sure Derek can manage to keep all of that away – maybe it was, as Peter had said before, the place.

But maybe it was them, and he doesn’t want to deal with all of that again. Never, ever again.

Guys are leaving tomorrow morning. I’ll call you.

It’s what he sends back, and receives a smiley face as an answer.
Maybe Derek has changed.

The day goes by calmly enough. They go out – Scott a bit stunned at the town car carrying them around, Lydia commenting that it’s the only way to live, really, and Allison just happy for him – and generally have fun, in a way that, in all honesty, the four of them never had together. He and Scott, maybe, before everything, but not after that.

They have lunch and walk around the city, Stiles shows them his school, and points out where they have lunch, and the three others look suitably impressed.

Their friendship has changed, definitely, it’ll probably never be the same again, but he himself has changed quite a lot, and the others have too – it doesn’t mean they won’t be friends anymore, it doesn’t mean they won’t be a part of each other’s lives, but changes happen, and sometimes they can be good.

In Stiles’s case, it means that he won’t go around risking his life anymore. He can’t take that chance.

He doesn’t want to.

They have dinner out that night, Mike and Harvey take them to a fancy restaurant, and wake up early the next day, so there’ll be enough time to bring them to the airport and still make it to his classes.

Scott makes fun of his uniform, Lydia compliments him on tying a tie with no difficulty, and Allison wolf-whistles at him.

They say goodbye at the gate, and it’s not as sad as it could have been.

“We’ll always be here if you need us” Allison tells him, stepping away from their hug, and smiling.

Scott is next, grabbing him tightly, even if briefly.

“Are you sure you want to stay? ‘Cause mom would take you in in a heartbeat” he says, only half joking, and Stiles just laughs as an answer.

“Let’s arrange to see each other over Christmas break, okay?” Lydia says, “I miss you.”

He doesn’t really answer to that, probably because he’s going to cry if he does.

He steps away, watches them go, and goes back to the car, where Harvey is waiting for him.

“Everything okay?”

He nods, quietly, and his brother pats his shoulder in solidarity.

“I told them I’m not going back. The first night they were here, actually, I told them I’m not going back to Beacon Hills. I’m… tired of fighting for my life. I’m tired of losing people. My life is here now, you know?”

He looks to the side, and Harvey is smiling at him, calmer and more confident than he had been ever since Derek Hale showed up in their lives.

“I’m glad you finally got that you are here to stay.”

He smiles at his brother and closes his eyes, resting for the rest of the ride.

It feels as if a whole part of his life is over.
And the new one has only just begun.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Twenty-Fifth

Two chapters in one day!! Yaaay!!
Now, can you guys forgive me for disappearing for a week?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twenty-Fifth

“Jessica, Darby, good morning” Harvey greets with a wide smile on his face. On his right side, Peter is smirking away, looking like a cartoon villain. It’s fitting, somehow. Not as good as Mike smirking, because Mike has that angelic thing going on for him that makes the smirk a warning sign, whereas Peter smirking is just his natural state of being, but either way, it’s good.

“I don’t remember having an appointment with you this morning, Mister Specter” Darby says, sipping some tea. Jessica looks annoyed as hell, not only because the man is greeting people at her office, but also at the whole drinking tea thing. This is not Downton Abbey after all – it is a Law firm.

“Oh, I’m sure you didn’t because we don’t have one, but we will find time in our busy schedules to talk some things over, once and for all.”

“What is going on, Harvey?”

The Lawyer turns to look at his boss and smiles at her, putting a pile of files in front of her.

“I may have been out of line with the way I dealt with things before the merger happened, but I had my reasons, and honestly? I’ve been punished for them, not only in this firm, but also in life. I wouldn’t do any of those things again, and I learned from my mistakes, but I haven’t gone soft, or turned into a weakling. By the end of this talk, Jessica, I am either going to have my name on that wall, or you are going to release me from my non-competitive clause and let me leave. One of those two things is going to happen, and the reason they are going to happen is in those files, files that prove, beyond any doubt, that this man over here is as dirty as a Game of Thrones character, and we all know that in that show no one is clean.”

“I’m listening” she answers, as Darby goes a little bit pale.

Truth is that most of those files aren’t even supposed to exist, and Harvey is determined not to question how they came into being, or how they even ended up in Peter’s hands. As Stiles had said, Peter would probably want something from them at some point – or maybe it would be Derek he would ask, but the whole thing turned out to be truth.

Every single file, every small dirty thing that Darby had done on his way to the top, was there, documented and proved.

Of course, it had been years since his last dirty dealing, but it didn’t make them go away, and it
wouldn’t harm the firm’s image any less – it wasn’t fair, but it was something that Harvey was willing to do to settle this once and for all. And, of course, the things Darby had done were pretty serious. Blackmailing of jury, missing evidence, bribery and so on and so forth. When his office started to grow, he stopped with this kind of dealing, and became a righteous man, somewhat, but the stain was there, and in a business like theirs, the smallest inkling of dirt was dirt enough to take them all down.

“So, here’s the thing. You can leave his name on the office in name only, and put me in there too; or you release me from my contract, and I leave, to open my own firm. I mean, I won’t have much business at first, but I can hold my own until Mike graduates and starts working with me, and I’m sure I can persuade a lot of people to work for me once I start to grow.”

“And if we refuse?” Jessica asks, but from the glint in her eyes Harvey knows he has her – she is enjoying this. She likes seeing him win.

“If you refuse, this whole thing goes public” he shrugs, carelessly, “I mean, I know I won’t be released, but I figure that as soon as this whole firm has to be shut down from lack of clients, there won’t be anything to be released from, is there?”

“We will talk this over, but I’m sure you know you won, Harvey” she says, and Harvey smiles at her benignly, getting up to leave, Peter by his side, “Just… one more thing before you go.”

He turns around and stares at his boss.

“Where do you find your associates?”

Harvey smirks at her.

“Oh, they are all like family.”

By the end of the day, there’s a new name by the door, with a new plaque on the wall.

PEARSON SPECTER DARBY

All in all it’s a pretty good way to end the day.

X

“We are all in need of a good celebratory dinner, because my name is on that wall” he announces as soon as he gets home.

Mike startles a bit and runs to him, kissing him in greeting, and Stiles hugs him tightly, clapping him on the back.

He imagined this moment a thousand times in his head for the longest time, ever since he started working at Pearson Hardman, really. He thought about a huge party, women all over him, or maybe a private kind of affair, few people he actually liked. Dinner with Donna, maybe. Something fancy and important, and full of smoky rooms and expensive whisky being had by a whole lot of people who would only have to bow to him on his way to the very top.

He never quite pictured it eating take out in his apartment with his boyfriend, his teen brother and his secretary, sitting on the floor.

It felt, however, better than anything he could have imagined or hoped for.
“So, what Peter gave you was good, then?” Stiles asks some time that night, when they have all eaten enough, and are just kind of lying around and watching a movie.

“Yes. It was perfectly in order. How he got those files is a mystery to me, and I think I’m better off not knowing.”

“As this is about Peter, yes, I agree with you.”

“What is the deal with Peter, though?” Donna asks, “I mean, apart from being a werewolf?”

Stiles chokes on his food, and Mike almost drops the glass he’s holding, as Harvey just kind of thinks that they should have expected her to know. What doesn’t she know, after all?

“Honestly, if you didn’t want me finding out, you shouldn’t have any conversations in your office. I heard him talking to you, telling you that being a werewolf has a lot of perks. I confronted him about it, and he told me. Now what is his deal, because he asked me out, and I’m not too keen on investing a whole date into someone who’s bad news.”

“Oh, God, why does he do this?” Stiles mourns, and Donna just stares at him until he starts talking.

“Look, he’s not a good guy, okay? Any other woman and I would be warning them to stay the hell away from him, because he could probably eat them alive, but you are different, and you’ll probably keep him on his toes. Just… be careful. And never take him at face value. He can be a good guy if he wants to, the thing is that he almost never wants to, and even when he does, he always has some ulterior motive.”

“How do you know him, Stiles?” Donna asks, and the teen looks at Harvey, who shrugs – it’s his story to tell, if he wants to, he can tell it.

“His whole family got burned down, and he was stuck in a coma for six years. Then he woke up delirious, killed his Alpha, who was also his niece, bit my best friend, and we killed him a few weeks after that. He came back because he infected another one of my friends with his memories or something, and as she is a banshee, she brought him back. Now, he’s actually good, because he’s not crazy anymore, just incredibly manipulative.”

“He was dead?” she asks, as if she got stuck on that part and didn’t really hear anything past that.

Mike reaches out and pats her on the shoulder.

“You get used to it, don’t worry.”

So, apparently, this is their lives now.

If he might say so himself, it’s pretty good.

X

“We seriously need to talk” Harvey says as Stiles is getting ready for bed, and the teen startles, not expecting a conversation – it’s late, and he has school in the morning.

Honestly, it’s like this week just won’t end.

“Okay” he agrees, sitting on his bed. His brother closes the door and sits too, looking concerned.

Stiles has to admit he’s a bit confused by this. The worst is past them, everything is out in the open, there’s no reason for Harvey to look concerned now.
“What’s up?”

“The night you told us everything, I got extremely upset and it wasn’t because of you. I need you to know this, always. When I’m upset with you, you’ll know it, Stiles, and I’ll always give you a chance to explain yourself before blaming you. I left because I thought that staying and saying what I was thinking would only upset you further, and you were already distressed enough.”

“You were blaming my dad” he says quietly, and Harvey just stares, not really confirming it, but it isn’t necessary, “I get it. I don’t really… I don’t like thinking about it, Harvey. He was everything I had for the longest time, and I had to take care of him, because watching mom waste away was too painful, I couldn’t risk losing him too. If it wasn’t for you, I don’t think anyone would have got me through his death. I watched both my parents die, alone, with no one to turn to, and I don’t want their memories to be bad ones. So, yeah, I get it why you’d blame him, and I don’t agree with you, but I’m not going to try and defend him, because it won’t change anything now. I know the father I had, and I know the mother I had, and you’ll never know them as I did. Not in the same way. It’s… not worth it.”

Harvey nods somberly, letting it go, apparently, but Stiles has the feeling this is not all.

“That was one thing I had to clear up. The second is that when things get bad, Stiles, you can’t run away like you did, ever again. I honestly thought I was going to die, I was scared like I’ve never been before in my life, and I can’t go through that again.”

“It’s not going to happen again. I think I just… Everything hit me at once, Harvey. All of it. I freaked out.”

“And ran to Derek” Harvey’s voice is neutral, not a single inflection in it, and Stiles knows this is bad. Harvey is using his Lawyer voice.

“He…” he can’t go on, because he doesn’t know what Derek is. He doesn’t even know what he wants Derek to be, really.

It’s all very confusing.

