I know that you love me, even when I lose my head
by LunaCanisLupus_22

Summary

“We’re not mates, Cora,” he insists. “I mean look at him-“

“Ouch,” the kid says, no longer pushing that shit eating grin.

“He’s- he’s,” Derek tries, at a loss of how to explain why this can’t be possible. Why it shouldn’t be possible.

Or the one where Derek gets attacked by hunters, ends up with amnesia and forgets Stiles is his mate
Fic title is from Jon Bellion's [Guillotine](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QGzJo1oP8g) give it a listen!

I really don't even know where this came from. I'm in the middle of writing so much other fic but this story wouldn't let me be. So far I've only really read amnesia fic where it's Stiles that forgets Derek so I was interested to see how it might play out the other way around. Especially with Derek being so closed off and unable to trust.

Full disclosure Derek's way more of a dick and not in the loveable way in this fic and there are a few instances of internalised homophobia from him as well once he realises Stiles is his mate. The threats of rape/non-con is tagged for a situation when Stiles is in heat and trapped in a room with someone who isn't his mate and they make a few gross insinuations.

As always let me know what you think!
Chapter 1

When Derek wakes up his skull is throbbing and there’s a pressure behind his eyes that makes it feel like they’re about to burst out of his head. He puts his hand to the spot, gingerly and feels it throb with pain at the touch.

“Ugh,” he groans, wondering what the hell happened.

Did he get hit by a football again? Or a rock?

“Derek?” an unfamiliar voice says, calling him back to the land of the conscious. “Can you hear me?”

“Yeah,” he mutters, wincing around the spikes of agony in his skull. “What the hell happened?”

“You were in an altercation with a group of hunters. You were shot in the head protecting your mate. The bullet’s trajectory was off so it cracked your skull open rather than killing you instantly. You’ve had some severe brain swelling and you’ve been unconscious for an entire day.”

Derek opens his eyes.

There’s a male doctor hovering over him and Derek reaches up to rub the aching spot above his eyebrow. There’s no bandage there but it hurts.

And the doctor isn’t making any sense.

“I don’t have a mate,” he mutters. “You’ve got the wrong person.”

“Can you tell me what year it is Derek?”

He groans again, wishing the doctor would back the hell off already so he could just go back to sleep. It doesn’t feel like he’s healing right. Though he's never actually cracked his skull open before. That's definitely a new injury to add to the list.

“Where’s Laura?” he demands, trying to sit up.

“Easy there,” the doctor says, putting a preventative hand on his chest. “Your mate is just down the hall.”

“I keep telling you,” he snaps angrily. “I don’t have a-“

The door opens and some scrappy looking kid comes flying in, tripping over the doorway and nearly launching over the hospital bed before he's followed by an exquisite woman with luscious red hair and the kind of lips that make you do a double take.

She’s staring at him calculatingly as the kid scrambles to get back on his feet and suddenly this whole mate thing is looking up. Especially when she steps forward to take his hand.

“Derek,” she says, visibly relieved. “We were so worried.”
“Look, I’m really sorry,” he says, managing a much sweeter tone for her. God, she’s gorgeous. And she smells great too. “But I don’t remember you as my mate.”

The red head’s expression changes quickly, like her thoughts are moving very fast as she glances over at the clumsy kid. The ecstatic look on his face abruptly falls away and the red head yanks her hand back like it’s been burned.

Derek’s not really used to that kind of reaction from women before. Usually they’re clamouring to get their hands on him. He knows what he looks like.

He can’t help but feel a twinge of disappointment. For his mate, she doesn’t seem very interested in touching him.

“That’s good,” the girl says surprisingly. “Since I’m not your mate.”

Derek frowns. He’s getting more confused by the minute.

“Then who-?”

The lanky guy who’s covered in moles and wearing a shirt that says STUD in big letters with a muffin underneath is covered in scratches, blood and dirt and there’s a leaf in his hair that he doesn’t seem to be aware of or has completely forgotten about. He’s a total disaster but his uncovered arms are tense, muscles jumping beneath his shirt and Derek realises he’s more lean than lanky.

The kid, who’s suddenly looking more uncomfortable by the minute, rubs his hand against the back of his head in a nervous looking gesture and the leaf in his hair comes free and floats onto the hospital floor unnoticed. The blood he’s covered in isn’t his own. It’s Derek’s.

“That’d be me,” STUD muffin t-shirt guy says, pushing his hands into his pockets and rolling on the balls of his feet uneasily.

His eyes seem unusually wide, and there are shadows underneath them as if he hasn’t slept in a long time.

“Right,” Derek laughs, peering over his shoulder to see if someone else will be walking through the door soon.

Maybe these strangers are his friends. Or friends of his mate.

The kid winces. “That’s not gonna have lasting damage to my self-esteem at all,” he mutters, more to himself than the rest of the room.

Derek’s too busy looking over his shoulder to notice.

“He is your mate,” the doctor says helpfully. “He’s listed as your emergency contact.”

“No,” Derek says, laughing harder now. “This is a joke right? Where’s Laura?”

“Get Cora,” the kid covered in moles mutters to the red head. “She’s in the cafeteria grabbing coffee.”

The red head disappears out of the room with an expertly done flick of her hair and Derek watches her ass move in her jeans as she glides out the door. When he glances away it’s with the realisation that the kid caught him looking and is expertly concealing some complicated emotions about it.

Derek understands. He’s under the delusion that they’re mates. The poor kid’s got some shit to work
“Derek?” the doctor tries again. “Can you tell me what year it is?”

“It’s amnesia right?” the kid says bluntly, not even looking at him anymore.

His attention is focused on the doctor and Derek wishes the red head would come back already.

Preferably bringing his sisters. The kid did say Cora was here. Where’s Laura? She’s still in Beacon Hills while Derek’s living on Campus. It’s only an hour drive. She would have made it here if he had a head injury and ended up in hospital. She wouldn't abandon him.

Cora crashes through the door a second later, nearly spilling coffee all over herself.

“Stiles? Is he awake?”

“What the hell is Stiles?” Derek grumbles, losing his patience with all these awkward silences and subtly exchanged looks.

“Shit,” she says, staring at him and suddenly Derek notices that she doesn’t look like she used to.

She’s taller. She’s stopped wearing her hair in those god-awful Leia bun things and she looks decidedly less like a barely teenage girl than Derek remembers.

“You’re old,” he says, surprised.

“Still has the same amount of tact though,” the kid says dryly, rolling his eyes at Cora and Derek’s anger reaches a boiling point when she smirks back.

The camaraderie between them makes him feel worse. Cora’s in on this prank as well. Pretending to know this random kid they’ve picked off the street to play the role of his fake mate.

“What the hell is going on?” he demands. “Cora, this fucking kid is saying he’s my-“

“Calm down, Derek,” she snaps. “He is your mate.”

“This is bullshit,” he shouts. “He’s a guy.”

Cora stares at him, with the kind of glare that reminds him of Mom and what to expect when he’s gotten himself into a fuckload of trouble.

“Oh no,” she says faintly. “College Derek.”

“What?” the kid wonders, bemused. “You’re telling me he thinks he’s in college? Oh my god, Scott’s gonna pee himself with-“

“Shut up,” he snaps. “Jesus fucking- do you ever shut your goddamn mouth?”

The kid raises an eyebrow at him, unimpressed. “Sometimes, when it’s otherwise occupied.”

Derek’s cheeks heat up because he gets the double meaning exactly. There’s no fucking way. Because this kid is insinuating-

“Quit it Stiles, you’ll break him,” Cora warns, smirking a little despite herself.

He doesn’t like that she’s so amused by all of this. Cora shouldn’t be enjoying herself so much. He's
got a fucking head injury.

“Derek we’re going to need you to calm down,” the doctor tries, managing to raise his voice over the rest of them. “This is a very stressful situation and I think-“

“It’s 2017,” Cora says, brusquely.

Derek stares at her.

“Here,” she says, pulling out a cell phone that doesn’t look at all like a cell phone he remembers. It’s sleek and long and she taps her fingers on the screen to get it unlocked.

She shows him and on the screen is an article she’s pulled up about a movie called Hidden Figures. The date reads February 22nd 2017. Derek glares at it, head aching worse than before and wishes that he could just go back to sleep.


“College Derek has a foul mouth,” the kid says grinning but in a painful way that makes it seem forced.

“We’re not mates, Cora,” he insists. “I mean look at him-“

“Ouch,” the kid says, no longer pushing that shit eating grin.

“He’s- he’s,” Derek tries, at a loss of how to explain why this can’t be possible.

Why it shouldn’t be possible.

And why it can’t be happening right now. A rush of conditioned air pushes the kid’s scent straight toward Derek.

“An omega,” he finishes, surprised, peering at the kid again. “You’re an omega?”

The kid rolls his eyes and turns to the doctor. “Is it normal to lose this much time?”

Derek isn’t listening to the question though, he’s staring at the kid’s exposed neck. Where a very healthy looking bite mark rests.

If the relationship between a mated pair isn’t going well the colour turns like a sickness and slowly starts to fade. He knows. Derek has grown up learning this mating stuff. But the mark on this kid’s neck is dark red. A strong bond.

He feels a jolt in his stomach at the sight of it, then a deeply pleased rumble of heat courses through him that’s more instinct than anything else. Derek pushes the feeling down, horrified.

He’s mated this kid, he realises. He’s had sex with this kid and gave him a mating bite. The oncoming rush of revulsion makes it hard to breathe for a second.

“I mated this kid?” he says, finally accepting the horrible truth. “Oh god, I’m some kind of creep, aren’t I?”

“Slow down there, big guy,” the kid says quickly. “I’m twenty three. I’m like barely four years younger than you.”

Derek feels like he’s choking. “I’m twenty seven?! I was turning twenty in November!”
“Stiles, dude, stop talking,” Cora says.

“Obviously things are a little confusing right now,” the doctor declares in a placating tone. “Let’s not overwhelm Derek with too much information. The memories will come back in due time, I’m quite confident.”

Derek snorts at the same time the kid does. He’s startled for a second before he quickly looks away and focuses on his sister.

“Where’s Laura?” he asks.

Cora runs a hand through her hair with a sigh. “She lives in New York now. She’s taking a taxi from the airport once her flight gets in tonight.”

“She didn’t have to,” the kid tells her. “She only just started at The Plaza.”

Laura works in a fancy hotel now?

“What do you know about it?” Derek snaps, annoyed that this kid is talking like he knows what’s best for his sister.

He narrows his eyes at Derek. “Probably a lot more than you right now.”

“Stiles,” Cora hisses, grabbing at his arm. “Let’s go talk outside.”

Derek wants to insist that she stay with him. That this kid intruder who thinks he knows better than everyone else should be the one to leave. Where did that stunning red head go?

But the both of them walk out, abandoning Derek with the doctor that he really doesn’t like and would rather be left alone, but it’s not as if he’s got a choice about it.

“If you have any questions-“

“No talking,” Derek snaps, dropping back onto the bed and letting his eyes fall shut.

He can’t turn off his hearing though.

“Look I know this is upsetting,” he hears Cora say. “But you’ve got to realise. Derek in college is not at all like the Derek who loves you now.”

“Yeah, no shit,” the kid says and Derek’s mouth twitches with the beginnings of an involuntary smile.

Once he realises what he’s doing, he forces his mouth into a frown, trying to ignore the ache in his skull.

“The Derek in college is still under the insistent delusion that he’s only into girls,” Cora continues and he flushes at the suggestion.

Whatever she’s trying to say, he doesn’t like it. Mating an omega guy was obviously some kind of freak accident. Like whatever happened to end him up in the hospital.

“Great,” the kid says, unenthusiastically.

“College Derek was kind of a homophobe, Stiles,” she admits. “I’m sorry.”
He shifts under the sheets, uncomfortable. He’s got nothing against being gay, Cora’s got him all wrong.

“He never mentioned it. But I shouldn’t be surprised since he’s got a particular talent for repressing everything known to man. Course he’d throw his sexuality in there as well.”

Derek doesn’t like where any part of this conversation is going. Especially since Cora and a total stranger are all but discussing his sexual preferences out in the hall where anyone can hear them. Why is Cora even talking to this guy?

“He was probably embarrassed,” Cora suggests. “You saw him in there. Couldn’t even fathom that you might be his mate.”

“Yeah, let’s not relive that a second time, thanks. I’m taking enough hits as it is.”

Derek’s not trying to be an ass, but they’re not listening to him. Frustration always makes him lash out. And why should he give a shit about some stranger's feelings anyway?

“Stiles, you should probably know- College Derek was a total frat boy.”

The kid lets out a long, drawn out groan and Derek’s temper prickles. The fact that he’d turn his nose up at that is laughable. He doesn’t even need to look at the kid to know that he’s way out of that STUD muffin’s league.

Derek has girls lining up for the smallest chance to get close to him. Or he did. Before he left college. His face and body never fails to open doors and pants, he’s always known that.

The kid’s heartbeat sounds a little strange to him, uneven, like he’s nervous or agitated. Derek wonders what’s wrong with him.

“His memories will come back,” Cora insists. “He’ll be his old self again, don’t worry.”

“Right,” the kid replies, not sounding confident. “Maybe he should stay with you for a while. Things might make more sense if he’s around someone familiar.”

He feels a swell of relief. The last thing he wants right now is to be trapped in a house with a total stranger that he doesn’t remember.

“What about the pack?”

Derek frowns. They belong to a pack? He hasn’t been in a pack since his whole family was murdered.

“We should keep them away for now,” the kid says. “It’s not like he remembers them anyway.”

“Stiles-”

“C’mon, let’s see when the doctors will discharge him. He’s probably already going stir crazy in that room.”

Derek glances down at his fingers and realises he’s tapping them impatiently against the metal support bars of the bed. Hastily, he retracts them and tries not to look like he’s fidgeting.

He doesn’t want to give that kid the satisfaction. Something about those sharp eyes says he loves being proven right.
“When can he get out of here, Doc?” the kid asks once they return, folding his arms and jutting his hips out obscenely so Derek’s eyes can’t help but be drawn there.

He keeps thinking this kid must be something for Derek to choose as his mate, but every time he looks at him he doesn’t see much. He’s more obnoxious and annoying than anything else.

How in the hell did Derek’s life end up like this?

“Tonight,” the doctor informs them. “Tomorrow morning at the latest. He’s healing quite rapidly. Even by an alpha’s standards.”

Derek sits up a little straighter, forcing a casual expression when inside he’s preening at the compliment. The kid coughs, turning his face away and Derek realises he figured out what he’s thinking and is laughing at him for it.

He curls his hands into fists and stuffs them underneath the sheet to hide them, burning with anger and embarrassment. This kid makes him feel like he’s the butt of a joke.

It’s their mating that’s the joke. Derek just doesn’t see it.

He’s still not ruling out it’s a trick yet.

“I’ll sort out the paperwork,” the kid mutters, which seems funny because he looks barely old enough to drive, let alone figure out hospital bills.

He disappears before Derek can think of something to say, the doctor following him out and he can’t help but breathe a sigh of relief once STUD muffin is gone.

“Cora,” he says quickly. “You’ve got to get me out of here. This is a joke.”

She pushes him back when he tries to swing his legs out and over the bed. “No,” she snaps. “Look I understand things seem strange now but fight your frat boy instincts on this, Derek and do not be a dick to Stiles.”

“I would never mate with someone so annoying,” he mutters. “I mean, come on Cora, look at the kid, he’s nowhere near that Lydia girl.”

Cora just shakes her head, anger curling her lip before she punches him in the arm. Hard.

“Ow. What the fuck, Cora?”

“When you get your memories back you’re going to kick yourself over the things you’ve said to Stiles today,” she snaps.

He opens his mouth to protest but she beats him to it.

“He means everything to you, Derek,” she hisses. “Everything. You took a fucking bullet to the head for him. Does that throw things in perspective for you?”

“I-“ he splutters furiously. “He-“

“Grow the fuck up. You love him and he’s got a dick. Get over it.”

His face heats up. “I don’t-“

“You’d better start playing nice, dickface, because unlike everyone else you used to walk over in
college, Stiles won’t take any of your shit. And if you keep treating him like you did just now, he’s not going to stick around for long.”

Derek’s speechless.

Cora’s threatening him over this. He can still remember when she fell over last time Derek was home for the weekend and accidentally impaled her leg on a branch. She’d healed around it before Laura could pull it out and and cried because she thought they’d have to amputate it.

God, she’d been barely sixteen then. Now she’d be- twenty three. He’s mated to a guy his sister’s age. Derek feels faint.

And he’s never seen her look so much like their mother before. It’s terrifying.

“Fine,” he snaps, folding his arms over his chest and glaring out the window.

His head is still throbbing.

The kid, Stiles,- what kind of name is that?- returns half an hour later and Derek’s finally allowed to leave.

It’s dark when Cora and Stiles lead him out into the hospital parking lot and Derek passes most of that time staring at Stiles’ ass.

Does he really fuck this guy? Or does the kid fuck him? The thought sends a frisson of heat through his stomach, the sharp yank of burgeoning arousal so strong that Derek hastily pushes the thoughts away. He’s not a Freddy Krueger at least. He seems fit and strong.

And he’s got a good ass, Derek can admit that at least.

For a guy.

“My eyes are up here, handsome,” Stiles calls, without turning, pointing at the back of his head.

Derek nearly trips over his own feet he’s so shocked to be caught out. And Cora lets out a bark of laughter, relishing the mortification on his face. If this kid is meant to be his mate then shouldn’t Derek be curious about him?

“Shut up,” he mutters, flustered and annoyed that he’s flustered.

He doesn’t need to see Stiles’ face to know he’s grinning. They stop beside a beat up old jeep that’s parked crookedly over the lines and Derek stares at it, unimpressed.

“Whose shitbox is this?” he demands, when the kid pulls the keys out of his jean pocket.

He drops them almost immediately and Derek is starting to realise that Stiles not only walks around like he’s got too many limbs, but he’s also gracefully challenged. What the fuck do they even have in common?

Cora scoops them off the floor and shoots Derek a warning look.
“I’m gonna look past that, buddy, since you clearly realised that this is my jeep. Though technically it used to be my Mom’s.”

“Your Mom’s an idiot for not selling it for scraps sooner.”

Cora’s mouth falls open in horror and Derek’s unreasonably satisfied by the sight of Stiles’ shoulders stiffening. Nobody talks for a beat.

“She’s also dead,” Stiles says finally unlocking the doors. “But thanks, man, for that insight. Real good to know.”

Fuck.

Derek knows he crossed a line but doesn’t know how to apologise for it. Not to mention he can smell the bitter tinge of sadness now, following the kid around like a bad smell.

Clearly he just hit a sore spot. He very nearly reaches out to take a hold of the kid's hand to comfort him but his brain catches up before he can make a complete ass of himself.

Cora looks like she wants to murder him, so Derek gets into the jeep without another word and doesn’t talk for the rest of the drive. It’s easier if he blocks off his sense of smell. The instincts that follow especially in response to the kid are definitely something to be avoided.

They’re in the southside of Beacon Hills. Some of the buildings are a little familiar as they head into town but most of them have changed over seven years. Derek stares out the window, his head aching and feels more uncomfortable by the minute.

When they pull into the familiar long driveway into the woods, Derek grips the back of Cora’s headrest, claws popping free.

“Cora,” he whispers, horrified.

“It’s okay,” she promises. “We knocked it down. Rebuilt.”

“We?” Derek wonders carefully, not relaxing even as they pull around a copse of trees that he could walk through blindfolded and still not get lost.

“The pack,” Stiles offers. “We built it from the ground up and went from there. It’s our unofficial base of operations.”

Derek snorts. “Alright, James Bond.”

“Would you prefer den of sadness?” Stiles retorts. “Or are you past your angst stage yet?”

“God, you’re mouthy,” he mutters. “Where did I even meet you?”

“In those woods,” he says. “Right after your uncle bit Scott.”

Derek inhales sharply. “Peter’s a comatose.”

Cora makes a contrary sound.

“He’s not?” he demands, nonplussed. “But- but- What’s he doing then?”

“In general?” Stiles wonders. “Being a creeper. Making shifty deals with powerful people he can’t handle and then running back to us when he’s in over his head.”
“He’s not in our pack,” Cora determines firmly.

“Good,” he says, sighing and sitting back again. “Uncle Peter’s a fucking dick.”

Stiles actually cackles at that and Derek turns his head, surprised. Shouldn't he want to get along with all of the family Derek has left? Or at least pretend to get along with them? He is nothing like a good mate should be, Derek knows that at least.

The kid laughs with his whole body, wild and exuberantly and there’s something strangely alluring about it. Derek turns away and lets his eyes fall shut again.

Maybe if he falls asleep this whole nightmare will be over.

For the time being, Derek has closed his eyes, but isn’t sleeping because the crease between his eyebrows is still there. Stiles can’t help but keep glancing at him in the revision mirror. Just to keep checking he’s there. And alive.

There’s still a bandage wrapped around his skull and the damage still hasn’t fully healed yet. Derek came so close to death yesterday that Stiles can’t even think about trying to relax. He’s running on mostly adrenaline and hyper vigilance, feeling like at any moment they could be attacked again. And he definitely needs to shower. He's starting to reek.

In his defence though, he is still covered in a pool of Derek's dried blood. It's still caked beneath his fingernails despite trying to clean his shaking hands in the hospital bathroom. He probably looks like a mess and he knows the sight he made, didn't do much at all for Derek seeing him for the first time. Stiles has long since realised he doesn't need to do much to impress Derek.

But that was before. Now- it's looking a lot less certain.

The pack is still patrolling their territory in search of the two stray hunters but they haven’t been seen since Stiles and Derek came across them yesterday morning. They're not local, so they must be roamers.

And they’re rogue too, considering they attacked without so much as a hello.

The rest of the day following that confrontation had been completely shitty. Derek had been unconscious and there was nothing the doctors could do to help the swelling in his brain when his body was already in the process of trying to heal. So Stiles was forced to pace around the hospital floors and wait.

Being back at the hospital definitely brought back some bad memories of his Mom in her final moments. Unsurprisingly. He couldn’t even close his eyes to sleep the entire night.

And not only did Derek nearly get himself killed trying to protect Stiles, since he woke up it’s painfully clear he’s been replaced by some kind of pod person.

An asshole pod person. And not just the loveable grumpy kind Stiles thinks of with great affection. The arrogant, steal your girl just for the fun of it kind.

He’s already said a few things that have made Stiles want to smack him over the head with a rolled
up newspaper. Derek’s still snarky as hell. But it’s mean snarky, vindictive snarky. That’s usually
Stiles’ ballpark whenever somebody makes the mistake of hurting a person he loves.

Not only that, but this Derek seems to believe with his whole heart that being mated to Stiles is a
mistake.

Stiles might have been able to handle the attitude problem if that was all he had to deal with. The fact
that Derek is insistent that he’s not interested in men has thrown Stiles for a loop as well.

He knows they’ve been through hell and high water to get to where they are now. To be happy. But
he’s not going to beg Derek to stick around if he's determined to go. Even if he desperately wants to.

Losing all his memories of them changes things, Stiles knows that. He also knows how weak it could
potentially make the pack as well. Derek’s proven himself to be easily manipulated in the past. By
Kate, by Peter, by Jennifer.

With Derek like this right now he’s vulnerable to being manipulated again. Even more so, when it’s
clear that he doesn’t trust Stiles and probably wouldn’t listen to him. Stiles doesn’t hold out much
hope for the pack either being the balancing force. Not when Derek seems to be ignoring his own
instincts.

Anybody from his past could come along and try to fill in the blanks of his memory with falsehoods
and fake recollections. In this state, coming from someone he trusts, Derek could believe almost
anything.

It’s fucked up to be thinking of it like this but that’s what Stiles’ brain does. What it has to do if he's
going to keep their pack together and safe. Stiles is the schemer here. That’s his job.

He just can’t believe how much of a dick College Derek is.

Before it used to be funny, how much of an asshole Derek could be, but that’s because he knew
what he was like underneath. And they’d been through so much together. They went from
begrudging allies, to sort of friends, to hooking up on a regular basis.

That Derek he knew. A jerk who’d bitch about Stiles being a liability but would still inevitably come
and rescue him from a pair of angry werewolves interested in tearing him apart.

This Derek, Stiles doubts would throw a puddle of water on him if he was on fire.

That’s definitely not comforting.

He’s closed off again, like he usually is around strangers but this time Stiles is on the outside. It's
Stiles, who is the stranger. He’s not used to being around a version of Derek that doesn’t trust him.

Stiles pulls up to their driveway and tries not to sigh. This is going to be hard. He'll have to fight his
feelings in order to give Derek the space he needs to wrap his head around everything going on right
now.

But seeing Derek get shot in the head has only increased Stiles’ urge to stay close in order to protect
him. Backing off will not be easy. Not that he ever had a talent for keeping things casual when it
comes to relationships. His decade long obsessive crush on Lydia Martin speaks for itself.

He’s so screwed right now. This will require Scott’s help.

Cora goes to shake Derek awake but his eyes open before she can grab him and he’s staring up at the
house with a frown. If he didn’t recognise Stiles, there’s no point holding out hope a home they built together is going shake the branches in his memory tree.

His seven years of lost time most likely won’t return for a while. It’s best they all start accepting that, Stiles included.

He switches off the engine and tumbles out of the driver’s seat with a frown. Derek takes a huge step to the side to avoid him as he’s passing by as if Stiles is a poisonous plant. It’s a far cry from Derek’s usual need to be as tactile as possible.

Stiles follows him toward the dark house, Cora reaching his side just to squeeze his arm comfortingly like she sympathises with the situation. Derek is standing impatiently by the door, peering at the house with interest and clearly attempting to find something familiar about it.

So Stiles squeezes into the space left for his body, noting how Derek steps back again when he reaches out to unlock the door. Before he can step through the threshold though, Derek pushes past just for the pleasure of stalking inside first.

He doesn’t think it’s a protective thing. Derek doesn’t seem remotely interested in Stiles beside the whole alpha posturing act of entering a room first. It’s such an outdated move that Stiles can imagine Derek cringing if he were watching himself right now.

Feeling slightly comforted by that fact, Stiles heads in after but makes sure to elbow Derek in the side as he slips past. Just because they’re mates doesn’t mean that Stiles won’t be petty. The surprised oof makes him vindictively pleased before Stiles remembers that it has none of the playful edge that usually leads to him being naked.

Grumbling to himself, Stiles moves towards the wall and switches on the lights.

“I’ll take Derek up to grab some of his things,” he says. “Cora can you fetch the keys to Derek’s Camaro from the-“

The downstairs bedroom door opens and Scott pokes his head out, still half asleep with his hair sticking on end. Stiles is so relieved to see him that most of the stress slips out of his body.

He was at the hospital yesterday for moral support but had to leave for a sudden veterinary emergency. By the looks of it he’s only just gotten home and fallen asleep. He seems as exhausted as Stiles feels. He hasn’t slept a wink since Derek was shot.

“Whosere,” Scott mumbles, and it doesn’t escape Stiles’ notice that Derek steps in front of his sister first, blocking her protectively from view.

There’s a twinge of hurt following that move but Stiles does his best to push past it. With Derek like this for an indefinite amount of time, he’s got a lot more of these moments to prepare for. Best option is to move forward with thicker skin and not to take it personally.

“How’s Derek?” Stiles mutters, ignoring Derek because it’s the best way to avoid getting soul crushed by the rejection. “It’s just us.”

“How’s Derek?” Scott wonders around an attractive yawn.

“Derek’s a dick,” Stiles declares cheerfully, enjoying the way Derek’s lip curls maybe a little too much.

Some of his anger has the familiar Derek edge to it and it’s very easy to fall back into past rhythms.
“Oh good, everything back to normal then. G’night.”

Stiles watches Scott’s door close and wishes more than anything that he could tell Scott how very not normal things are right now. He’s gonna need someone to talk to about this, now that his number one listener is gone.

He heads towards the staircase as Cora moves into the kitchen in search of Derek’s keys. Stiles doesn’t even realise that Derek is following until he stubs his toe on the first step and Derek runs into his back.

“Watch it,” he snaps, without inquiring to the state of Stiles’ poor battered foot.

At least before the attack, he’d snicker a little before drawing Stiles’ pain away.

“Just leave me behind,” he bemoans. “I can’t go on.”

“Oh for fucks-“ Derek hisses, shoving him aside and storming up the stairs ahead of him without so much as a by your leave.

Stiles is trying his hardest not to blame Actual Derek for College Derek’s behaviour. But this is unprecedented. At least Derek used to roll his eyes a little. Now he really doesn’t give a shit.

Reaching down briefly to rub his sore foot, Stiles starts climbing the staircase and focuses on trying to hide how he feels about this.

He’s so distracted that he runs into Derek at the top. The fact that he flinches as if Stiles jabbed him with a knife rather than absentmindedly touched his lower back, leaves a hollow feeling in his chest. Stiles drops his hand away quickly.

“To the left,” he directs, finally grasping that Derek’s waiting to be told where to go.

Derek postpones his reply until he’s led them into their bedroom. “Your friend lives with us?” he hisses sounding much more accusatory than expected.

“Our friend,” Stiles tries patiently as he flicks on the bedroom light, gesturing at the chest of drawers which houses Derek’s clothes.

Derek doesn’t move, but gives a disbelieving look that is oddly reminiscent of the Derek Hale Stiles knows and loves.

“Oh, okay fine, maybe he was my friend first. He’s also the one that roped me into going into the woods when I officially met you for the first time. Though to be fair, I did bring him into the Preserve the night before to look for a dead body. My point is, Scott’s the one who brought us together, you should be thanking him.”

Derek’s scowling now. “‘Yeah. Thank him.”

He sounds more like he’d rather punch Scott in the face and this is really not doing nice things for Stiles’ ego. College Derek should not be making him feel so inferior right now.

But to be fair College Derek looks a hell of a lot like Actual Derek so you’ll have to forgive Stiles for letting his wires get so crossed.

“I’m trying to figure out if College Derek’s threats sound as bad as Sourwolf Derek. Can you scowl and say ‘I’m gonna rip your throat out. With my teeth’.”
Derek actually seems like he's internally combusting. “God, you’re a mouthy omega.”

Stiles stalks over to the cupboard and fetches the duffel Derek uses sometimes for out of town trips or going to the gym. “Those two aren’t mutually exclusive, dumbass.”

He can almost feel Derek’s anger from the other side of the room when he turns back and tosses the empty duffel bag onto the bed.

Derek hasn’t moved since then and Stiles thinks he’s having some kind of internal gay crisis where the proof of the fact that they actually sleep together is melting his brain.

It’s really not as big a deal as Derek is chalking it up to be. Stiles figured out he was bi fairly quickly in his teenage years when’s Scott’s dick had interested him almost as much as his own.

Derek had his bi awakening in college when he hooked up with a few guys at different frat parties, but it must have been in the later years since College Derek now doesn’t seem to know the meaning of the word.

Stiles rolls his eyes and ducks around him to open up the top drawer. When he turns back to say something snotty, he realises that Derek is staring at the photo frame on their nightstand instead.

A photo Erica took of the two of them fast asleep during one of their many pack movie nights. In the picture Stiles has taken his sleeping-in-odd-positions habit to an entirely new level, since he’s basically hugging the front of Derek’s chest as they’re sprawled back against the armrest. He’s half perched himself on Derek’s face, with his mouth wide open in the middle of a much deserved siesta.

What’s even better though, is that Derek is fast asleep in the photo too, undisturbed by the odd clinging creature that’s permanently attached itself to him. They both look utterly ridiculous.

No dignity whatsoever. But Stiles fucking loves it.

It’s them and it’s a little bit hilarious and endearing. Derek always rolls his eyes at it but Stiles knows he secretly likes the photo just as much.

College Derek, however, is not impressed.

Stiles sighs. “You want to grab some clothes or do alphas not dress themselves where you’re from?”

Derek jerks back, surprised, like he’d forgotten Stiles was in the room, which hello, also not a great feeling. Stiles realises abruptly that he can’t handle Derek acting so distant in their own bedroom. Where they laugh and get naked and cuddle more often than he can count.

It’s tainting the place somehow.

“I’ll be downstairs.”

“You like it don’t you?” Derek wonders abruptly. “My knot. Do you only get wet for me or do you spread those legs for Scott as well?”

His mouth falls open and Derek responds with a spitefully satisfied smirk.

Until of course, Stiles hauls off and punches him in the face.
When they come downstairs a minute later, duffel packed, Derek’s broken nose has already healed itself but there’s blood still dripping down his face. He looks like a character from a horror movie but Stiles is too angry to specify a pop culture reference.

He storms into the kitchen, knuckles rapidly bruising to a dark shade of puce with some of the skin there now cracked open and bleeding. Stiles doesn’t regret it at all.

Cora, who’s sitting at the kitchen table, instantly smells the fresh blood and rushes to his side. Stiles should never have suggested that he and Derek be alone together. After his less than enthusiastic reaction to being mated to him, that was a disaster waiting to happen.