“I can’t ignore the fact that he’s an Alpha werewolf, which is a thing I’m still having trouble believing is actually coming out of my mouth; and also that he is six years older than you” Stiles sighs, waiting for the next part, where Harvey will tell him he better stay away from Derek,

“However, I also can’t ignore the fact that even though he treated you terribly, that he broke up with you, that he never once contacted you in four months, he was the one you felt was safe enough to be with when, just as you put it, you freaked out. When everything was too much, you trusted him to be with you, and that tells me that whatever it is that you two had – or maybe have – is big and strong, and I have a feeling I can’t really fight against it. Not if you really want to be with him.”

“I don’t know if I do” he whispers, looking down for a bit, and then looking back at his brother, “We… Our first kiss, my first kiss ever, by the way, happened when we were arguing. Harvey. It was all so… life or death, you know? The Alphas were after us, and we were always losing so badly, and then Derek was just there, even when Scott left me behind, Derek never did. We worked, and I… I love him” he says, swallowing hard, “But I don’t know how we’d work in the real world, without running for our lives. I don’t know if we can, you know, do this… right. Normal. I don’t know if we can do normal, and I want that. I don’t want to go back to the madness” he stops for a second, laughing quietly and bitterly for a second, “I don’t even know if maybe… If we do get back together, and he sees that he can do a lot better than me? I mean, have you seen him? And what if we get back together and he doesn’t love me anymore, because all we had was this desperate need to live while we could, because we might die any second? What if it was all nothing more than
adrenaline rush for him?” he goes quiet again, looking back at Harvey, “What if it was nothing more than adrenaline rush for me?”

“I can’t tell you I’m happy with this, because I’m not thrilled at you dating anyone” Harvey starts, “I had a problem with that Tony kid, and he was your age. But I do think you’re insane for thinking Derek could ever do any better than you. Come on, Stiles. You think Elizabeth Marshal Simmons would let anyone hang around her, be the King to her Queen if you weren’t the best of the best?” Stiles laughs a little at that, and Harvey keeps going, “As for not knowing what you two are for each other… You won’t find that out by staying away from him, and not finding that out won’t let you move on, Stiles. You have to… see where this goes, and if the end is where this is headed, let it end. But give it closure. You need that. Derek probably needs that too. I can’t imagine what you two have been through together, but I’m sure it left its marks on both of you, and you need to solve this to move on with your lives, be it together or apart, but you need this closure.”

Stiles sighs deeply, and keeps quiet for a long moment before speaking again.

“Does this mean I have your permission to date a guy six years older than me?”

Harvey scoffs.

“No. You have my permission to see if you actually want to date Derek Hale, and him alone. After we figure that out, we can talk about you dating him. Or anyone else, for that matter” he pauses for a bit, frowning, “What happened to Tony, anyway?”

Stiles rubs the back of his neck, a bit sheepish.

“Well, he left me at the party, so it could have blemished Lizzie’s rep, because, you know, her right hand man being dumped? Not cool. So she spread the rumor that I was seeing an older man, and Tony couldn’t compete. He’s cool with it, though, he doesn’t really care about being popular and such” he shrugs by the end.

“And you do?” Harvey asks, and Stiles actually has to think before answering.

“I used to, a lot, when I wasn’t, funnily enough. Now it’s just… it’s easier being with Lizzie than struggling without her. I actually like her. It’s all very weird.”

“As long as you’re happy, kid.”

Stiles smiles at his brother, half raising from the bed to hug him tightly.

He never thought he’d be happy again, but somehow, he is managing.

Harvey leaves him to sleep a few moments after that, and he takes his phone, staring at it for the longest moment, before pulling up Derek’s new number.

Can we talk tomorrow? I’m free after 5.

He puts the phone in mute, and goes to sleep.

He feels confident enough that he doesn’t have to wait for the answer to know that tomorrow they’ll talk.

Hopefully, things will end well – no matter how the talk goes.

Hoping is pretty much all he can do now, right?
Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Chapter the Twenty-Sixth

He’s so nervous the next day that three of his teachers actually pull him aside after their classes and ask him if he’s forgotten to take his meds for his ADHD.

No, he hasn’t forgotten to take his meds, he is just freaking out about his ex-boyfriend – if the ex-part of it even exists, he’s not even sure anymore, because while they haven’t been together for longer than their relationship actually existed, it feels as if they never really ended.

Which doesn’t even make sense, except that it does, and he really doesn’t know what to do with himself when lunch comes around. Elizabeth keeps glancing at him curiously, but she doesn’t really push him to talk – maybe because she isn’t interested, maybe because she actually respects his boundaries, it’s always a toss-up with her, really – and so, when the school day is over, and the Lacrosse training is over, and he finally showers, puts back his uniform and heads out, he feels as if he’s wrong inside his own skin.

He cleared the meeting with Harvey that morning, and he knows Ray isn’t going to be waiting for him when he leaves the school – he’s supposed to call when he’s done. Which means that if Derek doesn’t show up he doesn’t even have a way to go home – he’ll have to figure out the subway, which is something Mike has been meaning to make sure he knows how to work for months now, but Harvey keeps making excuses, and he never really does go there.

Harvey is incredibly overprotective, now that he thinks about it.

He misses his Jeep. He misses driving, really, going wherever he wanted to go with no drivers, no having to wait – of course, driving in New York is pretty much waiting all the freaking time, so it’s not the same.

He still misses his Jeep. In a way, Harvey gave him that Jeep.

What if Derek doesn’t show up?

He leaves the school at ten to five, and is prepared to wait for a few minutes – he’ll wait until five fifteen, and then he’s going home.

He won’t be kept waiting. It’s not right. After all, Derek was the one who said he wanted to talk first, so, yeah, he should be on time! Hell, he should be early.

As he finally gets to the street, he sees Derek leaning against the Camaro, looking just as freaked out as Stiles is feeling, and it helps calm Stiles down a bit – until the moment when it hits him that maybe Derek wants to talk to him to tell him that he doesn’t want to have anything to do with Stiles anymore, and he’s not really ready for that – he doesn’t know if he wants to be with Derek, but he kind of wants this to end on his own terms, and not just because Derek said so!

“Hey” Derek greets, with a small smile, and Stiles stops and smiles back, relaxing. Things will work out in the end.
He knows they will, they have to.

They just… have to.

“Hey” he says back, and they just stare at each other for a moment, before Derek tears his eyes from Stiles’s and looks at his uniform.

“You’re in uniform again” he comments, and Stiles looks down at himself, frowning and adjusting the strap of his book bag on his shoulder.

“I kind of wear it every day” he shrugs, “Why?”

“It works for you” Derek says, looking down, and looking downright mortified, “It kind of really works for me too, and I feel like I should be on How to catch a predator” he mutter the last part, but Stiles grins broadly.

“You like the uniform. You like little old me in a school uniform. Ha.”

Derek tries to glare at him but it kind of loses its effect when he’s kind of blushing.

“I thought we could go and eat something, if you’d like? Peter called me earlier and passed along the message that Harvey will have me arrested if we go to my place, so we should be somewhere public at all times.”

Stiles laughs at that, shaking his head.

“That does sound like my brother” he comments, and starts walking, “There’s a nice place a few blocks from here. Sometimes we send one of the minions to get us food from there for lunch.”

“Minions?” Derek repeats, walking beside him.

“Yeah, it’s how Lizzie calls her helpers. They’re useful” he explains, shrugging.

“Lizzie is that girl who was with you on the steps last week?”

“Yeah. She’s a good… friend.”

“A friend like the Tony guy you were at the party with?”

“No, because Tony was a date, and Lizzie and I never dated. If you can call a date going to a party where I had a nervous breakdown, and then to another party where he disappeared.”

“He’s stupid” Derek grumbles, and Stiles looks at him with a small smile.

“Nah, he’s a good friend too. Not as crazy as most of the other kids at school.”

“You sound like you’re having fun at school and with your brother” Derek’s tone is careful, and Stiles pauses a bit before answering.

“I am, yeah. It’s… different than back in Beacon Hills. Harvey… takes care of me. He acts as if he can protect me from things. It’s… nice.”

Derek is quiet after that, and Stiles doesn’t know how to break the silence either, so they just keep walking, getting into the place Stiles mentioned, and getting a table at the furthest corner, where they can have at least the concept of privacy.
A waiter comes over, and they order, and then there’s silence again.

“So… we should probably… talk. Since it’s, you know, what we came here to do.”

Derek takes a deep breath before looking straight into Stiles’s eyes.

“I never meant to hurt you. I mean, I knew I was hurting you, but that wasn’t the point of it. I just wanted to keep you safe.”

“We had this conversation before, Derek. And, honestly, if all we’re going to do from now on is apologize, we’ll never get on with this. I get why you did it – I don’t agree with it, but I get it. I’m not going to say I forgive you, but I understand, and in the end, it got me something really good. I love Harvey, and I love living here, I even love my new school, to be perfectly honest with you. And I’m not going back to Beacon Hills, I told Scott this before he left. I don’t want that life anymore. So, really, what’s left for us to talk about is if… If we still have anything. If now that our lives aren’t in danger at every turn we still are… us” he pauses but, before Derek can say anything, he continues, “And that’s another thing, how is this going to work for you, Derek? I mean, being… you know, of your… rank, here. Is there going to be a whole lot of…” he flails his hands about, and knows that Derek will get what he means.

Derek is shaking his head before he can even finish.

“Beacon Hills has that name for a reason, Stiles. That place is like… Sunnydale” Stiles scoffs, and Derek smiles briefly before going on, “When I and Laura ran away, we came here. It was peaceful. Hard, of course, because we had lost everything, but it’s calm. There are no disputes on territories like in the South, and the general consent is that if there’s a creature in New York, said creature is civilized enough to live here and not cause trouble. That they are more human than animal, and that they will respect each other. Even if I ran into another Alpha here, it wouldn’t be a problem – as long as everything is under control during the full moon, it’s pretty much live and let live” he finishes with a shrug, leaning back on his chair when the waiter comes to bring their food.

Stiles stares at him while the man puts their food on the table and excuses himself.

“I’m sorry you ever had to go back to Beacon Hills” he says, and Derek shrugs.

“Not really your fault. If anything, we should have known better than leaving Peter there all alone, but we were young, and we were afraid. I don’t think anyone in our position would have done anything differently.”

“So… it’s peaceful here. No… weirdness. No life and death, just plain, old, boring New York?”

Derek smirks at him, and Stiles has to confess that his heart skips a beat, which only serves to make Derek smirk widen.

“If you think New York is boring, you’re not doing New York right.”

“You know what I mean” he mutters, blushing and chewing on his straw.

“Yes, everything is fine here. No more danger for you, I promise that, no matter what happens between us.”

“And what is going to happen between us?” he asks boldly in a rush, before he loses his nerve, “I mean, I still… I just… I keep thinking that maybe we just…”

“You think we were only together because we were always in danger” Derek says, his tone
sounding as if he finally understood something.

“I don’t know, Derek. I never really… did the dating thing under normal circumstances, how am I to know it wasn’t just that – adrenaline and fear?”

“Do you think it’s all that it was?”

“I… don’t know what to think, really. I still… I haven’t stopped caring for you. If I had, I wouldn’t have freaked out that night at the party, and I wouldn’t have been so hurt when I thought you and Cora were… you know. But I don’t know what that means. Do you even want to? I mean, you’re single and hot and smart and in New York. You could do anything, be with anyone.”

Derek stares at him for the longest moment and then he leans forward, taking one of Stiles’s hands in his, and the teen frowns at him, not getting it.

“Would like to go to dinner with me on Friday?”

“What?”

“Dinner with me on Friday. I’ll even call Harvey and clear it with him before picking you up at seven. If you want to, that is?”

“I… don’t get it.”

Derek shrugs, grins at him and leans back on his chair, looking downright confident.

“You don’t know if we can do normal, I’ll show you normal. I’ll give you all the normal in the world. Friday, do you want to?”

Stiles doesn’t know if he should laugh or what, so he just nods, a bit stunned.

Derek grins at him, pays the bill and says goodbye.

It takes Stiles ten minutes to understand what is going on before he can actually leave.

He has a date with Derek Hale.

He gets his phone and sends a text to Lydia, Scott, Allison and Lizzie.

*I’m going to dinner with Derek!!!!*

He doesn’t care if the abundance of exclamation points makes him sound like a thirteen year old girl – he’s going to normal dinner with Derek.

This is as awesome as it gets.

X

“So… dinner” Harvey says for what Mike thinks it’s the fourth time, and he can just feel Stiles losing his patience with his older brother.

“Yes. That meal we consume after lunch, but before breakfast, usually before sleeping, if you don’t raid the fridge in the meantime. We talked, and he told me things here are different, and then he asked me to dinner. He also told me he’ll call you if he has to, to make sure everything is okay.”

The kid is looking anxious, and Mike decides to end this before everything goes to shit again.
“So… he can come and see Harvey tomorrow at the office. Or maybe call him. Or they can meet for lunch, and set everything right, so Friday night everything is perfect, right, Harvey? Because you told Stiles he could try and see where this goes, and this is him, following your advice.”

He glares at his boyfriend until the man sighs, annoyed, but turns to his brother with a smile so forced it must be hurting him – but it is a smile.

“I’ll call Peter and tell him to see if we can have lunch tomorrow or something. You can go Friday, just… no going back to his place, no getting home after eleven.”

“Twelve year olds have curfews later than eleven on a Friday night” Stiles comments and Harvey grins cheekily at him.

“Twelve year olds aren’t going out with a twenty-three year old Alpha werewolf.”

“Got it” the teen answers, and he and Mike trade a look, before he excuses himself with talks of homework, but he’s probably going to his room to talk to Lydia.

They hear the door close and Mike turns to Harvey, who is looking downright miserable, staring at his scotch and sighing.

“You know, when I realized you were actually going to make this whole parenting your younger brother thing work, I pictured you in a lot of ways – incredibly overprotective wasn’t one of them.”

“I’m trying. I just… I don’t know.”

“That was eloquent. I can totally see why your name is on the wall of your firm now.”

Harvey glares at him, and Mike grins back, until the man just sighs.

“I… never really thought about having children. I know we’ve been together for a short while, and we never really talked about this, but…”

“I don’t want kids either, Harvey. I love children, but I’m too afraid of what I could do to screw them up to actually want to raise one.”

Harvey sighs, relieved this time, and Mike smiles fondly at him.

“So, you see, you get it. Stiles is… it” he shrugs, “The closest thing I’ll ever have to a son, and I know he’s my brother, and that should be enough, but I have so little time to make up for so long, I just want him to…” he seems to be struggling with the rest of that sentence, and Mike moves, sitting by his feet on the floor, putting his chin on the man’s knee.

“You want him to be your little brother a bit longer.”

Harvey nods tiredly, taking another sip of his drink.

“I wasted so long not being there for him. Ever since he told us everything, I can’t help but think what if I had been there? What if I had been in his life, what if I wasn’t too busy with the mess my mother made when I was a teen to be there for my brother, who, for all I knew, could have been going through the same shit I did? I lost so much time, and now that I have him here, I don’t want to lose him again.”

“I’m not going to lie to you and tell you that you wouldn’t have made a difference, because you would have, in a way or another. Maybe he would have been more careful, maybe he wouldn’t even
have been in that mess to begin with, or maybe everything would be exactly the same – we can never tell what could have been, Harvey. But you are here now, and you are doing your very best, and that’s what Stiles needs right now. What he will always need, to know that you care. That he matters” Mike kisses the man’s knee and gets up, “Now, I am going to take a shower, and I wouldn’t say no to some company, if you are… up for it” he grins, and Harvey rolls his eyes.

“I’ll be there in a minute” he says, raising his glass, showing it’s still half full.

Mike goes and takes his time getting in the shower.

If he had waited a few more seconds, he’d have seen Harvey sending a text to Donna.

_Hale’s address ASAP._

Smirking, he gets up and follows his boyfriend.

Yeah, he’s doing well. By tomorrow morning he’ll be doing even better.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on [Tumblr](http://www.tumblr.com)
Chapter the Twenty-Seventh

Derek is extremely confused when there’s a knock on his door at seven thirty in the morning, because Peter and Cora both have their keys, and he knows no one else who would come to the apartment.

Weary, because that’s what living in Beacon Hills for a year does to a person, he goes to the door and peeks out, frowning when he finds Harvey Specter standing there. He opens the door and stares at the man for a moment, not saying anything.

“Are you going to invite me in or are we having this conversation out in the hall?” the man asks after a few seconds. Derek startles out of his confusion, and invites him in, going to the living room, where he offers Harvey a seat.

“Would you like something to drink?” he offers, feeling very out of place in his own home.

“No, thanks. This won’t take long” Harvey gives him a brief, cold smile, and Derek sits opposite him in an armchair, and waits, “Peter already out?”

Derek nods.

“Yeah. This isn’t… permanent. He’s looking for a place of his own, I’m looking for a place too.”

Harvey keeps staring at him, and it innerves Derek to no end.

“Your sister?”

“She’s left for school. Can I help you with something?” he ends up asking, because this staring thing is starting to freak him out.

“You’re going on a date with my brother Friday night” Harvey says instead of answering him, “My younger, still underage brother.”

Oh.

Now he’s starting to get it.

“Stiles said it was okay. I mean, that he had talked to you last night, and you had given him the
okay.”

“I did. And don’t get me wrong, this is not about you being… you” the last word sounds like the worst kind of accusation, and the accompanying disdaining look doesn’t help either, “This is about you being interested in my brother. Hell, you could be Prince Harry, for all I care, and I still wouldn’t like the idea.”

“I’m not going to hurt him” he tells the man calmly, every word enunciated slowly.

“I know that. Because if you do, there won’t be much left of you for me to do anything with – and I’m not saying this lightly. I will end you if you hurt him again. End you. You may be a werewolf, and you may be an Alpha, whatever that means, but this is my brother we’re talking about, and I am one of the major partners in the best Law Firm in this city, which means it is the best one in the world. There won’t be a single rock left where you can hide under after I’m done with you if you hurt him. You get that?”

Derek is not really proud of it, but he does growl in answer, and it seems to amuse Harvey instead of scaring him.

He keeps quiet, though, trying very hard not to make things worse.

“That being clear, I came here to give you some ground rules for this dating thing of yours. He will not be home later than eleven on school nights if you do go out more than this once. On weekends, there’ll still be a curfew, to be decided when you tell us what you mean to do, and you will always tell us what your plans are. He will not come back to your place after said dates, and I know every single private detective in town, I’ll know if he does. And, most importantly, you will not touch him inappropriately until he’s legal. My wish was to actually wait until he’s out of High School, but I know my brother, and Mike made me realize that he’d be the one trying to break that rule, so you are the more responsible one. I’m trusting you to keep those rules, they are very, very simple, after all” he completes with the same smile from before, before going on, “I don’t know how things were before, with the two of you, but they won’t be the same here. I’m watching you. I won’t let you hurt him, do you understand me?” he finishes in a whisper, and Derek sighs in relief.

“I’m glad” he says, and Harvey actually looks surprised for half a second before schooling his features again into threatening, “Look, I don’t know if we’re going to work or not. I have this tendency of… clinging to feelings. It takes me forever to get over someone, and it won’t be any different with Stiles – but maybe he won’t want to be with me. Maybe normal with me is not what he needs, or what he expects of a relationship, but he is the one who will have to tell me to stay away from him, because if there’s one thing I learned about Stiles is that no one else fights his battles for him. He doesn’t let anyone do that. Not me, not you, not Scott, anyone” he stops and stares at Harvey seriously for a moment, before deciding to actually say everything he wants to say at once, “That being said, I want to tell you that I get that things will be different here. You are in his life, and I get that. I also get that you’re watching him, that you know what is happening with him, and I think he needs that more than he needs me. So, yeah, I’ll follow your rules, and I’ll make sure he follows them too, because I actually kind of need you to… accept me, even if not like me. I’m glad he has someone who knows what’s going on in his life, and is trying to help him.”

“It’s not like I’m spying on him” the man says defensively, and Derek rushes to correct himself.

“That’s not what I meant, I just… I’m sure Stiles told you he accused me of murder?”

“Twice” the lawyer contributes with a smirk. Derek nods.

“One of those times? I hid in his house. Inside his house, in his room. We weren’t together yet, I
actually still found him deeply annoying by then, but I finally got why Scott was running to him for help – I, a wanted fugitive, was hiding inside the Sheriff’s son’s bedroom and he knew nothing about it. And don’t get me wrong, I love Stiles, but he can’t lie for shit. He can deceive you, sure, if he has the time to think about it, and formulate a lie, but on the stop? He can’t. We were in so much trouble back in Beacon Hills all the time, and he was always there, even when he didn’t have to be, and I am sorry if you think I’m out of line for saying this about a dead man, but the Sheriff just wasn’t… involved enough in his life. And when he told him everything, he didn’t believe his own son. So, yeah, I’m glad you’re in his life. I just hope you’ll find it in you to see that maybe I can have a place in his life too.”

Harvey gets up then, eyeing him up and down for a long moment, before huffing and turning away, clearly intent on leaving.

“Maybe I won’t have to hate you after all” he says to Derek before opening the door and going away.

It’s a good twenty minutes before Derek actually moves from the spot he’s in, staring at the closed door.

Even their normal is weird.

X

“Please, tell me you didn’t wake up early to go and try to threaten Stiles’s boyfriend” Donna greets him when he gets to the office, and Harvey stares at her with an eyebrow raised for a moment, before getting his coffee and a pile of papers from her hands.

“He’s not Stiles’s boyfriend yet” he replies, and the redhead rolls her eyes at him.