“What the hell happened? Did Derek- hurt you?” she demands, appalled.

Stiles is too infuriated to speak and stalks over towards the sink, moving to wash away the blood.

Cora has rounded on Derek by then and is in the middle of poking him hard in the chest. “What the hell did you do?”

“It was a joke,” he snaps. “I wanted to see how he’d react if I-“

“If you what? Derek? What did you do?”

“He punched me,” Derek complains, sounding so much not like Derek that Stiles can’t help but snort.

He’s never actually hit Derek before, without the intention of bringing him quickly back into consciousness when their lives depended on it. The knowledge of what he’s done leaves a sour taste in his mouth.

His father has dealt with enough domestic violence cases to last a lifetime. Stiles has been lectured so many times on violence between mates that by now he should’ve known better.

But he wasn’t even thinking when he did it. The response had been impulsive, instinctual. Usually it takes a lot more to get a rise out of him. College Derek, unfortunately seems to have retained the skill of knowing how to push all of his buttons.

“I’ll get the bandages,” Cora mutters, intercepting Stiles on his way to reaching one handed above the microwave to open the cabinet above where they stock their medical supplies.

Stiles manages to lift his mouth at her, in a gesture of gratitude but absolutely refuses to look at Derek. He knows he should apologise, but something tells him College Derek would view that as being weak.

It’s not like he can take the punch back anyway.

“Oh whatever,” Derek mutters, coolly. “The kid probably healed by now.”

Cora looks like she wants to scream as she pulls the disinfectant out of the cupboard along with the bandages and gauze. Stiles hopes he doesn’t have to hold her back from messing up her brother.

Derek’s having a bad enough day as it is.

“Have you bothered to use any of your other senses since you woke up in the hospital?” She snaps. “Stiles is human.”
She opens the bottle in her hand and disinfects Stiles’ open cut before passing him the bandages. Expertly, he starts taping his knuckles, before wrapping them up tightly in the gauze. While he works, he can feel the exact moment when Derek steps closer to him.

If he was a werewolf, he'd probably be able to smell the guilt.

“I didn’t- look I was trying to rile you up,” he admits. “I was just wondering what you’d do if I said that.”

Cora throws a rolled-up bandage at his head. “What the hell did you say?”

“Nothing,” Stiles finally mutters. “Just take him back to your place, Cora. Please.”

“Look, c’mon I’m sorry, alright. I was out of line.”

Stiles puts the bandages and disinfectant back into the cupboard and strides past Derek without saying anything because he’s fighting every urge not to get some holy water and douse him in it. Just to be sure Derek’s hasn’t been possessed by the spirit of some frat boy asshole and that this really isn’t happening.

Right now he just wants to shower and go to bed. And forget this.

But that won’t last long because tomorrow when he wakes up, Derek’s side of the bed will be empty and there will be nobody remotely resembling the guy he fell in love with to fill that space.

And that’s disappointing as hell.

“Goodnight, College Derek.”
“Way to ignore literally everything that I said to you,” Cora hisses as she leads him towards the garage where the Camaro is parked.

Derek’s Camaro, Stiles said. The very same person who punched him in the face less than ten minutes ago. Derek still can’t believe that he actually did it. He can’t remember the last time somebody challenged him like that.

People normally see his size, his strength, smell the alpha on him and back off entirely.

Stiles just ploughed through all those instinctive warning signs like a freight train. Is he always this reckless? Is that all Derek does with his life, cleaning up this kid’s messes?

Although for a human, he’s surprisingly strong. Derek can’t remember the last time somebody intentionally broke his bones.

Breaking things on the field is an accidental by-product of the game itself. He’d always heal before it could be a problem. The same as any other werewolf playing football. Mistakes happen.

People usually know better than to challenge him.

Stiles’ certainly didn’t. Or he did and somehow inexplicably didn’t give a shit.

To be fair, Derek shouldn’t have said what he did. But Stiles’ flippant attitude about all this pissed him off more than he can even attempt to explain. If Stiles is his mate, then shouldn’t he be more upset that Derek’s memories are gone? Shouldn’t he be doing everything to keep them together?

Shouldn’t he care?

The fact that Stiles has probably made fun of him more times than he’s shown concern tonight definitely isn’t helping Derek’s mood. So he’d lashed out and yeah, it might have been uncalled for but it still had the desired effect. He’d shown that kid he meant business and wouldn’t tolerate that kind of mockery. Like an alpha should.

And Stiles’ cheeks had turned blotchy afterward, his mouth parted wide in shock, eyes burning in outrage. It had been about the realest emotion he’d displayed all evening. Until he’d swung his arm back quicker than Derek could think to duck.

He’d paid for his crudeness with a broken nose. An omega broke his nose. A human omega at that. Derek’s not denying at least that he might have deserved it.

And he knows he’s going to keep paying for it all the way back to Cora’s house. She’s been shifting constantly the whole night, gearing up to unload a lecture on him since they left the hospital, Derek can tell.

“It’s none of your business.”

“Right of course, it’s not my business that you upset Stiles enough that he actually punched you in
the face and broke your nose.”

Derek climbs into the passenger side of the car, feeling defensive. Because if anything, it sounds like Cora is on Stiles’ side and not her own brother’s. Is she forgetting he has a head injury and has no idea what the fuck is going on right now?

“What do you care?”

Cora slips into the driver’s side and buckles up. “Because Stiles is my friend, assface.”

“I don’t know him!” he shouts back, losing it altogether. “You put me in a room alone with a total stranger. What did you expect?”

She scowls as she starts the engine and peels out of the drive so quickly that gravel kicks up around them. “Well if you hadn’t been avoiding your senses ever since you woke up then maybe you might have found something familiar about him.”

It feels like he’s a second away from popping his claws and slashing the car seat with them. “None of this is familiar.”

“That doesn’t mean you get to treat Stiles like shit.”

Derek scoffs because that shouldn’t mean Cora gets to treat him like shit either. He’s healing from being shot in the head the least she could do is try and cut him a little slack. He’s fuming so much that they don’t talk until they’ve left the long winding drive of their property and returned to the main road again.

“That guy at Stiles’ house- Scott,” he starts eventually with a casual air, trying not to sound annoyed. “What’s he doing there?”

Something about the way Stiles’ entire body relaxed at the sight of him peering out of that door, really rubbed Derek the wrong way.

Cora glances at him suspiciously. “He and his girlfriend, Kira, are staying at your place until their house is finished being built.”

His girlfriend, Kira. But is it serious? Is she his mate? Derek doesn’t ask more for fear of Cora figuring out what he’s thinking and yelling at him some more because of it.

But how close are they exactly if they’re living under the same roof? He smelt like an alpha too. Why would they have another alpha in the pack? How would the hierarchy work? What if Scott’s interest in Stiles extended beyond friendship?

What if he actually wants the kid for himself?

Derek pushes the thought down almost immediately.

It’s not like he cares either way.

Cora’s apartment it turns out isn’t too big but she’s got a spare bedroom and that’s all he needs right now. Derek tosses his duffel into the far corner of the room, kicks his shoes off and collapses onto the made bed, ignoring the faint pounding in his skull.

He falls asleep without getting undressed.

His dreams are confusing and the kid pops up in them more than once. Derek doesn’t sleep very well
at all.

When he opens his eyes the next morning, his arms are tightly wrapped around a pillow that his brain somehow convinced him was a person during the night. And not just any person.

The kid. Stiles.

Grumbling at the way his subconscious mind seemingly betrayed him, Derek tosses the pillow across the room angrily and gets up, stretching and listening intently to the sounds of movement coming from the kitchen.

The two heartbeats.

One of them is Cora and the other-

Derek rushes out once he recognises it.

Laura, turns at the sound of his heavy footsteps and smiles, relieved. At least she’s happy to see him. She’s not going to take the side of some kid over her own flesh and blood.

“Derek.”

Whatever she’s about to say, Derek doesn’t wait for it, hurrying forward and wrapping his arms around her. Laura is strong, otherwise she’d have staggered back into the kitchen cupboard under his weight but Derek is so relieved to see her that he doesn’t care about being conscious of his own strength right now.

“You’re here;” he says, burying his face in her throat and scenting the familiar smells of safety and home.

But it’s not the same as he remembers. She smells a little different, he realises. Changed. Not just like Laura anymore. Like someone else as well.

“I got in last night. I didn’t want to wake you.”

Derek pulls back and inspects her properly. Her hair is short now and there are more laugh lines near her eyes, which have changed their colour slightly as well.

“You’re mated?” he demands, shocked, remembering how angry she’d been after the fire.

She’d refused to let anybody near her. Her ability to trust took as big a hit as Derek’s did. She might not have known exactly who was responsible like he had, but she’d felt the betrayal of it anyway. It’s why they’d never joined another pack.

Laura had made them all sleep in shifts for the first two weeks when they were bouncing around from different hotel rooms. Cora had hated it.

She’d shut down so completely that Derek assumed she’d always be alone. He’s glad she’s not though, he wants her to be happy. And so many things can change in seven years, Derek’s own life is undeniably proof of that.
Laura shares a glance with Cora before she responds.

“Yes, Derek. How are you feeling?”

“Like shit,” he admits. “None of this makes sense, none of this-“

“Only because you refuse to listen to anyone!” Cora snaps, waving the spatula in her hand threateningly as the eggs she’s cooking crackle and pop on the stove.

“Cora,” Laura warns. “Take it easy on him. He’s got amnesia.”

Derek has never been so glad to see her in his life. He and Laura always got along well. Cora he remembers more like a sweet little kid rather than the raging bitch she seems determined to act like now.

You’d think since they've been through so much together that she might be on his side and not the kid’s.

“What he’s got is a particular brand of asshole otherwise known as College Derek.”

Laura’s expression flickers, like she’s trying to hide a negative reaction and Derek really fucking wishes they would stop calling him that already.

“Come on,” Laura protests. “He wasn’t that bad in College.”

Cora abandons her eggs altogether to advance on the both of them. “So far, he has laughed at the idea that Stiles is his mate, to Stiles’ face, insulted his dead mother and said something to him so grotesque that Stiles actually punched him.”

Laura’s mouth falls open. “Oh God, Derek.”

“It’s not my fault,” he insists heatedly. “How was I supposed to know she was dead?”

Laura grabs Cora’s arm to stop her when it looks like she’s going to hit him with the spatula.

“What did you say, Derek?” Laura asks. “To Stiles. What did you say?”

The difference between his sisters right now is that Laura isn’t staring at him like she’d love the chance to get her hands around his throat in order to strangle him. Where does she live now again? Maybe Derek can move in with her until he gets his memories back.

At least then he won’t have to deal with Stiles or Cora.

“I might have said something crude about my knot and- whether or not he opens his legs for that dopey looking friend of his as well.”

Cora drops the spatula.

“I was kidding,” he insists, raising his hands up in surrender. “Sort of.”

Laura is staring at him like she doesn’t even recognise the person standing before her and Derek finally feels the first stirrings of shame. It was kind of fucked up what he did. He was way out of line. Whoever the kid thinks he is to Derek, he didn’t deserve that.

Cora turns off the stove, yanking the saucepan off the heat and abandons her eggs altogether as if she just lost her appetite. She storms out of the apartment without another word, she’s so mad, slamming
the door hard enough that it rattles in the doorframe.

“Can I stay with you?” he asks immediately once she's gone. “Cora’s being a bitch.”

Laura inhales heavily like she always does when she’s really pissed off and about to start knocking some heads together. “Cora is angry and upset because you’re hurting her friend and the man you love and don’t seem that concerned about it.”

Derek wants to punch something. “I’m not in love with that kid.”

Laura looks sad. “You were.”

“I’m not gay.”

“Look I know there are some things that you aren’t ready to face yet but I want you to know that we supported you the first time you brought Stiles to meet us and we have ever since. And you know I’d love to have you stay at my place but you’ve got responsibilities here to your pack, to your mate. You can’t just leave Beacon Hills.”

“My pack,” he repeats, surprised. “I’m the head alpha?”

“Derek, you have one of the most powerful and influential packs in the northern hemisphere,” she explains patiently. “You and Stiles.”

He snorts at that. “What does that scrawny omega have to offer?”

Laura doesn’t get angry. Not like Cora. “Well for one thing, you’d be dead about sixteen times over without him. He’s your biggest asset. He taught you how to be the head alpha you are today.”

This doesn’t make any sense. Stiles is his greatest weapon in this pack? He’d trip over a flat surface and brain himself first before doing any real damage to someone else. Maybe he could annoy someone to death, he’s definitely obnoxious enough to pull it off.

“He doesn’t look like much,” he mutters, stubbornly, refusing to take this seriously.

This kid? This kid, who Laura's trying to say is the best thing that ever happened to him? That he somehow made him into a better alpha? Derek wouldn't believe that in a million years or lifetimes.

“Kate didn’t look like much either.”

Derek flinches like she slapped him. “You know? I- I told you about her?”

“Yeah about a year after Scott was bitten,” she admits. “You decided to come clean because you were distancing yourself from us again out of guilt. I’m not trying to hurt you Derek, but I’m just saying you of all people should know omegas are never what they seem.”

“I hate them,” he declares, turning his face away from hers.

Laura squeezes his arm gently. “Don’t say that. You’re mated to one.”

“I don’t want to be.”

She sighs and checks her watch, seemingly realising Derek's only going to keep arguing about this. “My flight's at eleven so I’d better go. I’ll drop you back up at the house before I head out.”

“You mean that house where Stiles is?” he demands. “Why can’t I stay here?”
“The doctors said you shouldn’t be unsupervised since you’re confused about pretty much everything right now.”

“I’m twenty-seven!” Derek protests, though he didn’t actually know that fact until yesterday.

Laura snorts like she’s not buying it. “Come on Mr Twenty-seven. There’s enough time for you to shower first so move your ass.”

Derek reluctantly obeys and disappears back into the spare bedroom with a muffled curse to fetch out a fresh change of clothes.

Stiles wakes up in an empty bed, sighs, and stares forlornly at Derek’s unoccupied spot for ten minutes.

After he’s sufficiently lamented the loss of his hot-like-the-sun boyfriend, he staggers into the shower, furiously jerks off thinking about Derek’s stupid face and comes with a groan onto the blue tiles. He slumps against the wall afterwards feeling breathless and only marginally better.

Once out and clean, he wraps himself up in a towel and goes searching through the cabinet for his suppressants. Usually Derek helps him through his heats and since Stiles is also on birth control, he gets to have as much unprotected sex with his mate as he likes.

But since the situation between them has changed it’s better for everyone that he starts taking them on the regular again. Especially for stubbornly straight College Derek.

Stiles doesn’t want to think of what might happen if Derek were to come across him in the throes of heat, body signalling his sexual desire and availability. He wouldn’t want College Derek to freak out because his instincts are telling him to get all up in Stiles’ business when right now he’d rather not touch him with a ten-foot pole.

It wouldn’t be fair to him. College Derek would probably have some kind of crisis over it. Plus, Stiles doesn’t need the extra trouble now that he’ll be all but running the pack by himself. He’ll have more things on his plate than usual and there’s no time to be worrying about his heat on top of that.

It’s strange, not having Derek’s unwavering strength and support at his back. Stiles feels oddly listless without him.

He swallows the pills dry and heads back out to his bedroom to get dressed. There’s a knock at the door when he’s pulling out clothes and Stiles wonders if Kira’s trying to bring him coffee in an attempt to cheer him up a little.

“Yeah?” he calls, rummaging around for a clean pair of underwear.

The door opens.

When nobody says anything, Stiles glances over at the doorway to see Derek standing there. His hair is wet and he smells freshly washed and it’s unfair that he looks well rested when Stiles had such a crappy sleep last night without him.

For a second, hope surges forward that Derek’s gotten his memory again before he catches sight of
his tight, unwelcoming expression.

Nop. Still College Derek. Fan-fucking-tastic.

“I came to apologise,” he says stiffly like he’d rather be anywhere else in the world than looming dramatically in this particular doorway.

Stiles turns to face him, unconcerned that there’s only a towel around his waist or that he’s naked right now. Derek’s seen him in all his glory anyway. It’s not like modesty is their biggest problem right now.

“Was that it?”

There’s a flush to Derek’s cheeks and he looks angrier than he did a second ago. That’s about when Stiles finally realises he’s glaring at the left-over marks on his bare chest.

“Who did that?” he demands forcefully, stomping closer and pointing at the very clear lovebites littering Stiles’ sensitive like a peach skin.

He’d laughed derisively when the doctor suggested that Stiles is his mate, but still somehow feels entitled to being possessive of him? College Derek is making a lot less sense. And he doesn’t think it has anything to do with his head injury.

At least with Actual Derek, Stiles knew what he was dealing with.

“That would be you, compadre,” he mutters, rolling his eyes.

“No- I-”

“Am I lying?” Stiles demands, unimpressed.

Derek stares heatedly at the marks without responding so Stiles turns his back on him and throws a shirt on to cover it. His skin is still a little damp so it wets the t-shirt in a few places. Stiles is too busy trying not to offend any more of Derek’s irrational sensibilities to care.

“Interesting that you’re hyper focusing on whether or not I’ve cheated on you when you’re so insistent that we’re not mated,” he says, unable to resist the observation.

Denial at this point, seems like a waste of everybody’s time.

“I know we’re mated,” Derek says, stepping closer and staring pointedly at the bite mark on Stiles’ neck. “I just think it’s a mistake.”

Ouch. Cut right into the soul kind of ouch. That’s on Stiles though, he should’ve known that trying to carry a conversation with College Derek was a bad idea. He walked straight into that one.

“Gee, Derek tell us how you really feel.”

He seems startled by the snarky response. As if it’s somehow unexpected that Stiles might be offended by that. “It’s just the truth.”

“You’re the one who begged me to let you give the mating mark while your dick was buried in my ass. I didn’t force you into anything.”

It’s not exactly accurate. The moment had been much more tender than Stiles is advertising, sappier than even he could’ve guessed they were capable of and it pisses him off that he’s cheapening that
moment just to get a rise out of Derek.

It works though, Derek steps back as if Stiles has just flashed his junk, averting his eyes and seemingly rendered speechless with discomfiture. Stiles should remember that in the future in case he ever needs to get him to shut up.

Hey, if Derek can be crass about their sex life than so can Stiles. He's not embarrassed or ashamed of it. But he’s also not going to mention his dick has been in Derek’s ass many times as well or that he loves it, something gives him the impression College Derek wouldn’t be able to handle that information at all.

Stiles isn’t that cruel. Especially when College Derek clearly has some very real hang ups about his sexuality. That’s something he has to work through alone. Stiles can’t be his gay yoda.

“You’re a little shit,” Derek retorts eventually. “Have you always been a little shit?”

He shrugs. “Since I first drew breath, big guy.”

“Why do you keep calling me that?”

“Well,” Stiles says slowly, purposely shifting his attention to Derek’s crotch and raising an eyebrow meaningfully.

It’s impossible to resist making fun. Especially when Derek’s face turns a vicious looking red at the suggestion. For somebody acting so cocky all the time, he certainly blushes a lot. Stiles is trying his best not to find it endearing.

“Are you fucking serious-?”

“I’m kidding,” he laughs. “Relax, dude.”

Derek glowers at him and there’s something a little familiar about that look.

“Now are you just standing here in the hopes of looking at my junk? Because full disclosure, this towel is coming off in five, four-“

Derek storms out of the room before Stiles can finish speaking.

“Too easy,” he mutters, shaking his head as he grabs out pants and underwear.

Derek’s heavy footfalls thump down the stairs as he makes his hasty retreat and Stiles hopes he doesn’t end up starting a fight with Scott as well. He's not as good at hiding his emotions and he definitely won’t stand for Derek continually insulting his best friend.

His first instinct wouldn't be to dismiss Derek's words entirely and offer a barbed response to prove he's not upset or remotely offended. Scott might just end up tackling Derek to the ground and pummelling him instead.

Because that would be the perfect start to the day.

Derek heads into the kitchen to see if he can scrounge up some food when he runs into a pretty
looking Asian girl standing there in a sweatshirt and sleep shorts. Her smile is sweet, and he has no doubt so is the rest of her. Her bare thighs aren't half bad to look at either.

“Hey,” he says, intentionally making his voice sound deeper. “You’re cute, aren’t you?”

The girl looks confused until the floppy haired Scott guy enters the kitchen with a frown. “She’s also my girlfriend, Derek.”

Right. Kira or something. The girl steps back with a hand over her mouth. “Oh my God, he was serious just now? I thought he was kidding.”

Flushing, Derek pushes past her for the fridge. “Sorry,” he mutters, hating everything about this. That’s two girls now he’s struck out with. Derek’s losing his touch. But then again he’s also technically no longer available. This is so ridiculous, being mated to a man, it's no wonder he's still trying to chase after pretty girls. He only wants pretty girls.

But even if he doesn't believe he should be mated to the kid, he's not going to disrespect that bond by being unfaithful. Derek's not willing to stoop that low at least. Not when he grew up with bonded parents that loved each other.

That still means something to him.

“Jesus, Stiles told me it was bad,” Scott says from behind Derek’s back. “But I didn’t realise it was like this.”

“Screw Stiles,” he snaps just as he steps into the kitchen.

He winces at the weird stutter of Stiles’ heartbeat and waits for another lecture. The sweet looking girlfriend, Kira, is glaring at him and the room feels more electrically charged than it did a second ago.

“Screw you too, buddy,” Stiles shoots back without blinking.

The unconcerned tone of his voice sounds forced though. Derek grabs out a few eggs and some strips of bacon but Stiles snatches them from his hands before he can start searching for something to cook it on.

“Hey!” he protests, but Stiles is already getting a pan out from the cupboard next to the stove and setting about to make breakfast himself.

Derek grabs the juice from the fridge instead and starts scanning the room for where they keep the glasses. Scott points to the right cupboard and Kira darts out of Derek’s way like he’s going to grab her about the waist and try to kiss her.

His face is still red when he pours himself a glass of juice and puts the bottle back in the fridge. Stiles is already cooking the eggs.

“I don’t like them runny.‘‘ Derek starts but he's already flipped them over without his direction.

Stiles already knows how Derek eats it. That realisation makes him a little uneasy so he takes his juice and retreats to the far corner of the kitchen, wishing Laura hadn’t gone home and abandoned him with these strangers.

Hell, he’d settle for Cora right now. If he knew where she was. Something tells him they won't be
seeing her for a few hours at least after her tantrum this morning. Derek hasn’t forgotten she has a temper.

“So where are you building your house?” Derek asks Scott, just to stop the silent glances he keeps shooting Stiles.

The question startles him out of whatever silent conversation they appear to be having. “Did you remember-?”

“No, Cora told me,” he says quickly, watching Stiles’ back stiffen.

The crackle of cooking bacon fills the room and Derek joins Scott and Kira at the table in the dining room while they drink their morning coffee just to escape trying to figure out small talk with the kid he’s supposedly mated to.

Stiles comes out a few minutes later and sets Derek’s breakfast down on the table in front of him. It looks great, probably better than he could’ve manage to cook it.

“Thanks,” he mutters, feeling awkward.

Stiles lifts his fingers to the front of his head like he’s tipping an invisible hat and disappears back into the kitchen without a response. He bangs his elbow on the wall passing through the doorway though and curses like a sailor at the unexpected ache.

Derek shakes his head and picks up his knife and fork. Until he remembers he left his juice on the counter back in the kitchen. He stands up to go back and fetch it, wondering if short term memory loss is another side effect of being shot in the head that he has to worry about now.

The stitches on his skull holding the skin together where the bullet grazed him have dissolved and healed by now. Laura helped remove the bandages before he stepped into the shower this morning.

Stiles is in the middle of cleaning up when he misjudges the distance between the pan and his fingers as he moves his hand over it. He snatches it back with a hiss of pain and Derek rushes forward before his brain catches up.

He catches Stiles’ elbow, sliding a supportive arm around his waist and guiding him quickly over to the sink. He flicks the tap on and encourages Stiles’ fingers under the running water. They’ve already turned red, but they don’t look like they’ll blister.

He didn’t burn himself that badly.

“You’re a menace,” he says fondly, pressing his face unconsciously into the side of Stiles’ neck.

His body is warm and open, welcoming the touch.

“Uh- Derek?” Stiles wonders uncertainly and he realises abruptly that he’s plastered himself against the kid’s back, leaving no space between them.

His crotch is right up against Stiles’ ass with his arm curled intimately around his hip, just holding him as if it's something they do all the time.

And Derek’s still gently directing his wrist under the running water.

What the hell is he doing?

“Derek?” Stiles tries again, sounding strangely expectant.
As if he’s waiting for his memories to magically come back just because Derek ran his burnt fingers under water. Stiles desperately wants everything to return to how it was. Before. Derek drops his hands, face burning and steps away.

“Sorry,” he says gruffly. “I- that was instinct.”

“Right. Yeah,” Stiles mutters sourly. “No homo and all that.”

Feeling foolish, he hastily grabs his glass full of juice and retreats back to the relative safety of Scott and Kira. They’re in the middle of a conversation about interior decorating, no doubt for their new house so Derek gets started on his food and tunes them out.

Stiles comes back out of the kitchen a few minutes later, mug of coffee in hand, but Derek can’t even look at him.

Derek’s rinsing his plate in the sink before putting it in the dishwasher when he hears the approach of a car.

He straightens up and storms out of the kitchen, past Stiles who is curled up on the couch with a cup of coffee and two books open in his lap. Jesus, he's a total nerd.

“Whoa, slow your roll there,” Stiles cries, dumping his mug onto the table and scurrying up to hurry after him. “You’ve got murder face on and that’s-”

Derek doesn’t wait to hear the rest, stomping toward the front door to meet the challenger currently approaching and invading his territory. He's only ever met a hellhound once in New York, but that is definitely a hellhound now getting out of a car and walking towards the house. He doesn't need to smell him to know that. Not when he can almost feel the heat of fire in the air.

The hellhound doesn’t get the chance to knock before Derek wrenches the front door open.

The guy has a kind looking face and he’s pretty young looking to be wearing a deputy uniform. Derek stiffens up involuntarily at the sight of him, feeling like he’s in trouble for something that he doesn’t remember. Even if the guy does smile at the sight of him.

Derek really doesn't like hellhounds. Especially since they seem to have a particular talent for lighting themselves on fire. He's had enough experience with fire to last a lifetime.

Stiles jogs up behind him, careful not to touch as he peers over his shoulder to see who’s at the door.

“Parrish,” he says, smiling at the deputy.

Derek hunches his shoulders down and folds his arms over his chest, trying not to scowl. How many fucking dudes is this kid friends with?

“Hey you two,” the guy named Parrish says. “Derek, how’re you feeling?”

Derek wonders what kind of alpha he is if this deputy knows him by name. Do the cops come to their house a lot? They're not doing any illegal shit are they?

“Fine,” he mutters, through gritted teeth.
Stiles’ hand presses warmly against his forearm before Derek realises he’s attempting to calm him. “Sorry, he doesn’t remember you,” he explains. “He's a bit of a blank slate right now. Derek, this is Jordan Parrish. You work together.”

Those words floor him completely. “I'm a cop?”

Jordan Parrish looks startled. “Wow, you weren’t kidding. Damn. I'm sorry to hear that. We'll miss you at work, but take your time recuperating. Hopefully the department won’t fall apart without you.”

When Derek glances at Stiles, he’s smirking. Does he run the department or something? He doesn’t know what to say. Or even if there’s something that he should be saying right now. He’s still working past the fact that he’s a cop.

It's not the worst job in the world. He'll never forget the deputy who looked after them once he and his sisters found out their house burnt down with half of their family inside it.

Deputy Stilinski hadn't treated them like they were still children and he hadn't ignored them like the rest of the emergency workers had either. Derek wonders if he still lives in Beacon Hills. He had a whole family. A kid even. But they might have moved since then.

“Where is the rest of the pack?” Jordan asks, glancing behind them both as if more werewolves will miraculously appear now that he's started searching for them.

“We’re limiting the number of people visiting at the moment,” Stiles admits. “Don’t want to overwhelm Derek with strangers.”

That's a surprise.

He heard Stiles tell Cora to keep the pack away but he hadn’t realised he’d applied the rule so determinedly. When had he called Derek’s boss to let them know he wouldn’t be returning to the police station? And for how long? How long is Derek going to be stuck in this memory loss limbo? Did the doctors tell Stiles when to expect his memories would return?

It’s a good thing he called the station though. Derek can’t imagine returning to work as a cop when he doesn’t know any laws. The one code he remembers is 451, for arson. It’s the only thing he heard on the police scanners when they came to school to collect him, along with Cora and Laura on the day of the fire.

The idea of trying to work at a job he doesn’t understand or know how to do is overwhelming. He probably has Stiles to thank for avoiding that.

“I’m sorry to bother you then,” Jordan says. “But I’m after a file Derek brought home last week for a read over.”

“The car thefts?” Stiles guesses. “They’re in his office.”

He steps aside to allow the deputy into the house and Derek unwillingly stops blocking the doorway. Stiles detours on the way to Derek’s office first in order to reclaim his mug of coffee.

Kira and Scott are still messing about in the kitchen.

“Do you want to know who did it?” Stiles wonders innocently as he leads them past the kitchen towards a part of the house Derek hasn’t even seen yet.
This is where his office sits. It’s not locked and Stiles lets Jordan into the room, even as the deputy shoots him a warning look.

“You promised you’d stop looking over Derek’s cases,” he mutters, disapprovingly.

Derek’s more surprised that his office seems to be facing the woods. The room is occupied with so many windows that it must fill with sunlight later on in the day. It wouldn’t be such a bad place to sit and work. He takes a short breath, controlling how many scents his senses are exposed to. But there are mostly comforting smells in the room, familiar.

Stiles shrugs, unashamed. “I was bored.”

He wonders if he should feel annoyed somehow. This is his job that Stiles is meddling with here but it doesn’t really bother him that much.

Jordan snorts and locates the file on top of the desk. “Who did it then?”

“The first bystander they interviewed for the latest car theft,” Stiles explains. “The one who said he was waiting for a bus. They were on strike that day. No buses.”

“Hmm,” Jordan says with interest as he scans the paperwork. “That’s great. Thanks, Stiles.”

Derek can’t ignore that Jordan seems impressed by the observation. He’s not irritated by Stiles’ involvement either which seems strange. But he’s a civilian. Why would a cop listen to his advice?

“I’d better be off to the station then,” Jordan says. “Can’t be late or your father will give me that disappointed look.”

Their familiarity is starting to make sense. “God, whatever you do- avoid that.”

Jordan grins and disappears out into the hall again. Derek can’t help but smell both himself and Stiles lingering strongly in this office. Even from the stunted breaths he’s taking.

“Are we in here a lot?” he asks Stiles before he can leave to catch up with the deputy.

Stiles spins on his heel to face Derek, blowing air out between his teeth before answering. The uneven thud of Stiles’ heart speaks of something else as does the sudden hesitation.

“The desk is very uh sturdy,” he admits cautiously without looking at him.

Derek realises exactly why the smells of them both seem so intertwined in this room. It’s the same as their bedroom. Flushing, he moves past Stiles to follow Jordan outside, if only to avoid the scent of them both and Stiles’ intent expression. He may not be fully experiencing the potency of scents right now but that doesn’t mean he can’t still taste it.

He passes Scott on the way, looking like he’s heading off to work as well.

“Off to the Clinic?” Stiles asks him, appearing at Derek’s side.

Scott nods. “Kira’s just left. Are you heading back to DC?”

“I’ll be working from home,” Stiles tells him. “The office is assigning me cases that aren’t top priority so I won’t need to travel at all. I’ll be working from Beacon Hills given the special circumstances.”

Derek didn’t realise how many things have been put on hold for him since yesterday. His injury and
memory loss has affected so many people that he doesn’t even remember. It doesn’t seem fair to uproot everyone's lives so much.

He's not going to be anyone's burden.

As always, the pack is respectful of Stiles’ wishes to a certain degree before they dismiss it entirely and decide to do whatever the hell they want. Stiles wonders why he's even surprised when they all show up announced to their home later that afternoon.

The rest of the day had been spent finishing some of his important assignments while Derek hesitantly explored his own house. Stiles was kind of glad to avoid him, even if it was also reassuring to still have him around. There's a lot of conflicting emotions involved apparently.

Scott has barely returned from work and is in the kitchen with Kira cutting up vegetables for dinner. Derek is in the kitchen with them, hovering awkwardly without saying much and Stiles doesn't know how to make him feel more comfortable. The situation worsens when Derek tenses notably and the pack comes crashing uninvited through the front door.

Derek’s moving before Stiles can think to warn him.

“No rogue hunters in town,” Erica announces loudly from the front of the house as she struts inside. “And we’ve looked everywhere.”

Stiles scowls. “Well they’re definitely not here. What happened to backing off and giving Derek some space?”

When Derek heads out to go and meet the strangers that are his pack, he sprints out after him, trying not to feel nervous. This could go very badly if they're not careful.