“Sure, pick that part of the sentence to correct. By the way, I’m going out with Peter Friday night too, so you won’t have to worry about Stiles going to Derek’s, as I will, for sure, be there” she finishes with a wink, and Harvey feels like banging his head on the table.

What is it with all these… Hales in his life all of a sudden?

It feels like an invasion.

X

Stiles spends Thursday night freaking out, and just… raiding his closet.

Of course he has nice clothes, but they are… clothes. Clothes that Donna helped him buy, mostly, a few things he got from Harvey that aren’t really his style, some things he got when he was with Mike, but nothing is… what it should be. It’s not what he wants to be wearing when Derek picks him up in twenty-four hours.

Mike tries to help him, but as his fashion sense is limited to Columbia sweatshirts, he’s not really all that helpful. He considers asking Harvey for help, but he can’t do that to his brother, because he’d try to help, out of the goodness of his heart, and it’d drive him crazy.

Plus, he wants to look hot, and he doesn’t think older brothers are supposed to help you achieve that.

Friday morning he gets to school and zeroes in Elizabeth, determined. She sees him coming and sends the help away, staring at his determined face and frowning a bit.
“I need your help” he states, and she sighs, long and suffering.

“I knew the day would come when you’d realize that I am actually a valuable tool to your evil means. What is it that you need? Taking some enemy down? Having a teacher fired? Erasing something from your rap sheet? A good lawyer?”

He startles a bit, waving at her to stop.

“No, God. No. I don’t *need* a lawyer, I *live* with Lawyers. And certainly let’s go back to the rap sheet at a later date, but I need your help with… an outfit.”

“An outfit” she repeats, “For the date you have tonight. Which you felt the need to warn me about through a text message.”

“Yeah, I need help.”

She eyes him up and down for a bit, and then nods decisively.

“Okay. I’m giving you three hours of my time after school, and I hope you brought your credit card, because we are going shopping.”

He’s not sure it’s his best decision *ever*, but at least he’s sure he’ll be well dressed.

X

“So, what are we talking about here? You want to look good, extremely hot, easy, hard to get?” Lizzie asks a few hours later, both of them with coffee in their hands, staring at the shopping windows.

“I want him to eat his heart out when he sees me” Stiles replies, surprising himself with the vehemence in his voice – he hadn’t even realized he cared this much.

“How did you two break up, anyway? If we’re talking about Leather Man here, it’s clear he likes you.”

“My dad died, and then he went to see me at the hospital and broke up with me.”

Elizabeth stops and stares at him incredulously.

“And you want to get back to him? What is wrong with you, Stiles? If the thing is that he’s older and dangerous, we can find you one of those who isn’t really a jerk!”

“It’s not like that. He wanted me gone from Beacon Hills, because the guys who killed my dad were still around. He knew that if I was still with him, I’d never leave.”

She looks distrustful for a moment, and then huffs delicately.

“Still, what an awful thing to do.”

“Hence him wanting to eat his heart out when he sees me.”

She nods, staring at some more shop windows.

“What does he like? I mean, leather, obviously, but I assume *he* is going with that look, and you want to look good, not like his twin.”
Stiles shrugs a bit.

“He likes the school uniform” he comments, and then he smirks a bit, “He said it made him feel bad for it, but he does dig the uniform.”

The smile Lizzie sends him is positively evil.

“Oh, I can work with that” she says, dragging him into a store.

He knew she’d be his best shot at this.

X

Derek takes a deep breath before going into the building and asking for Specter. The doorman glares at him a little, but does let him up when someone in the apartment allows, and he takes the elevator breathing in and out slowly.

He’s dressed casually, clean jeans, a good sweater, and his leather jacket over it. It’s not like Stiles hasn’t seen him bleeding black blood and almost dying for him to actually care all that much about his clothes.

When Mike opens the door and Derek sees Stiles he realizes that maybe he’s made a mistake.

Stiles is in an intense red coat with a different cut, the neck of it up a little. The thing is, well, tight. And it’s put over a cardigan that is a little open at the bottom, over a shirt and tie, just like the one of his uniform, except this one is deep blue with thin stripes of the same red as the coat. His jeans are artistically washed out, and he’s wearing boots with the legs of the pants tucked into them, and he looks like…

Well, he’s been staring at him for a full minute, not saying anything, maybe he should say something.

“You look amazing” he gasps out, finally, and the teen smirks at him.

“I know” he answers, turning to look at his brother, who is glaring, “So, we’re off, bye.”

“Back by eleven, or I swear to God.”

“I’ll be back by eleven, God” he mocks, imitating his brother’s tone, “Mike, take him out or something” he says to his brother’s boyfriend, “You know, you really should go out, Harvey, maybe Mike will trade you for a younger model if you’re this grumpy all the time.”

Before they can answer he grasps Derek’s hand in his, and takes him out of the apartment, closing the door behind him.

Derek isn’t entirely sure he’ll survive the night.

X

“I’m kind of shuddering to think what you’d do if Stiles were a girl.”

Harvey stops looking angrily at the door to look angrily at Mike.

“The exact same thing. It’s not about Stiles being a boy or a girl, it’s about that… leather clad miscreant taking him out.”

“Leather clad miscreant” Mike repeats, “Man, I really should trade you in for a younger model.”
“You go and try to find a newer model who is half as great as I am. They don’t make them like this anymore” Harvey replies, gesturing to himself, and Mike laughs out loud at that.

“Are you laughing at me?”

“A little, yeah. I kind of am.”

Harvey glares again and picks Mike up, putting him over his shoulder, as the man squeaks, surprised.

“Put me down!”

“I’ll show you a newer model” he grunts, dropping him on the bed.

He can’t do anything about Derek Hale taking his brother out, but he sure has some ideas about passing the time.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

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One more thing: for those of you who like the ~~visual, the coat Stiles is wearing is like this one, except it's red, like the suit Dylan wears in that Teen Vogue shoot, and without that belt, which, yuck. And The boots are like these ones, except they are black.

It took me, like, half the afternoon to decide on these clothes. Clearly I spend way too much time thinking about clothes.
Chapter the Twenty-Eighth

They leave the building hand in hand but, suddenly, when they hit the street, Derek kind of fears everything will get awkward.

He wants this to work so freaking badly that he’s afraid he’s going to screw it up in his attempts not to screw it up.

He hears Stiles sighing next to him and turns to look at the teen, who is kind of almost smiling, but looking ahead. Stiles squeezes his hand, and Derek looks down, fighting a smile – squeezing hands were usually reserved for those tense moments when the Alphas almost had them but then they didn’t. For when they managed to burn a building with Khali in it. For when Ennis had to run away from Scott, Isaac and Allison. Now, maybe, they can have hands being squeezed just for the hell of it.

“The way I see it, we can do this two ways: we either get really awkward, not talk about anything that really matters, let it all fester and destroy whatever this could have been, or we skip the awkward right ahead, talk about whatever issues we have, you know, right now, and keep doing this until we actually find out if we are as in love as we thought we were.”

Derek is a bit stunned by the whole thing, but looks sideways at Stiles, who’s staring determinedly ahead.

“I really like that second plan.”

The teen beams at him, and their hands sway between them.

“So… where are we going?”

“There’s this restaurant near here… It’s not really fancy or anything, but it’s not as loud as a place with a lot of teens would be. I thought it’d be nice for us to talk.”

Stiles nods, and steals a glance at him.

“Did you have to make a reservation for it? Or is it just… we get there, we sit, we eat?”

Derek looks at him with an eyebrow raised.

“I made a reservation. Why?”

“Because Lizzie told me that if you hadn’t done that, then you were clearly not worthy of me.”
“This Lizzie seems to be very fond of you” he comments neutrally, and Stiles shrugs a bit.

“I’m starting to get that. I think, in her own way, she actually likes me” he pauses for a moment, looking at Derek briefly, before looking away, people passing them by on the sidewalk, walking briskly because of the cold of late November, “What about you?”

“What about me… what? I don’t like Lizzie, she threatened to have security called on me the one time I met her.”

“No” Stiles says, shaking his head, “What about, you know, what did you do, back in Beacon Hills, without me there?”

“Well, there was the whole thing with the twins…” he starts, not really wanting to get into it, because this is *not* what their first date – oh my God, it *was* their first *real* date, wasn’t it? – was supposed to be about.

“No, you don’t need to get into that, Scott told me pretty much all I needed to know. I meant… what did you *do*? When you weren’t… you know, being *Alpha Hale*. What did Derek do?”

“Derek missed you” he answers, and Stiles facepalms with the hand that is not in Derek’s one.

“Oh my God, that’s so cheesy I might have to go back home.”

“It’s true, though. I missed you” Derek continues simply, “I didn’t… I mean, I *knew* I liked you. I wouldn’t have started anything with you, I wouldn’t have encouraged you to do anything about your crush on me either if I didn’t think there was something there, but I never really… *realized* how much I missed you until you just weren’t there” he looks at Stiles, sees his face a bit stunned, but not in a bad way, “And I don’t mean just when Lydia was being a complete b… uhmm, was being unreasonable, or when no one could even start to understand what Peter was saying, or when we needed someone there who could think outside the box. I missed you as… Derek. Not as *Alpha Hale*” he says, imitating Stiles’s tone from before, “I missed you when you wouldn’t send me a text with a good night on it, and I missed you in the days when the twins didn’t do anything and everything was calm. I missed you with the TV on, or trying to convince me to have a Facebook page. I just… missed you a lot.”

Stiles doesn’t seem to know what to answer, but they get to the restaurant, and so they don’t really talk for a few minutes, as they are seated, and their waiter brings them their menus. Stiles tells him to order for him with a weird smile, and something tells Derek Lizzie has something to do with that too – he’s not sure whether he really likes this girl, for wanting what’s best for Stiles, or if he hates her, because Stiles already was sneaky as hell before, he doesn’t need to get any better at it.

“So… apart from missing me, you did nothing else? There was… no one else?” Stiles asks when the waiter brings them their sodas – Stiles can’t drink anyway, and Derek doesn’t *want* to drink, in case Harvey has a test ready for him when he brings Stiles back home.

Derek thinks for a minute, and considers not saying anything, but *not telling* Stiles things will only lead him to trouble – plus, Scott or Lydia, or even Allison, probably told him already.

“Jennifer… the Darach?” he clarifies, and Stiles nods, “She… well, she helped me the night we… ended the twins. I got hurt, she helped heal me, and she… well, she kissed me.”

Stiles stares at him for the longest moment.

“And?” he prods after a few seconds, and Derek shrugs.
“And, that’s it. I didn’t kiss her back, asked her to leave – thanked her first, of course, for helping – and that’s it.”

Stiles nods a bit and doesn’t say anything. Derek starts to get nervous, because a not talking Stiles is something he’s not really used to.

“And you? I mean, I know you and Lizzie didn’t date, and I met Tony, but…”

The teen shrugs.

“But that’s it. I wasn’t really in a frame of mind for dating, really. I only said yes to Tony because I thought you were with Cora, anyway.”

Derek shudders at the thought.

“Gods, no. Plus, Cora isn’t even a permanent addition to the pack, I don’t think.”

“What do you mean?” Stiles asks, frowning and worried, and this is not what Derek wants right now.

“I don’t want to… This is our first date, Stiles. We shouldn’t talk about my sister of all things.”

The teen eyes him again, and then leans forward, really close to Derek.

“Here’s how I see this: yes, this is our first date, and we haven’t had the easiest of lives. We have been hurt, and we aren’t completely healed yet. And if what we really wanted to do was normal, then we both would head to different therapists, and would try to find our way to wellbeing by ourselves, and only then would we try to pick this up where we left off. But I don’t want to do that, Derek. I want to be here with you while you heal, so I’ll always be a part of you, and I want you to be here with me too, so you can never really leave. I want to do normal from now on. I don’t want to be running for my life, but I can’t erase what we have been through, and I want to deal with all of that – with you. If we can. If, apart from being really good at running, we have something more in common. This is what I want.”

Derek is still in shock at those words when the waiter brings their order, and he stares at the food and thanks the man before looking back at Stiles, who’s staring at his food with a small smile – Derek takes it as a win, seeing as he ordered what he thought Stiles would like.

“You know who the most famous couple at St. Jude’s and Constance was?” Stiles asks and Derek looks at him, confused for the moment.

“Ahm, no. I’m not even sure I know what you’re talking about right now.”

“Well, a few years ago there was this blog that talked about all the gossip about this very specific group of popular people. There was this couple, Blair Waldorf and Chuck Bass? They are… insane. The party I went with Tony, after the whole thing at Thanksgiving? He was throwing it, and let me tell you, it was insane. They are… not healthy together. They are buried to their noses in issues, and they are married. Rumor has it, according to what Elizabeth told me, that they actually got married so that Blair couldn’t be asked to testify against Chuck on the case of Chuck’s dad’s death. She’s pregnant too. And I never, ever, saw a couple happier than them. They fit. They are wrong, but they fit. And I think that, if they can work, man, then so can we. So, yeah, it’s not perfect first date material, but it’s our first date, so I think it’s pretty much what we should do, seeing as the first time we slept in the same room you were running from the police because I accused you of murder.”

That gets them a funny look from a waiter that is passing by, but Stiles doesn’t seem to care, and
Derek has to chuckle quietly at them.

So much for normal.

“Well, Cora ran away, and when she did that, she found protection with a pack in São Paulo, in Brazil. A bunch of them were in vacation in LA, where she ran to after the fire, and they took her with them. When she heard about the Hale pack being back, she returned, but she’ll always have a place in that pack. And I know she’s finishing her school here and everything, but she doesn’t feel… comfortable here. I don’t think she’s going to stay, really. Peter is a bit much for her.”

Stiles snorts at that.

“Peter is a bit much for everyone. And I’m sorry. I mean, it’s your sister” he trails off, and Derek nods, taking a bite of his food.

“Yes, but it’s been six years. I think Scott is closer to a younger sibling to me than she is right now. I love her, and the relief I felt when I found out she was alive is… indescribable. It doesn’t mean it has to work, though.”

Stiles seems to consider this for a moment, before shrugging, seeming uncertain.

“I don’t know… I think… It depends on how much you need it to work, really. Harvey didn’t… he wasn’t the most caring person before I showed up in his life. I mean, he isn’t, even now, but he cares about me a lot, and I care about him, but we really needed this to work. When I came here, I thought I had no one else; and he was going through some really shitty stuff too. I think… the fact that she has the option to go, but chose to stay, says a lot about how much she wants it to work too.”

Derek nods, and Stiles shrugs on the other side of the table.

“On the other hand, it’s also awesome that she had someone there for her all these years. For all she knew, she was eleven and all alone.”

“Yeah, I’m glad she had that pack. Whatever she chooses to do will be fine by me, I just want her to be happy.”

Stiles smiles at him then, wide and open.

“I bet she just wants you to be happy too.”

“She actually danced Wednesday, when I told her you had agreed to go out with me today. She says I’ve been moping, and that she wants us to get back together soon so she can get to know you, because she hates you a little bit.”

“How can she hate me? She doesn’t even know me!” the teen exclaims indignantly, and Derek smiles sheepishly.

“It might have something to do with a lot of ‘If Stiles were here’ situations in the past few months. We all missed you.”

Stiles laughs at that, looking incredibly smug.

“I kind of missed you guys too.”

“So, how have things been here? I mean, really, apart from Tony” he manages to say the name of the teen with minimum disdain, but Stiles is smirking at him anyway.
“Good. I mean, I haven’t been out much, and Harvey has an overprotective streak five miles wide, so I haven’t even seen all that much of New York, really, not by myself, anyway. School’s good.”

“You’re playing Lacrosse still, right?”

Stiles nods.

“Yeah, first line. Apparently, not having werewolves competing with me helps me a lot. I kind of changed my prescription too, it’s been helping me too.”

“I noticed you are a little less…” he doesn’t say the word, but Stiles chuckles and nods in agreement.

“Taking the medicine in the right dosage and schedule helps a lot too.”

Derek sets his fork and knife on the table and just stares at Stiles for a long moment.

The teen starts to fidget soon.

“What?”

“I’m just… glad you have Harvey in your life.”

Stiles swallows hard, looking down, and then looking back at Derek, with a sad half-smile on his face.

“Me too.”

Dinner goes on after that, pleasant and calm, and as normal as they can get, really. Stiles tells Derek about little things that happened at school, which movies he’s seen, which ones he wants to, what is like to live with two lawyers and how much harder St. Jude’s is compared to Beacon Hills High. He tells him about his plans to get into an Ivy League College now, not really because he always dreamed about it, but because he’s just now realizing that he can. He actually has the potential.

Derek tells him about trying to find a new apartment – the one they live in now is the same one he used to live with Laura, and he really doesn’t want to be there any longer than necessary. He tells Stiles about his plans of finally working as an engineer, which is something he loves doing but never really had the chance to work with – he was just finishing his first month at a huge company when Laura stopped answering his calls and he went back to Beacon Hills.

At ten-thirty they leave the restaurant, Derek insisting on paying.

“I don’t want Lizzie thinking I’m cheap” he quips at Stiles who laughs at him but stops arguing.

The doorman is different this time of night, but he clearly has been warned to keep an eye on Stiles, because when they stop in front of the gates the man looks at his watch and taps it, showing it to Stiles, who waves at him with a smile.

“Is your brother paying these people to keep an eye on you or something?” he asks, and Stiles laughs out loud at that.

“Kinda?” he answers, still smiling and shrugging a bit, “My second week here he took me to meet everyone who works for him, you know, the driver, the three doormen of the building, asking them to keep an eye on me, because it was just the two of us. Now Mike is home a lot too, but they still keep an eye on me. I think I was a bit of a wreck those first weeks, it helped to make them fond of me.”
Derek opens his mouth to apologize, but Stiles is staring at him and shaking his head.

“Don’t… apologize, or say you’re sorry, or… just don’t. I know, and you know, and we can’t keep having this same talk over and over. It’s done. It matters, sure, but it can’t keep coming up every time we mention something that has already happened.”

“Okay” he agrees, and takes a step closer, getting both of Stiles’s hands in his, “So… as far as first dates go, what did you think of this one?”

Stiles looks at him with an eyebrow raised.

“Well, it beats the one I had with Tony, where he left me at the party” Derek can see he’s struggling not to smirk, and rolls his eyes.

“Do you want to do something tomorrow? We could catch a movie. It could even be in the afternoon, so Harvey won’t freak out.”

“I want to, but I can’t. I have to help Lizzie with… stuff.”

“Stuff?”

“Winter Dance stuff.”

“You have a Winter Dance? And you’re going?” Derek asks, surprise clear in his voice, and Stiles stares at him in challenge.

“I’ll have you know I’m not only going, as I am a part of the organizing committee. That’s why I have to go with Lizzie to all these places tomorrow, for something to do with decoration, because she decided the people we hired to do the decoration have no taste. It’s mostly walking around a bunch of shops and carrying stuff for her, really. She never listens to me.”

“I can help” he offers, and Stiles looks downright incredulous.

“You want to spend your Saturday helping with St. Jude’s and Constance Winter Dance?”

“No, I want to spend my Saturday with you.”

Stiles stares at him with narrowed eyes.

“I think you have brain damage, and it’s contagious, because you keep saying these ridiculous cheesy lines, and I keep finding it adorable” Derek laughs, and the teen sighs, “Okay, you can help. Can you meet me here at one? We’re going to lunch with her.”

“Okay” he agrees, and leans forward, coming closer to Stiles, grazing his lips softly right at the corner of his mouth, “Good night, Stiles” he whispers and pulls back.

“You are evil” the teen says in a shaky voice, turning away and getting in the building to the sound of Derek’s laugh.

He hasn’t felt this good since…

He actually thinks he never felt this good before.
Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr.
Chapter the Twenty-Ninth

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry it took me this long, but this chapter was really, REALLY hard to write for some reason.

Anyway, the next one will probably be the last, so yay for that!

I hope you guys enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uneven Odds

Chapter the Twenty-Ninth

Derek can’t say he’s surprised when Elizabeth is already at Stiles’s when he gets there on Saturday, but he isn’t quite expecting the girl to answer the door when the doorman lets him up.

“So, you’re Derek” she says in a brisk tone, and he arches an eyebrow at her, not quite liking her attitude.

“And you are…” he starts, as if he doesn’t know who she is, because there’s nothing more annoying to someone like Elizabeth than not be known.

“A friend of Stiles’s” she answers with a sweet, and a bit scary, smile, “You know, the one his brother actually likes” she adds, stepping away to let him in.

Stiles is just coming down the hallway, with a big smile on his face.

“Hey, you made it!”

Derek smiles at him, deciding to ignore the girl, who is still staring at him.

“I told you I would. So, what’s the plan?”

“Just some stores and stuff” he answers, shrugging, just as the blond guy, Harvey’s boyfriend, comes into the room.

“So, you three off to some shopping?” he asks cheerfully, and Stiles turns to him, looking suspicious.

“Harvey is still in the shower, right?”

“Yes. So you should, you know, go. Fast. Now.”

Stiles nods, and kind of pushes Derek out the door that Elizabeth has just left through, and Derek looks a bit confused.

“What just happened?”

“Well, Lizzie warned Mark that you’d be coming after her, that’s why he let you in without buzzing
up, and when he warned us you were in the building, Mike convinced Harvey to take a shower, so he wouldn’t be there to interrogate you.”

“Your brother doesn’t like me” he states, knowing it was the truth, because, well, Harvey told him so.

Stiles just shrugs a bit as an answer.

“I can take him, you know. It’s not like I’m a defenseless person, Stiles.”

Lizzie snorts at that, and Derek turns to her, who is staring at him, looking thoroughly unimpressed.