Cora is standing in the living room with Isaac, Erica and Boyd. The three of them lower their heads slightly at Derek’s arrival and Stiles can’t help but feel like he’s watching little school kids being punished by their teacher.

“Hello Derek,” Isaac ventures hesitantly.

Cora’s standing between them and her brother, ready to intervene if something goes wrong. Stiles really hopes nothing goes wrong. Pack dynamics are complex and harder to fix if they've been thrown out of balance.

Derek does not seem particularly interested in any of them and Stiles can tell that Isaac and Erica are disappointed by that. They were still holding out hope that he might remember them. Boyd is much better at concealing his feelings. Even now, Stiles can barely ever get a read on him.

“This is Erica, Boyd and Isaac,” Cora says as each of them extend their hands out to shake.

It’s been a few days since they’ve been around their alpha. They’re probably dying for a puppy pile to spread scents again. The loss of his memory has been hard on everyone, not just Stiles.

Derek uncurls his fists to shake hands but doesn’t smile at any of them. Because apparently he still remembers how to be a jerk. There’s no escaping the fact that he lingers on Erica’s hand the longest.
Stiles grits his teeth and tries to ignore it.

Is he planning on hitting on every female in their pack? Stiles wouldn’t put it past College Derek. With his face, he was probably a huge player before he returned to Beacon Hills with Laura. Then he became infinitely more hostile and his unapproachable grumpy self.

What happened between then and his return which made him so unfriendly and closed off like the guy Stiles slowly fell in love with?

Derek is still frowning. “There’s more of you in the pack isn’t there?”

Isaac nods eagerly. “Yeah. Allison, Chris, Lydia, Danny, Liam, Malia, Hayden, Jordan, Mason, Corey, Ethan, Aiden, Jackson—”

Stiles snorts at that. Isaac might be over exaggerating how many people they have. “Some members are more honorary than official. Half of them don’t even live in Beacon Hills anymore now they’re in college. Jackson’s still in London, thank Christ.”

“They’re still pack, Stiles,” Erica says, rolling her eyes. “They’d come through if we ever needed them. Just as we’d save their asses if they needed us.”

He knows that’s true but right now he’s looking at Derek and seeing how overcome he is by so many unrecognisable names being listed. This is hard enough without throwing all of the forgotten people in his face at once.

And Stiles has no idea how to help him.

“I don’t know any of them,” Derek says bluntly, staring at his packmates without recognition.

Stiles sighs. Way to spare their feelings. It’s unbelievable to think that Actual Derek might not be as insensitive as believed when they’re looking at this merciless prototype.

“Don’t take it personally,” Cora says glaring at her brother. “College Derek is just about the worst version of him we could’ve been lumped with.”

“Stop calling me that,” Derek snaps, hackles raised and quick to losing his patience.

It’s not like Cora to be so shitty. She seems like she’s trying harder than usual to piss him off. And that’s when Stiles suddenly realises what she’s doing.

“All right, play times over, time to go,” he says, gesturing towards the front door.

“Oh come on Stiles, Derek wants us to stay,” Erica promises, lip curling in a playful smile.

Boyd takes a step back before he realises the rest of his pack aren’t joining him. Thankfully, Derek isn’t swayed by Erica’s sweet talking. He folds his arms and stares her down stonily.

“I don’t know you,” he repeats. “What’s the point?”

Erica’s smile wavers.

“Jesus, Derek,” Stiles says. “Could you at least try to pretend you’re not an asshole?”

“No,” he retorts, stubbornly.

Stiles throws his hands into the air before pushing them all towards the front door to avoid a scene
where someone else decides to punch Derek in the face. This isn’t the first time he’s kicked them out of their house but usually it’s because of sexiling reasons. Their door is meant to be always open, in a metaphorical sense.

They wouldn’t be a strong pack without it.

But they don’t look so strong now. With an alpha acting like he wants nothing to do with his pack members. Stiles can feel a headache coming on.

“Who’s on patrol now?” he wonders.

“Allison and Lydia until ten.”

“I’ll relieve them then,” Stiles says. “Malia and Liam can take the shift after. He’s still here for semester break right?”

Isaac nods but Boyd is frowning at him. “You shouldn’t be patrolling alone.”

“I won’t,” he promises. “I’ll take Scott or Kira. You guys head home. I’ll let you know if Derek starts remembering anything.”

“Are we still on for the pack barbeque this Friday?” Cora demands. “We shouldn’t have to suffer because Derek is acting like a child.”

Stiles tries not to roll his eyes at the barely veiled insult. She's starting to cross a line now. “Full moon run is still on. See you guys around.”

They hesitate only a little, reluctant to leave their alpha even now. Eventually Isaac heads off the front porch with a final wave, Boyd jogging ahead of him before Erica clambers onto his back with a shriek of delighted laughter.

Cora grins and goes to take off after them, facial features already shifting before Stiles reaches out to snag her wrist.

“Not so fast,” he says. “I know what you’re doing.”

Derek’s still in the dining room but it's not hard to overhear the conversation going on between the kid and his sister outside. It's almost impossible not to hear them. The members of his pack have long since taken off into the woods, running about like madmen.

He has a strong urge to head out and join them. At least then he might be able to avoid all of this tension. It's weird being around people who seem familiar but having no idea who they are. This is too confusing for Derek to handle.

“What am I doing?” Cora wonders innocently.

He can hear Stiles’ heartbeat jump as he lets out a mocking laugh. “You're being purposely shitty to Derek so that he won’t want to stay with you anymore. So he'll stay here instead because it's his only other option.”

Suddenly Cora’s antagonistic behaviour makes sense. He never used to fight with her this much
when they were kids.

“I would never,” she gasps but everyone can hear she’s lying.

Even Stiles. He might be human but even he can't be tricked that easily.

“Look I appreciate what you’re trying to do, but I don’t need help with this,” he says. “Derek has to figure this out on his own.”

That's kind of unexpected. For all his standoffish behaviour, it's strange to think he might actually have Derek's best interest at heart. For all his attitude about their apparent relationship, he still hasn't actually said he's in love with Derek or anything. Considering they're supposedly mated to each other.

The rest of the pack keep saying it and the kid hasn't denied it, but it's not like he's declared his undying love either. Not that Derek would want him to, this is uncomfortable enough.

“You don’t know what he’s like,” Cora mutters.

And then of course there's Cora, trying to imply he's the biggest doucehbag that ever lived. Would she quit trying to make him out as some kind of horrible monster already? Derek's aware he can be a dick sometimes but he's not the fucking antichrist here.

“Yeah I'm starting to figure that out.”

The kid's tone doesn't sound good. If Derek had to guess he'd say he's disappointed. Because Stiles is obviously the one disadvantaged in the relationship. What a joke. How did he end up with this fiery tempered omega when Derek's so clearly out of his league? They may as well be from different planets.

“To College Derek it's barely been a few years since the fire and he still hasn’t told either of us about Kate yet. He’d overcompensated for the guilt back then by putting all his energy into being the best football player, being popular, by dating as many girls as possible. Just to pretend that nothing was wrong.”

Derek hates that she's unpeeling him like this. It's not that simple. There are- were other things going on at the time. He wishes he could remember who he is now and who Cora is. Maybe then he would know how to make her shut up.

“But he grew up,” she promises. “He told us what Kate did to him. Did to us. He became the guy you fell in love with. He can do it again.”

She’s so sincere that Derek can't be angry at her. But he still wishes she'd stay out of this. If he had the choice, he'd stay out of it too, but those are his teeth branded into Stiles' neck. His mating bite. There's nothing else to be done. Except dissolve the mark but Derek's entire body revolts at the idea.

And Cora has been trying to look out for him, in her own obstinate, annoying way.

He shouldn’t be so quick to dismiss her. Derek makes up his mind and heads out to join them before they start talking again. Stiles startles at his arrival, clearly forgetting that he could have been listening though Cora knows exactly how much he overheard.

“Are we leaving?” he asks, without acknowledging the rest of the conversation like she desperately wants him to.
“Yeah,” Cora says eventually. “But I’ll bring you back here tomorrow. I have to work.”

“Okay,” he says, easily, like it’s no problem.

The surprised glance Cora shoots Stiles’ way says she was expecting more complaints. Stiles raises an intrigued eyebrow that makes him look ridiculous. But that’s hardly a stretch, the kid can do that without much effort.

Whatever Cora’s plans, Derek’s not going to let her try and push him towards Stiles. He doesn’t need her matchmaking. “Let’s go,” he says, throwing an arm around her shoulder.

“I’ll drive,” Stiles offers, walking with them. “Derek shouldn’t be out in the woods.”

He talks like it's his decision and what's more frustrating is that Cora listens without protest. Is Derek the head alpha here? Or is it this mouthy omega?

“I can take care of myself.”

Stiles doesn’t back down. He just folds his arms like there’s no argument at all. “Not when the a**holes who shot you in the head are still lurking around.”

“Those other wolves said they didn’t see them,” he mutters, exasperated by the thought of more babysitting.

Stiles looks grim. “That doesn’t mean they’re gone.”

He disappears back inside to fetch his keys. Derek doesn’t bother to argue. Something tells him he won’t win. That’s probably the most aggravating part about it.

Stiles pulls up in front of Cora’s apartment and tries not to look too disappointed that Derek doesn’t instantly change his mind and decide that he wants to stay at home. With him.

But he’s got to at least try and be mature about this. Maybe he’ll drop in to see his father at the station now instead. They haven’t really had a chance to talk since Stiles called him from the hospital to let him know what happened.

He could do with someone to talk to. And his father always gives good advice. Stiles might even grab them both some takeout. They can eat dinner together if he has time between cases.

“Thanks Stiles,” Cora says from the passenger seat, leaning over to kiss him on the cheek before she climbs down.

Derek lingers in the back for a second, long enough that Stiles thinks there’s something he wants to talk about in private. Out of earshot of his loveable but meddling sister.

“Thanks,” he says gruffly and Stiles tries not to feel surprised that that’s it.

“No worries,” he manages, trying not to curse at the unfairness of it all.

He hesitates before opening the door, inhaling shortly and Stiles has a wild moment where he almost believes that Derek is trying to memorise his scent.
Until his face shuts down and he steps out, slamming the door closed without another word.

Then Stiles is sure he imagined it.

The Sheriff is still hard at work when Stiles comes in bearing gifts of burgers and curly fries. His father lights up at the sight of the food, rather than his own son and for that, Stiles doesn’t bother to mention that it’s from a vegan restaurant two towns over.

Or that the patty isn’t actually meat at all.

“How’s Derek?” his dad asks once he’s set aside his paperwork in order to dig into his burger.

He raises his eyebrows in surprise at the taste but can’t quite figure out yet what the difference is. Stiles smiles into his box of curly fries and tries not to look too triumphant.

“He’s different,” he admits, trying not to sound devastatingly unhappy about it. “He’s not acting like himself. He’s acting like-“

“Somebody who’s lost seven years of memories?”

His father’s supportive tone is bordering on snarky. Stiles wonders if he should be offended. "Yeah, fine alright. I get your point.”

His dad is too busy chewing to respond. Stiles digs into his burger as well, handful of fries at the ready to alternate between.

“The best you can do is be patient with him, Stiles,” he says eventually, wiping sauce from the corner of his mouth with much dignity. “It’s all you can do.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he grumbles, around a mouth full of fries.

There's actually a lot more Stiles can do but most of it probably isn't legal. And his job now requires he walk the narrow edge of the law, even if allowances have to be made for the supernatural. His morals are still firmly planted in grey area.

“Heard anything of those hunters since they attacked you both in the woods?”

Stiles swallows his food and shakes his head in exasperation. “Not a peep. But they’ll be back.”

“You seem sure of that,” his father says, snagging at a couple fries and putting them in his mouth.

“We’re not that lucky,” he mutters with a shrug.

The Sheriff sighs, leaning back in his chair as he has a drink of water. “I guess not.”

Definitely not that lucky. Stiles knows their history. All of the monsters and dangers they’ve had to face over the years. Those hunters will be back but this time Stiles isn’t going to let them finish the job.

"What about the FBI?" he wonders. "Are you still going to DC to consult for them?"
Stiles stretches out in the seat with a frown. "They're letting me work from home for now. Only problem with that is they've given me all the low priority cases and that means-"

"They're boring," the Sheriff guesses.

"So boring," he agrees with a groan. "I solved four before lunch today."

"You can always look over some cases here," he offers. "Pick up some of the slack now Derek won't be around to do it."

The suggestion is very tempting, but that's probably a bad idea. "He'd get all butthurt if he knew I'd taken over his cases."

The Sheriff snorts. "Derek's not that petty, son."

Stiles actually laughs at that. "Yeah, Actual Derek maybe. But College Derek is beyond petty. He's supernatural levels of petty, trust me."

His father's eyes narrow with confusion and Stiles knows beyond a doubt that he should never cross paths with College Derek if he wants to live without the experience of watching his father shoot his boyfriend. Definitely a good idea to keep them separated for the time being.

"Well I'm sure when he remembers, he'll be happy you could help him out like this when he needed you."

Stiles slumps lower in the seat. "If he remembers," he mutters darkly.

"When he remembers," his father corrects, reaching over to steal more fries.

Right. Sure. Because things in his life just work out for him like that. Stiles is finding it hard to feel optimistic with the possibility of dealing with College Derek for an indefinite amount of time in his future. Thing is, Stiles is an asshole, he's very aware of that fact. But even he doubts he was as bad as Derek in College.

He's not sure he could even master that degree of dickness.

College Derek is on a whole other level.

His father is chewing on his burger thoughtfully while Stiles sits there lost in his own thoughts.

"This is vegan isn't it?" he realises eventually, shifting the burger in his hands suspiciously.

Stiles manages a grin.

Scott and Kira are curled up on their bed when he finally gets home. The house seems bigger without Derek in it, more empty. Stiles staggers into the room and collapses in between them with a heavy sigh.

"Are you okay?" Kira wonders, reaching out to squeeze his arm carefully.

Scott lifts his head off the pillows and stares at him with sleepy concern. It's good to know they both
care about him, but right now the caring only makes him feel more untethered like he's standing on shaky ground.

“I guess,” he tries. “This is pretty shitty.”

“I’m sorry, buddy,” Scott says, snuggling into his side and wrapping an arm around him as if that will fix everything.

Stiles appreciates the effort anyhow.

Kira does the same thing though she’s a little more hesitant about it. It took some time for her and Stiles to bond outside of Scott but they got there eventually. Stiles didn’t realise that his best friend could find someone who complements him so well. Even Allison loves her. Stiles can’t fathom anybody not liking Kira.

“It’s just- can you imagine Kira waking up one day and looking at your like you’re a stranger. Not trusting you at all?”

Scott reaches over Stiles to take Kira’s hand. “It sounds like a nightmare.”

“A living nightmare,” she agrees understandingly.

“Welcome to my life.”

Stiles wants to fall asleep here and delete the last 78 hours from his brain.

“I can’t believe he hit on me,” Kira whispers, unaware of Scott wincing afterward. “Even when he knew he was mated to you.”

Stiles sighs and hates that his lower lip has started to tremble. “He put the moves on Lydia as well,” he admits. “In the hospital. I think that’s why she’s avoiding the house.”

Scott curses at the new information and Stiles hastily reaches up to wipe some of the wetness from his cheeks. “It’s cool,” he mutters. “Whatever.”

“It is not cool,” Scott insists. “It’s not cool at all.”

Stiles sits up abruptly, dislodging, Kira and Scott as he gets up. “I’d better get ready. I’m supposed to patrol at ten.”

“Who’s patrolling with you?”

“I won’t be alone,” he says, not being entirely truthful.

Scott doesn’t pick up on the lie though.

Stiles leaves them to it and heads up to his room to get dressed in appropriate wood exploring clothes. He fetches his bat and a torch and goes outside to find his jeep. When he said he wasn’t alone, he was talking about bringing the bat with him. It's pretty good backup as weapons go. Technicalities like that help him get away with lying to werewolves.

After so many years, he's gotten pretty good at it. Scott can hardly even tell when he does it. Although Derek is a lot harder to fool.

He meets Allison and Lydia at the parking lot of the Preserve at ten o’clock exactly.
“How’d it go?” Stiles asks. “Find anything?”

“Nothing,” Allison answers, sounding disappointed. “Lydia didn’t sense anything either. Is Scott or Kira with you?”

“Scott,” he lies. “He’s coming in on foot.”

It’s much easier to trick them when they can’t listen to his heartbeat. Lydia is watching him carefully though. “Listen,” she starts, appearing very unsure of herself all of a sudden which is not a look Lydia Martin typically embodies. “About what happened in the hospital-”

“Oh that,” Stiles says airily. “Ain’t no thang. We good.”

Lydia doesn’t seem convinced but that’s because she knows him a lot better now than she used to. It’s okay though, really. It’s not like he blames her for it. But she can’t help him and letting Derek’s shitty actions ruin their friendship seems laughable.

“If you want to talk-“

“I’m gonna go for option number two where I don’t acknowledge the problem and it goes away, thanks.”

Allison pats Stiles on the back as she heads over towards her car. “Let us know if there’s anything we can do to help.”

He nods as Lydia finally follows after her but there’s nothing they can do. There’s nothing Stiles can do. This whole regaining memory journey is one that Derek needs to face on his own.

Stiles watches Allison reverse and drive out of the Preserve, still pretending to wait around for Scott who isn’t actually coming.

Once they’re gone, he switches on his torch, rests the bat against his shoulder so it’s ready to swing at any given moment and trudges into the woods alone.

Usually walking though the woods at night would be a sure-fire way to get lost, but Stiles has patrolled so many times that he feels like he could almost do it in his sleep. There are some small rabbit trails that he likes to follow because the patterns are interesting to observe and it’s fun to see where they meet up and intersect.

The woods are both silent and full of sounds that Stiles’ human ears can’t identify past the rustling of leaves and the snapping of twigs under feet. He keeps his torch low to the ground so he can’t be easily seen moving in the dark, but so it can also prevent the unnecessary pain of tripping over tree roots.

Stiles owns a gun but he hasn’t brought it out since Derek was shot. Right now he prefers the knowledge that it’s locked away. The bat will have to do.

Besides, it’s not like he’s helpless. He knows how take care of himself. Living in Beacon Hills most of his life will do that to a person. If he didn’t come out of it with knife skills and the ability to put a grown man on his ass, then he was doing something wrong.

Stiles walks for a little over half an hour before he senses something approaching.

Something not human.
He waits until they’re within range before swinging the bat out to defend himself, but the man’s reflexes are sharp enough that he ducks, flashing his red eyes through the dark.

“What the fuck?”

Stiles nearly drops the bat.

“Derek?” he cries, astonished. “What the hell are you doing out here? Where’s Cora?”

Derek is looking at Stiles’ bat with a raised eyebrow. “She’s sleeping. I snuck out. You shouldn’t be out here.”

That’s rich considering he’s not meant to be there either. “Why? Because I’m an omega?”

“No, because you’re alone. Did you say you were going to patrol with someone?”

Stiles raises his chin defiantly. “I lied. Obviously.”

“Obviously,” Derek repeats, starting to look mad. “And this little bat is all you brought?” he demands, reaching out.

“Wait, no-“ he starts, but his hand has already closed around the head.

The runes etched into the metal glow a brilliant blue and Derek wrenches his hand back with a sharp cry of pain. “What-?”

“It’s runed and coated with wolfsbane, smartass,” Stiles explains impatiently. “Werewolves no touchy.”

“Jesus, what’s wrong with you,” Derek mutters as Stiles expertly twists the bat out of reach and back onto his shoulder again.

“It’s called not dying,” he replies cheerfully. “And what’s wrong with you, slipping out on your sister to sneak out for a couple hours? Are you trying to get shot in the head again?”

Derek scowls at him. “I don’t need you babying me, kid.”

“Is it babying you when you’ve actually been shot in the head before?” he muses, beginning to walk through the woods again.

Apparently that’s an invitation because Derek follows him further in. “I can handle myself.”

Stiles snorts. “You don’t even remember yourself!”

“Shut up.”

“Wow,” he says, putting a hand to his chest and staggering back a step. “You really put me in my place just now. I think that changed me as a person.”

For a moment the chirping of crickets sounds like laughter. Derek’s scowl is very impressive. "God, why do I want to shut you up so much."

"Unresolved sexual tension," Stiles replies, baring his teeth like a challenge.

The display stumps Derek completely. Whatever frat boy wisdom he picked up in College certainly didn't prepare him for this. Stiles tries not to seem like he's relishing the victory of hard won silence.
They stalk through the trees together for another ten minutes before Derek interrupts it with a yawn. Some subtle alpha he is.

"Couldn’t sleep, huh?" Stiles guesses, figuring that's probably the real reason that he snuck out here.

Derek seems surprised. “I- yeah. How did you-?“

“Usually you run through the woods when you can’t sleep.”

He's staring at Stiles intently, long enough that it feels like he should be blinking more. “I- didn’t- I was drawn here.”

The implications of that are pretty straight forward. Stiles cheeks warm up, nearly tripping over his own feet at the revelation. He tries very hard trying not to think of the reason why Derek turned up here like he did. He followed his baser instincts and they led him straight to Stiles. Like they always do. Stiles doesn't let that information show on his face, giving nothing away.

"To me," he mutters, overwhelmed by the sudden flicker of hope in his chest.

"No," Derek snaps, apparently unwilling to admit even that.

What a *dick*.

"Oh right," he says. "You were strolling by in the woods and just happened to find me. Shit, you're right, College Derek, that makes *much* more sense."

"Screw you. Call me that one more time-"

"Or what?" he demands, turning back to face him. "You'll do what, huh? Glare me into submission?"

Derek's scowl has reached dangerous proportions. Stiles knows an imminent nuclear explosion when he sees one.

“Come on, let’s get you back to Cora’s,” he mutters, turning on his heel and heading back towards the clearing and his jeep.

“I’m not leaving you here alone,” Derek protests stubbornly, mind made up.

Of course now he chooses the time to be protective, when it’s the last thing Stiles needs or wants. “I’m not alone,” he promises, swinging his bat pointedly and waggling his eyebrows to convey how much he's got this.

But Derek is going to take more convincing. “Right, you have a glowing fucking bat. What was I thinking.”

He could do with about 100 per cent less College Derek attitude right now. This is not turning out to be the night of quiet introspection that he had hoped for.

"I’m staying," Derek insists, a second later before Stiles can start arguing again.

"It’ll be three more hours of walking," he warns, trying to make it sound as unappealing as possible. “That's when my shift ends."

Derek steps up beside him, close enough that Stiles can feel the heat coming off his body. “I need the
fresh air.”

Of course, werewolves who practically live outdoors need more fresh air. That's believable. Stiles stops fighting it. It's not like he can force Derek to do anything he doesn't want anyway.

“Fine,” he mutters. “But if you bitch about anything I'm using this glowing fucking bat on you.”

The threat doesn't seem to sink in as much as Stiles would prefer.

"Right," Derek says dubiously, without a lick of concern.

"And I'm gonna talk the whole time because you know, I'm such a mouthy omega,” he adds, swinging his bat through another cob web with more force than needed.

The way Derek grimaces at that seems promising. College Derek didn't appear emotionally developed enough to feel guilty about the shitty things he says. Colour Stiles surprised.

“I'm not trying to be an asshole,” he says, which seems pretty contrary to every single word that's come out of his mouth since he left the hospital. "This is just a lot.”

“'You think I don’t know that?”' he retorts, trying to keep his voice level and unaffected.

It doesn’t help either that Derek is so well tuned to reading emotions. He might not remember Stiles but that doesn’t mean his body doesn’t know how to read him. He has the distinct advantage of picking up chemosignals.

Stiles might not be able to hide very much of what he’s feeling at all.

“How- how did we get together exactly?” Derek wonders, hesitantly enough that it's obvious he's being genuine.

He wonders if he should humour him with this, because he's only going to use it as ammunition to drive his point home that they shouldn't have been mated to begin with. Stiles could do without that slap in the face, thanks.

But he is asking after all. Maybe he's trying to understand.

“When we met Scott had just been bitten and Beacon Hills was under attack by a rogue alpha.”

Derek glances down at his own hands and looks grim. “Me?’”

The expression on his face makes Stiles want to laugh if it wasn't so full of internal angst and condemnation. “No. Your uncle.”

“Peter?” he repeats, disbelievingly and it's not hard to guess he's imagining the non-responsive Peter he remembers from the hospital. “He was in a coma.”

“But he was still transforming every full moon,” Stiles mutters. “He was out of control. Scott didn’t trust you. I didn’t trust you and we definitely didn’t get along.”

Derek is frowning but when he steps past a heavy branch, he holds it back and out of the way in order to let Stiles through first. The gesture is wholly unexpected but Stiles manages to tilt his head in thanks since he doesn’t know what else to say.

“We hated each other?” he wonders, confused.
This is not making their relationship look good at all. It wasn't really like that though. Derek's got it all wrong.

“Not exactly. We just didn’t trust each other. You didn’t see any of my good qualities, just thought I was some dumb teenage kid and I was pretty sure you were the worst werewolf I’d ever come across. We did not see eye to eye.”

“Then how-?”

“Circumstances kept putting us together,” Stiles admits with a shrug, brushing away another huge spiderweb with the top of his bat. “Then we were allies, I guess.”

“Allies?”

Stiles nearly drops his torch after tripping over a heavy root but Derek reaches out to steady him automatically before pulling away. He straightens up and refocuses his attention on the ground again to avoid falling flat on his face.

“Yeah, you were more interested on staying on Scott’s good side after the whole alpha pack, nemeton disaster. And I had- other things going on.”

The whole being possessed by the nogitsune thing. Stiles would rather not think about that.

It’s been years.

“How did we all become pack?” Derek asks after he ducks under a thick branch. “All those people-”

“Allies we picked up along the way. After the nemeton was activated it acted as a sort of beacon for supernatural creatures, luring them to Beacon Hills. We teamed up to face them all and then kind of just stayed that way. You went off on a solitary journey for like nearly two years but when you came back you ended up taking over Beacon Hills territory since Scott was in New York for College and most of the pack had split up. We all came back eventually and we’ve been facing supernatural problems together ever since.”

“But how did we-“ Derek starts, gesturing awkwardly between their bodies until he's unable to finish the sentence.

It's probably not a great sign that Derek can't even say the words. He's not even surprised. It took almost a year of dating before Derek actually said that he loved him, and he'd mumbled it so quickly into Stiles' throat after an enthusiastic bout of sex that Stiles had thought he'd imagined it at the time.

Super romantic. Stiles can't talk though. He'd blurted it out in the middle of a fight with a wendigo when Derek smashed its skull with his bare hands in order to stop it eating Stiles.

They're not exactly a normal couple.

And College Derek might be better at using his words, but he's still absolutely shitty at openly discussing feelings.

“Oh,” Stiles says, flushing. “When I was in college at George Washington you guys flew in to DC a couple of times to visit me. The pack was smaller then and everybody bailed to go out clubbing while I finished off a term paper so it was just me and you.”

Derek smacks a branch away with more force than necessary.
“And that’s all it took?” he demands, sounding irritated though Stiles can’t really figure out why.

“We had a lot of- uh unresolved tension,” he admits. “It wasn’t going to take much.”

“Right,” Derek replies shortly, unmoved.

Stiles could have tried to make it sound more romantic but somehow he knows Derek wouldn’t buy that. How exactly is he meant to explain why they got together? And stayed that way until Derek offered him the mating bite almost three years later?

How does Stiles tell him how much better their lives have been since that night? Or how good they figured out they are for each other?

There aren’t enough words.
Just a heads up I know nothing about american football besides the random googling that I did, so if anything is glaringly wrong please tell me!

Derek patrols with Stiles until two in the morning. Besides the few pointed barbs shot back and forth as they walk they manage not to kill each other. Stiles does trip over a few more times, and during one of those times accidentally manages to smack Derek's bare arm with his bat.

He bitches about it for nearly the entire last hour of their patrol. So much that Stiles no longer regrets inadvertently hitting him.

They meet up with Liam and Malia back at the parking lot of the Preserve once their shift is up. It goes about as well as expected.

“You smell familiar,” Derek says immediately upon seeing Malia.

She is not impressed by the question. “You’re my cousin.”

Derek is taken aback, trying to figure out whose kid she is. Stiles as always, steps in to help. “She came from Peter’s loins,” he explains, barefaced.

“Gross, Stiles,” Liam mutters, sufficiently creeped out.

It is a creepy thing. Stiles can’t imagine Peter procreating either.

“Laila?” Derek ventures slowly, trying to catch up with the situation.

He is a little out of depth here. Stiles realises he’s thinking of one of Peter’s children who died in the fire. “No,” he says quickly. “Illegitimate daughter.”

Derek’s visibly upset now. “Peter cheated on Sarah?”

God, Stiles is just making this worse now. “No. well, maybe. Peter never really elaborated.”

“He’s not my father,” she snaps angrily. “I have a dad.”

“She grew up in a different family.”

“Oh,” Derek says, voice quiet and looking very awkward. “Does Laura-?”


“It’s fairly recent,” Stiles says. “We only found out a couple years back after Malia and I broke up.”

Derek goes completely still. “You dated my cousin?”
Liam looks between them all with horror. “This is so awkward I’m gonna go patrol now.”

Then he slinks off into the trees without waiting for Malia. Derek’s clearly still trying to process everything. Maybe Stiles should have waited a while before mentioning it. It's certainly a lot to take in.

“It’s not a big deal,” Malia says, shrugging. “We had sex but now I have new people I have sex with.”

Stiles cringes.

“Are you fucking with me right now?” Derek demands, turning to Stiles for some kind of support. “She’s kidding right?”

“Uh-“

“What the fuck, Stiles?” he snaps, storming off towards the jeep without another word.

“Sorry,” he says hurriedly to Malia’s scowling face. “No memories. Nothing makes sense. You know how it is.”

“Shouldn’t we just hit him in the head again then?”

“No,” Derek snaps, from across the parking lot.

“No,” Stiles agrees. “Also, maybe ease in to telling him you’re dating two people at once. His poor frat boy brain probably can’t handle polyamory.”

“What?” Derek shouts, looking visibly pissed off now.

“Shit,” he mutters. “Sorry. See you, Malia.”

“Bye,” she says, following after Liam into the woods with a flash of her blue were-coyote eyes.

“Who’s she dating?” he demands, when Stiles gets within hearing distance. “No, don’t tell me, I don’t want to know. Is Cora with- Who’s Laura mated to- No. No. I don’t want to know.”

“Knew your frat boy mind couldn’t handle it,” Stiles mutters, moving towards the driver’s side. Derek clambers into the passenger seat. “Stop calling me a frat boy. I’m just, you know- in a fraternity.”

Stiles laughs openly. Does he realise how ridiculous that sounds?

“Right how did I not see the difference.”

Derek’s face is delightfully red and somehow coming across Malia tonight and the ensuing awkwardness that followed was worth it.

“You were in one of those crappy werewolf run frats weren’t you? That’s why you’re suddenly buying into all that illogical, alpha constructed omega stereotype bullshit.”

Derek stubbornly sets his jaw and doesn’t reply. Stiles starts the car and reverses out of the park. “God, you’re one of those alphas aren’t you, College Derek? You think I should sit at home all day cooking and cleaning for you and then hang off your knot whenever you want cause I can’t live without it.”
The flush of red to his cheeks is traveling down his throat. Stiles has never seen him so flustered.

“Stop talking like that,” he mutters. “I don’t think that.”

“Right,” Stiles snorts. “Which is why it’s fine for you not to want me anymore but somehow I’m not allowed to go searching for anyone else. That doesn’t seem hypocritical at all.”

Derek’s quiet for a long time. Enough that Stiles figures he’s not going to talk for the rest of the drive back to Cora’s apartment. He’s partially right it turns out. Derek only starts speaking again when they pull into her driveway.

“I don’t- I don’t know what I want,” he says in a small voice.

His voice wavers enough for Stiles to feel like a total shithead for forcing the issue. He’s not going to make Derek admit that he’s attracted to him when he’s not ready to face that yet. That’s not fair.

“Trust me, dude,” he manages eventually. “You’ve got the time to figure it out.”

Derek nods and climbs out without a word. Stiles watches him disappear around the side of the apartment block, no doubt to get access to the window he jumped out of. Typical. He waits another beat in case Derek can’t get in before driving off. Stiles feels tired, but he’s not holding out much hope for a good night’s rest.

He’s not wrong.

When he finally falls asleep he has nightmares. For the first time in three years.

It’s terrible.

Stiles is stepping out of the shower, wiping the condensation off the mirror opposite when he sees it. His mating mark.

The colour has changed. The toast he ate this morning churns uncomfortably in his stomach at the sight of it. He hadn’t thought Derek’s behaviour was going to affect it so much.

It’s no longer the deep red that Stiles is used to seeing in the mirror every day. It’s starting to fade. The red looks paler than usual. The bond between them is weakening. For a second he thinks he’s going to throw up but then the unexpected nausea passes. With shaking fingers, he retrieves his suppressants and swallows the pills dry, frantically thinking of what he’s going to do about this.