“You do realize that Harvey is one of the major partners in the biggest Law Firm in New York. You can have as many muscles as you want, he could end you in ten sentences or less. You should thank us for not letting him have at you as you clearly deserve.”

“I don’t--”

“Ah ah ah” the girl interrupts, shaking a finger at him, “The guy who breaks up with his underage boyfriend when his father has just died does not possess the right to argue with the best friend.”

Derek’s eyes widen, as Stiles looks at her with his eyes narrowed.

“You’re not his best friend” Derek mutters back, and Lizzie just smiles at him, sweet and scary again.

“We’ll see.”

The afternoon isn’t exactly smooth, but Derek manages to survive between a very awkward lunch – where Elizabeth keeps making quips about him being below Stiles’s status now – and the shopping they have to do.

“This is just not the right hue” the girl tells the saleswoman, who looks ready to cry, “I’m not very sure if you just don’t understand what I’m saying or if you are actually trying to annoy me.”

“Lizzie, there’s no reason for you to talk to her like that” Stiles scolds, as Derek stands back and glowers at the rude girl, “I’m sorry” he apologizes to the saleswoman, who smiles a bit and says it’s okay.

“Why don’t you go with her, Stiles? You know what color I’m talking about, and this has to be the perfect blue, because we are not going white again.”

“It’s a Winter Dance. White is expected” Stiles says, and Elizabeth smiles at him.

“Which is why we are not going white again. Please, just go and help her find the right shade of light, metallic blue, okay?”

Stiles looks at Derek, probably to invite him along, but the girl arches an eyebrow, and Stiles leaves to the back with the salesgirl.

“You are coming with him to the Dance” she tells Derek suddenly, her voice quiet and her face serious.

“If we—“

“There is no if. You two are clearly a couple, even if you were a jerk, but I’m sure you made him
think you had your reasons. I’m not convinced, but, unfortunately, I can’t quite manage to order Stiles around, which is why I think of him as a friend, and not a minion. You are stuck right now, in a stage where you are going to try and spend a lot of time with him, and he’ll love it, and you two are going to dance around each other for the longest time, and either you are going to lose a whole lot of time you could actually be together, or you’ll be so stupid you’ll ruin whatever it is you could have” she takes one step closer, and Derek takes a small step back – for such a small person, she takes up a lot of room when she’s trying to be threatening. “It’s called a Grand Gesture. I’m sure you’ve heard of it. You go to his brother, because so help you God if you don’t clear this with him first, and then you ask Stiles to go with you, and you confess your undying love at the dance, and then we can focus on more important things than deciding if you two want to be together, when it’s obvious you do.”

Derek stares at her for a moment, looking at the counter behind which Stiles disappeared before speaking.

“You don’t like me. Why do you want me to be with Stiles?”

“Because you won’t drag him down. You want to see him succeed, you want him happy.”

“Why do you care?”

“Because I want him happy. Ever thought of that?” she asks, and turns around just as Stiles comes back, with yet another sample of fabric that is not what they want.

“They really don’t have the color, Lizzie, let’s just go.”

“Fine” she agrees, leaving. Stiles stays behind, apologizes to the salesgirl again, but she just looks relieved at seeing Lizzie leaving, and not offended, so they leave too.

They manage to get all of the fabric that will be used as table cloth and other pieces of decoration to Stiles apartment, who promises Lizzie he’ll get all of it to the people responsible to turning the fabric into decoration, and then the girl leaves – but not before mouthing ‘Grand Gesture’ at Derek.

“She is…” he starts, and Stiles smiles at him, clearly thinking this is funny.

“She is something, isn’t she?”

“When the guys mentioned her to me, I kind of thought of a meaner version of Lydia.”

Stiles is already shaking his head.

“No, they are two different brands of mean when they want to be. I’m not replacing anyone, she’s just… She was actually the first person in the whole school who actually took notice of me when I first started, even if it was to tell me I wouldn’t catch up. The challenge kind of made me snap out of my misery bubble to try and win her over.”

Derek nods, thinking that maybe she isn’t the worst kind of friend to have – if only she wasn’t so determined to dislike him.

Before he can say anything else, though, Harvey shows up in the living room, in sweatpants and a hoodie – which somehow doesn’t make him any less intimidating.

“Derek, I thought I heard your voice” he greets, offering his hand, which he shakes, already on alert.

He is a werewolf, after all, and every single instinct he has is screaming at him that this is a trap.
“Did you three have fun?” he asks casually.

“Yes, as you can see by the pile of fabric, it was a very productive afternoon. Derek was just leaving, right?”

“Are you sure, Derek? Why don’t you stay for dinner?” Harvey asks, with a huge smile, and Stiles pales a bit and turns to him, a warning in his eyes, and Derek knows he could just say no and vanish, but that will just tell Harvey that he is intimidated by him, and this game has to turn around at some point. It’s not in him to just run away – he did that once and look how that turned out.

“I’d love to stay if it’s not any trouble” he answers, with his most charming smile, and is deeply satisfied when Harvey looks surprised.

“That’s great. I’ll go call Mike and tell him we’ll have a guest for dinner.”

He leaves the room, and Stiles grips Derek’s arm tightly.

“Are you sure? You don’t have to stay if you don’t want to.”

“I want to. I wouldn’t have said yes if I didn’t. It’ll be okay” he says, trying to project calm and confidence.

The teen doesn’t look really convinced, but oh well.

He’ll just have to prove that it’ll work, right?

X

It’s kind of like a train wreck, really, except it’s not that he can’t look away, is more like he absolutely must not look away, lest something goes wrong, and he ends up with no boyfriend or no brother.

Derek wouldn’t eat Harvey, right?

If you stop to think about it, Harvey is kind of an Alpha Male. He imposes his presence, he’s always the center of attention, he manages to always seem to be controlling the situation – the thing is that Derek is an actual Alpha werewolf, and for some reason, Stiles doesn’t think that will mix very well.

Harvey is back a few seconds later, and Stiles and Derek are sitting on the couch.

“Would you like something to drink, Derek? Scotch?”

“No, thank you” Derek answers, frowning.

“Not a fan of it?”

“I have no taste for it, and I can’t get drunk either, so really, there’s no point.”

“So, Derek, what do you plan to do now? Or is being an Alpha your only job?” Harvey asks as he sits down too, on the one armchair that has a slightly higher seat than the couch, so that Derek will have to look up to look at him.

“I’m getting in touch with a few old colleagues to get back into business, as I was before the fire. I’m an engineer” he answers, very politely, and Harvey nods.

There’s a stretch of silence after that, and Stiles wants to break it, but at the same time he really
doesn’t, because, well, what if he talks and makes everything worse?

“You didn’t work, though, in Beacon Hills, did you?”

“We were a bit too busy running for our lives for him to find the time to work, I’m sure” Stiles intervenes, “Can I talk to you for a moment, Harvey?” he gets up and goes to his room, which is the furthest from the living room, even if it won’t make much of a difference, because of Derek’s hearing. If he wants to listen in, he will.

His brother follows him in, and he closes the door with a scowl on his face.

“Look, I’m… incredibly grateful for everything you’ve been doing for me. I love you with everything I have, because you are my brother, and I care a whole lot about you, and I never thought I would, but you have to stop prodding him like this, because Derek doesn’t deserve that. Crap from me, yes, he deserves, but not from you. Especially because I know how far I can go before I hurt him, and you don’t. Stop it. I know you’re doing the older brother routine, but stop it. Either you accept him or you don’t, but don’t toy with him like you’re doing, because you’re toying with me too.”

Harvey looks disappointed at this, and Stiles steels himself for whatever answer he’s going to get.

“What if I said I didn’t like him at all, that I think he’s no good for you, and I want him gone from your life?”

“I’d…” Stiles stops, takes in a deep breath, thinking over what he wants to say, and realizing that, yes, this is what he would do, “I’d wait till I was eighteen, and then I’d look for him. Because whatever it is I feel for Derek isn’t going to go away, and I don’t know if it’s the saving each other’s lives thing, if it’s him, or whatever it is, but I… can’t let him out of my life. I’m aware I’m sixteen, but I don’t feel sixteen, Harvey. And he is possibly the one good thing I can actually keep with me from Beacon Hills, because as much as I love Scott and Allison, they’ll never be here with me, and he changed his whole life again for me. So I’d wait, because you’re my brother, and I love and respect you, but we’d be together eventually, and we would be in for some really uncomfortable Christmases and Holydays in general, because I’m not leaving you either.”

Harvey stares at him for a minute and then sighs with great suffering.

“Fine. Let’s go back before he pees all over the furniture.”

“No dog jokes either!” he screams as he follows Harvey out of the room, and he chuckles.

He just can’t win with these people.

With Harvey not trying to antagonize Derek, and Stiles being a bit too nervous to say anything coherent, the conversation is quite limited to Stiles’s school as they wait for Mike to get back.

“I just can’t believe you’re organizing dances. It just… doesn’t seem like you” Derek comments when Stiles comments how hard it was to find all the right colors in fabrics.

“I know, but I kind of like it. I mean, Lizzie does all of the major planning thing, but the… constructing a visual, you know? Planning the actually decoration, for example, that’s loads of fun. It’s going to be really beautiful, and even if it would have been loads easier to just go with silver and white, the whole all-blue thing is going to have an amazing effect with the lightning we chose.”

“You know, if you really enjoy this, maybe this is something you can pursue later” Derek says,
looking at him intently, “I mean, I know we never really talked about your plans for college, and that you were planning on some kind of Folklore Major, because, of, well, everything, but we don’t need that anymore, you don’t have to do that anymore.”

“You mean become a party planner? Derek, I’m not that gay.”

“Hey, stereotypes” Harvey calls from his armchair, and Stiles shakes his head.

“I don’t mean it like that, just that… I don’t like planning the thing. I just liked the… putting things together? I don’t know, seeing something we designed take shape, you know? That’s nice.”

“Maybe you should look into Architecture. It’s a broad field, you wouldn’t be stuck or out of options when you graduate.”

He’s saved from having to answer by Mike returning with the food. They wash up and sit in the kitchen to eat – technically, they have a dining-room, but they never eat there, mostly because it’s always filled with books and files over the table, because it’s the biggest table of the house, so Stiles and Mike use it to study, and Harvey uses it for his big, scary cases that he sometimes brings home (to ask for Mike’s help, but he doesn’t say that out loud, and they pretend they don’t know).

It’s mostly quiet for a while, as they start the meal, and then Derek’s phone beeps, and he takes a look at it, frowning a bit.

“Everything okay?” Stiles asks, a bit concerned.

“Just… Peter letting me know Cora got home. I asked him to warn me, because she, well, doesn’t.”

“How’s that going?” he asks, and Derek sighs deeply, putting his fork through a piece if steak with a lot more force than necessary.

“I don’t think she’ll stay any longer than the Holidays, really. She’s not…” he struggles for a word, and Stiles winces in sympathy.