The pack is going to notice almost immediately. Of course Derek had to choose the most visible place for a mating bite. He’s always had a flair for the dramatic. Stiles has seen more than enough unnecessary backflips during a fight against other supernatural creatures to last a lifetime.

Derek just likes to show off.

The pack is better off not seeing it and getting more worried than they have to be. But it’s not like Stiles can suddenly get away with wearing turtlenecks out of the blue. Or with scarves either since he does his best to mock Isaac relentlessly every time he wears them.

He’s sure that College Derek would love the chance to dissolve their bond entirely. What if he sees it
and start trying to speed up the process?

Stiles doesn’t think he can handle that. He might be very skilled at concealing emotions most of the time, but there’s no way he wouldn’t be able react to that kind of betrayal. And it’s not dignified to wrap himself around Derek’s leg and beg for him to say. There are limits. Stiles has got to keep some of his self-respect here. Or at least pretend he still has some.

He can’t let College Derek walk all over him. That’s nothing like what their relationship is really like. Derek doesn’t just think of Stiles as his omega.

If they fall into patterns that they’ve never been in before, Derek’s never going to start to remember anything about their previous life. He’s never going to realise he loves Stiles. He could use makeup to cover it. But for that he needs a special type of product strong enough to actually conceal the mark. Unfortunately, since Stiles hasn’t ever had a need to hide it before he doesn’t own any.

To keep this under wraps he’s going to have to head to the store and in order to do that, he’ll have to pass a house full of reasonably observant werewolves. Basically he’s screwed. There’s nothing he can do.

Stiles eventually gets dressed and heads downstairs, accepting his fate.

“What’s wrong with your neck?” Derek wonders rudely as soon as he steps into the kitchen.

Because of course Cora decided to drop him off earlier this morning. Of fucking course.

“I know I’m irresistible but you’ve got to keep it in your pants, dude,” Stiles mutters, squeezing past Derek to get at the coffee maker.

“Shut up,” he sputters, instantly ruffled. He makes it too easy. “You know what the fuck I’m talking about.”

Stiles searches the cupboard for his favourite mug, balancing on the edge of the counter to reach it. He manages to hook the handle on his fingers and pull it out. “Well I guess if I had to pinpoint it, I’d say it’s because the asshole who gave it to me now did a three sixty and decided he hates me instead. You know, for starters.”

Derek’s pulling out a mug too and pushes it towards Stiles when he fills up his own cup of coffee. “I don’t hate you,” he mutters. “God, don’t be so fucking dramatic. I just think it’s a mistake to be mated to you.”

Stiles’ laughter ends up sounding more hysterical than he plans it to be. “Oh and that’s so much better. Thanks for clarifying.”

He leans over to pour coffee into Derek’s mug before he stops. Stiles stares at it suspiciously.

“Why did you grab this one out?” he demands, frowning.

Derek’s fingers curl deeply into the counter like he’s about to tear out a chunk of it. “I can’t choose my own goddamn mug now?”
“Fuck off. That’s not even- why did you choose *this* mug?”

“Because I liked it,” Derek snaps, throwing his hands in the air. “Do you need a ten page written paper explaining why?”

Stiles rolls his eyes. “Like you could write that much.”

He can, Stiles is just sick of all the attitude. It’s not fair that he can grab out Derek’s favourite mug like it’s nothing and then act like College Derek instead. Is he trying to rub it in how much things have changed? Would he even tell Stiles if he remembered anything? He doesn’t actually know the answer to that.

“Screw you,” Derek snaps, stomping over to the fridge and yanking the milk out of the box from the inside of the door.

When he marches back over he pours for Stiles first, putting in a small amount, then stirring it through with a spoon just as he likes. Stiles adds sugar next without a word, watching as Derek adds milk again, putting in the exact amount he wants.

He’s so angry that he’s not even paying attention to what he’s doing. It’s exactly how Stiles makes his coffee, but Derek doesn’t seem to realise he’s done anything special when he turns back to fill his own mug.

“What are you staring at?” he mutters eventually when Stiles just stands there, swept up in confusion and hope.

“Your beautiful face, clearly. Wanna make out a little just to see what it feels like?”

He’s not exactly serious but Derek hunches over at the proposal and Stiles can see his ears are quickly turning pink. Sufficiently satisfied now, Stiles heads out into the living room to get started on his cases.

He doesn’t mention the coffee.

Stiles looks up from his case files around one o’clock when he finally realises that Derek is asleep on the couch opposite. The sight of him sprawled out there is disquieting, Stiles didn’t even hear him enter the room.

He has no idea how long he’s been there.

Last time he heard Derek he was upstairs inspecting the attic. Stiles knows he’s bored but he can’t exactly help fix that when he has no idea what College Derek likes to do in his spare time. Throw around a football? Party? Drink a keg of beer? Run naked through the woods?

Stiles can’t even imagine Derek at a party except to stand in the corner and ominously loom over everyone. If it’s just the pack he usually loosens up a little but Derek really doesn’t like strangers.

Get laid then? He knows Derek would’ve been getting busy in college, though it’s amazing he managed to get anyone into his bed with his attitude. Is College Derek’s sex drive higher than Actual Derek’s? Derek’s libido means Stiles is very satisfied all of the time, in many different places. But he
can’t help but wonder if College Derek is somehow hornier.

Would he hook up with someone even when he’s mated to Stiles?

He might be a raging dick but Stiles doesn’t think he’s actually that terrible. Even College Derek would respect a bond bite.

Derek stirs a little, but only to turn onto his side, facing Stiles entirely. He looks much more like Actual Derek like this. Stiles can’t believe he didn’t notice him for such a long period of time. He must have really been absorbed with his work.

Truthfully, he didn’t actually think College Derek knew how to be quiet. Stiles wishes he could just fall asleep as well but he wants to impress his bosses by closing as many low priority cases as possible while he’s working from home. He wants to repay them for being so understanding. He knows people who have been fired from their jobs for less.

And Parrish is going to stop by later to drop off some cases from the station for Stiles to work through as well.

Maybe he should offer them to College Derek. He’s bored, there’s no doubt about it but they might be of some interest to him. God knows, Actual Derek gets so absorbed in his work sometimes that Stiles ends up having to seek him out in his office at the station or at home.

Stiles especially likes finding him at his office at home because there’s a higher chance of it leading to sex. He really wasn’t exaggerating. That desk is very sturdy. Derek fucking loves it.

Rolling his shoulders since he’s been sitting in one spot for so long, Stiles stretches out and heads into the kitchen to make lunch. He makes two sandwiches. One for himself and the other for Derek once he wakes up. Just because he’s a total shitbrick right now doesn’t mean Stiles is going to let him starve.

Derek would still feed him, even if they were at each other’s throats.

He’s angrily cooked them delicious meals in the middle of fights more times than Stiles can count. When he’s finished with the sandwiches, he wraps Derek’s up and puts it in the fridge for him to eat later. Then he fills a glass of water and returns to the living room with his own lunch.

Derek’s eyes flutter open at the welcoming smell of food. “I made you one,” he says, reclaiming his seat. “It’s in the fridge.”

“Thanks,” Derek manages, sitting up and the atmosphere feels awkward when he disappears into the kitchen.

He returns with the sandwich a few minutes later, yawning as he collapses back onto the couch again.

“You’re bored, huh?” Stiles says. “I know you’re bored.”

Derek shrugs around his mouthful of food. Since Stiles is an expert translator of Derek body language, he knows that means yes.

“Parrish is bringing over some cases from the station,” he says, before taking another bite. “You can work on those with me if you want.”

Derek finishes chewing. “I’m not a cop.”
“Technically you are.”

“Well technically I don’t fucking remember how to do it.”

Stiles narrows his eyes at him. “It can’t hurt to try. I’ll look over it after you’re done. Or if you want, you can head out and patrol with Boyd and Chris. They’ll be starting a patrol soon.”

Derek looks surprised. “I’m allowed to leave?”

“Jesus Christ, dude you’re not a fucking prisoner,” he says. “Just don’t go anywhere alone and only with people we trust.”

“You trust,” Derek corrects, voice a low, aggravated mutter.

“Yeah, no shit,” he replies. “We all know about your trust issues.”

Derek glares at him mid bite and Stiles struggles not to laugh at how ridiculous he looks. There are better times to seem threatening and it’s definitely more effective when you don’t have food in your mouth.

“How long are the patrols?” he wonders once he’s swallowed.

“We do four hour shifts,” Stiles says. “We only patrol this much when there are enemies in our territory.”

“I’ll go on patrol,” Derek decides. “I’d rather be outside.”

“With a football?” he can’t resist adding.

Derek’s immediately suspicious. “What’s wrong with football?”

Stiles snorts and doesn’t reply, pulling out his cell phone and sending a text to Chris and Boyd asking them to stop at the house to pick Derek up first before they relieve Erica and Hayden.

It’s funny to think Derek might have been defensive about football in college. Stiles will have to remember that for when he gets his memories back. So he can tease the hell out of him for it. Derek’s eyebrows are in the midst of some very complicated emotions.

“Do- do I still play?”

Stiles hides a smile behind his hand. “Last week you threw a football at Scott’s head when he wasn’t paying attention during training. Does that count?”

That doesn’t seem to appease him at all.

“Hey I get it,” he says. “Running about and tackling a bunch of other muscular, sweaty guys to the ground. That’s fun stuff. They don’t call it homoerotic for nothing.”

“Shut up,” Derek snaps, red faced. “It’s not even about that.”

“Sure,” Stiles agrees, unconvinced. “And I’ve never popped a boner during a game of lacrosse.”

That catches Derek’s attention. “You play lacrosse?”

“In high school. Joined a team in college, but that was mostly for the partying. The pack likes to play every now and again.”
“We should have a game,” Derek declares and Stiles raises his eyebrow.

There is something appealing about the chance to trip Derek into the dirt. Being rejected by the love of his life makes him vengeful. Go figure. “We’re having a pack barbeque tomorrow night,” Stiles admits. “You should ask the guys then.”

The way Derek enthusiastically finishes off the rest of his sandwich means he’s definitely going to. It’s kind of sweet actually, to see him be so interested in something.

Maybe Stiles will have the chance to put Derek into the dirt after all.

They encounter a big problem when Boyd and Chris come to the front door. Derek tenses up all over when he sees Chris and that he’s armed to the teeth.

Abruptly Stiles realises the colossal mistake he’s made. Derek’s claws are out when he launches himself at Chris Argent with an explosive roar. Stiles moves fast, tackling Derek in the side so he crashes onto the porch rather than ripping Chris’ insides out.

Stiles manages to pin Derek’s arms down before he can throw him off. “Chris wasn’t involved in the fire,” he shouts. “He didn’t know about it.”

“He’s an Argent-“

“She’s dead,” he yells. “Kate’s dead.”

Derek’s stops struggling and looks intently into Stiles’ face, listening to the truth in his voice. Chris has already backed away several feet, palms of his hands facing outwards so they can see he’s not touching any weapons.

“I didn’t know about Kate,” he says and Derek can hear he isn't lying. “We’re supposed to protect those who can’t protect themselves. What Kate did was an abomination. She’s no sister of mine.”

That doesn’t sound like it’s good enough. Stiles is rhythmically being lifted by the force of Derek’s shuddery breaths as he tries to get himself back under control. It’s a lucky thing he hasn’t thought to slash Stiles with his claws yet.

“We’re allies,” Stiles promises. “We’re pack. We don’t judge them for what Kate did the same way we don’t judge you or your sisters for the people Peter’s killed.”

Derek’s mouth falls open. “Peter’s killed people?”

Shit. Why does Stiles keep telling Derek things that he probably shouldn’t? The abject horror on his face shows that Derek is having some serious difficulty reconciling his uncle with a rampaging murderer.

“Oh, I mean, I guess they deserved it?” he ventures cautiously, wondering what Derek’s thinking. “Most of them were involved with the fire.”

That doesn’t mean anything to Derek. Apparently even the College version of him isn’t as interested in revenge as his uncle was.
“Come on patrol with us,” Chris offers, pretty bravely in Stiles opinion considering what just happened. “We can talk.”

That seems like a bad idea now given Derek’s reaction to him. Stiles glances at Boyd, silent question ready. “I’ll keep them both in line,” he vows.

Stiles finally relaxes his hold and Derek breaks free, pushing him off forcefully, red faced and visibly upset. He definitely doesn't appreciate being pinned down by somebody that he first mistook for a teenager.

“Where’s Peter now?” he demands, getting to his feet. “I want to talk to him.”

Stiles really shouldn’t have opened up that can of worms. “Trust me, dude, you don’t want that.”

“How about I decide who the fuck I talk to,” Derek snaps. “Dude.”

Apparently he has some issue with being restrained by Stiles. Is it because Derek’s bigger than him? Or because Stiles just happens to be an omega? Knowing the bullshit College Derek is constantly spewing out of his mouth, probably both.

“Good luck finding him then,” he retorts. “We haven’t seen him for little over a month now.”

Derek spits out a vicious curse and kicks at one of the wooden posts supporting the roof of the porch. “Very mature response,” Stiles observes. “A-plus for expressing your emotions through violence. Real twenty first century of you.”

Derek’s eyes bleed red. “Would you SHUT UP,” he roars, taking a ferocious step towards him. “I’m meant to be the leader of this pack. I’m the head alpha. You can’t keep treating me like this! Joking around with that other alpha who shouldn’t fucking be in this pack, let alone staying in my house!”

Boyd and Chris rush forward, pushing between them to stop him getting to Stiles but he’s already moving.

“No, I got this,” he says, darting through the sudden wall of bodies.

Derek’s breathing heavily and his eyes are still red when he glares at Stiles.

“You may think that your alpha bullshit is gonna fly here but let me tell you, buddy, you’ve got another thing coming. We’re a fucking team you dick, not a dictatorship. Not only do we have a true alpha in our pack, we also have a set of alpha twins as well even if they’re out of town right now on pack business.”

Stiles relishes the look of astonishment on his face. They didn’t just become the strongest pack in America by being traditional and following the rules.

Ethan and Aiden are busy right now in peace talks, making allies with a desert pack in Nevada. The situation was too important for them to drop everything and leave after Derek was injured. Apparently strength in werewolf packs is all about networking.

It’s a good thing Stiles can be charming. Derek just looks like he’s stepped in a bear trap whenever he tries to win new people over with his very unique brand of charm.

“We’re stronger together because of it. And Scott deserves to be in this pack, he’s saved your ass more times than you can count. I invited him into our home and he’s not going anywhere. You want to be a leader? How ’bout you actually show some leadership qualities rather than screaming in my
face every five minutes? You can throw all the tantrums you like but I can guarantee that if you keep acting like this nobody is gonna listen.”

He doesn’t respond so Stiles uses the silence to really drive the message home. “Do you really think Talia Hale would have been proud of this? You always told me you wanted to be an alpha like her, lead by her example. Has that changed too?”

Derek ducks his head and that’s when Stiles knows he finally got through all the bullshit. Chris and Boyd keep glancing at him, ready to intervene but he really doesn’t need their help.

“I know you’re frustrated,” he says, softening his tone. “This is a messy situation. But it doesn’t mean you get to treat the people who care about you like shit. Any of them. You’ve got to stop acting like we’re all against you, because we’re not.”

His claws finally retract and Derek shakes his hands out, the red finally fading out of his eyes. “Okay,” he says simply. “Fine.”

Stiles stares at him.

If he’s being honest, he really didn’t expect Derek to back down that easily. He narrows his eyes warily but when Derek does nothing else but stare into the woods, body slowly unwinding, he thinks the danger has passed.

Boyd steps closer to Derek and puts a hand on his shoulder. He startles at the touch but manages not to glare at him. Stiles would count that as progress.

“Do you still want to go-?” he starts, stepping closer to them both and reaching out to touch Derek’s arm as well.

“Yeah. Let’s talk,” he snaps at Chris, pushing Stiles’ hand away and advancing on him.

Chris for his part, doesn’t back down but he also doesn’t drop his hands. Stiles feels nervous just looking at them. Boyd shoots him a reassuring look before they start heading off into the trees together.

If nobody ends up dead it will be a miracle.

Boyd and Chris drop Derek back off at the house around six o’clock.

The both of them look suspiciously unharmed but Stiles is pretty sure that if they attacked each other neither of them would leave any evidence. And Derek refuses to tell Stiles what he and Chris talked about no matter how many times he asks. But he’s gone quiet too, clearly ruminating on the conversation. There are some things he needs to think about.

Parrish came over a few hours before, dropping off more case files so Stiles had more than enough paperwork to pass the afternoon away alone.

When Cora comes to pick Derek up after she’s left work for the day, he can’t help but feel a little relieved. Things between them got a little intense earlier. It’s probably better for Derek that he gets away from Stiles for a bit. Hopefully that also means he might think about some of the things Stiles
If College Derek stops acting like everyone is out to get him it will be much easier to integrate him back into the pack again. Even if it’s not as Stiles’ mate. Distancing himself only means it’s harder for the pack to show their support. He knows they’re not the most patient of people, but they’ll have Derek’s back. If he lets them.

First, he has to give them a chance. But judging from the less than ideal first meeting with Boyd, Erica and Isaac, pack members he actually turned himself; he’s not expecting much. Stiles hopes the barbeque tomorrow will be a good starting point. He has plans to introduce Derek to the rest of the pack and let whatever happens happen.

There’s a high chance it’s going to end in a shitfight though.

As is the new norm, Stiles tosses and turns pretty much all night, then gets annoyed that he’s tossing and turning all night and gives up on sleeping altogether.

That’s when he finally falls asleep. Life is unfair.

When he wakes up again, he can hear people moving about in the kitchen downstairs, Scott and Kira probably, but Stiles just rolls over and lets his eyes fall shut. Since he’s his own boss right now, he can stand to be late to work. Luckily he falls back to sleep without a problem.

But the light sound of the knob to his bedroom door turning has Stiles blearily opening his eyes again some time later. Derek is standing there, in that loose fitting red Henley of his, the one with the thumbholes, so soft looking that Stiles lets out a groan of longing.

“Mmm Derek,” he says, opening his arms invitingly for him to climb back into bed again.

Did he go for a morning run? Stiles hopes he made coffee. When he doesn’t make a move to come closer, Stiles covers his mouth with a huge yawn and sits up. Reality comes crashing down on him all at once. Derek’s not coming back to bed because he doesn’t remember him.

“Oh, right,” he mutters, scratching at his chin to cover the sudden rush of embarrassment. “Ah, never mind then.”

“Stop looking like a kicked puppy,” Derek mutters. “It’s pathetic.”

Stiles flops back onto the bed. “Okay, first of all for thanks for the irreparable damage that’s gonna inflict on my self worth. Second of all fuck you, you giant bag of dicks. Bye now.”

He wipes furiously at his eyes. Should they be this wet so early in the morning? “What’s got you so emotional?” Derek demands with the all the sensitivity of sandpaper.

“Wow, sorry for having feelings,” he mutters. “Guess they’re not masculine enough for you.”

“Are you always this bitchy after you wake up?”
Stiles throws a pillow at Derek’s head. “Wouldn’t you like to know.”

He tosses the pillow right back, hitting him in the chest. Stiles hugs it to his body and rolls over with a curse. He jumps a little at the touch of Derek’s hand to his bare shoulder before he tries to shake him into moving. Yeah, good luck with that.

“Get up. I’m hungry.”

“So make food,” Stiles grumbles. “You’re not an infant.”

Derek pulls the elastic of Stiles’ boxer shorts away from his body, releasing it so that it snaps back like a rubberband. “Ow, you fucker,” he snaps, at the sharp stinging pain but Derek’s already left the room.

“Real mature,” Stiles shouts after him.

Derek doesn’t reply so he punches the pillow a few times until he feels better.

When he decides to crawl out of bed, he tosses his boxers in the corner and slips into a pair of sweatpants, freeballing it. He throws on a big t-shirt and slinks downstairs, stomach grumbling at the smells coming out of the kitchen.

He ambles in to make himself a cup of tea, automatically setting out another mug for Derek as the kettle boils. At least he didn’t set the kitchen on fire yet. There were at least two dorm fires a month at the college Stiles studied at. College students are human disasters, it’s been proven. Stiles would know, he was one of them.

The kettle finishes boiling and he steeps the tea bag to make sure the flavours are properly infused in the water. Derek likes to drink his tea black and enjoys jasmine tea the most. So Stiles fetches the teabag out from the container resting atop the counter that houses all of their tea.

Derek is in the middle of making scrambled eggs for himself so Stiles leaves him to it, setting the mug down beside him on the counter. “I don’t drink tea,” he argues immediately because of course Stiles can’t even make simple gestures like that anymore.

“What have you got against tea?”

Derek waves a hand gawkily. ‘It’s- it’s for nerds. And- old people.”

“Oh my God,” Stiles groans. “Who even are you? Tea is for anyone who wants to fucking drink it. There are no socially complex tea rituals, okay? Drink it or don’t. Whatever.”

He takes his own mug and stomps out into the living room, climbing into the window nook to soak up some sunshine. There’s a fair amount of cases waiting for him to get started but Stiles doesn’t feel particularly invested right now. He’ll get to them later.

He’s glad it’s Friday at least, which means the weekend and potentially some back up to deal with College horror Derek Hale. At least now he won’t be alone and frustrated because he wants his mate desperately but also simultaneously can’t have him.
Because his mate doesn’t want him back.

Ouch.

But also the pack is having a barbeque at the house tonight which means that half of them will come bearing gifts of alcohol for both werewolves and humans. It’s a perfect way to welcome the full moon and forget about all their problems for a while. Stiles cradles the warm mug full of tea between his fingers and lets his eyes fall shut, feeling the sunshine caress his face.

He lets out a soft sigh and his mind drifts, searching for a higher plane of understanding where everything College Derek says doesn’t upset him.

There’s a weak clinking of silverware and Stiles’ eyes flutter open at the sound, startled to see Derek standing next to him. His mouth is parted slightly like he was about to say something and got interrupted. His expression is slack and kind of bewildered and Stiles has no idea what he’s thinking.

“What?” he starts, confused.

Derek sets the plate down on Stiles’ stomach, buttered toast heaped up with scrambled eggs and sprinkled with a few herbs. It smells delicious. "Uh, thank you-" He starts. But before he can ask any questions, Derek is disappearing back into the kitchen again.

Did he cook this for him? Stiles takes a tentative sip of his tea before he sets it down next to his thigh and picks up the knife and fork. For some reason, Derek doesn’t come back out again to eat breakfast with him.

But Stiles isn’t that repulsive.

Is he?

Breakfast is freaking delicious and Stiles is in such a food coma that he can’t move afterwards.

Twenty minutes later, when his mug is finally empty and he’s taken the cup and dishes, rinsed them off and put them in the dishwasher, he’s ready to work. He goes to retrieve some of the case files from Derek’s office and starts setting up in the living room. By then Derek has resurfaced. He doesn’t mention whatever overtook him earlier when he made Stiles scrambled eggs.

If it was a lost memory resurfacing, he would have mentioned it. Probably.

Stiles waves a case file at Derek like he’s trying to tempt him with it and Derek rolls his eyes and snatches it out of his hands because he’s an asshole and can’t see a gesture even when it’s being made to him.

He settles back down against the couch and opens up the manila folder, eyebrows furrowing as he starts to read the details of the case. Stiles watches him for a while before he realises that’s probably a little creepy and starts paying attention to his own work.

He hopes that Derek doesn’t get frustrated enough to tear apart the case file with his claws. All this detective work is new to him. Well, new again. God this is weird.
Stiles is trying his best to roll with it.

Derek’s staring at the words in front of him but he hasn’t actually read a full sentence in the last ten minutes.

Truthfully, he’s trying not to panic about what happened earlier. He’d been in the middle of making himself breakfast when Stiles sloped into the room like some kind of sloth and set about making tea with his eyes barely open.

Then he’d tried to make Derek tea. As if he would drink that shit. But when he said no, Stiles’ face did that thing, where he looks like Derek kicked him and he suddenly felt like a massive shithead. So maybe Derek cut him some slack.

The kid is pathetic. He can’t help but feel sorry for him.

And maybe there are some providing instincts getting mixed up in his head telling him that he needs to feed Stiles all the time. It's hard to get a handle on urges that he's never experienced before. So he’d made up a plate and went to find the kid in the living room. He’s so helpless that he didn’t even hear Derek approach, not even when he’d stopped right by his side and stood there for a while.

Stiles had curled himself up in the window seat, long, clever looking fingers wrapped around the mug resting atop his chest with his eyes closed. Who just curls up anywhere they like to take a nap? What is wrong with him?

The sunlight poured onto him like he’d been doused in gold, and the soft light touched the brown in his hair, drawing out chocolate coloured strands that Derek never even noticed before. The flushed pink of heat to his cheeks made him seem different and his moles were much more distracting than Derek remembered. Had his eyelashes always been that long and delicate?

In that moment, with Stiles relaxed in a state of his own privacy and thoughts, he’d actually looked kind of beautiful.

Derek had nearly dropped the plate of food, shocked by the realisation. He’d caught it at the last second but the cutlery had clinked together, finally announcing his presence. When Stiles had opened his eyes, Derek’s heart had been pounding.

It’s the kind of revelation he didn’t want any part of. Objectively, he knew that Stiles isn’t hideous but he hadn’t thought about it more beyond that.

He’s thinking about it now. Derek glances up to where Stiles is busy reading two case files at once on the couch opposite. He’s chewing on a pen while he reads and Derek should be disgusted by the sight but instead he just ends up staring at his mouth.

Jesus, his mouth. Derek wishes he wasn’t thinking about this at all. He doesn’t know this kid, he doesn’t want to be feeling things for him just because he thinks he remember he does. That’s not good enough. But God, the picture Stiles had made on that window seat—

Derek didn’t even know he could look like that.

It’s not his fault he needed time to regroup. So he’d eaten breakfast in the kitchen alone, sitting atop
the counter and listening intently to Stiles' heartbeat in case he decided to come looking for him. He didn’t and Derek had polished off the plate uninterrupted.

But he kept glancing at the mug of fucking tea deserted on the counter the entire time.

When he’d rinsed the plate and put it into the dishwasher he’d finally picked up the mug, silently cursing himself for even bothering with this. It was still warm in his hands, so Derek put it to his lips and had a taste.

And instantly loved it.

He'd drained the entire thing.

When the pack starts to arrive at around six o’clock, Stiles remembers what a sight his fading mark will make since he didn’t have enough time to head to the store for the heavy duty makeup to cover it up.

He manages to dodge everyone for a while by buttering the hamburger bread in the kitchen. But that doesn’t work for long because Scott heads in to fetch the bread tower and carry it out to the grill. “Stiles,” he says, shocked. “Your-“

He knows what Scott’s referring to straight away, turning around and slapping his hand over the mark to cover it. “Shhh,” he whispers furiously. “The pack is outside.”

Scott is still staring at his mating mark with wide eyes. “But look at it-“

“I know, I know,” he says miserably. “It's fading. It’s not like I can do anything about it. I don’t have anything to cover it up.”

“I’ll go to the store,” Scott offers. “Right now. We can cover it up before they notice.”

The fact that Scott is willing to do that for him, makes him feel things. He’s a good buddy. But Stiles can only groan. “They’ll notice if it’s just gone.”

“What do you want to do?”

Stiles thinks about it. “Maybe I should go. Fake some emergency or something.”

“You can’t just avoid the pack forever,” Scott protests. “It’s only going to keep fading.”

As if that’s not a knife piercing his chest. Stiles knows that the mark will continue to slowly lose its colour, but he’s not ready to acknowledge that yet. As far as he’s concerned he never wants to acknowledge it. Which is why it’s so much easier if the pack doesn’t know. He hasn’t got much of a choice about that though.

“Let’s just get this over with,” he mutters, following Scott out into the backyard.

Erica observes the subtle change almost straightaway because apparently her eyesight is freakish. “Stiles, what’s happened to you mating mark?” she demands, loud enough to carry across the entire group.
Stiles’ eyes find Derek automatically, searching for some kind of reassurance since Erica basically just exposed their relationship problems to the entire pack. But College Derek apparently is a coward, because he hunches over, stuffing his hands into his pockets and quickly turns away.

Fucking great.

“Yeah, it’s fading,” Stiles snaps, trying not to sound too bitter. “Feel free to stare cause it’s not like this is awkward enough.”

Erica shuts up after that. The rest of the pack falls into a tense silence.

Scott drags Stiles over to the barbeque so he can’t start fights with anyone else. He makes sure to wrap an arm around him, holding Stiles close and giving him a supportive squeeze. That might make him feel only marginally better. Kira, who’s manning the grill and wearing an apron that makes her even cuter than usual, looks like she wants nothing more than to hug him. Stiles is thankful that she manages to resist.

Allison heads over a few minutes later, handing Stiles a beer without a word. If he was able to give hugs right now without collapsing into a blubbering mess he’d want to bring all three of them into his arms and squeeze the air out of them.

“Oh, you know, work and such.”

Stiles doesn’t believe that for a minute. “She’s still avoiding the house, isn’t she?”

The second of hesitation is all the answer he needs. Allison reaches out to squeeze his arm. “Lydia didn’t want to make this harder for you.”

God. Stiles wishes College Derek felt the same way. Actually being respectful of his feelings. Unfortunately, he’s not that lucky. Stiles takes another drink of his beer and wishes he could somehow drown in it. Or maybe someone will take pity on him and smash it over his head.

He glances over at Derek again and this time it looks like Cora is attempting to re-introduce him to everyone. Hopefully he doesn’t make the same winning impression that he did on Stiles. But from the looks of it he seems to be doing well. Half of the pack is crowding around him, he’s so popular. No blood has been shed yet. That's really all Stiles can ask for.

He turns back to the grill before he can be caught out and tries not to resent that College Derek is capable of being friendly. It’s his own mate he has no interest in. Like that doesn’t leave a bitter taste on his tongue.

A snatch of laughter rises above the hubbub of conversation and Stiles tenses at the sound, swivelling around to stare. Because that’s Derek's laughter and Stiles has never heard him sound like that before.
He finds Derek standing by the tables, wolfsbane laced beer in hand as he talks to Boyd. Cora on his other side. How does that even make sense? Stiles didn’t even know that Derek could laugh with his whole body like that. Of course Boyd would make it happen. It’s always the quiet ones.

“Huh,” Scott says, surprised. “Is Derek laughing?”

Stiles can’t look away, even as the sound of it trails off. Derek snickers into his beer, highly amused beyond all reason before taking another drink. Boyd seems a little startled but he’s smiling too. It’s official. Derek has been replaced by a pod person.

“Oh my God,” he says. “Am I dreaming? Is this real right now?”

Allison tilts her head at Derek thoughtfully. “I didn’t even know he could make that sound.”

“Me neither,” Stiles admits, lifting the beer to his lips and not putting it back down again until the bottle is empty.

It’s not like Derek’s never laughed before. But it hasn’t sounded like that. Unreserved and open. It’s so fucking charming that it seems unjust that Stiles has never heard it. Does that mean he’s doing something wrong? Was Derek not as happy as Stiles believed he was if he never laughed like that?

That doesn't bring about a lot of good feelings at all. Like Stiles isn't already struggling with doubts about his relationship already. Is this how Derek became popular in college? By laughing a lot? Stiles finds it hard to believe.

Some of the meat patties are finally ready so Scott starts loading up the buns onto plates and passing them to Kira so she can dish them out. The rest of the pack start ambling over, lining up to get some food. There’s salad, tomato slices, cooked onion, beetroot, cheese and other bits to add to their burgers waiting for them on the long table.

Stiles is only a little hungry so he decides to wait until everybody else has gotten their food first. It’s probably a better idea to hide out here with Scott, Kira and Allison. Away from all the action.

He doesn’t want to rile Derek up and start a fight. It might hurt his chances of bonding with the rest of the pack if he puts him in a bad mood and Stiles doesn’t want to risk ostracising him even more.

The pack all seem to make excuses to touch him as they come past. Trying to show their support. There are a lot of hands patting Stiles’ back, squeezing his shoulder or brushing against his bare arms.

Erica actually comes forward to clasp his hand in silent apology for calling him out in front of everyone earlier. He appreciates what they’re trying to do but it’s a bit smothering as well. Even Chris Argent gives him a sympathetic look. That's when he pretty much knows he’s hit rock bottom. Stiles could probably do without the collective group pity right now.

He’s standing by the barbeque, close enough that the warmth coming off it is heating his face when someone presses up against his back. Stiles half turns before he feels two warm fingers rest against his mating mark absentmindedly, gripping the back of his neck as they force a plate full of burger into his hands.

“Here,” Derek mutters gracelessly. “Quit making that face already.”

“Wow, fuck you,” Stiles says involuntarily but accepts the plate anyway.

Allison is raising an eyebrow at them. Maybe he should be making some introductions. “Derek this is-“
“Allison,” she says, extending her hand. “Allison Argent.”

Derek, who is in the middle of extending his hand towards her, flinches at her surname and wrenches it back. There’s no way Allison can pretend not to notice that reaction. “I’m not your enemy,” she promises. “I hope in time you’ll be able to believe that again.”

It’s pretty decent of her to try and extend the olive branch when she knows he tried to attack her father yesterday afternoon. But Derek ignores her words and stomps off before Stiles can decide what to say in lieu of the sudden awkwardness.

Or analyse what the hell Derek handing him food is supposed to mean. The mark on his neck is still tingling.

It’s late afternoon by the time everybody has finished eating but they’ve got fairy lights hanging outside and Allison’s lit a few candles before dusk starts to settle in.

The atmosphere is familiar and comforting and Stiles is definitely feeling the buzz from the few beers he’s had. The crickets are getting louder and the woods seem to come alive around them when the pack splits up into two teams for a game of football.

Everybody is willing to play, even Cora, who’s been making fun of Derek’s apparent love for the sport by mocking him endlessly about it. Stiles ends up on a team with Scott, Kira, Cora, Hayden, Mason, Isaac and Chris. It’s no surprise that Derek ends up on the other team. If he's being honest, he probably prefers it that way.

The other team is made up of Derek, Boyd, Erica, Malia, Liam, Allison, Corey and Parrish. They don’t have enough people to make the full eleven players but they make do with what they’ve got.

“Zero contact, right?” Derek assumes and the rest of the pack stare at him with disbelief. “We’ve got human players, don’t we?” he mutters defensively, catching all of their reactions.

Allison laughs at that.

“We’ll be okay,” Stiles offers modestly while Isaac snickers standing next to Chris, who is already in the middle of cracking his knuckles.

Kira supervises the coin toss because she’s probably the most honest out of the entire pack and Stiles’ team wins so they get to start on the offence. The two teams split up to organise the positions. With Stiles as the captain, he makes Hayden and Kira their widereceivers since they’re the fastest in the group. He makes Scott the centre and Mason and Chris the front guard. Isaac and Cora are the fullback and halfback.

They don’t have enough players to fill out their offence so Stiles has to make some sacrifices. Derek snorts once he sees that Stiles has taken the role of quarterback. Scott glances back at Stiles sympathetically at the sound. Right before his eyes zero in on Stiles’ fading mark again.

Oh yeah. He’s going to make Derek regret underestimating him.

Derek appoints himself the middle linebacker, Boyd and Malia the two tackles at the front, Parrish and Erica the outside linebackers and Corey and Liam the two cornerbacks. He leaves himself one
safety, Allison, at the back of the group, so far from the action that it’s clear he doesn’t even trust her to play on his team.

Stiles can see Allison scowling at him as she takes her position.

“Ready to taste defeat?” Erica taunts from across the field.

“Are you?” Kira shouts back, grinning.

He would roll his eyes, but they’re only teasing. They’ve played more than enough games like this before. And with only a few broken bones to show for it. They’re pretty good at having fun. “Wait,” Stiles says, seeing the flaw in the problem. “Who’s gonna ref?”

They’ll need one, Stiles doesn’t trust any of them to play fair.

“I’ll do it,” a well-known voice calls from nearby.

He turns, grinning at Lydia who’s finally relented on her forced exile in order to make an appearance.

Stiles doesn’t even care if Derek tries to hit on her again, he’s just glad that she’s finally here. After a few days apart, he’d started to miss her. Apparently Derek is too busy muttering instructions to his team to even notice her arrival anyway. Allison beams at her but doesn’t move from her position.

Lydia comes to stand between their teams, analysing the way the groups are all set up. “Stiles’ team won the coin toss?”

Most of the guys standing near her confirm it with a few nods.

“Then let’s play.”

It is a lot of fun.

Isaac gets elbowed in the face almost within the first five minutes, Malia loses a tooth after falling face first into the grass after an enthusiastic tackle and everybody ends up covered in grass and dirt pretty quickly. They play by a two foul system before ejection and nearly everyone gets a foul in the first twenty minutes.

Derek has it out for Stiles from the get go and keeps trying to blitz past the first line to sack him.

Stiles manages to avoid that play because he’s faster on his feet and more flexible than Derek as he’s pretty much all muscle. He throws the ball to Hayden or Kira and if they’re not in the end zone to make the touchdown, Stiles usually manages to evade Derek and run it down a few yards himself until he’s tackled.

Scott is the perfect centre, he tries to keep the front line as tight as possible so Derek can’t squeeze through and he’s got a talent for tackling the other team as well. They gain ground quickly because Stiles changes plays so often, leaving it harder for Derek’s team to anticipate them.

He even manages to barge past Derek one time before he can get his hands on him, hard enough to knock him to the ground. Stiles grins when he sprints the rest of the way into the end zone.

Their team ends up beating the other team by six points when Kira scores a touchdown in the last minute. Derek’s team played the last five minutes one player less since Lydia awarded Malia her second foul and sent her off the field. She’s been watching the rest of the game from the sidelines,
shouting encouragement though she still hasn’t quite got the hang of the rules even now. Stiles is sweating heavily by then and feeling a little jealous of the beer Malia is standing there drinking.

Scott tackles Stiles to the ground with a whoop of excitement once they've won and suddenly Hayden, Isaac, Cora, Kira and Mason are joining the pile on top of him. Stiles can see Chris’ feet, standing just outside the tower of people currently pushing his organs out of his body.

His laughter sounds more like a groan, ribs pushed down by the pressure as he tries to gasp some air into his mouth. There are spots appearing behind his eyes when Stiles hears a snarl of anger followed by a few exclamations of surprise as the pressure of at least six people lying on top of his chest disappears.

“Get off him,” Derek roars, as Stiles rolls over onto his side in the grass, gasping and inhaling deeply before attempting to sit up.

“Relax,” Hayden says, still grinning. “We’re just messing around.”

“I’m fine—” Stiles starts to say just as the onset of a panic attack sets in.

The pressure around his ribs is back again and he drops his head, squeezing his eyes shut and trying desperately to breathe evenly through his knees. His hands are shuddering along with the rest of his body. Stiles can’t seem to hold himself still.

“What’s he doing? What’s he doing?” he can hear Derek shouting before hands are on his neck and he’s kneeling on the grass next to Stiles. “What’s wrong with him?”

He might not be handling it like Derek knows how to, but Stiles reaches out to grip his hand like a lifeline anyway, feeling it ground him as he tries to breathe in and out.

“It’s a panic attack,” Cora says. “Derek, you need to calm down.”

Stiles chokes out a strangled laugh at the suggestion, that Derek is the one who needs to calm down right now, throwing out the pattern of breathing he’s been trying to establish all over again. Derek’s hand holds him tighter.

“His heart is beating so fast,” he says urgently. “What do I do?”

“Rub his back,” Scott says and Derek must give him a sharp look because he adds. “You always do that when it’s happened before.”

He’s not lying. Stiles feels his warm hand against his skin, disregarding the way his sweat makes the t-shirt cling to his body. Stiles manages to get focused on his fingers, tearing into the grass between his legs, breathing and counting slowly as Derek’s hand steadies him.

“It’s slowing down now,” Isaac says. “He’s coming out of it.”

“I’ll get him some water,” Mason announces before taking off towards the house.

“Is Stiles alright?” Allison asks, sounding closer than before.


Stiles watches the feet clustered around him take a few cautionary steps back. By then he's able to lift his head up. The rest of Derek’s team have hurried over as well as Lydia and Malia from the sidelines.
“Whoo,” he manages, pushing air out between his teeth. “That came out of nowhere.”

“Are you okay?” Kira wonders, looking worried.

Mason finally returns with a glass of water, which Stiles accepts gratefully, knowing his face must be red. Panic attacks in front of crowds, the pack especially, are always the worst. College Derek didn’t do too bad though. But Stiles is kind of stunned that it rattled him at all. That was definitely concern that he was showing.

“Oh, thanks,” he manages after swallowing several mouthfuls.

Everybody seems to be staring at him anxiously. And Derek is still rubbing at his back. Stiles half turns towards him, feeling uncertain. “Thanks,” he manages, just as Derek finally pulls away.

“Maybe you should lie down,” Liam suggests.

Stiles hates feeling like this. He wishes they could all go back to the fun they were having five minutes ago. “I’ll just stay here for a bit,” he says. “Regretting life and all that.”

The pack adapts pretty quickly, flopping down into the grass around him without complaint. Malia starts trying to protest that her last foul wasn’t a foul and in the ensuing argument, Stiles takes the time to get a handle on things again.

Derek heads over to sit by Boyd, but Stiles can see that he’s still kind of hovering in case of another attack. Stiles hasn’t gone into a panic attack straight after another since the few months after he’d come out of the nogitsune’s possession. It’s not pleasant.

Erica and Isaac head on over towards the esky, hidden just inside the kitchen door, in order to pick it up and bring it back to the rest of the group. They start passing out drinks to everyone and Malia accepts another even though she’s still working on her first beer.

Stiles takes the bottle offered just to put it onto his forehead and cool down a little. He can still feel Derek’s eyes on him.

They sit there in the grass until the darkness settles in completely and the mosquitos start to come out. The laughter is almost as loud as the conversation when the moon finally emerges from the top of the trees. The werewolves in the pack start to get excited, getting to their feet, whooping and carrying on as they abandon their drinks and start to head into the forest.

Derek’s expression is astonished when he turns towards Cora. “We’re doing a full moon run?”

Stiles is close enough to hear the way his voice shakes. The last one he probably remembers was with the rest of his family before they died. To College Derek that was a long time ago. He swallows a painful stirring of sympathy for the grief Derek must be re-experiencing right now. Stiles wouldn’t wish that on anyone. Cora shrugs out of her jacket, folding it up and leaving it near her drink.

“Like every month,” she explains. “You ready?”

That’s about when Stiles steps forward to intervene. “Maybe he shouldn’t?” he starts. “He doesn’t even know-“

“I know how to transform,” Derek snaps contemptuously, instantly transforming back into rude, College Derek. “I’m a born werewolf, dipshit.”

So much for that concern earlier. Stiles folds his arms. “Do you know how to do a full shift, asshat?”
After that Derek loses some of his bravado. “I can do that?” he demands, astonished by the sudden development. “Only Mom could pull off a full shift.”

He glances at Cora but she only nods encouragement. “You can. You’re an evolved wolf.”

This might be a bad idea. What if Derek can’t figure out how to shift back? As far as he remembers right now he’s never done it before. This could be dangerous. But when Derek turns toward the woods, Stiles knows there’s nothing he can say. It's not like he can really stop him. So he heads back towards Lydia, Allison, Mason and Chris as they watch the rest of the pack disappear.

“How are you feeling?” Allison asks him once he sits down next to her.

“Peachy,” he mutters, staring at the trees, listening to the fading sounds of their laughter.

Now there’s nothing to do but wait.

Stiles is lingering on the edge of the woods and wondering not for the first time if letting the pack take Derek out on a run was such a good idea after all.

He didn’t even know that he can do a full shift now. And it’s much too soon to be transforming since the hospital. He might be healed and everything but what if there are some unexpected complications? What if he can't change back, panics and runs off? What if the pack is too rough with him? What if he gets territorial and hurts someone?

There are way too many ways in which this can go wrong.

But Derek comes charging out of the forest nearly an hour later like Erica promised, Boyd, Isaac, Malia and Cora in tow. Parrish, Corey, Erica, Scott, Kira, Hayden and Liam appear a few seconds later, a little worse for wear but looking relaxed and happy.

Like they would if nothing went wrong. That’s a relief. Stiles can see the whites of Derek’s teeth from where he’s sitting with Mason, Allison, Chris and Lydia on the wooden tables by the back of the house, surrounded by their empty bottles.

They’ve definitely been having a good time without them. And Derek’s grinning from ear to ear.

No matter how disappointed and unimpressed he might be with his new life and current mate, there’s no mistaking how delighted he is by this new ability. There’s a wild kind of ecstatic happiness to him that’s rare to see even on his good days. He looks invigorated and more alive than ever.

Stiles ends up bounding towards them, following the automatic pull he always feels around Derek until he reaches the rest of the pack. They’re talking and laughing and some of them seem to be covered in dried blood but don’t look very concerned about it. Which is pretty normal following a full moon run.
Derek catches sight of him and for once since returning from the hospital, his face doesn’t fall or twist up into a frown looking at him. In fact, Derek’s face doesn’t change much at all when he strides forward and hauls Stiles into his arms, kissing him full on the mouth.

Stiles is so startled by the sudden change in attitude that he doesn’t resist. It’s nothing earth shattering, just the insistent press of hot mouths that he hasn’t realised he’s been missing after five days without it. But Derek tenses in his arms as if reality finally caught up with him before violently pulling away. Stiles jerks back in response, figuring out very quickly that he must have gotten swept away in the moment.

The rest of the pack is staring at Derek eagerly, assuming shifting into a wolf might have somehow triggered his memories and Stiles doesn’t have the heart to correct them.

“Derek-“ Cora starts, amazed.

“Shut up, Cora,” he snaps, storming past Stiles into the house, carefree smile long since disappeared.

What the hell was that?
“What’s up with your face?” Scott asks, taking the seat on Stiles' left, finding him at the dining room table after he'd slunk away to lick his wounds.

Stiles startles out of the daze he’d fallen into for the past ten minutes. He didn’t even notice Scott come in. Most of the pack is outside firing up the grill again to make more hamburgers. They’re bound to run out of meat soon.

“What, man.”

Scott looks confused at his expression of crushing dejection.

“Dude, Derek kissed you in front of everyone. So why don’t you look happy?”

Stiles lets out a heavy sigh and drops his face onto the surface of the table with a thump. “Yeah, but did you see his face afterward? The worst.”

It definitely wasn’t a good feeling watching the regret slowly play out on College Derek’s face before he'd stormed off. Stiles has never actually felt that bad after being kissed by someone before that moment, the way that Derek looked at him cracked him right open.

Made him feel completely worthless. Stiles is still surprised the mating mark didn’t just pop out of existence right then and there.

Scott reaches over and pats his shoulder comfortingly. “He’ll remember you. Nobody can forget Stiles for long.”

If only that were true. But Scott's making an effort to raise his spirits and Stiles appreciates the effort even if he'll still be brooding over this for a few more hours. He manages to sit up and give Scott a smile anyway though.

“You know it,” he agrees with an enthusiasm that he doesn't feel.

Scott beams and disappears into the kitchen to find more hamburger buns, leaving him alone again.

Stiles knows Derek is still around the house here somewhere. But right now he’s clearly hiding. From Stiles. Who he kissed. Cora disappeared to go and find him a little while ago. Derek’s probably telling her how much of a monumental mistake kissing Stiles was at this exact moment.

If he's not trying to convince Cora that kissing Stiles was somehow a Very Heterosexual move, he'll sell his jeep.
Stiles thinks he should probably be getting drunk. His brain might be thinking too much. And he can’t pretend it was an accident either. You don’t just go around accidentally kissing people. That wouldn’t even make sense.

But College Derek is probably willing to believe that right now in order to avoid the real truth. For someone who insists he’s not interested in dicks, he certainly knows how to act like one.

Stiles lets his head slump back down onto the table in defeat.

“Stiles,” Scott calls from the kitchen. “Are you wallowing again?”

He sighs heavily into the wood and doesn’t lift his head. “Yes?”

“Okay,” he replies just as easily. “I love you, man. You wallow all you need.”

“Thanks,” he mutters, letting his eyes fall shut. “Love you, Scotty.”

Scott returns eventually, bag of hamburger buns in hand and curls himself over Stiles’ prone form, hugging his back. He groans lowly into the wood and awkwardly reaches backwards to pat at whatever part of Scott that he can reach.

“You wanna be alone right now, buddy?” he guesses after he’s pulled away.

“Yeah,” he mutters, letting his eyes fall closed.

Scott rubs in between his shoulder blades before disappearing outside again and Stiles listens to his footsteps fade away before he gets up and hurries into the kitchen. They have a booze shelf in the walk in food cupboard so he disappears inside it for a moment, reaching up to fetch the whiskey.

With the prize in hand, Stiles heads up the stairs towards the entrance to the attic. The stairs are retractable so Stiles finds the chord connecting to the roof and pulls down the ladder. There’s no one around to watch him so Stiles climbs up undisturbed, pulling the ladder up behind him to hide his presence. The attic is usually a little musty but the air smells fresh since Derek’s been coming up here so much lately.

He must have been opening the windows to let the breeze in. Stiles heads over to the window now. It opens up to the roof and sometimes he and Derek like to take a blanket up there to snuggle and watch the stars.

Yeah, they can be romantic as fuck. Or they used to be at least.

Stiles grabs the woolly blanket they leave near the window for moments just like these and carefully clambers out. He uses the torchlight from his phone to avoid face planting off the roof and climbs towards the uneven nook above the attic window.

He gets settled in and curls up in the blanket, uncapping the bottle of jack. The smells of cooked meat are still reaching his nose and he can still hear snippets of the pack’s conversation even from up here. He takes a swig of whiskey and lets the distinct taste settle in his mouth. The flavours are supposed to be too coarse to drink neat but Stiles doesn’t mind it so much. Especially in moments like these.

Coarse seems like something he deserves right now. Stiles drags the lips of the bottle back towards his mouth again.

He swallows another mouthful and stares at the moon, slowly moving its way across the sky. It’s
almost hanging over their house tonight, much closer than it usually is. The stars look paler in comparison. But that might have more to do with the clouds that are creeping in around them, gradually pushing the stars out of view. The moon will probably go next. It was supposed to be a clear night.

It’s definitely a metaphor for something. Stiles takes another drink and leans up against the tiles behind him.

This is definitely how you wallow.

When he opens his eyes again the world is darker than it was before and he must've drank way too much because there’s a shadowy kind of monster sitting beside him.

“Holy shit,” he cries, flailing away from it so hard that he nearly tips out onto the sloped part of the roof and rolls off.

Derek catches his arm at the very last second and slowly drags Stiles back towards safety, saving him from many o’ broken bones. “Do you just sleep everywhere?” he wonders, unconcerned that Stiles nearly died or at the very least seriously injured himself. “Is that a thing you do.”

“I’m tired,” he protests, slurring a little as he tucks the bottle of jack under his blanket. “And I can sleep wherever I want.”

It’s a pointless move. Derek can smell the alcohol. He’s a freaking werewolf. “You’re drunk,” he says, unsettled. “You’re up here alone and you’re drunk.”

Stiles drags the whiskey out and hugs it to his chest protectively. “Who are you, the fun police?”

“Give that here,” he mutters, yanking it out of Stiles’ hands pretty easily considering he’s determined not to let go. His muttered protests are rudely ignored. “I didn’t think humans could be this accident prone.”

“I’m perfectly fine, dickface,” he gripes, poking at Derek’s chest but his aim is off because he hits his elbow instead.

“Jesus, you’re fragile,” Derek mutters, uncapping the bottle and draining it himself.

“Shit, you bruise easy. How do we even-?” Stiles guesses, head tipping into Derek’s arm and using him as a pillow. “With great ease and enthusiasm. Frequently.”
Derek jerks away from him but he follows like a heavy sack, pitching completely sideways. Stiles’ stomach is churning a little. He probably shouldn’t have had so many sips from that bottle.

It's possible he's a bit drunk. Derek takes a hold of him and pushes his body up against the sturdy surface of the wall again, keeping him upright.

“Shut up,” he snaps. “Why do you always have to-?”

“But you don’t even like me anymore,” Stiles sighs severely, tugging the blanket up to his neck and closing his eyes. “You think I’m worthless. I’m a kicked puppy. I’m pathetic.”

“Don’t say that.”

“Why not?” He demands, glaring at Derek. “You did.”

“Yeah, but I’m a dickface, remember?”

Stiles mulls that great wisdom over for a second. “True,” he decides around a yawn.

“Why are you sleeping out here?”

He snorts at the obvious question. “Because I’m not likely to catch some z’s anywhere else.”

“You been having trouble sleeping?” Derek asks and the ‘without me’ is implied.

There’s a lot of ‘without me’ going around lately. Stiles could do with less of that, thank you. “Wouldn’t you like to know,” he counters blearily, tucking his feet deeper under the blanket and sighing morosely again.

“Well I fucking asked didn’t I?” Derek snaps, with an unreasonable amount of snark.

Stiles tilts his head to the side with a considering expression, knowing for a fact that Derek usually gets like this whenever he’s trying to hide things.

“Are you still having trouble sleeping?” he counters, astutely, blinking at him until he comes more into focus.

Derek hesitates, caught off guard by the inquiry. Stiles is definitely on the money with this, he’s certain. His mouth kind of furls open in a smug grin but Stiles isn’t sure he’s pulling it off.

He might be a little more than drunk.

“We’re not one of those unhealthy couples that can’t survive without sleeping together are we?” Derek mutters, disgusted.

“It’s not unhealthy,” Stiles defends, ignoring the small thrill of hearing Derek refer to them as a couple. “We’re used to sharing a bed. But- but- we’re not going to fucking die without it, Jesus.”

“Good,” Derek says but he doesn’t sound happy about it.

Stiles cannot for the life of him figure College Derek out. He makes a grab for the whiskey again but Derek keeps it out of reach.

What an assmuch.

“Good,” he agrees, not feeling good at all.
But at least that’s one thing they can agree on.

“Come on,” Derek says, hauling him up. “Let’s get you inside.”

“We were really good together you know,” Stiles mumbles as he lets Derek drag him toward the attic window again, blanket and all. “We made each other very happy. Like disgusting happy. We annoyed the pack so much.”

Derek doesn’t even glance at him. “I don’t doubt you were annoying.”

“Why d’you have to be so shitty?” he groans. “Don’t you have any feelings?”

It’s warm when Derek tugs him back into the attic, arm around his waist and other hand holding the bottle of jack. Stiles is in charge of the blanket. It’s a very big responsibility.

“I have feelings,” he says eventually. “I’m just surrounded by strangers I don’t remember. So it’s not fucking unreasonable that I might have my defences up.”

Stiles sighs, long and loudly but he can’t exactly disagree with that.

“You’ve got yours up as well,” Derek points out. “Don’t try and bullshit. Otherwise you’d have bitched more about all the things I’ve said.”


“Yes,” Derek says patiently, dragging Stiles towards the ladder. “I was there.”

“Good,” he says. “You’re a big frat boy jerk.”

“Uh-huh,” he agrees, lowering the ladder down to the floor below through the opened hatch.

Stiles peers down and feels Derek’s restraining hand on his chest when he nearly topples through the hole. “I can’t get down there,” he reasons. “I’ll die.”

Derek stares at him for a second before he accepts that assessment. “You can barely stand up straight. Why did you get drunk on the roof anyway?”

“I was wallowing,” he grumbles. “You don’t even want to kiss me anymore.”

The expression on Derek’s face is not good. His eyebrows have nearly formed some kind of angry alliance with one another. “I don’t remember you,” his eyebrows mutter because Stiles still hasn’t looked away from them yet. “It’s not personal.”

“Feels personal,” he mutters, swaying and wrapping himself up tighter in the blanket.

Derek sets the bottle of jack on the floor. “Okay fine,” he snaps. “Maybe I wanted to kiss you. A little. Would you climb down the ladder now?”

“I was wallowing,” he grumbles. “You don’t even want to kiss me anymore.”

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“I’m gonna die,” he moans, glancing at the gaping hole. “And throw up. Simultaneously.”

“You’re not,” Derek insists. “And I’m not gonna just leave you up here. Knowing you, you’ll trip out that fucking window.”

“Rude,” Stiles observes but doesn’t argue the point.

“What if I carried you?”
“On your back.”

There’s a vein pulsing on Derek’s forehead now. “Fine.”

Stiles manages to climb onto him without much difficulty but he squeezes his eyes shut when the room starts moving too fast afterward. The sensation passes soon enough and he can look around again.

“This is definitely familiar,” he mutters in Derek’s hair, hugging his back tightly.

“Don’t be cute,” Derek says, moving towards the open hole.

Stiles shuts his eyes again just to be safe. Derek won’t be happy if he throws up on his neck. But he’s still as sturdy as ever. Stiles tries not to think how unfair it is that this is the first time since the hospital that he’s been able to get close to him like this. Derek smells really good.

But in no time at all his feet are on solid ground again, stepping aside from the ladder and trying to shake Stiles off. “Time to get off my back. I’m not carrying you all over the damn house.”

“I live here now,” Stiles says simply, burying his face into Derek’s shirt.

God he’s so warm. He will become Stiles’ new blanket since he dropped the other one somewhere between the ladder and the attic.

“Fuck, you little shit, get off.”

“Take me to bed,” he groans, feeling nauseous. “Or I throw up on you. Your choice.”

“Sadistic fucker,” Derek mutters but stomps over towards their bedroom and deposits Stiles on the bed like a heavy package.

“Happy?” he demands, hands on his hips when Stiles manages to roll over.

“No.”

Derek turns his head. “Cora’s calling. No more attics. Go to sleep.”

“Fun police,” Stiles sighs, but he’s already digging underneath the covers, still covered in dirt and grass and dried sweat as he manages to start kicking off his shoes.

He’ll shower tomorrow morning. When his head is pounding and he’s full of regret. Yes, perfect. When he opens his eyes again the lights have been switched off and Derek is gone.

He’s alone in the dark.

Stiles drops his head on the pillow and sleeps.

When he opens his eyes again, Stiles’ skin is itchy from the grass and dried dirt caked to his skin. His head is also aching which seems like an added bonus that he didn’t ask for but inevitably brought on himself.
Stiles strips out of his pants, shirt and underwear and slips into the bathroom to shower. He sits down underneath the spray because that seems easier and tries to remember exactly what he did last night.

Derek kissed him.

And then jerked back like he’d made a monumental mistake before running off into the distance. He’d basically taken a cheese grater to Stiles’ feelings and gone to town. In front of the entire pack to boot. It’s no wonder Stiles fetched out a bottle of jack and took problems into his own hands. He thinks he climbed onto the roof at some point to be alone.

Oh and he’d drank a lot of the whiskey up there. Stiles winces at the memory. That probably hadn’t been his finest hour. And College Derek had found him.

God, Derek found him. Stiles thinks he said some embarrassing things. Some very embarrassing things. God, why did College Derek have to be the one to find him? Where was the rest of the pack?

He groans under the spray and generally regrets everything that he did leading up to this morning. Stiles is pretty sure that Derek put him to bed as well.

Like a child. He’s never going to live this down.

Stiles climbs to his feet with a groan, the dried sweat, dirt and clumps of grass long since washed away before he staggers out to get dried and dressed. When he returns to the bed, he sees the mess he made of that too and strips it, throwing the sheets and everything else into the washer in the laundry downstairs.

He’s barely put fresh sheets on and hidden the evidence of his humiliating night when he passes Kira on the way to the kitchen, mid yawn.

“Coffee?” she offers.

“God, yes,” he mutters, following after her.

“Where did you get to last night?” she wonders. “I mean, I understand why, what happened was upsetting but Scott couldn’t find you for ages. Not until Derek left with Cora.”

Stiles leans against the counter and tries not to let the results of last night show on his face. Kira would be understanding about it, but he’d rather never think about it ever again for the rest of his life if possible.

It’s probably safer. Derek’s got enough ammunition now to make fun of him for eternity.

Kira pours coffee into Stiles favourite Star Wars mug with Darth Vader on it and pours two more for herself and Scott. Stiles fetches out the milk and finishes making it how he likes before handing the bottle to Kira.

He barely waits for it to pass the stage of boiling before he essentially eats his coffee. That’s the best way to describe what happens. Stiles probably burns his tongue but he doesn’t care. Right now he really needs the fuel.

If he’s trying to prove himself a worthy mate for Derek, last night probably did the exact opposite of that. At least it’s Saturday. That means Cora isn’t working and there are much more people to occupy Derek’s time. Stiles can avoid him indefinitely. After last night, he’s sure Derek would be more than happy to dodge the chance of any further interactions.
He might have been a hot mess.

“Are you okay?” Kira asks, watching the complicated emotions shift across his face.

“No,” he admits. “I think some very embarrassing things were done and said by me last night. This is my shame spiral.”

Kira raises an eyebrow before taking a sip of coffee. “I’m sure it’s not as bad as you think. Trust me, I’m very good at embarrassing myself.”

“I think I was all over Derek,” he says. “And not in the endearing way. The hot mess way. The needing to leave the country for an indefinite period of time afterwards to avoid the fallout way.”

Kira winces. Apparently she’s all too familiar with the concept. “Was he very rude about it? I mean, well, he is very rude about everything already.”

Stiles frowns, trying to remember. It’s all very disjointed. “I don’t think so? He put me to bed at least. Doesn’t mean he can’t still be a dick about it though.”

Scott comes into the kitchen straight after. “Is this Derek we’re talking about?” he guesses. “He and Cora aren’t coming over. They’re heading out of Beacon Hills for the day. She texted me this morning.”

Panic bursts into his chest. “Why didn’t she tell me they’re leaving?” he demands, stalking towards the front door as if he might be able to catch up with them.

Scott makes himself a wall and blocks Stiles’ progress. “For the day,” he amends. “They’re coming back. It’s a family thing.”

Oh. A family thing. Stiles doesn’t know what hurts worse, that since Derek has other options he’d rather not willingly spend time with him, or that Stiles isn’t included as a part of the family anymore. Both of them feel like a different kind of knife being pushed into his back.

“Fine. I’ll text my dad,” he says. “Maybe we can do a family thing. Go fishing or something, you know.”

Scott rubs at his forehead like he’s trying his best not to instantly shoot down this plan. “Stiles, you’re a terrible fisherman. The one time you tried, you hooked Derek with the line more times than it actually went into the water.”

Stiles winces, remembering the many instances Derek had to pull the hook out of the flesh of his bare arms. Yeah, maybe Scott has a point. “I can sit in a boat,” he mutters. “I can do that.”

Kira and Scott seem sceptical. Which is probably fair. Stiles has fallen out of more things than should be physical possible. But that usually only happens when he’s not paying close attention to what his body is doing. The problem with that though, is a lot of the time he’s never paying attention.

Stiles puts two slices of bread in the toaster and leaves them to cook while he returns to his coffee. It’s all but empty now so he sets about making another one as Kira hands Scott his mug.

It’s definitely a two consecutive coffees type of day.

The toast pops before he’s finished so Stiles starts slathering one of them with peanut butter and jam and the other with peanut butter and Nutella. What? He likes to experiment.
He makes his second coffee and disappears back out into the dining room to sit down and worry about what Derek’s doing or thinking right now in peace. Is he relieved to finally have a Stiles-free day? Is that what their lives are like now?

Where exactly are they going? What would require a trip out of Beacon Hills? Probably a lot of things. Too many to narrow down. Why didn’t Cora tell him they were leaving but mentioned it to Scott instead? Was she trying not to upset him? Are they doing something that they shouldn't be doing?

Stiles bites deeply into his toast and chews with a kind of manic energy while his brain works itself into hyper drive. If Cora is trying to spare his feelings or something, it’s definitely a little late for that. No feelings will be spared in the presence of College Derek. That’s just inevitable. And it’s a bad time all round to be leaving. Who’s to say those hunters won’t see the two of them heading out of town and follow? They’d be an easy target, just the two of them, especially when Derek clearly doesn’t remember how to fight like he used to.

They’ve made themselves very vulnerable. And for what? Because Derek really can’t stand Stiles that much?

This is the worst.

By the time he’s finished eating breakfast and drained the second cup of coffee, Stiles’ head is no longer aching. It’s not exactly a miracle hangover cure but it’s semi-effective. So he fetches his phone from upstairs and texts his father to see what his plans are for the day. He replies pretty quickly though he doesn’t employ any of the acronyms that might speed the texting process.

Stiles feels like he’s texting his boss it’s so formal. And the contents of the message is probably just as unsatisfying. Chris has taken his dad to the shooting range in Chico. He won’t be back until later this afternoon.

He’s getting rejected by his dad now.

Stiles really has hit rock bottom. This is his new life. Being so unappealing that neither his mate, nor his own father want to spend time with him.

He slinks downstairs with a few untimely muttered groans and goes to see what Kira and Scott have planned for the day. Apparently they’re in the middle of strategising their interior design despite the fact that they’ve barely erected a frame on the plot of land they own. Stiles would usually avoid that kind of third wheeling and domesticity but knowing Derek and Cora are alone somewhere has him all wired up.

He’s got too much energy and there’s no way he can just lounge around the house all day doing nothing. Looking at furniture for an imaginary not-yet-completed house it is.

They pile into Stiles’ jeep and head over to Wyckes Furniture.

Stiles ends up feeling like the biggest third wheel in the entire store. There’s mated couples in every direction and the weathered cherry colour of his mating mark has drawn more than a few stares and even some unoriginal, whispered comments.
Very unsubtle unoriginal whispered comments.

“You know I can hear you, right?” he snaps after the second time it happens.

Kira tugs him away from the couple inspecting the same bedroom display that they are before Stiles manages to smother them both with the hugely ornate fluffy pillows currently overshadowing the bed. Probably a good thing. For the two betas at least. Because they get to live out another day.