“Pack?” he completes, and Derek nods, taking a sip of his water.

Stiles is suddenly hyper-aware of the fact they’re having this talk in front of his brother, someone who doesn’t even like Derek, and who Derek isn’t really very fond of either, so he decides not to press the issue, waiting for when they are alone, but Mike surprises him.

“I heard you saying that before, but I get a little lost, and I didn’t want to ask Stiles, because, well, he’s not…” the blond trails off, and Stiles shakes his head, a bit amused.

“A werewolf?” Derek asks, and Mike nods at him. Harvey’s eyes are glued to Derek, showing that this is something he and Mike must have talked about together on more than one occasion, “He doesn’t have to be. Actually, he’ll never be, because I wouldn’t risk it. But you don’t have to be a werewolf to be pack. When my mother was the Alpha, there were a lot of humans in our pack. Peter could have left the house unharmed when the fire started, but he tried to stay and help a few of the humans who were trapped. He only left when he truly couldn’t save anyone else. It’s one of the reasons I kind of… trust him, to some extent, even with all he’s done. Losing a member of your pack is like losing a limb – you can actually feel their pain, and you ache afterwards, because a part of you is actually missing. And that is only if you are a normal werewolf bound to a pack – as an Alpha, I don’t even want to think what that must feel like. The connection I have with my pack is what lets me know Jackson is okay even though he’s not even in the country, is what lets me know Scott is fine, because we share a bond even if he’s his own Alpha now, is what let me find Stiles so quickly that day he ran away” he stops talking, and looks downright defeated for a few seconds, and Stiles
reaches out and squeezes his leg reassuringly, “I don’t feel Cora. She’s not my pack, even though she’s my sister, and I know she wants to go back to her old pack, sooner rather than later. Her human nature is making her stay for a while longer, maybe to see if we can make it work, but she’s not really trying. It’s been too long. I love her, and she’s my sister, but she’s not my pack, and I can’t change that. God knows I’ve learned my lesson with Scott about trying to make someone be my pack.”

Stiles snorts, and Mike and Harvey don’t say anything else on the subject, letting it go, for what Stiles is very grateful.

The rest of the dinner goes as well as can be – no jibes from Harvey, and a calm conversation between Mike and Derek, about the differences between NYU and Columbia.

Dessert is consumed, and Harvey insists on walking Derek to the door. Stiles says goodbye, and he and Mike start tidying up the kitchen.

It could have been a lot worse, really.

X

Harvey walks Derek to the door, gets out with him, and closes it behind his back, leaning against it.

“Thank you. For sharing that information with us. I know you didn’t have to, but I did wonder what this pack business was about, and I also wondered if Stiles ever asked… you know.”

The man shakes his head at him.

“He never wanted that. Peter offered him, when he was the Alpha, and Stiles refused. I would never ask him to do that, you don’t have to worry.”

Harvey nods.

“Is he safe? Being with you?”

“As safe as he would be with anyone else. I’m trying the normal thing here, Harvey. I want this to work.”

The lawyer nods again, and sees that the man is trying to gather courage to say something.

“I’m glad you came with me. I wanted to ask you something before I ask Stiles, because I don’t want to get his hopes up if you say no.”

“Oh God, please, don’t tell me you’re asking him to marry you.”

“He’s sixteen” Derek deadpans, arching an eyebrow at Harvey, and he feels stupid for jumping to that conclusion, but well. It’s been a really weird day. Week. Months, really.

“What is it then?”

“I want to take Stiles to his Winter Dance. I know it’s stupid, but it means something to him, and I want to be there.”

“Are you sure you just don’t want someone else taking him?”

“Well, yes. That’ll save someone from having their throat ripped out with my teeth.”
The most intriguing thing is that Harvey can’t tell if the man is joking or not.

“You can take him. But you pick him up here, you go to the dance, and you come back home. My home. Got it?”

Derek nods, smirking at him.

“I wouldn’t even think of taking Stiles to my home, seeing as Peter and Donna might be there. Let me just tell you, your secretary is loud.”

And with that he disappears into the elevator, smirking away, making Harvey want to bleach his brain.

Now, that is something he never needed to know about Donna.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr.
Uneven Odds

Chapter the Thirtieth

Stiles thinks it’s just hilarious that Derek asks him to the Dance through a text message – he knows Derek, and this is a clear sign that he’s afraid of the answer. He may be the Alpha and all that jazz, but when it comes to unpredictable things, he tends to avoid them by pretending he didn’t even attempt all that much, hence the ask out on a text.

He gets the message when he’s getting to school, which means Lizzie sees it, and then convinces him to ignore it at least until lunch, because it’ll be more fun that way – it goes a long way to show how much she has corrupted him to her dark ways that he agrees.

They part for classes and meet again for lunch – which one of the minions brings them on the steps from the place where he went to talk to Derek.

“You are saying yes to that invitation” she starts, and Stiles nods, taking a sip of his coffee.

“I am. There’s no use pretending I don’t want to go with him, and we kind of lost a lot of time because of, well, bad things back in Beacon Hills.”

She stares at him for a long moment, and then turns to her minions, and sends them away – not even a few steps down, away. Stiles starts to get nervous, because this just isn’t like her at all.

“How bad were things back there, Stiles?”

“As bad as it can get” he answers, and she frowns again.

“Was it… was it your father?” her voice is quiet and Stiles turns to stare at her in the eyes, seeing, for the first time, might he add, real concern there.

“Not in the way you’re thinking. My dad was the Sheriff. There was this… gang after Derek and my friend Scott, and, therefore, after me. When I told my dad everything, he didn’t believe me. We were going to Derek’s, so he could confirm everything, when two of them attacked us, and killed my dad. I… saw the whole thing. The two guys took off, and, well, Derek broke up with me because he wanted me to come to Harvey, because staying there was dangerous. It was a jerk thing to do, but he did it because he thought he was right.”

She stares at him for a while longer, and Stiles waits patiently for once.

“Do you know why I took to you so fast?”

“Because I brought you a mat?” he asks teasingly, and she rolls her eyes.

“Please. I have minions bring me new designer handbags that cost more than some families make in a month and they don’t get to be what you are. I took to you, because I remembered what it felt like” she pauses, as if looking for words, “When you were enrolled in school, it took about a minute for everyone to know that Harvey Specter’s brother would be studying with us, and people started
digging up stuff about you. How were you related, and why you were coming here, and I found this article, with some pictures, and… God, Stiles, you looked dead. Your face was turned away, and, really, all we could was see an ugly hoodie and just a smudge of your profile, but you looked dead. And on your first day here, you still looked that way. I’m sure you thought you were doing a great job at acting as if you were doing great, and maybe you would have been able to fool a lot of people, but I remember that feeling. My dad died when I was thirteen. It was a car wreck, and it took three hours for them to get me out of the car, and for those three hours I could see my dad’s body right next to me – it wasn’t a pretty sight” she says the last sentence quietly, taking a deep breath, “I saw in you the same kind of raw pain, but also the same will not to let it drown you, so, yes, I did what I knew would have made me bounce back faster, I told you you couldn’t do something, and here we are. Maybe at first I just didn’t want to see someone suffering, maybe I didn’t want to be reminded of what I was like all those years ago, so I felt obligated to change it, but now I really like you, as more than a minion or an ally, I think of you as a friend. These kids here, they are brought up to slash each other’s throats if it means getting ahead in life, and I’m not going to say I’m any different, but I’m glad you’re here, and I’m glad I know you wouldn’t do that to me.”

Stiles feels like hugging her, but he knows this would probably ruin her image as a cold badass, so he smiles softly at her instead.

“I’m glad you found me” he tells her, and she nods, looking determined, all of her vulnerability washed away in a second.

“Good. Now that I managed to take away your attention from your phone for more than ten seconds, you can go ahead and tell Leather Man he is bringing you to the dance, but both of you will come with me to get your tuxes. I’m not leaving such an important choice in the hands of someone who thinks Leather is an all occasion kind of fabric.”

He laughs a bit, but does sends back a small ‘Yes :D’ to Derek’s succinct ‘Will you go to the dance with me?’

It seems like a good enough start.

X

The week seems to fly by, because they have so much to do.

Harvey and Jessica have a big case that they strongly suspect has Darby working against them; Mike has finally found a professor who isn’t impressed with his memory and keeps trying to find ways to make him fail his tests; Stiles and Elizabeth are freaking out about the final details of the dance – or Elizabeth is freaking out and taking Stiles with her; Peter finds himself a new apartment; and Derek finally gets a job at one of the most prestigious Engineering Offices in Manhattan (and he really doesn’t have to know that he got the interview because Donna called and made sure they knew he was Harvey Specter’s brother’s boyfriend. She almost didn’t do it, but then again, Peter does know how to persuade a woman).

Because of all of that, Derek and Stiles have almost no time to talk at all, and Elizabeth ends up sending for Derek’s measurements to get him a tux instead of going out to buy one with him.

They do, however, arrange for Derek to pick Stiles up so they can go to the dance together, and the ridiculous normalcy of it all stuns Stiles and Derek both.

At the night of the actual dance, Donna comes over to help Stiles get ready the right way, and insists on taking lots of pictures of him ready to go.
“I think you guys are taking this whole thing a little too seriously, it’s not even my first dance or anything.”

“It is the first one with you looking this good, though.”

Which is kind of true.

His tux is a dark blue, with a light metallic blue vest and tie, and underneath it he’s wearing a dark blue shirt. He looks amazing, and, seriously, he should just let Lizzie dress him forever.

When Derek comes to the door, though, well, maybe they should let her dress Derek too.

Derek’s whole ensemble is black, his tie is the only exception, being a metallic, and yet dark, petroleum blue. His eyes look like they’re glowing, and not in the werewolf kind of way.

“Wow” Stiles sort of whispers, and Derek smirks at him.

“Right back at you” the man compliments.

Donna then decides to break the moment by demanding a picture of them.

Derek gets in and they walk to the wide open glass window, Manhattan’s night lights behind them. The werewolf puts his arm around Stiles’s waist, pulls him close until they are flush together, and smiles at the camera, while Stiles tries not to feel too shaken up to smile too.

Donna declares the photo shoot over, they listen to Harvey’s guidelines once more, and then they are off.

Derek is driving the Camaro, and Stiles smiles at it before getting in.

“You know, the first time I saw what car you drove, I hated you a little bit more.”

Derek chuckles, starting their way to the dance.

“The first time I saw what you drove, I kind of felt bad for you.”

“Hey, do not diss my baby. I miss her” he sighs, and Derek puts a hand on his hand, squeezing it reassuringly.

“You could get another Jeep” Derek suggests, and Stiles snorts.

“Sure. Because Harvey is going to let me drive in New York. I can really see that happening.”

“And you’d obey him” Derek states, and Stiles shrugs a bit.

“I would, yeah.”

They stop at a traffic light and Derek turns to face him fully, smiling softly at him.

“I’m really glad you have him.”