Scott tugs him into a one sided hug but Stiles’ arms are firmly folded and he has no intention of relaxing the position for the duration of this experience. He glares over his shoulder at another couple who seem to think pointing at his neck is the craftiest way to gossip about it without him noticing. If he were willing to uncross his arms he’d used them both to strangle them.

Kira senses the murderous tendencies from the extended glare and quickly drags them over to the kitchen displays.

“Oh that poor omega,” an old lady mutters loudly to her husband.

Stiles almost plans to kill her before he sees the hearing aids and decides to slowly seethe instead.

“You seem mad enough to produce a thunder cloud to float above your head and shoot lightning,” Scott notices quietly.

“I wish I could do that,” he mutters, glaring hard at the approaching couple when their gazes linger too long on his throat.

The expression must be powerful because the couple abruptly turns back the way they’ve come and disappears into a bathroom display. Yeah, they’d better run. Stiles tugs his phone out of his jeans and opens up a new message to Derek before hesitating. Does Derek even have his phone anymore? The hospital kept his personal affects when he was in the emergency room but they must have returned it when he was released.

And Stiles hasn’t seen him with it since. He probably doesn’t even know the password. There’s still that fingerprint thing he could use instead except Derek wouldn’t actually know that’s a thing that exists now. But if he’s with Cora she’ll explain it.

**You better not be getting murdered,** Stiles types and hits send before he can regret it.

Derek doesn’t answer immediately so he pockets his phone again and tries to help Kira explain to Scott why a green kitchen top is a terrible idea.

“It’s vomit coloured dude,” he says. “You really want to eat off that?”

Kira’s nodding along with him but Scott looks pretty disgusted. That turns him off the idea pretty quickly. Stiles is here to help. His left ass cheek vibrates when he’s inspecting a wooden table shaped like a llama.

“Demon llama,” he whispers to Scott and Kira before tugging his cell phone out of his pocket.

Kira starts laughing, hard enough to attract a few more stares to their otherwise pathetic group but Stiles is too busy unlocking his phone to notice. College Derek actually texted back. Stiles can’t believe it.

**Yeah,** he’s written, **im being brutally murdered right now while I send this text.**
Stiles can’t help but grin.

**I applaud your efforts at multitasking**

When he pockets his cell phone, Scott and Kira are still messing about with the demon llama table and giggling. Kira’s actually taking pictures.

“Hey, we should watch The Emperor’s New Groove tonight,” Scott says. “Invite the whole pack.”

“I’m in,” Stiles agrees, because there’s no way he’s saying no to that classic.

Or the opportunity to eat popcorn. It’s win win.

“I’ll send a group text,” Kira offers, still laughing. “Along with this picture. Wait- wait, Scott you should get in it too.”

Scott cracks up and positions himself half on the floor so that it look like the demon llama table is trying to eat him. Stiles’ can’t even manage a frown at the sight of it, it’s so funny. That is until the salesperson marches over and politely asks them to leave his section if they’re not going to take the furniture seriously.

It’s not hard to guess who might have ordered the demon llama table into the store.

Somebody just sent Derek a photo of a demented looking llama table.

It’s from a group chat that his name is apparently included in because Kira just invited everybody over tonight to watch a kid’s movie.

Cora is standing beside the top of Nevada Fall and using the sun to dry off her wet clothes. They don’t call it the Mist Trail for nothing. Derek’s completely drenched by the water which sprayed him when they followed the trail past Vernal Fall and the Emerald Pool before ending up here.

He has no idea why Cora decided to drive two hours to Yosemite National Park just so they could hike seven miles up this damn mountain and back. His cell phone has buzzed a few times during the walk but Derek had to wait until he reached a relatively dry patch to check it. Luckily Cora knew the passcode for his cell phone.

Of course the kid is texting him. He’s expecting apologies for last night or maybe some lingering embarrassment but Stiles doesn’t mention it at all. He was pretty trashed. He barely looks like he can legally drink, it’s not a surprise he can’t handle his liquor either.

Coming here wasn’t a bad idea though. It’s a great feeling pushing the muscles in his thighs and working his lungs for once. Actually leaving the house for longer than a few hours at a time. Maybe getting away from Stiles is a good idea too.

Derek still can’t believe that he kissed him. Even now his stomach churns with embarrassment at the thought. It hadn’t even been planned. He’d been riding a first transformation high from his new form. Everything had felt so heightened and fresh. Including the pull towards his mate. Derek hadn’t even been in control when he’d grabbed Stiles and kissed him.
His body saw Stiles running towards them and it just reacted. Derek still can’t believe that it happened.

And in front of everyone too.

Now they’re definitely going to start believing that he’s-

Derek shakes himself and shoves his cell phone deep into his pocket, forgetting about the freaky llama photo and that reckless kiss and pretty much any other thing that he doesn’t want to think about right now. He goes to stand by Cora who looks pretty dry now actually, only to realise she’s staring at a picture of the llama as well.

“What the hell kind of monster table is that?” she mutters, zooming in. “Who would buy this?”

“Stiles probably,” he mutters, because he can see it happening.

He’s undoubtedly the most ridiculous person on the planet. He likes odd furniture, sleeps on roofs, and is evidently strong enough to push an alpha to the ground without breaking a sweat.

Derek can’t believe he lost a game of football to that kid. Stiles fucking tripped over his own socks two days ago. And they were on his goddamn feet! He grew up with humans, alright? He knows they’re not usually this accident prone. Stiles is just, something else.

“Up for a movie tonight?” she wonders.

He folds his arms and stares down at the trees and boulders and the rushing water cutting straight through them. “I don’t watch cartoons,” he mutters, lying through his teeth.

“Since when?” she wonders with a laugh. They used to watch Saturday cartoons together. There’s no point pretending with her.

“C’mon,” Cora says, slinging an arm around his shoulder. “Let’s head back to the car. We’ve still got a two hour drive until we make it back to Beacon Hills.”

“Why did we come here anyway?” he asks, curious to know if there was some other reason.

Or something that Cora wanted to talk about alone. But she only shrugs.

“You seemed like you needed some space,” she says before gesturing back down towards the valley and the trees and the open air. “Can’t get more space than this.”

He’s not going to argue with that. “Thanks,” he manages instead, awkwardly patting her shoulder.

“You’re such a dweeb,” she says but it’s mostly fondness in her voice so Derek doesn’t get that offended.

“And you’re such a dork,” he counters, tugging her head under his armpit.

“Ugh, gross,” she protests before pinching at the sensitive skin below his bicep.

“Ow, fuck,” he cries, dropping her. “Jesus, Cora.”

She grins and they head back down together. Derek seriously considers tossing her into the raging waters gushing down from the waterfall beside them.
They eventually give up on looking at interior designs and go eat burgers for lunch instead. Which is good because Stiles needs way more greasy food in his stomach if he’s going to avoid an ill-timed hurling experience.

The food is good and it’s late afternoon when they head to the supermarket to grab some extra snacks and food for the movie. They need four packets of microwavable popcorn. At least.

When they make it home most of the pack has started to turn up, bar Cora and Derek but Stiles isn’t too bothered because Erica and Boyd bring pizza for everyone. Derek and Cora arrive when a whole pizza box has been eaten and Derek looks totally disappointed when it’s clear they’re just in time and haven’t missed any of the movie.

Scott grabs the DVD out of their movie shelf and gets it all set up before he returns to sit with Kira. Stiles is almost glad they encountered the demon llama table today, if it means this is what came out of it. He reaches out for another slice of pizza and gets settled.

Derek tries to act like it's some great hardship to sit through the movie but Stiles knows for a fact that he absolutely loves The Emperor’s New Groove. And Kronk. Stiles has witnessed Derek humming Kronks’ stealth song to himself before. But every time he’s caught out Derek gets all flustered and blames it on Scott. He likes to insist it’s because Scott was singing the tune first, but he’s definitely full of shit.

Stiles could deal without Derek glaring at the TV right now though. “You’re not being punished, dude,” he mutters, tossing a handful of popcorn at his chest.

Derek doesn’t even bother to try and dodge it. The popcorn pieces bump harmlessly off his muscles. Erica sniggers at the sight.

“Feels like it,” he mutters. “This is a movie for kids. I don’t want to watch this.”

“Well sorry Emperor Kuzco,” Stiles says. “What would your Highness prefer to watch?”

“I am not Kuzco,” Derek protests, offended. “If anything I’m fucking Kronk.”

The fact that he’s so insulted means he’s definitely a bigger fan of the movie then he's willing to admit. Cora starts laughing at him. Stiles can see Liam and Mason grinning into their food.

“Shut up,” Derek says, sullenly. “You’re Yzma.”

“Fuck off,” Cora snaps, losing her good humour as the pack erupts into giggles.

The front door opens and the pack quietens down a little, listening to them approach. They have a key since they let themselves into the house. Lydia comes slinking into the living room like a wanted criminal just as the Kuzco and Pacha go tumbling over that waterfall. Scott and Kira are too busy quoting the lines at each other to turn and wave to her.

The pack is spread out across the living room, using one another as footrests and pillows and Derek is sitting pretty much the furthest away from Stiles as possible, leaning against Cora.

His interest perks up when Lydia joins them now that there aren’t any footballs being thrown around and Stiles resists the urge to tug the bowl of popcorn Hayden’s holding out of her hands in order to
Lydia takes a seat behind Allison, wrapping her arms around her waist and kissing her cheek and Stiles instantly cringes at Derek’s wide eyes. He’s just flat out staring at them now. Zero subtlety.

Scott seems to sense he’s upset because he curls a friendly arm around Stiles’ hip and half drags him into his pile of snuggles with Kira so he won’t feel left out. Derek finally stops looking at Lydia, turning stiffly to face the TV but he’s so tense that Stiles can see the outline of corded muscle in his neck. He can’t really be that upset that Lydia isn’t available. Can he?

Or is it because her mate is a woman? The idea that College Derek might be so narrow minded as to make other pack members uncomfortable about showing affection to their mates, whatever their gender, leaves a sour, bitter taste in Stiles’ mouth.

He drops his head onto Scott’s chest and reaches over to snag some popcorn before Liam and Mason demolish it. Hayden’s barely defending her popcorn territory by slapping at their hands when they get too greedy. Derek has his arms resting on the top of his knees but his hands are clenched so tightly he looks like he’s about to pop claws. Jesus, he’s not handling the new situation very well.

You’d think he’d never been rejected before. It’s not like Lydia ever gave him any hope of interest to begin with. But that doesn’t mean much apparently. He looks like he’s about to punch something. If only he felt the same degree of interest in Stiles. But it doesn’t look like that will be happening anytime soon.

When Lydia gets up to fetch herself a drink from the kitchen, Scott runs his hand through Stiles’ hair and starts massaging his skull to help with the accompanying headache like the amazing best friend he is.

And suddenly just like that Derek’s had enough of the movie. Because cartoons greatly offend him on a deep personal level for some reason. He snaps to his feet, tension building up like he’s about to explode before managing to extricate himself from the pack pile and stomping out of the room.

After Lydia.

That’s about when Stiles accepts this problem isn’t going away. He stands up, heart beating hard in his chest and staggers out of the living room after him. This is a confrontation he is not looking forward to at all.

He steps into the kitchen, expecting the worst but Lydia is the only person standing there, pouring herself a glass of iced tea. Stiles is confused that she’s alone. That he’s not interrupting Derek trying to put the moves on her again and it’s unexpected enough that he can’t focus his thoughts.

“Where-?” he starts and Lydia gestures at the back door leading outside into the woods.

“He went straight out there,” she says. “Didn’t say a word.”

Stiles feels instantly nervous before going out after him.

Derek’s out there standing in the grass, staring up at the night sky and taking several deeps breaths. He looks like he’s trying to calm himself down but Stiles really doesn’t understand how seeing two women mated to each other is getting him so riled up.

“Are you okay?” he asks, once he reaches Derek’s side, steeling himself for an upsetting answer.

“No,” Derek mutters, glaring at the woods.
“We should talk,” he admits.

Derek side eyes him with a scowl. “Oh great, more talking.”

“Do you want to talk about Lydia?” he wonders, staring at his shoes and trying to be mature about this.

He can talk about the person Derek’s shown more interest in that his own mate, he can do that. No problem.

“Who?”

Isn’t Lydia why he’s so upset? “The red head?” Stiles says, gesturing back at the house.

“The Argent girl’s mate?” Derek wonders, perplexed. “No.”

Guess Stiles will have to settle for something else he really doesn’t want to talk about.

“I didn’t say anything because I thought you’d start remembering things sooner than this and I didn’t think it was going to be a problem,” he says. “But clearly you’re not who I remember and I’m next to nothing to you. It wouldn’t be fair not to suggest this.”

The fact that Derek only rolls his eyes means he probably isn’t following here. “What are you rambling about now?”

Stiles can’t keep pretending that this is okay or that it’s even working anymore. He’s not going to keep Derek trapped in a relationship that he doesn’t want to be in.

“We can dissolve the bond,” he blurts. “If you want.”

“No,” Derek says sharply, sounding strangely wounded as he reaches out to grab his wrist like Stiles is suddenly about to vanish into thin air. “I don’t- I don’t want that.”

Well that’s news to him. “Uh- okay.”

Derek drops his hold and rubs at his face. “I hate this,” he mutters. “I’m so fucking aware of you. All the time. I’ve got all these leftover instincts that don’t even belong to me. Every time Scott touches you I want to rip his head off.”

Say what now? Stiles stares at him in shock. “That’s not a leftover instinct. That’s like the opposite of a leftover instinct.”

“What?”

His heart is beating fast. “Derek’s literally never been jealous of Scott. Ever. He’s like my brother. And he’s always gonna be my best friend. Wanting to rip his head off? That’s all you.”

College Derek didn’t seem to realise this was a possibility because he goes real quiet and doesn’t talk for the next five minutes.

Stiles awkwardly stands there and wonders if he should say something else but apparently realising he might be more into Stiles than assumed requires some deep introspection. He should probably just leave him to it.

“Why don’t you act like you love me?” Derek asks, just as Stiles is turning back to head towards the house.
Jesus, he doesn’t mess around when he’s decided to talk about his feelings does he? Stiles is startled by how direct the question is.

“How do you know I don’t?” he responds quietly. “You haven’t even tried to get to know me, College Derek. And it’s not exactly easy to talk about how much I freaking love you when you’re strutting around acting like I’m beneath your mighty alphaness all the time.”

Derek hisses out a sharp sound but Stiles is already trudging through the wet grass towards the light and warmth coming out of the back doorway. At least they were semi-honest tonight. Stiles is all for dropping truth bombs when the time calls for it.

“Come inside when you’re ready.”

College Derek doesn’t respond.

It’s almost midnight when the rest of the pack calls it a night.

Boyd is asleep sitting up and Malia is using Erica’s stomach as a pillow. Mason and Corey are engaging in a popcorn fight with the leftover kernels though Corey keeps trying to cheat by vanishing every few seconds.

Allison is sleeping soundly on Kira’s shoulder and Liam and Hayden are cuddled so close together Stiles actually can’t tell where either of them begins.

Scott, Lydia and Isaac are in the middle of a conversation while Stiles is nibbling on a stray popcorn kernel watching Derek across the room. When Scott finally gets up to rouse the rest of the pack and offer pillows and blankets if they’re planning on crashing here, Cora stands up and goes to pull her brother to his feet.

Derek resists, swatting her hand away.

“C’mon,” she grumbles. “Let’s go home, I’m tired.”

“I’m staying,” he says.

The kernel falls out of Stiles’ mouth. He tries to cover his disbelief by pretending he’s not unsubtly listening to the whole conversation. And most likely fails at it.

“Are you sure?” Cora asks, distrustfully.

Mostly because she doesn’t think Derek’s capable of spending time here without causing trouble. Stiles would agree with her but he’s so blind sighted by Derek’s sudden change of heart that his brain needs to catch up.

Is he expecting to sleep in Stiles’ bed? Does he have plans to put the moves on him or something? Usually he’s always ready to get naked and freaky with Derek if he has the slightest inclination, but right now he has no intention of doing that when Derek probably wouldn’t be able to look him in the eye afterward.

Stiles doesn’t hate himself that much.
But it turns out Derek plans to crash in the living room with the rest of the pack who are sleeping the night. Allison and Lydia head home but everybody else seems content to drop where they are.

Stiles helps Scott and Kira carry in blankets and spare pillows and can’t help but notice Derek looks much more relaxed around the pack. He wonders if Derek is finally listening to his instincts again but judging from what he said earlier, probably not. He’s been shutting them out to avoid the obvious connection to Stiles. It’s hard not to feel bitter about that. But at least he seems to be settling in with the pack again.

That’s one positive thing they can take out of this. Pretty much the only thing.

Kira switches out the main lights and Stiles locks the front door after Lydia’s car pulls out of the drive. He covers up a yawn and heads upstairs to his room, moving into the bathroom to brush his teeth. After he’s done, he strips off until he’s just in his boxers and ready to crawl into bed. The marks left by Derek’s eager mouth have long since faded from his skin now.

Stiles is sorry to see them go.

Before he’s about to climb into bed the door opens and Derek steps into the room.

“Can’t say I was expecting this,” he admits. “Unless of course you’re here to murder me then I guess I’m not surprised. What’s up College Derek? You wanna snuggle? Cause I’m pretty amazing at it.”

“I’m not here to murder you,” Derek snorts before his expression sobers at the idea. “Wait- have I murdered someone before?”

Stiles thinks about it. “You killed Peter. But he came back from the dead so it doesn’t really count.”

“What the fuck, Stiles,” he cries, sickened. “I killed my uncle?”

“Yeah, yeah, it was all very Hamlet,” he agrees, around a yawn. “But I’m sure that’s not what you wanted to talk about right now.”

“I’m not gonna cuddle you, you can forget it,” Derek mutters. “I just need a pillow.”

Stiles waves at hand at the bed, indicating the side that Derek usually sleeps on, the one closest to the door. But when Derek steps forward to fetch the pillow he goes to the opposite side and takes the one Stiles sleeps on.

The one covered in his scent. He doesn’t comment though it’s extremely tempting. Especially when Derek stalks out without saying thank you or goodnight.

Such a charmer.

Stiles switches the lights off and climbs into bed, burying his face into Derek’s pillow with a pleased sigh. Since it’s been a few days since Derek’s slept on it and Stiles has been clutching it to him more times than he can count, it smells more of him than of anyone else now. Derek’s scent is faint.

But he still manages to curl up and fall asleep anyway.

When Stiles wakes up it’s with the knowledge that he’s just had the best night sleep since before he
and Derek went on patrol in the woods and came across those dickbag hunters.

He catches sight of his mating mark in the mirror and his stomach drops at how much paler it’s gotten. When it finally fades completely their bond will dissolve along with it. Mates who want to separate sometimes can’t wait that long so they use store bought bond dissolving chemicals usually locked behind the counter. Apply that special cream and the bond will dissolve within the day. If they don’t use that it could take up to three months for a bond to dissolve, depending on the mated pair.

Stiles doesn’t know how much time he has yet but he knows it’s not long. And it’s probably not helping things that he and Derek are being constantly unpleasant to one another. That’s speeding up the process no doubt.

When he stumbles downstairs for coffee, he discovers College Derek in the kitchen drinking from Actual Derek’s favourite mug again. Is he just trying to rub it in now?

“Morning,” he says, with a degree of acknowledgement that sounds almost cheerful.

Stiles inspects him closely before understanding Derek looks as well rested as Stiles feels. He must have had a really good night’s sleep. They both did.

Suddenly it clicks. The both of them slept so well, because they were under the same roof again. Sharing each other’s scents. It’s upsetting that the connection has become something negative between them. And being apart is clearly making things worse. Stiles isn’t used to their bond being a problem. It’s unsettling.

But he can't really deal with it right now.

Stiles feels like making pancakes this morning so he fetches out the mix from the food cupboard and gets started. By the time he gets the mix into the pan the smell of food has already lured half of the pack into the kitchen.

Liam opens the fridge and grabs out a huge handful of bacon and a whole carton of eggs.

Boyd disappears into the cupboard and comes back sporting two boxes of poptarts. Isaac starts on a fresh pot of coffee and Hayden starts fetching glasses and cutlery to set the table.

Kira steps in to take people’s coffee orders and to help Isaac carry all of the mugs towards the coffee machine.

It’s a good thing they have a walk in food cupboard. Whenever the pack is here food disappears quicker than the money in Stiles’ wallet. Stiles has kicked them out of the house many o’ times for this reason alone but whenever Derek’s around he puts a stop to it. He loves providing for everybody. Derek’s mentioned it reminds him off his own house growing up, too many people to count and large cupboards that empty out quicker than the days can pass. Food is the biggest commodity here.

Stiles has spent his entire weekly paycheck on groceries more than once.

By the time he’s used up the entire pancake mix and made an impressive tower, Corey is finished off buttering mountains of toast and Liam is piling the cooked bacon and eggs onto plates that Mason is holding out for him. Malia takes two bottles of juice out of the fridge and carries them out into the dining room.

Stiles lifts his pancake stack high to avoid wandering hands and follows her out as most of the pack
clears out of the kitchen and into the dining room. He sets the plate down and looks at the formidable feast the pack has laid out for them. They’ll have no trouble demolishing the entire thing. Stiles has seen it done frequently.

Cora uses a key to unlock the front door and comes into the dining room just in time to take a seat and eat a free meal with the rest of the pack.

He snags the first few pancakes from the stack and sets them down on his plate, having Scott pass him the tub of ice cream. He unloads some cut up strawberries and blueberries on top before digging in. For the first few minutes there’s nothing but the clatter of knives and forks as the rest of the pack fill up their plates and start eating. Stiles is hungry enough to eat as fast as the werewolves and finishes the pancakes in no time at all.

He reaches out to snatch a strip of bacon from the rapidly dwindling pile and gets a hold of the chocolate syrup when it makes its way around the table again.

When he pours the chocolate onto the bacon and stuffs it into his mouth, he catches Derek watching him chew in disgust. Stiles rolls his eyes just as there’s a knock at the door. They better not be under attack right now, Stiles hasn’t finished his coffee yet.

Corey is closest to the front door and since he can turn invisible at will, he moves towards the curtains to peer outside. He doesn’t reappear until he’s run back into the dining room again. “It’s Malia’s creepy dad,” he hisses.

Stiles drops his fork. “Peter is here?”

Derek is already on his feet, stomping towards the front door.

“Wait,” he cries, scrambling after him. “Don’t tell Peter what happened to your memories.”

He’s glad more than ever that all of walls are soundproofed against werewolves. Peter couldn’t hear their conversation from outside even if he wanted. But he can still smell them.

“He’s my uncle,” Derek protests.

“He’s a manipulative dickwad,” Stiles counters and most of the pack is nodding along with him. “And he’ll totally lie to trick you into helping with whatever new scheme he’s caught up with because you don’t know better.”

Derek scowls at him. “He’s my family, Stiles. You don’t know anything.”

“He’s a fuckface,” Malia snaps. “We’re your family.”

Cora nods her agreement but Derek doesn’t look like he’s willing to listen to them right now. Stiles forgot Derek and Peter used to be close when they were younger.

“I know he’s the one who brought that alpha pack to town and let you deal with the fall out,” he says. “I know he literally impaled you on his claws when I was in high school before tossing you aside like a rag doll.”

“Stiles-“

“He took you to the store once and ‘accidentally’ left you there when you were ten,” he says using air quotes. “Even you knew he left you there on purpose.”
“How did you-?”

“You told me,” Stiles explains. “Look I know this seems like a bad idea but I really need you to trust me on this, Peter is better off not knowing you’ve forgotten everything.”

Derek’s jaw is clenched. “Fine. But I’m letting him in.”

That decision is met with a few grumbles but Derek seems to have suddenly developed selective hearing because he stalks over to the front door anyway. Stiles heads out after him, mug in hand and watches Derek open the front door. The first thing they’re greeted with is Peter’s smarmy, smirking face.

Ugh. Stiles prefers it when he disappears for months on end. Or just disappears altogether.

“Peter,” Derek says, pulling him into a hug.

Stiles nearly drops his mug. Shit. Peter’s going to know something’s up. In all the years they’ve known each other, Stiles has never seen Derek hug his uncle. He’s seen him punch him a few times, Stiles definitely enjoyed those moments the most. But so much for keeping Derek’s memory loss a secret.

“My, my, what a welcome,” Peter drawls, eyes finding Stiles as his smirk widens. “Things have changed around here, haven’t they?”

“What do you want?” Stiles snaps, wondering if Derek will have a problem with him throwing hot coffee all over Peter.

Most likely. Traitor.

“You didn’t happen to come across two rogue hunters lately, did you?”

Oh. Why did Peter even come back from the dead again?

“Are you fucking kidding me?” he shouts. “This is all your fault?”

Derek steps closer towards Stiles like he’s planning to stop him from charging forward and kicking Peter in the balls.

“I’m guessing that’s a yes,” Peter mutters, backing away from him. “But obviously you all handled it. If someone was dead Derek would have been much less... hospitable.”

“Derek got shot,” he snaps. “We had to take him to the hospital. You know, for getting shot. By hunters who were after you.”

Peter at least pretends to seem guilty about it.

“I’m fine,” College Derek says because apparently it’s not tough to show concern after being shot in the head. Jesus. “I’m all healed now anyway.”

“Why did they come after us if they were looking for you?” Stiles demands, and the pack finally leaves the dining room to join him. It’s probably because all the food is gone.

Nobody is particularly happy to see Peter but that’s no surprise. It’s Peter. Instant unhappiness when sighting him is kind of a reflex. Erica looks like she wants to kick Peter in the balls as well. Actually, most of the pack looks like that.
Peter brings that out in people.

“I might have used the Hale name to get into a notorious werewolf den,” he admits, largely unconcerned considering so many people in the room have less than favourable intentions towards his junk.

“You’re not in our pack,” Isaac mutters, standing at Malia’s shoulder and glaring at him.

“Well yes, they did figure out that eventually,” Peter says. “So I might have said my name was Derek Hale.”


Peter feigns concern but if he truly was worried about his nephew he wouldn’t have given his name to a bunch of angry werewolves in the first place. Peter Hale is all about throwing his family under the bus to save his own skin.

And what exactly was he trying to achieve by inserting himself into a prestigious wolf pack? Whatever his plan, Stiles is certain it wasn’t good.

“Which pack?” Cora demands, asking the very same question that Stiles is thinking of. “Which pack did you piss off?”

“Silva.”

He stomach drops like a stone. “The Silva pack. From Nevada? You attempted to infiltrate a pack we’ve been trying to bring in as our ally for months?”

Peter tilts his head, eyes widening in a picture of contrived distress.

That’s it. Stiles is gonna kill him.

For someone so weak looking, the kid is certainly carrying around a lot of anger. His body is vibrating with rage so much that Derek wonders if he’s about to start hovering off the ground instead.

When the kid shakes his hands out vehemently and takes a step forward, Derek thinks he’s going to have to step in. Since Peter just admitted to being the reason he got shot, and that he’s also interfered with a relationship they’ve been building with a foreign pack for some time, it’s clear he’s not popular right now.

Peter’s always been a bastard for creating problems but it’s not hard to notice he seems a lot more sinister than he used to be. Derek thinks he understands where they’ve gotten the idea that he’s creepy from. Even he has to admit that he feels it. Right now he’d rather be standing next to the kid than his uncle. But that has more to do with his instincts than anything else.

Though Stiles seems to think some of those feelings are actually his own just like he said last night. Derek is too confused by all of this right now to really figure out if he’s right.

At the moment he's focused on stopping Stiles from killing his uncle. But the way the rest of the pack
is standing at the kid’s back it’s clear he can’t expect any help from them. Derek might be the head alpha in name, but it seems to him that they’re following Stiles.

He’s smarter than he pretends to act, Derek is starting to realise that now. The kid’s cleverness is on par with his uncles, though something tells him they’re not as well matched as Peter would like to believe. Somehow, Derek knows Stiles is smarter. But even so, the rest of the pack is still fawning over him. Protective instincts are at play, some of them have already stepped between Derek and Stiles when things got heated earlier. Not to back Derek up but to defend his mate if need be.

What’s worse though, is that Stiles doesn’t even need them. He might not look like much, but he’s managed to wrangle a functioning pack together of a sizeable number, with more than one alpha amongst them and still somehow make it work. And work well.

It’s unusual for packs of this size to exist. And to exist in harmony with each other.

Stiles even organised talks with other strong packs to boost their standing and offer mutual protections. Whatever might be going on with Derek right now, it’s obvious that the rest of the pack is going to stand behind Stiles first.

Follow the omega over him. Derek can’t believe how much they respect him, but also that Stiles doesn’t really even try to keep them in line. They don’t need to be ordered about by a pigheaded alpha. They sit down as a group, discuss the problem and make decisions that way.

And when they can’t Stiles subtly manoeuvres them into the best action possible. Derek’s seen him do it. With the kind of manipulative skill to rival Peter. Or to put him to shame.

It’s no wonder Laura called the kid his biggest asset. Maybe Derek is starting to understand her meaning.

“I think I know where they might be hiding out,” Peter offers. “Recuperating before they make another play for Derek again.”

Stiles opens his arm out expectantly and gestures him into Derek’s office. When the rest of the pack follow him in and fit in the room comfortably, Derek realises that it’s also meant to double as their planning room.

Especially when Stiles turns to one of the bookcases behind the desk and pulls out a rolled up map of Beacon Hills.

“You’d better be right about this,” he says. “It’s the least you could do after nearly getting Derek killed and most likely putting Ethan and Aiden in danger as well. But we’re still kicking you out afterward. Just to be clear.”

“Oh, I’ve got it,” Peter says. “I’m not welcome here.”

Derek opens his mouth to protest that statement but Stiles’ look is sharp enough to cut him right through so it seems safer to drop it. For now. Peter leans over Stiles to scan the map, searching for this hiding place when Derek feels a flutter of something stir at the close proximity, like a knee jerk reaction.

It’s fucking weird but it almost seems like Peter is putting the moves on his mate. Right in front of him. His uncle is so close to Stiles without the final point of contact that Derek reasons that he’s doing it entirely deliberately. And he knows he’s right when Peter glances over Stiles’ shoulder to smirk at him.
Derek hasn’t known him since the fire made him into a comatose but the uncle Peter he used to know would never have tried to do whatever he thinks he’s doing with Derek’s mate. Or test the boundaries of how much he can get away with before it upsets Stiles.

Is he trying to challenge Derek somehow? Does he actually want the kid for himself?

Stiles’ lack of reaction only proves he’s used to Derek’s uncle trying stuff like this on him. Peter likes to play mind games. But if Stiles needed Derek’s help, which somehow he doubts very much, he would have flat out asked him for it. Something tells him Stiles is more than capable of settling this himself.

Peter is obviously trying to bait someone, but Derek’s not entirely positive who. He could be attempting to annoy Derek. Although they never really had any major problems before the fire. He had a tendency to be a dick but Derek never took that personally.

What happened to them after that? Did they have some kind of falling out? If Derek had known Peter was still conscious and trapped in his own mind, he would have done more to try and help him.

He can’t change the past now though. Derek folds his arms and watches them, indifferently. Peter looks disappointed that he hasn’t tried to bite his head off which confirms he’s trying to bait him specifically. “It’s no fun when you don’t have that pinched expression and get all territorial.”

Derek only frowns. “Why would I be territorial? Stiles doesn’t want you.”

Stiles splutters with scattered laughter at that and Derek looks away, trying to hide he’s pleased by the response. The pack titters as well, amused at Peter's expense. Even Boyd's sniggers and from what Derek's learned of him so far, he's a serious kind of guy.

Derek’s had a lot of Stiles laughing at him these past couple of days, but he can’t deny it feels good not to be mocked this time. For a second he feels more connected to him than before, like they’re a couple of co-conspirators. Stiles laughing at Peter is much better. Derek prefers it actually.

“Brutal,” Cora snickers, clearly enjoying herself.

Maybe she’s not so bad either.

“Here,” Peter says shortly, pointing at a set of caves just outside the range of the Preserve.

“Who wants to go?” Stiles wonders to the pack at large.

“I’ll do it,” Scott volunteers.

“I’ll-“ Derek starts.

“Stay here and look pretty?” Stiles finishes, not leaving any room for discussion. “Good plan, babe.”

Babe. Derek glances quickly at Peter, trying not to blush as he checks for a reaction but his uncle isn’t even staring at him. His hand is inching slowly towards one of the locked drawers in Derek’s desk.

“Don’t even try it,” Stiles snaps, having not looked away from Derek at all but somehow still able to sense Peter’s up to no good.

He lifts his hands up like they’re trying to shoot him. Maybe they have in the past. It’s not like Derek has any idea for certain. But he can’t believe Peter’s trying to steal from them. Even after what he’s
put them through in the past week. He’s the reason that Derek got shot. That he’s stuck in this strange future where nothing is like he expected.

Peter really has changed. And not for the better.