Stiles smiles back, and they don’t say anything else the rest of the ride, basking in the silence they so seldom have the opportunity to enjoy.

Here, in New York, until now, it felt like every silence had to be filled with an explanation, an apology, an acceptance of something else. In Beacon Hills, every moment in silence had to be filled
with something, be it desperate kisses, or shouting matches, because the fear of losing the other was too great for there to be a silence they could both exist in and not want to break.

Now it seems like they can just… be. That just being together is fine, enjoying the rapid lights passing by, the warmth of the car, the presence of the other.

They get to the place where the dance is being held at and, when they get in, Stiles has to admit that the full effect kind of takes his breath away.

The walls are covered in a very thin fabric of a light, shining silver, hiding fairy lights behind it, and bathing the whole room in an ethereal glow of blue and silver. The tables are covered in the metallic light blue he and Lizzie had so much trouble finding, and the center pieces are low on the tables – no flowers, just a silver piece, shaped like an antique lamp. The ceiling has tiny lights too, in silver and blue, and they hang all over the room, in different lengths, so it gives the impression of falling down.

The whole thing looks magical, and Stiles is ridiculously proud of himself.

“You two did a wonderful job” Derek says, and Stiles smiles at him, beaming.

“Thank you.”

On the other side of the room, Elizabeth and her date are talking to a group of people, and she sees Stiles and Derek and waves, shining in a silvery blue dress that seems to have been painted on, and yet it’s not overdone. Her blond hair is in a bun to the side, with a few strands loose, and she looks beautiful.

Stiles finds himself suddenly so happy, he can barely contain it inside himself, and he never, ever, thought he’d feel this way what with how this whole new life thing started.

“Do you want to dance?” Derek asks when the song changes to a slow beat, and he turns to look at him, tilting his head to the side.

“You know how to dance?”

“No, that’s why I asked you, so I could tell you to go and find someone to dance with” Derek answers, leading him to the dance floor.

Stiles laughs at that and lets the man lead him, putting his hands on his shoulders when they get there, swaying slowly to the song.

“The day we went out to buy those fabrics, Elizabeth gave me some advice, and I thought a lot about it, so I’m going to take it, and you have to let me finish, okay? Before you say anything.”

Stiles nods, staring at him seriously. Derek looks down, takes a deep breath and then looks back at him again, his face solemn.

“When Lydia showed me, months ago, what I told you in the hospital had sounded like, I made a conscious decision of letting you believe all of that, because I needed you to be safe, rather than just a little less unhappy. I’m plenty aware that I hurt you, and I intend to make it up to you forever, if you let me. But a part of me also thought that… maybe that was your chance to be happy away from me. That maybe you could do better, be better away from every single bad thing I brought into your life. And then, one night, Scott came to my place, telling me you were different on the phone, on Skype when you talked. That you were better, and you kept mentioning this new girl who was your friend, and Mike, who was your brother’s boyfriend. That you seemed a little less miserable, that you were getting happier. That you smiled more, and yet that you seemed more distant from him, and that
Lydia had mentioned the same thing to him. You were moving on. And that, right there, was the moment I saw that I couldn’t just… let you go. I wasn’t ready for that. That was the moment I caught on to Peter and Lydia’s plan to come here when everything was okay again in Beacon Hills, because you were the one thing in my life that was never, ever bad, not even when you accused me of murder. That was when I decided I had to come here, and try to win you over, because if I didn’t, then that would be the very thing that would finally make it impossible for me to live with myself. And I’m glad I came, I’m glad you weren’t really with that Tony guy, I’m glad you weren’t with Lizzie, I’m even glad Harvey keeps giving me a hard time, because it reminds me that I should never take you for granted” he pauses then, one of the hands that was on Stiles’s waist coming up all the way on his arm, his neck, their eyes locked together, “I love you. I honestly believe I always will. And you don’t have to say anything right now, because… I hurt you. Maybe you need some time, maybe you’ll never be ready to say it, but I love you. And I’ll never leave you again.”

Stiles stares at him for a good minute, before grabbing the back of his head and kiss him fiercely on the lips, mouths burning together – four months of sadness and despair, four months of fear and doubt, all come crashing down in a kiss.

They pull apart a few minutes after that, and Stiles runs his hands on Derek’s hair, who smiles softly at him. He gives the man a quick peck on the lips, pulling him closer, putting his head on his shoulder and, even though the beat has now changed to a rapid one, they keep swaying together softly.

In all truth, it should be the perfect ending, Stiles thinks. The lights, the music, the love confession, the certainty that Derek loves him.

All in all, it could be an ending.

He knows, though, that this is just the beginning.

And it’s going to be awesome.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

Also, you can find me on Tumblr
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Uneven Odds

Epilogue

It’s not as if life is always perfect after their new beginning, because life is never perfect.

Even when you try your very best and you work really hard, even when everything big in your life is going just fine, it’s in human nature to find the small things to be bothered with.

It is easier, though – knowing they have someone to turn to when things get bad, knowing your family is there for you, knowing you have found your place in the world even if it’s not where you expected it to be: be it in the arms of your ex-associate, who you met when he was carrying a suitcase full of weed, or a part of a group of people you never thought would even allow you to breath near them. With an older lawyer as your lover or a werewolf for a partner, things have a way of always working themselves out, one thing after the other, with all the small annoyances we find in life, because that’s what we do: we look for them, and when we don’t, we just keep expecting them to find us.

They always do, too.

For Harvey, it comes in the form of a few homophobic clients; for Mike it comes when people don’t take him all that seriously because he’s in a relationship with an older, much richer, man. For Derek and Stiles, well… the first big one comes in the form of Jackson.

In the middle of Summer, when Derek and Stiles are spending a few days with Lydia, Jackson comes back, and the resulting mess… is not pretty.

He comes to live in New York, though, with Derek, in his new apartment, at least until he turns eighteen, and he’s Stiles’s new classmate.

Stiles, because he just can’t help it, makes him jump through hoops to be accepted by his crowd – he is, after all, the King of St. Jude’s, and no Jackson is going to walk all over him, never, ever again.

That is not even close to the suffering Lydia puts him through until they get back together, but that is not Stiles’s tale to tell, really. He just has a lot of fun with it.

The day Lydia and Lizzie actually talk, and become somewhat friendly, Stiles keeps expecting the world to implode, but it doesn’t – he does keep the two of them away from Donna, though, because then nothing would be safe, ever again.

Donna and Peter have an on-again-off-again kind of affair that neither of them takes seriously – until someone shows up trying to steal one of them away. Then it’s all a matter of hands off or I’ll eat you, and that’s mostly Donna, because Peter has learned a thing or two about subtly over the years – which only served to make him even more dangerous, but oh well.

Stiles graduates as the Valedictorian, and so does Elizabeth, seeing as they are from different schools. They both get into Yale, and Mike swears he sees Harvey crying at the ceremony.
Harvey denies this vehemently, but there are pictures, because, well, Peter and Donna.

The day Stiles is to leave for school, Derek says he has a gift for him, and a blue Jeep is waiting for him on the street. Harvey scowls, Mike grins, and Stiles just kiss Derek silly, because they are awesome together.

College isn’t a picnic, but they do manage. Stiles does look into Architecture as a field of work and, surprisingly enough, so does Elizabeth.

They plan to work together when they graduate, and Derek is included in their schemes for the future.

Lydia goes to MIT – she considers CalTech, but she really doesn’t want to stay in California anymore. Plus, Jackson gets into Harvard, so there is that too, even though she says it had no weight in her decision at all.

Scott and Allison are the first ones to get married, not even into their second year of college, because Allison, well, gets pregnant. And even thought they are young, and still a bit immature, it does both of them – and Chris and Melissa – a world of good. Scott works incredibly hard to be a Veterinarian, while Allison and her dad invest their family money into a Sports Shop in Beacon Hills (and if the shop has a wee bit more of bows and crossbows than a normal store would, well, this is really nothing to worry about). Isaac works with them at the store, and the Beacon Hills fraction of their pack is pretty happy all in all.

Boyd leaves town two weeks after graduating High School. Three weeks after that, after worrying their sleep away, Cora calls and lets them know he’s staying with her pack in São Paulo, Brazil. It’s a pretty big city, and they are happy there.

Derek feels as if he’s losing another brother to the same pack, but can’t really hold a grudge. He’s just glad Boyd’s found a place for himself.

When Lizzie and Stiles do graduate, Derek leaves the company he works for, and the three of them open a business together. With their talent (and contacts, really, network is everything) they are really successful.

Lydia moves to New York a month after Elizabeth and Stiles come back for good, and Jackson stays in Harvard, for Law School. Lydia works for a company that Stiles likes to call Stark Industries, and she never really manages to explain to them what it is that she does.

He just hopes she never gets caught.

Three years later, Jackson is Peter Hale’s first associate when the man becomes a Senior Partner at PEARSON SPECTER (and if he had something to do with Darby no longer being a part of their firm, well, Jessica is not talking, and neither is Harvey), and Stiles starts to be afraid to even go near that office, because with Peter, Donna and Jackson there it’s like Mordor, except in a high end building where everyone wears custom-made suits.

Mike works for a small firm – a really small firm – and they sure aren’t there for the money. He does help people, though, and that, more than anything else, is what makes it worth it.

Harvey and Mike never do get married, even though both of them know they can, and neither have they thought about having kids. Some scars are a bit too deep to heal, even with all the time and love in the world.

Stiles and Derek – with a teeny, tiny help from both Lydia and Elizabeth – take one year and a half to
plan their wedding, find the perfect place to live, and then tear the interior down and remodel the whole thing, because they are an Engineer and an Architect getting married.

They plan on adopting kids later on on the road, maybe moving to a house – maybe not.

The future is not set in stone, anyway. Things change, sometimes for the better, sometimes not.

Sometimes bad things turn into amazing results, sometimes good beginnings end really badly.

Life is life, and if there’s one thing that is certain is that life will always go on – some days are bad, your hair won’t settle, and you stub your toe against the bed; the shower is cold and you can’t catch a cab. Some days are just good, even though all of that happens, and you just don’t care. Life goes on, and so does the everyday journey, which can’t really end, because every single day has its own story to tell, and what really matters is that you are, in fact, living.

The end, after all, doesn’t really exist.

All that matters is the road – and the people who take the journey with you.

Chapter End Notes

Please, let me know what you think!

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______________________________

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaand this is it.

Thank you so much for reading this, taking the time to comment, or just press Kudos, or even just reading the whole thing (how did this get so long? It was supposed to be 8 chapters. EIGHT CHAPTERS). Anyway, thank you, guys, it means a lot to me that you liked it, and took your time reading it to the end.

Now, I'm going to go back to When it all falls apart, probably. I kind of need the Sheriff to be alive again. I'll probably write one or two short oneshots first, but that's the plan.

Thank you again for reading it!!! I hope you enjoyed the end!

End Notes

Did you like it? Let me know!

REVIEW!

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