“Get out,” Derek says, ignoring Stiles’ surprise. “You’ve overstayed your welcome.”

Apparently even his own uncle doesn’t think he’s running the pack because he glances at Stiles and doesn’t move. “What he said,” Stiles says, stepping next to his side as if to physically prove they’re some kind of united force.

Derek doesn’t think he minds it. If he’s being truthful, it feels good to work together like this. To be a team.

Is that him actually thinking that? Or is it the bond messing with his head again? Trying to convince him that they should be together? What’s the most fucked up about all this, is that Derek doesn’t even know for sure.

Peter lets himself out of the office and the rest of the pack helpfully escorts him to the door. Derek has the distinct feeling that his uncle is being run out of town. Surprisingly, he’s not as upset about that as he might have guessed.

Peter did leave him at that grocery store when he was ten. On purpose.

He is a dick.

Derek’s a little relieved to see the Mason kid shut the door behind him and lock it for good measure. But he could just be picking up on the tension coming from the rest of the pack who don’t want his uncle around. Stiles looks extremely satisfied with the proceedings though. And the rest of the pack seem ready to go and hunt down two rogue mercenaries now that they’ve eaten half the kitchen.

There’s no way they’re going to that damn cave without him.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Just a heads up, Derek stops fighting his instincts in this chap and it totally overwhelms him to the point that he actually loses control of himself. Still a bit iffy if I should tag it as dubious consent (because the both of them are aware of this possibility before they engage in the attempt) but I thought I should give a bit of a warning anyway.

“I’m going to that cave,” Derek says when the rest of the pack is heading toward the front door to leave without him.

*Again.* Is he the leader of this pack or not? The blonde werewolf who likes to pop her claws out at the slightest provocation, Erica or something, says she’ll text Lydia and Allison to meet them at the cave itself.

So even the pretty red-head gets to go to the cave with her mate. And Derek is stuck here. He doesn’t know exactly what kind of help they can be, they’re certainly not werewolves. So why can’t he leave with them?

Stiles stares him down even when Derek steps into his space, preparing to test his resolve. There’s something inexplicable about the clever, sharpness of Stiles’ eyes that makes him want to push his buttons.

And there’s a strange kind of familiarity to all of this. He wonders if he liked riling Stiles up before he got shot in the head. Something tells him that he did. A lot. Especially when Stiles’ face flushes like that and his eyes narrow with a dangerous challenge.

God, what is Derek even doing right now?

“*I can handle myself,*” he insists, despite the clear signs that Stiles is getting keyed up by his objection, drifting closer to losing his patience. “*I don’t need all of you trying to tell me what I can and can’t do.*”

Stiles waves his hands outward like he’s trying to angrily communicate silence but all it really seems to do is push his scent towards Derek. For a second, the smell overwhelms him, even though he’s been trying his best not use his nose since he left the hospital.

He doesn’t want the influence of scents. Not of the pack. Or of Stiles. It’s just going to make all of this more confusing. He can pull it off if he concentrates on blocking those extra senses. But it’s nearly impossible with Stiles moving the air like that, right in front of him.

A blast of sharp cinnamon, pine and the distinct scent of Stiles’ skin reaches him, all wrapped up in a way that’s familiar and smells of home.

Jesus, this fucking kid smells of *home*. There’s another stronger scent, lingering amongst the others and it takes Derek a second to figure out what it is that he’s so accustomed to. It’s him, he realises.
Even with the distance between them lately, not sharing the same bed, barely even touching, Stiles somehow still smells of Derek.

Pride at the permanence of his subtle marks on the kid takes up all the space in his head after that. Leaving no room for anything else. The lingering claim of his scent on Stiles is messing with all of his instincts, strengthening the urge to reach out and touch him. Mark him up and have him smell like Derek even more.

God, that’s a good idea. He should do that. Right now.

Derek shakes himself.

He barely inhaled the fragrance of Stiles’ natural scent and yet it’s gone completely to his head. Just from that brief moment. He frowns and struggles to focus on what was happening before that.

What were they talking about? He was telling Stiles something. God, has the little fucker always smelt this good?

“Okay, okay,” Stiles says and by then he’s managed to get control of himself.

The cave. That’s what he’s talking about. Right. It’s probably a good thing that Derek hasn’t been using his senses lately. One whiff of this asshole and apparently he loses his fucking mind.

“If you can overpower me then you can go.”

He laughs, but all Stiles does is tilt his chin back and boldly cross his arms. Then it’s not so amusing anymore. Because the dumbass is completely serious. Does he even know what Derek can bench press?

Isn’t he supposed to be smarter than this? Derek’s not going to fucking fight him. What kind of messed up, absurd idea is that? It’d go against every instinct in his body, picking a fight with an omega. And with an omega he’s mated to? Forget it. He doubts he’d even be able to pop claws.

This is wrong on so many levels. How is the rest of the pack not questioning this?

“I’m not going to fight you,” he says harshly. “Are you insane? I’ll break you in half.”

Stiles response is to laugh too, long and throaty in a way that’s clearly mocking him because omegas have no sense of self-preservation apparently. The rest of the pack stops what they’re doing before doubling back to witness the scene now taking place.

Is nobody going to talk some fucking sense into this kid? They seem way too invested in watching Derek embarrass him.

“Oh yes, I’m gonna love this,” Cora says, approaching them with glee.


It doesn’t take much to figure out what the kid is trying to do. Avoid witnesses. As if he’s the one trying to spare Derek from being humiliated. Is he serious right now? This omega is out of his mind.

“You really think you can beat me,” he says, incredulous. “You actually believe you can put me on my ass?”

Stiles tilts his neck back and forth like he’s stretching himself out. Does that mean he fights all the time? Is he trained to do this? Who the fuck trains an omega to fight? What kind of kid is he?
“One way to find out.”

“I’m not doing this,” he says, folding his arms, unable to ignore that the muscles there alone are bigger than Stiles’ head. “I’ll break you.”

But the kid’s not backing down. The jut of his jaw is determined, fiercely determined. Why won’t he give up on this already before he gets hurt? Derek doesn’t want to beat up an omega. Especially one that he’s bonded to.

“You want to go spelunking in that cave, buddy, you’re gonna have to get past me first.”

“Fine,” he mutters. If Stiles is determined to be put in his place then Derek’s more than happy to do it. They better not make him out to be the bad guy after this. Stiles is the one who insisted. “But remember you asked for this.”

He gestures invitingly at the back door and Derek stomps outside, listening to Kira’s soft footsteps as she follows after them. He’s never really met a friendly kitsune before but the whole sweet, honest thing could be an act. Plenty of girls pretend to be a certain way in order to get what they want. Derek knows that from experience.

For all he knows she could be a dark kitsune. They’re a powerful pack for a reason. It’s nothing short of a miracle that so many formidable supernatural creatures have managed to live and fight in one pack. Together. Derek doesn’t know what to expect from her. Or from Stiles.

“No watching from the window!” Stiles calls out, admonishingly and he turns to see the curtains quickly shift back like someone dropped it.

“Look, you don’t have to prove anything,” Derek starts, shifting back to face him. “I can take care of myself, you don’t need to get all worried.”

Stiles steps forward, widening his stance and watching him expectantly. Kira is glancing nervously between them like she’s fighting the instinct to intervene. “Then you’ll have no problem proving it.”

Derek stares hard at this plucky little omega but all he does is raise his head resolutely. The challenge is already boiling in his blood, Derek couldn’t back down right now even if he wanted to.

This idiot is going to get himself killed one day. Why would he even challenge an alpha like this? His own alpha? Briefly, he loses himself in the image of finally having Stiles under him, the way he’ll squirm since he can’t stay still for a single fucking second of his entire life, and feels a sudden frisson of heat pool in his gut.

God, what he’d do to get his hands all over this kid. The freaky part is Derek doesn’t know whether the urge is purely physical, or sexual. Or both.

But these instincts are driving him crazy.

“Alright,” Kira says, interrupting them. “No biting or claws. Start when you’re ready.”

Derek watches Stiles carefully, giving him time to change his mind. Because he should change his mind. This is a fucking terrible idea. But Stiles only opens his palm to beckon him forward.

Well, fine then, he fucking asked for it.

“Try and get past me,” Stiles dares him.
He probably won’t even have to make much of an effort. The kid might have a bit of muscle on him, but the softness of his face, the sweet curve of his lips only prove he isn’t cut out for this stuff. Derek rolls his eyes and steps forward. His heart is beating faster than it should and it’s hard not to show the excitement stirring within him.

It’s like being a teenager again, having something constantly itching under his skin, fingers twitching like his claws are gonna pop out any minute. Anything to bring on the shift. He barely gets a hand on Stiles’ shoulder to push him down and out of the way before he moves impossibly fast and Derek’s feet are knocked out from under him.

He ends up on his back in the grass, breathless with Stiles grinning over him in unmistakable satisfaction. He barely even exerted himself to take Derek down. An omega. His omega knocked him on his ass. Face burning, Derek flips back to his feet.

“Wait,” he grunts. “I wasn’t ready.”

“Sure,” Stiles agrees easily, still smiling but Derek knows he’s humouring him.

He can tell the difference now. His mate is humouring him. Because he thinks Derek is a joke. He’s beaten him in football, the one thing he was certain he was the best at and now he can’t even fight off one little omega.

This is humiliating.

But Derek’s ready this time. Now he knows what to expect. And he’s going to show Stiles that he shouldn’t be messed with. He rushes forward, arms coming around Stiles’ waist, feeling a tug of heat jerk through his lower abdomen at the chance to finally grab him like this. No holding back. But somehow Stiles’ hands still move faster.

Derek doesn’t even see what happens.

But next thing he knows, he’s face first in the grass and Stiles is pinning him to the ground. His arms are locked behind his back and Derek can’t break free, not unless he’s willing to break his own arms to do it.

Stiles has him. Completely at his mercy. As if it was the easiest thing in the world. Which it fucking was. What is wrong with him? Derek's been in fights before and he's never lost this badly. His skin feels hot when Stiles’ mouth brushes against his ear.

“Still think you can handle yourself?”

Derek lets out a groan of frustration, bucking under Stiles’ grip, but that only pushes his hips more firmly into his ass.

He feels it before he even recognises what he’s feeling. Heat gathering steadily in his crotch like Stiles has put his fingers on something really sensitive. Derek knows he lets out a strange noise once he realises that he’s hard, cock thickening up between the confines of his body and the solid ground.

Fuck, he's into this. Being pinned by his omega. He squeezes his eyes shut, mortified that Stiles brought on this reaction and tries to will away the heat rapidly stirring between his legs.

“Get off me,” he mutters, wanting to be anywhere but here right now.

At least then he might be able to pretend this isn’t happening. But it’s not like he can run off into the woods when Stiles will clearly see his fucking boner. Damn this fucking kid. How does he make
Derek respond like this so easily?

“Thanks, Kira,” Stiles says, unaware of the escalating situation as he rolls off to the side. Derek tries not to sigh in relief. “I think I made my point. You guys go on without us.”

She frowns at them both but heads back towards the house with a nod. Derek lays out on the grass and doesn’t get up. It’s not like he can right now anyway. Stiles will just take this as more proof that Derek is-

Into him. Fuck.

And apparently really into being held down by his omega. What the fuck is wrong with him?

“If you can’t even win against me, do you really think you can go up against two hunter mercenaries?” Stiles asks, continuing with the lesson he’s trying to shove down Derek’s throat. “They’ve been trained specifically to hunt and kill werewolves.”

He doesn’t answer, letting anger quieten the sudden rush of arousal in his body. God, it’s much harder than he thinks, right now he’s practically covered in Stiles’ scent. He has to take short, sharp breaths to avoid getting swept up in it again.

“You just wanted to humiliate me,” he spits out after a moment.

Stiles reaches out unexpectedly to cup the back of his neck and Derek feels the heat return full force. It takes every cell in his body, not to shudder at the surety of his grip on him. Jesus, Derek’s actually into this. Super into this, by the way his dick feels like its trying to force its way out of his jeans.

“In front of all these witnesses?” Stiles murmurs quietly, gesturing at the empty space around them. “Yep, you figured out my plan there, big guy.”

He did say the pack had to stay inside. Stiles could have made a real spectacle of this and really put Derek in his place. Just like Derek thought he was going to do when he came out here. God, what is wrong with him?

Maybe Stiles should have humiliated him in front of the rest of the pack. He probably deserves to be taken down a few pegs. Has his ego always been this bad? Derek never really noticed it before.

“Shut up,” he mutters, hating that his body automatically leans into his fingers.

“Are you hurt?” Stiles checks. “Besides your wounded pride, I mean.”

He’s not going to dignify that with a response. He can’t.

“Fuck off,” he snaps, despite himself.

He listens to Stiles’ body move as he lies down beside him with a sigh. “I’m just trying to help you put things in perspective.”

Things are definitely in perspective alright. Derek rolls over with a sense of finality and sits up, leaning on his knees and knowing the visible bulge in his pants won’t go unnoticed. But he’s resigned himself to his fate by now. It’s not going anywhere anytime soon and he can’t just will it away when Stiles is fucking right there.

And it doesn’t go unseen. Stiles’ expression flickers with sudden, clear understanding but he draws his gaze away and doesn’t comment.
Derek feels something in his chest ease, like a heavy weight disappeared in the span of that careless look. That’s probably the most surprising thing of all. Stiles not opening his mouth for once. Especially after all the remarks he’s made about homoeroticism in sports.

And it’s not like Derek can deny that he got hard from Stiles wrestling him to the ground. Or that he can pretend he didn’t kiss him. Or that there are certain unexplainable impulses fighting to get out from under Derek’s rigid control right now.

Denying all of that now is laughable. He’s mated to the guy.

The front door slams closed and Derek can hear the rest of the pack’s feet as they move away towards the woods. Someone is talking about kicking ass but Scott is struggling to regain their attention in order to relay the plan to the rest of them. But Derek’s not even listening anymore. He’s looking at Stiles and trying his best to breathe shallowly.

“You know you probably shouldn’t be doing that,” Stiles says, because what was Derek thinking, that he could be quiet for even a minute. “It’s only going to make being around me more overwhelming.”

He tenses all over. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

“You’re trying not to scent anything,” Stiles observes. “You’ve been doing it since the hospital. It’s probably why it took you longer to trust any of us.”

He didn’t expect Stiles to be this observant. “I didn’t want to be influenced by it,” he admits, turning away.

Stiles’ heart is pounding but Derek has no idea what that is supposed to mean. “Yeah, solid plan dude. Only problem with that is it’s gonna ruin the familiarity of my scent and make you way more sensitive to it.”

Right. Whatever. Derek rolls his eyes.

“I saw you space out back there in the kitchen. If you keep trying to shut out those senses it’s only gonna overwhelm your instincts whenever you’re exposed to it.”

He can see exactly where this is going. “You want me to scent you,” he sneers, the itch reappearing beneath his skin at the suggestion.

Stiles’ expression widens, eyebrows climbing and mouth parting in a picture of innocent surprise. “Not what I meant.”

Derek listens out for the rest of the pack but they’re out of his hearing range now. He stares at his feet and wonders if it’s worth asking the question. It comes out of him anyway.

“You fuck me don’t you?” he mutters, unable to meet his eyes.

Stiles lets out a little incredulous laugh. “Are you kidding me with this shit?”

Derek’s head snaps up, glaring at him. “I mean, you- you’ve fucked me. I let you-”

His cheeks are hot, but he’s not planning on letting this go. Because Derek’s pretty sure that’s exactly what happened. There’s got to be a reason he likes Stiles on top of him so much. And it’s not just to wrestle.
Stiles’ mouth opens wider and Derek hates that he can’t stop staring at it.

“What does that even matter?” he demands frustratedly, as if that’s not anything but a confirmation of the truth.

Fuck. Derek has been fucked by this kid. A lot, from the way Stiles is trying to even out his features into something indifferent. He groans, putting his hands to his face and collapses back onto the grass again.

“I’m meant to be an alpha,” he hisses, more to himself than anyone else, feeling ashamed.

It’s mortifying. But all he can seem to think about right now is what it felt like. Was Stiles good? Did Derek enjoy it? He must’ve if they kept doing it again and again and-

Fuck. If anyone knew he let this fucking kid mount him-

Fuck.

“Being an alpha has nothing to do with whether you like a dick up your ass,” Stiles says, because it’s not like this is humiliating enough. “Didn’t you take Status Studies 101 like pretty much every other college student in existence? Status is a social construct. The behaviours and attitudes assigned to them have no basis whatsoever.”

Derek stares helplessly at him. Is that supposed to make him feel better?

“Oh, God. Honestly Derek, it’s really okay. I promise you, you don’t give a shit about what anyone thinks of this. Not even remotely.”

He finds that seriously hard to believe. “I don’t?”

“Yeah man,” Stiles promises. “It’s really not that big of a deal. Nobody gets hung up on stuff like that.”

How could they not? Derek’s still hung up on it right now. But he can’t bear to even think about it anymore. About the things he’s done. The things he’s let Stiles do to him.

“Teach me,” he says abruptly, lurching to his feet without warning.

Stiles is sitting crossed legged and squints up at him warily. “What now?”

“Whatever you just did before. Teach me. People want to kill me right? I need to know how to fight like I used to.”

Yeah, it’s a great idea. Derek doesn’t know how he didn’t think of it before. If he learns how to defend himself maybe they’ll start letting him join the pack hunts. Maybe Stiles will stop sending bodyguards with him wherever he goes.

That seems to settle things since Stiles rocks to his feet. “You sure?” he wonders. “Because teaching you this means you know, you actually have to listen to me.”

“I listen,” he protests, eyes catching the fade of his mating mark on Stiles’ neck.

If he put his mouth to it right now would the colours stop growing paler?

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“You’re not even listening now!” he cries, exasperated, throwing his hands up in the air.
“Teach me,” Derek insists, unapologetic.

Stiles' mouth shifts but he looks decided. “Fine. It’ll pass the time anyway. Alright, come at me like you did before and I’ll show you what you did wrong.”

Derek does what he says, only this time Stiles moves slow enough that what he’s doing is obvious. “See how you left yourself wide open here, by putting your arms out like that?”

“Yeah,” he says, surprised to realise that he does.

“You’ve got to size me up, alright. I’m smaller than you-“

Derek inspects Stiles more closely. “You’re taller than me,” he realises, appalled to see that he’s actually a few inches higher.

This kid is actually taller than him. How did he not notice that? Derek was lying in a bed when he first met him though, so it’s not surprising he didn’t immediately figure it out.

“I’m still smaller, size wise.”

Derek smirks, eyes dropping downward.

“Well actually-“ Stiles starts loudly like he’s about unzip his pants to prove otherwise.

That’s not happening. Derek does not want to know. It’s something he’s probably already very intimately acquainted with. He does not need the reminder.

“No.”

Stiles grins. “Since I don’t have the same build as you,” he continues, clarifying his words more carefully. “That makes me faster, more flexible and much more equipped to put you on your ass.”

He scoffs, but Stiles inches forward as if he’s intending to make another demonstration. Derek’s ego can only take so much. He backs away a step.

“So what do you do then?” Stiles asks, watching closely, even as he slows his advance.

The question stumps him. How does he outsmart Stiles? How does anyone? The answer comes to him a second later. Derek slips into his space, as close as he can without breaking eye contact.

“C’mon, babe,” he says, making his voice curl up like an invitation. “You don’t want to hurt me, do you, Stiles? I’m your mate.”

His mouth falls open but Derek can see he’s taken-aback, flustered even. His heart is moving at a strange rhythm when he stares into Derek’s eyes, and licks his lips almost unconsciously. Actually, Derek kind of likes him like this.

He leaps forward, under Stiles’ arms, not leaving himself open this time when he forces him to the ground. He goes down but wriggles out from under Derek so quickly that he can't see where he went wrong. But at least he managed to get under Stiles' guard this time.

“Oh my God,” Stiles says, visibly affected when he gets to his feet and puts some space between them. “That was a horrible thing to do. I love it.”

It takes a moment for Derek to realise that Stiles’ praise leaves him impossibly pleased. He covers the reaction and tries to mimic the stance he's standing in instead.
“Good,” he decides, once he’s inspected it. “Lower your elbows a bit, bring them tighter into your body. Yep, that’s it. Now, wanna see where you went wrong?”

He waggles his eyebrows suggestively and Derek’s mouth tenses up all of sudden before he figures out it’s because he’s trying not to smile. Weirdly, this is starting to be kind of fun.

Derek lowers his elbows and faces Stiles again.

“Show me,” he says.

Stiles does.

They’re outside in the grass for at least half an hour. Stiles is actually a pretty good teacher, Derek picks up things he’s never thought about using in a fight before. And he’s the one who’s the werewolf.

Soon Stiles is covered in a light sheen of sweat and it’s getting harder to ignore when he finally stops to suggest they leave it for today and head inside. He wants to protest, since he could keep going for much longer, but Stiles seems like he’s tiring.

He is still human after all. And the pack should be back soon. Derek’s not even that annoyed that he’s not out there with them anymore. From the looks of things, he’d only slow them down. He’s got a lot to learn. Even though he’s pretty sure that his future self is a vicious fighter.

The pack wouldn’t respect him so much if he wasn’t.

Stiles pours them both a glass of water in the kitchen and they drink in silence for a while, as their bodies cool down. Which is good, because the whole-bodied flush covering Stiles’ skin is really distracting.

“You weren’t too bad,” Stiles admits once he’s drained his glass.

He sounds hesitant all of a sudden and kind of vulnerable. Derek knows at once what he’s doing. Stiles is trying to be friendly, to bridge the gap between them made by Derek’s razor-sharp comments and Stiles’ even sharper responses. It’s not exactly an extended olive branch, but it definitely feels like one. What’s stranger though, is how much Derek desperately wants to accept it.

“I’ll scent you,” he agrees, out of nowhere trying not to seem overly keen.

Stiles just stares at him blankly. Before the rest of his brain catches up. “That is not what I meant,” he insists. “I was gonna suggest that you inhale my scent a little, in order to start building up an immunity again. You can’t keep looking like you’re high every time you accidentally get a hit of it.”

So much for a cease fire. Derek only frowns at him with growing suspicion. “So you don’t want me to scent you?”

Somehow, he finds that hard to believe. They’re mated for fucksake. They’d have to scent every couple of days at least. Stiles is probably dying for the chance to do it again.

The kid swallows heavily and if Derek was breathing normally he’s pretty sure that Stiles’ scent
would have changed in that moment. “Well, fine. I obviously want that, but that’s not a good idea.”

Since when is Stiles rejecting the opportunity to get closer to him? He remembers what he sounded like on the roof when he’d drunk too much whiskey, he’d wanted Derek then. And he still wants him now, no matter what he’s trying to pull.

“Why not?” he demands, put out and not sure why.

“Dude, you spaced out when my hands barely stirred the air. Imagine what would happen if you got near my scent glands. Your head would explode.”

So he’s against it because he thinks that Derek is the one who can’t handle a little bit of scenting? How weak does he think he is exactly? “No, it wouldn’t,” he mutters, glaring at him. “And it’s not like I can go around not fucking smelling anything forever. I’m a werewolf.”

“Fine,” Stiles mutters. “But you’ll be grinding on my leg in five seconds flat, I guarantee it, and I really don’t think your control is as great as it used to be.”

He flushes at the suggestion. Derek’s not so randy for this kid that he’d jump his bones at any provocation. His control is fine. Why is he coming up with all these excuses?

Is it because Stiles is worried that he won’t be able to handle it? Derek has to admit that there’s a part of him that wants to see Stiles lose that unflappable expression. To watch him fall apart.

“I’m not that desperate, I have control,” he protests, embarrassed. “You really think I’ll just-?”

“Fine, fine. Your control is so great then? Take a short breath, slowly,” he emphasises, without stepping closer.

Derek scowls at him and relaxes his body, letting his senses guide him again. No longer fighting his ability to gather information from a lot of different stimuli.

Then he breathes Stiles in.

“Whoa hold on-” he starts. “That’s too much-“

Everything happens very fast after that.

Derek gets a taste of the kid’s scent, his mate, and it’s so good, so good, of course he wants more. He breathes deep, inhaling as much of it as he can at once: the smell of body wash he used on his skin this morning, the sharp tang of his come, the faint traces of it from when he touched himself in the shower. The even fainter traces of Derek, enduring on his skin, inside and out.

He rushes forward, hands wildly reaching out for his mate, snarling as he swallows more of that scent again, feeling it overpower every thought in his mind. Except how to get more of it. To get closer, breathe more of it in. His mate gasps when his arms wrap around his back, cupping his ass before pulling their bodies effortlessly together.

Yes, perfect size for a mate. Strong, perfect, and sinewy. Good for bearing pups.

“Whoa, whoa,” his mate is saying, heartbeat increasing when he lifts him up, encourages his long legs around his hips where they belong, pushing him against the wall and lining up their bodies. “Fuck, yes okay.”

The scent changes, gets sharper and deeper, like a panther uncurling from its perch where it’s been
waiting in perfect stillness to strike. He groans, a low, desperate whine when he buries his face into the warm spot there. Where the scent is originating from.

His mate shudders, warm and willing in his arms and his mouth is opening to taste the skin, feel it shiver beneath his tongue. The flavours burst apart in his mouth and he kisses along the pale throat, marking a path of his own, to show them all who takes care of this exquisite creature. Prove that he’s responsible for him.

That this one gave himself over freely. And he’ll keep him forever if he can.

“Derek,” his mate breathes, groaning and writhing sluggishly in his arms. “Derek, whoa, Jesus-Derek.”

Yes, that is his name. It sounds better like this, coming out of his mate’s lips with a hopeful reverence. He growls and takes his mate’s mouth again, tasting the heat there and making it his own.

His mate’s hands are in his hair, gripping tight, showing his claim when he pushes his tongue into his mouth. Yes, yes, perfect. His lips are soft but they press hard against him, eager and clever.

Perfect mate.

He rocks his hips forward, heat licking up his bones, tingling in his mouth and he anchors his mate to him, shifting his ass against his fingers, wishing there wasn’t any clothing between them. Yes, yes. He drags them backwards and suddenly they’re on the floor, cradling the back of his mate’s head to protect it when he starts on his neck again.

“Oh God, oh God,” his mate is panting, and the noises make him grind his hips more firmly against the noticeable ridge in his mate’s pants. “Bad idea, fuck. Oh, fuck, fuck, that’s good.”

The scent is so much stronger now. Alive and wanting and full of welcome. He groans again like it’s painful, moving down his mate’s body to where the scent is stronger still.

So much stronger. He presses his face to the bulge and inhales with a strangled sound, nuzzling the hardness there. Where his mate is ready and open and perfect.

Yes.

“Derek, fuck- you need to-“

His cock jumps under the attention and he presses harder into it, salivating with the desperate need to get it in his mouth. To taste it, swallow it down.

Shock at the thought shakes some of the urgency out of his body, before a pillow cushion is hitting him in the face. It’s a bit musty, but the new scent is enough of a distraction to bring Derek back to himself.

Just as Stiles manages to get out from under him and scramble away.

“Don’t breathe,” he warns, face flushed and lips pink and swollen from all the kissing. “Let me get some distance. Shit. Hold on.”

He retreats to the other side of the room on shaky legs, still hard and a few seconds ago Derek wanted his *dick* in his mouth.

Jesus *fuck*. 
He groans sheepishly, dismayed by what the hell just happened and digs his claws into the fabric of his jeans when he takes a breath again. It doesn’t make him senseless like before, the pain helps a little to clear his head but his chest is still heaving and there’s a wild need thrumming beneath his skin.

He can smell Stiles’ slick in the air.

“Oh fuck,” he moans, pressing his claws in deeper.

“I told you,” Stiles snaps, voice quivering and not totally unaffected by what just happened. “To take a small breath. What the fuck?”

Derek’s too busy panting and trying to keep himself still. Fuck. He had no idea it would be like that. He wasn’t prepared. His dick is pressed so hard against the fly of his jeans that it’s painfully uncomfortable.

“I have control,” Stiles repeats, mocking Derek’s tone, and sounding a little delirious. “I’m not that desperate.”

Derek hunches over at the words, wishing the floorboards would swallow him up right now. God, he was all over the kid. Fuck.

“I was going to-“ he starts, horrified.

“Hey,” Stiles says, cutting off that thought before it can get started. “Wasn’t just you out there buddy. It takes two to tango, get horizontal and all that. I wasn’t helping the situation much either.”

Derek can’t believe any of this.

“This is why you shouldn’t be shutting off your senses,” he continues, unevenly. “Your control has gone to shit.”

It’s definitely the worst thing that could have happened. If Stiles tells anyone about this-

If Cora finds out how he completely lost it over Stiles’ scent-

He’ll never live it down.

“It’s not like I’ve had a mate before,” Derek snaps. “How am I supposed to know how to deal with any of those instincts when I’ve never experienced them?”

Stiles sighs, rubbing absently at the spot on his neck that Derek went to town on. There’s a red rash swiftly emerging on the soft skin there. Jesus, his skin is sensitive. Derek accidentally gave him beard burn. It takes all of his willpower not to rush over and get his mouth on it all over again.

“God,” he groans, briefly distracted by the scent of his blood in the air. “Stiles, stop touching it, fuck please.”

Stiles realises what he’s doing and wrenches his hand away. “Okay,” he says easily. “Okay, we’re gonna try this again. Derek, take your claws out of your thighs.”

He glances down where the blood is flowing freely but doesn’t withdraw them. His cock is still so hard. The sting from his claws isn’t enough to stop it. He can still smell the unhurried flow of slick between Stiles’ legs. Fuck, he’s so ripe for it right now. They both are.

If he just went over there-
“I can’t,” he admits. “It’s the only thing stopping me from going over there and-”


“Perfect,” he grits out incoherently, feeling like he’s lost his mind all over again.

Stiles gets up, staggers and lets out a soft noise when he realises how affected he is. Derek’s claws are in the cushion now, slowly tearing it apart when he finally manages to leave the room.

He listens to him try and hurry up the stairs and when he gets up, instantly following after him. Derek reaches the base of the staircase before his brain comes back online. He forces himself into the kitchen instead and fills up the sink with cold water. Then he rushes to the freezer, fetching out a tray of ice cubes and tosses them in as well.

When the pipes rattle and the rush of water signifies Stiles is in the shower, God, naked, Derek shoves his whole head into the sink.

The cold water helps clear his head quicker, claws covered in his own blood gripping the edge of the counter and he stays under for longer than he should. When he drags himself out, he’s gasping hard, lungs burning for air. When he flicks water out of his hair, he realises that Stiles’ arousal is still sitting heavy in his nose.

Derek dumps his head into the sink again.

Stiles’ body is flushed but satisfied when he turns off the tap and drags himself out of the shower. The recent orgasm might have made his body all loose but his mind is still in overdrive. He’d forgotten how intense it could be.

In the beginning, when Derek had first mated him, they’d fucked so much that Stiles genuinely worried that his dick might fall off. Things had calmed down after the first few months, when the both of them had adjusted to the new connection but even then, Derek had never really lost control to the extent that he did today.

It’s probably because he’s been trying to repress his instincts so much. That was bound to bite him in the ass.

Stiles knows it’s his fault as well. He’d been so touched starved for Derek that common sense had gone straight out the window when he’d pressed him up against that wall. He’d probably egged Derek on rather than stopping him.

But really, it’s been more than a week. To go from a pretty enthusiastic daily sex life to nothing has thrown Stiles off his game as well.

When he gets dressed and heads downstairs he finds Derek in the kitchen, dunking his head in a sink full of what looks like ice water.

“Uh-“ he says when Derek’s head emerges again.

How many times has he done that since Stiles ducked into the shower? When Derek turns to look at
him there’s a dazed kind of expression on his face.

“You good?”

His hair is wet and flopping out messily across his forehead. Stiles is trying his best not to laugh.

“You mean am I going to try and fuck you into the floorboards again?” he wonders sarcastically, oblivious to the way Stiles shivers. “I think we’re fine.”

“Oh joy,” Stiles deadpans. “I would have hated that.”

Derek’s mouth lifts a little, like he can’t resist the smile and it’s probably not a good thing that there’s water dripping down onto his chest making him look like he’s in the middle of a wet t-shirt photoshoot. God, how unfair is it that he looks this good?

The front door knob is turning before Stiles can say something to make the situation worse and they both shift expectantly towards it. Though Derek’s careful to keep his distance now. He already learnt that lesson.

They head out into the hall and it’s a small blessing that it’s Liam, the least nosiest pack member with maybe about the same level of observation skills. Because he doesn’t even seem to notice the smells that remained in the living room after they left it, or that Stiles’ mouth is still swollen or the equally telling drowned model look Derek is sporting.

Thank God, Derek’s not hard anymore. Stiles did not want to have to explain any of this.

“You didn’t get them,” he realises, figuring the pack sent Liam back to deliver the bad news.

Of course the two dicks who shot Derek would escape. When does anything in Stiles’ life go right?

“They were already gone,” Liam admits, frowning. “But they left a trail to follow.”

Peter definitely warned them. Once Stiles figures out his angle in all of this, they’re gonna screw him over so bad he’ll be feeling it for weeks.

“A trap,” he says.

“Probably,” Liam replies, distracted by something in his hands. “Scott and the pack are in pursuit. But some of them are heading back now to patrol.”

What is he looking at?

“What’s that?” Stiles asks, automatically.

“It’s a letter,” he says. “It was sitting on the doormat outside. Addressed to the Hale pack.”

Stiles is reaching him in seconds. “Whoa put that down. It could be covered in wolfsbane or something.”

Liam quickly passes the envelope to Stiles, since it’s marginally safer in his hands. Unless of course it’s anthrax. Then they’re all pretty much dead.

“Don’t open it,” Derek says, like furiously making out with Stiles for a few minutes somehow awarded him the right to boss him around.

Fuck that. Stiles opens the envelope. No white powders come spilling out, so that’s a good sign and
he can’t smell any faint traces of wolfsbane either. It’s unlikely to explode in his face.

But there’s a card. Stiles gets a very bad feeling once he slips his fingers inside and wiggles it free.

To Mieczyslaw Stilinski and Derek Hale, it reads.

We will be travelling through California in the next week and humbly request admittance to your territory.

If you truly are as interested in forging an alliance as you say, this will be a significant opportunity to cement the bonds of friendship by extending our pack your infamous hospitality.

Your alpha twins will be escorting us.

We look forward to finally meeting you in person.

Jessica Silva,

Head Alpha of the Silva Pack.

P.S. The actions of Peter Hale will be discussed.

When Stiles finishes reading his heart feels like it’s stopped working in favour of his mind moving so fast. “I have to call Laura,” he says, shoving the card and envelope into Derek’s chest when he tries to approach.

“My Laura?” Derek asks bewildered, as he turns the envelope over to read it. “Laura, my sister?”

But Stiles is already sprinting upstairs in search of his cell phone. He finds it abandoned on the bed, checks the time and prays that she hasn’t gone out for a run in Central Park like she usually does on Sundays and left her phone behind in her apartment.

He listens anxiously to it ring out, feet tapping out against the floorboards until she finally picks up.

“Hey, Stiles,” she says. “What’s-?”

“I need you in Beacon Hills,” he says urgently. “You need to request pack leave. Peter insulted the Silva Pack from Nevada who I’ve been trying to win over for months so they sent mercenaries after him. Only he didn’t use his own name when he infiltrated their territory."

“Oh, Derek,” she sighs, putting the pieces together instantly.

She’s definitely one of the smarter Hale kids. It’s why she and Peter do not get along at all. If she hadn’t moved out to New York, Stiles suspects Peter would have come up with a plan to kill her.

Because she’s his biggest obstacle. Derek is at least still willing to tolerate his presence. For a short period of time at least. Stiles really wishes he wouldn’t. Peter does his best to steer clear of Cora too. She’s more likely to use her claws than her words if he comes around.

“They’ve sent a letter,” he hisses. “They’re coming here next week. We need to show a strong united pack, not an alpha who doesn’t want his mate and can’t remember how to defend himself."

They might have been fooling around outside this afternoon, trying to train him and Derek may have picked things up surprisingly quickly, but he’s nowhere near ready to face the Silva pack.

Not at their level. They’d destroy him.
“What if he left?” she wonders. “We say he has matters to take care of elsewhere.”

Stiles shakes his head. “It’s not going to fly. These guys are serious shit. And they want us to know it. He’s going to make us look weak.”

It’s a hard truth, but it needs to be said. Derek’s best and most formidable qualities were apparently formed well after College. Besides his ability to run his mouth of course.

“What do you need me for?”

“He’s not exactly playing nice with anyone else. Especially not me. And definitely not Cora. I’m going to have my hands full with this pack so I can’t watch out for him. You know how to get through to him best. We’re going to need that.”

“What about Veronica?” Laura wonders hesitantly.

Derek does not have the capacity to be respectful or understanding of Laura’s female mate right now. But Stiles is behind her one hundred per cent. “However you want to play it, I’ll handle it,” he promises, jaw tightening.

He doesn’t want to be a dick, but it’s really not on the list of priorities right now. They need to focus on the Silva pack. Derek’s immaturity can wait until after they’re not dead.

“I won’t say anything,” she decides. “Not while this is happening. He shouldn’t be distracted.”

He’s relieved but he’s trying his best not to show it. Laura doesn’t need more bullshit right now. “Okay. If that’s what you want.”

“I’ll call my boss right now. She’ll want me to finish my shift tomorrow, we’ve got an important client checking in then, but I’ll start looking at available flights after. Hopefully I’ll be there Tuesday morning at the latest.”

“Thanks for this,” he mutters, suddenly calmer than a few minutes ago.

With Laura here, handling the Silva pack will be a whole lot easier. Stiles can use Scott and Kira as his welcoming team. They’re probably the best at being friendly. And have an unlimited reserve of tactfulness that is a true godsend.

He’ll need Lydia for the planning. Allison, Chris and Malia for the possibility of negative outcomes and how best to fuck shit up for the Silva pack. Isaac is good at diplomacy, in spite of the many fights he’s started with Stiles over the years, but he’s got a chameleon way of adapting to situations. They’re going to need that.

Could he convince his dad that he needs to leave the country for an indefinite amount of time? No, he’d never go for it. Stiles will have to do his best to keep him as far away from this as possible. That’s gonna be hard though when they already know Stiles’ name. Stilinski isn’t exactly common in town. The Silva pack could find his dad pretty easily.

It’s probably safer to have him stay at the house when the pack is here. At least then he’ll be protected.

Ethan and Aiden are a problem. Mostly because the Silva pack has plans to use them as hostages if things go pear shaped. He’ll need Mason and Corey to come up with a plan to extract them if it comes to that. Corey’s invisibility will come in handy and Mason is good at finding the best possible solution in stressful situations.
Erica and Boyd are good muscle and even better at intimidation. He’ll need to keep them close, just so the Silva’s don’t get any ideas. The more power they can show off, the better. Jordan’s a fucking hellhound. Stiles is sure they can find some use for him. It’s times like this when having a pack with such a variety of supernatural creatures is really convenient.

God, he’s gonna need to call Jackson isn’t he? He hasn’t been a kanima for a few years now, but he’s not exactly a pure werewolf either. Somehow when he finally made the full transition he brought some of the kanima’s qualities over with him.

His claws are sharper and longer than the other werewolves and they still secrete venom that can paralyse people. He can control when the lizard like scales ripple across his skin and uses the hard, impenetrable scales to protect himself from sharp weapons in a fight.

He heals just as fast as the other werewolves, faster even, and Stiles still firmly believes he can summon wings and a spiked tail, though he’s yet to see it. No one can control him anymore, which is an added bonus. He’s actually a pretty famous soccer player in England now, though Stiles can’t remember for the life of him what team he plays for.

Whichever one it is, Jackson clearly believes he’s some kind of American version of David Beckham. He is definitely still a dick though.

But they’re gonna need him.

Dammit.

The rest of the pack is easy to figure out. Liam has the kind of personality that makes others want to protect him, he’s a good kid, which might play on the emotions of some of the older werewolves in the Silva pack if they’ve seen too much bloodshed and aren’t completely desensitized to it yet.

His temper is still a problem. But if Hayden’s nearby she’ll keep him calm without letting any of the older pack members walk over them. She’s clever enough to stand up for herself without starting fights.

Cora, unfortunately does not have the unlimited tact that Stiles loves to see in Kira and Scott so it’s easier to lump her in Derek’s camp of don’t-let-him-speak-and-get-them-all-killed. She can do her best to keep him in line, but their Hale name will still bring them respect.

The Silva pack remember Talia Hale and that name still carries some weight. Having Laura there makes them the perfect set.

If only they could be certain Peter is nowhere near Beacon Hills when they finally arrive. But he’s currently scheming, so that means he’ll be in the thick of things, stirring up more trouble. Life would be a whole lot easier if Derek just killed him again.

He could do with an edge on the Silva pack as well since they took the time to research the finer points of his identity. Stiles picked up a few things about them when he attempted to form pack relations in the first place but that’s nowhere near enough information they need.

It’s a pity Danny moved to Hawaii to live with his boyfriend. They could do with his less-than-legal hacking skills right now. Maybe Stiles can email him for help. He’d do it, Danny is still technically pack, and he owes Stiles a favour. Since he’s the reason that Danny met Conrad. He wouldn’t go as far as to suggest he hooked them up but Stiles did share a dorm with Conrad for nearly three years in College and he would never have met Danny otherwise.

Danny will grumble about it, but he’ll use his skills to research the Silva pack if he asks.
Stiles needs all the help he can get.

“Cora told me he kissed you,” Laura adds, teasingly and he’s so far in his own mind that he forgot she was still on the line. “And that apparently since then he’s been glaring at you like he wants to kiss you a lot.”

Stiles turns to see Derek scowling at him from the doorway and very carefully tries not to think of how they were rolling across the floor in the throes of a scent high twenty minutes ago. Or that Stiles very nearly let Derek fuck him then and there.

“Well that’s definitely true,” he says, just to be a dick and to see Derek’s reaction.

He’s startled and flustered all at once before he manages to assemble his face into a shitty expression. Jesus, Stiles is still immeasurably fond of that asshole. “Look, I gotta go, Laura, let me know when you have a flight booked.”


Derek barely waits until she’s hung up. “I’m going to make you look weak?” he demands gesturing angrily at the pink polka dot socks on Stiles’ feet and then at Stiles in general as if he’s making some big point.

Which, first of all, rude.

“Yeah, you’re going to make us look weak,” he repeats. “You can’t fight. You can’t be diplomatic. You can’t keep your temper or your reactions to me under control. Or make up your mind on whether to keep me around or not and I’m bonded to you.”

“Don’t you even-“ he starts.

“As far as they’re concerned we are,” he snaps. “You know how old packs view power in established packs? In the relationships. And nothing is more important than the one between me and you. If they see the slightest thing off with us, some small vulnerability, they’ll strike. That’s how it works.”

Derek doesn’t seem to see the significance of that because he turns his head and shrugs dismissively. “Fine. Then we pretend.”

“What? That you love me?” he laughs. “You can’t even show affection in front of our goddamn pack. You think I haven’t noticed you only want to touch me when we’re alone?”

He glances behind him at the open doorway where Stiles’ words are probably carrying. “Keep your voice down.”

“Why should I?” he snaps. “I’m not ashamed.”

Derek can’t even look him in the eye. Which seems funny somehow when he was basically screwing Stiles into the ground a little while ago.

“You can’t pretend,” he says firmly. “You don’t even know how.”

He storms past Derek and back downstairs, furiously typing out a group text to the rest of the pack.

Pack emergency, he writes. I need everyone at the house after the trail goes cold. We’re in Peters shit again.
His phone starts buzzing, with replies and more questions but Stiles ignores them in favour of returning to the living room. Liam is still standing there awkwardly pretending he didn't overhear any of the argument upstairs. Since the door was wide open the whole time, there's no hope that he didn't. Poor kid.

If Stiles had time to worry about his feelings he'd send Scott to give him an uplifting talk. He's good at that.

"I need you to find whoever is on patrol right now," he says. "Tell them we have the Silva pack coming to town next week and to be on the look out for anything."

Liam nods, happy to get as far away as possible from the tension in the room and hurries outside to freedom. Stiles can hear his feet moving fast across the fallen leaves as he takes off into the woods. By that stage Derek has finally come back downstairs.

"Why are you acting like we're under attack?" he asks. "If anything they don't seem very smart for believing Peter was actually me. Werewolves are supposed to be able to hear when people lie."

Yeah, _usually_ that's true.

"Peter's figured out how to do it," Stiles mutters grimly. "I think he uses pain to mess up the baseline of his heart rate. He can lie as much as he likes, but that's not the point."

Derek isn't too thrilled by that. "It's not the point?"

"You don't think they would have researched the name and come across us? Come across you? Packs like the Silvas are old school werewolves. It's not that they couldn't figure out if Peter was lying, it's that they don't care. Peter disrespected them and he used your name to do it. As far as they're concerned that makes you an accomplice."

"I'm not," Derek protests, annoyed. "I didn't do anything. This is a fucking joke."

"They're ruthless," Stiles mutters, shrugging. "Do you know how many people they've probably killed? Spilling blood means nothing to packs like that."

That obviously doesn't sit right with Derek. He pushes his wet hair off his face. It's getting pretty long now. Stiles still likes it though. But to be truthful there really isn't anything that he doesn't like about Derek.

Even College Derek is sort of starting to grow on him. He's sappy like that.

"Do we do that? Kill people?"

"If it's our last resort, yeah," he admits. "But we're crafty enough not to let it be."

They haven't killed anyone yet. Stiles has been able to manoeuvre whichever enemies that came into Beacon Hills looking for trouble into a better outcome with only a minimal amount of bloodshed.

It's one of his talents. Something tells him that the Silva pack won't be so easy to deal with.

"And you really think this is a threat? This formal letter?"

Stiles groans, snatching it out of his hands. "Did you even _read_ it? The whole thing is a mix of threats."

Derek steps closer with a frown, peering down at the paper again. "Where the fuck is it a threat?"

“That’s your name?” he demands, turning his head to the side and squinting at it. “I thought that was a spelling mistake or something.”

Stiles snorts.

“Wait- Stilinski. That’s your last name?” Derek’s expression clears. “Oh shit, I do know you.”

Yeah, no shit genius. Is he still running on that scent high? He thought the frequent ice dunking cleared him of that. Stiles raises an eyebrow. “Yes, we’re mated? You think it’s a mistake. Didn’t we do this song and dance already? Wait, did you hit your head again?”

He reaches out to touch Derek’s skull but he twists away from him with a derisive sound. “Are you trying to be fucking funny? I’m saying I remember you and your family. You’re that deputy’s kid. The hyperactive one.”

Of course Derek would know his dad. He was the first call at the Hale house fire, how did he forget that? Stiles remembers trying to grill his dad for information afterward on what happened but he’d stubbornly refused to tell him anything.

He had been about twelve or eleven at the time. Stiles had always been fascinated by the macabre. He was a fucking weird little kid. Though to be fair, death seemed closer and much more engaging after it had already come and paid a visit to his house.

“He’s the Sheriff now,” Stiles explains. “And your boss.”

He’s expecting some unflattering commentary or some insensitive observation about his dad but Derek goes strangely still, staring off into the distance. Lost in some kind of memory.

“He’s a good man.”

That’s high praise coming from College Derek.

“The Silva pack isn’t happy about Peter,” Stiles continues. “That’s why the letter is full of subtle threats. They’ve barely given us enough time to prepare for their visit, which is their intention, to throw us off balance. They have two of our pack members as collateral, in case we’re planning something unwelcoming and they want to discuss Peter. If they don’t want compensation for his actions, then they want him dead and if we don’t receive them favourably they’ll go after him anyway and probably kills us.”

Derek’s mouth falls open. “You got all of that from a couple sentences?”

Wow, College Derek is really not getting this. “Dude, you’ve got to read between the lines here. We’ve lost the small amount of trust that we started to build because of Peter and now they want to size us up. Our reputation is usually a pretty good deterrent but if the Silva pack sees how vulnerable we are now, they’re going to use it. They’d be fools not to.”

Derek is frowning at him. “Maybe they’re decent.”

If he had the emotional capacity to laugh right now, he would. “Yeah, College Derek. Super decent people leave a pile of bodies big enough to fill a mass grave behind them when they clear out of a rival town.”
“So what do we do?”

Stiles pulls out his phone again and starts dialing a contact that he really would rather not be dialing right now. “In case you didn’t notice, dude. I’m already on it.”

He picks up on the fifth ring.

“What do you want, douchecanoe?” Jackson mutters, sounding like he’s been woken up. “It’s ten pm here.”

“Wow, slow down there grandma,” he drawls. “If you don’t get your twenty hours beauty rest how will you crochet in the morning?”

“I have a game tomorrow, fuckface,” Jackson snaps, extremely pissed off. “You better not be calling for another favour again.”

Dammit. Why do they have to have such a dick in their pack again? Okay fine, all of them are dicks, Jackson fits in just fine. But Jesus, what an asshole.

“Jackson, buddy, ol’ pal, moon of my life, brotest with the mostest-“

Jackson hangs up.

“Oh well, fuck you too,” Stiles grumbles, going into his messages and pulling up Lydia’s name.

“Who is that?” Derek wonders, seemingly impressed by the level of assholery.

Jackson is a class of asshole all his own. Stiles is willing to admit it's a bit inspiring

“Pack member,” he explains quickly as he starts to type. “Lives in the UK. Can grow wings, scales and a spiky tale if he feels like it.”

“What?”

“Oh and venom that paralyses people too, can’t forget that. He’s gotten me with that shit a fair few times, the dick.”

Derek looks like he’s having some kind of conniption, so Stiles leaves him to it.

Need you to convince Jackson to fly back to the states, he writes, life or death situation.

He sends the message and Lydia’s reply is nearly instantaneous.

He has a game tomorrow.

Stiles rolls his eyes. Don’t think weve figured out teleportation yet and since its physically impossible to do an 11hr flight in a few hrs he can come AFTER the damn game.

Yes thanks Stiles, she replies and he can physically feel the sarcasm through the phone. I’ll get him here. But he’s going to be shitty about it.

When is he not shitty about everything?

Lydia mustn’t have a good reply for that since she doesn’t text him back with an answer. Stiles feels wholly satisfied when he pockets his cell phone again. He glances up at Derek who’s watching him with a faint degree of surprise.
“Jesus you need a towel. You look like a drowned cat.”

“Says the kid covered in a rash.”

“From your fucking stubble,” Stiles shoots back, unflinchingly.

Derek flushes and disappears off in search of one before Stiles can make him feel more embarrassed. He's kind of glad they nearly got naked in the living room a little while ago. Stiles thinks it might have humanised College Derek somehow, actually losing himself in that moment. He seems a little less snarky if anything.

That's better than nothing.

“Fuck I need coffee,” Stiles mutters to himself and heads off into the kitchen with the express purpose of solving that problem as well.

He’s a problem solver. That’s just what Stiles *does*.

Once Derek has dried his hair and attempted to mop up some of the mess of his shirt, he returns to the kitchen to find that Stiles has made coffee for the both of them.

He’s careful not to breathe him in too much, but inhales a short amount, trying not to let it all go to his head again. Stiles is right, he can’t keep losing his shit every time he gets a strong hit of his scent.

Not when their territory is going to be full of enemies soon. Derek can’t afford that kind of distraction. None of them can.

Stiles is sipping from his mug but there’s an overexcited kind of energy about him that has nothing at all to do with caffeine. If Derek had to guess, it’s because his mind is working so fast.

He doesn’t really know what happened during that phone call to Laura but about halfway through when Derek came upstairs to see what was going on, Stiles was just standing there, uncommonly still, holding the cell phone up to his ear and thinking.

But not just idle thoughts, Stiles was thinking deeply. He stood like that for less than thirty seconds but by that time he seemed decided. As if he’d come up with a plan to face the Silva pack.

In thirty *seconds*.

Just how fucking smart is this kid?

Derek accepts the cup of coffee, careful to breathe shallowly while he’s in Stiles’ space before there are people coming through the front door. The pack is back. All of them. Derek is kind of interested to know what Stiles has come up with.

“The Silva pack is coming,” he says, without bothering with a greeting. Half of the pack isn’t even in the kitchen yet.

But they all hear him.

“What the fuck?” Cora demands but Erica is already pushing past her to claim a spot in the room.
Scott is struggling to get through the crowd of bodies and from the way he’s wrinkling his nose he can still smell everything they got up to in the living room. Derek is smiling into his mug before he can stop himself.

“They sent a letter,” Stiles explains in a rush. “They’ll be here next week.”

The pack breaks out into conversation and Stiles doesn’t even bother to try and calm them all down. He does glance over at Derek though but he has no idea what that look is supposed to mean.

The rash is still on his neck, the red standing out brightly against his skin and Derek really can’t stop looking at it. These instincts are much harder to fight than he realised. Stiles notices him looking and jolts out of his slouch against the counter, slapping a hand against his mating mark.

“Oh shit, I need to get some mark concealer,” he announces suddenly to the entire group and Derek cringes at the words, wishing there were some things at least that he kept to himself.

He’s a bit shameless sometimes. Derek still isn’t used to it. But the pack falls silent at the declaration, attention caught.

“You’re going to cover your mating mark?” Boyd asks, unsettled.

Derek hates that hearing it makes his teeth feel sharper, like he’d love nothing else but to walk over and sink them into Stiles’ pale throat. Prove his claim. He hates how wild the idea of losing this kid makes him feel.

“We can’t have them seeing it,” Stiles points out, oblivious to what’s going on in Derek’s head right now as he watches him. “Not when it’s fading like this. If they ask we’ll just have to say it’s in a private place like Derek’s.”

He startles at being addressed. “What?” he demands. “I have a-?”

“You’re mated,” Erica says, with a bewildered look. “Why wouldn’t you have a mating mark too?”

Obviously, she makes sense but Derek should have seen it already. And he hasn’t. The most popular places are the neck and wrists, and he doesn’t have a bond bite on either areas. Yet another reason why it was so easy to deny they were mated in the first place.

“Oh you just haven’t noticed it,” Stiles mutters, lips turning down with barely concealed indignation.

“Haven’t looked for it more like,” Cora accuses and Derek can’t pretend he’s not at the centre of attention anymore.

“Fine,” he snaps, losing patience with all this attitude. “Where the fuck is it then?”

Stiles gestures at his hip, gaze averted like he’s trying to pretend he’s not uncertain or hiding his feelings about it. Derek doesn’t understand how someone like him can say so much, all of the fucking time, but then never really reveal anything about what he’s thinking.

Or feeling.

Stiles is a lot harder to read than Derek first assumed. He’s not like anyone else he’s ever met. Omega or otherwise. Nobody but Laura calls him out on his shit like this. Or at least, that’s how it used to be. Things are so fucking different now.

Derek hesitates at the perfectly disinterested expression on Stiles’ face before he lifts his shirt up. He
can hear Stiles’ heartbeat stutter fleetingly when he yanks the material up over the ridges of his stomach and glances down to inspect himself.

But he doesn’t see anything. The rest of the pack is examining him with interest. Maybe they’ve never seen it before either. Or it doesn’t even exist.

“It’s not fucking there,” he mutters, annoyed and feeling exposed.

Stiles steps closer and lays his palm a little below the waistband of his jeans, underneath his right hipbone. Derek feels a rush of heat so strong that his knees nearly buckle from the brief pressure.

He yanks down the corner of his jeans to see it better and sitting right against his hipbone is the perfect impression of Stiles’ teeth.

It’s super intimate, as mating marks go and Derek’s face feels like it’s on fire when he glances up again to see the rest of the pack peering at it closely.

“I wanted to bite your left ass cheek,” Stiles says, grinning with a brazen kind of levity. “But you didn’t think it was a very practical place for a mating mark.”

Derek snorts, forgetting his embarrassment altogether when he laughs openly at the words before tugging his jeans back into place again, covering the mark. The area still feels hot though and Stiles didn’t even touch it with his bare hands.

Is that what it’s like every time Derek brushes his fingers against the bite mark on Stiles’ neck?

He couldn’t help but notice that the colour of his mating mark hasn’t faded at all. Because it isn’t Stiles’ conviction in their relationship that’s the problem. Derek’s the one who doesn’t believe in their bond anymore, so it’s the impression of his teeth fading from Stiles’ neck.

The bite on his hip is a deep red, the connection there unwaveringly strong. How can Stiles be so certain of his feelings for Derek, even now?

His eyes are still on Stiles, but he’s moving away again, attention unnoticed as he pulls himself up onto the edge of the kitchen counter. But not before he manages to knee the cupboard below and elbow the counter at the same time.

Real graceful.

Stiles curses and Derek has to physically hold himself back from going over to him. These instincts are getting stronger now. Derek can barely keep up with them anymore.

Scott takes a step towards him, hand outstretched like he’s planning on drawing out Stiles’ pain but Derek’s fists clench hard enough that his knuckles crack loudly in the room. Scott doesn’t move closer after that.

Good. He should back off.

Derek realises what he’s thinking and relaxes his hands, surprised by his own reaction. What the hell is going on with him? He’s not thinking straight anymore. He can’t sleep well unless he’s in the same house as Stiles, can’t stop looking at his throat, imagining kissing him again and thinking what a good mate he is.

Smart. strong. Beautiful.
Everything that Derek wants.

God, what is he doing?

“Look, I’ve got it all figured out,” Stiles says eventually, startling him out of his own head. “I’ve got a plan.”

The pack is ready to follow him. Turns out this kid can inspire loyalty too. He’s got all the makings of a leader. A lot more than Derek ever had.

“It better be a good one,” Lydia mutters. “Or Ethan and Aiden are dead.”

Whoever the fuck they are. More pack members Derek definitely doesn’t remember.

“It is,” Stiles promises, so sincere that it’s impossible not to believe him. “But it’s gonna involve all of you.”

“Done,” the deputy hellhound says, folding his arms. “You know we’re all behind you, Stiles.”

They are aren’t they? All of them. How the hell did he end up in a pack this strong?

But looking at Stiles now, at the way he’s staring at them all determinedly, ready for anything, Derek thinks he’s starting to get an idea.

Fuck.
Stiles lays everything out on the table like it’s really that easy. Derek can’t deny that he’s surprised. Somehow, Stiles has managed to find a role for everyone in the coming week before the rival pack arrives. Everyone is somehow useful. And when they accept their jobs with enthusiasm, Derek thinks it’s because what Stiles has chosen for them plays to their strengths.

He really is a clever little shit.

Derek wishes that he knew this earlier so that he could have prepared for it, but some forewarning wouldn’t have done very much. Stiles’ brain just works faster than everyone else’s. He wonders what it would be like to unleash that kind of unwavering focus in the bedroom and his face heats up before he can finish the thought.

The fact that he nearly sucked Stiles’ dick a couple hours ago has definitely put things in perspective. Now he’s got all these thoughts floating round in his head, most of them involving Stiles without pants.

It’s even more staggering to realise now that if Stiles asked him, he’d be more than happy to drop to his knees and give him a blowjob. There’s some lingering pride in the back of his mind that suggests he’s probably really good at it.

Derek wants to groan. This isn’t what he wanted to be thinking about right now. He’s supposed to be worried about his memories or the fact that he’s recently had a traumatic brain injury. Not whether or not he wants to fuck men now.

Or get fucked by men.

One man in particular.

Jesus, is his face always this hot? Derek moves over to the cupboards to fetch a glass out and tries not to think about it.

He’s not denying that there are some guys on the football field that turn his head sometimes. Or in the Campus hallways. He can appreciate an attractive dude, nothing wrong with that. Derek’s not going to pretend he hasn’t seen gay porn either or that he’s gotten hard in his dorm room, seeing the outline of Jason’s dick in his gym shorts.

That would be a waste of time. The real point here, is that Derek doesn’t want to think about it. He’d planned to face that problem head on if the opportunity ever arose to hook up with guy and he was willing. Not to wake up bonded to some little shit who looks at him like he knows Derek inside out, could pull him wide open at the slightest provocation and shake all his secrets loose.

This has been a bigger curve ball than Derek could have ever predicted.

But he’s not going to deny that he wants to fuck Stiles, or that he smells like everything Derek could have ever thought to want, or that when Stiles hovers over him he wants to get on his knees and let him-
Turns out there’s a lot of things Derek wants.

The two Argents and his cousin head out to start sorting out defences for any negative contingencies. Derek has the feeling that they’re going to rig the whole forest with booby traps. He’s almost glad a werewolf is with them.

She’ll keep them in line if they’re thinking of doing anything untrustworthy. They might know how to act nice, but so did Kate. Derek’s never going to fully trust them. That’s just how it is.

The young kid who smiles a lot and his invisible boyfriend head out into the backyard to start thinking up a plan to get the alpha twins away from the rival pack without getting them killed. Derek’s never met alpha twins before. At least none that he remembers. They’re supposed to be really rare.

Boyd and Erica start sweeping the house for potential weaknesses since the pack decided this is where the peace talks will take place. Whether or not any actual peace will come of it is anyone’s guess.

Derek isn’t holding out much hope.

Stiles is bent over several maps of Beacon Hills stretched out across the dining room table and Lydia is standing by his side, half leaning over him while they murmur quickly to each other.

They’re so absorbed that they barely notice when the rest of the pack disappears into the living room to put on a movie. Derek isn’t used to not having Stiles’ attention. And even if they weren’t friendly before that lingering awareness between them was still there.

Now he could almost say Stiles has forgotten he exists. That doesn’t sit right with him. Can’t Stiles feel that somethings changed between them now? Doesn’t he care?

Derek feels the shift so prominently, that he could almost call it a living emotion, one that’s pretty much overwhelmed everything else. They were rolling around on the floor boards a few hours ago. How can that not affect Stiles at all? Derek isn’t sure he’ll ever get over it.

And it definitely didn't escape his notice that Stiles didn't have a job for him. Everyone in the pack is useful. Except for Derek apparently. He wants to say something, offer some kind of ingenious input that might smooth out the crease on Stiles’ forehead right now but he doesn’t know shit about warfare. There’s nothing he could do to help with their planning.

He’s not Peter. Although being Peter nowadays is clearly a punishment in and of itself.

But if he could just say something smart, get Stiles watching him thoughtfully in that way that means he’s thinking, appreciating what the merit of what he said then everything would be-

God, what the fucking fuck, he is not trying to impress this kid. He’s not.

Lydia laughs, a sharp, short sound that makes his fingers curl and Derek walks out after the rest of the pack before his mouth opens and does the talking for him. It’s not like Stiles is going to realise he’s gone anyway.

What the fuck is wrong with him? Derek doesn't get like this when he dates people, he's not insecure. He doesn't feel sensitive and worried about what other people think of him. Or at least, he didn't use to. Is this what a bond does? Makes you completely irrational?

Jesus, he needs to get a fucking grip. He’s not some silly kid with a desperate crush, burning for just
the slightest bit of attention. He’s not going to amaze Stiles with his ability to not fucking handle feelings.

He can control this.

And who gives a shit what that little asswipe thinks anyway? Sure, he smells like something Derek wants to roll around naked in, but that doesn’t mean he’s going to fall over himself and beg for the slightest bit of Stiles’ attention.

He has some pride at least. Doesn’t he?

Derek inhales slowly, but not enough to lose his head over Stiles’ scent again and takes a seat next to his sister on the couch. It’s easier now in smaller increments. Now that he’s not blocking out everything it’s not as difficult.

He might even be gradually building up a tolerance now. That doesn’t mean that he still won’t lick Stiles all over given the chance.

Fuck, if Stiles gave him a chance-

This is ridiculous. Derek’s not going to pant after this fucking nutsack. Christ, what kind of dumbass is he? He's never been this desperate before. For attention. For comfort. For sex.

Scott and Kira, duck into their bedroom for a minute and when they return they're wearing jackets with the intention of going outside. They're heading out to relieve whoever is on patrol right now.

Nobody seems bothered to cook dinner so Cora orders pizza to be delivered to the house and gets enough pizzas that they’re climbing into the double digits. Which is fine. Derek feels like he could eat about three pizzas alone.

The delivery guy turns up twenty minutes later and the curly haired kid, Isaac nearly falls over when he tries to carry all of the boxes in at once. Cora laughs at him while the rest of the pack rushes forward to claim a couple of boxes, the smell of meat, cheese and sauce filling up the doorway.

Stiles is still in the dining room with Lydia making cryptic plans to deal with the rival pack. Derek doubts that he even realises there’s food here that he should be eating. They’re so absorbed, he’s probably forgotten that he’s even hungry.

The pack pools their money together to pay the pizza guy and Derek feels a flutter of awkwardness once he realises that his pockets are empty. Objectively, he’s got to have a wallet with money in it somewhere, he’s got a job for fucksake, but Derek has no idea where that might be.

Nobody mentions it though. Erica just shoves two boxes in his hands and Derek glances towards the dining room again. When the rest of the pack moves back into the living room to get settled, Derek walks into the next room instead.

Stiles and Lydia don’t look up. Don’t even seem to smell the presence of hot food. Derek hesitates awkwardly beside Lydia but somehow doesn’t even have the guts to interrupt them. Apparently he's a fucking coward now too.

The curtain of her hair blocks both of their expressions.

“No, that won’t work,” he hears Stiles murmur distractedly. “Think of Hutier tactics for infiltration.”

“You think they’ll begin with a violent frontal attack to demoralise us and well as targeting and
suppressing our ability to respond with suitable countermeasures?”

Derek has no idea what they’re saying.

Both of the boxes smell slightly different which means they’ve probably got separate pizza toppings. Feeling like he’s lowering the collective intelligence in the room, Derek quietly sets down one of them, throwing it open so they can’t ignore the smell of it for long and excuses himself without a word.

Barely a minute later and Stiles is making an appreciative sound. “Oh pepperoni, my favourite.”

Derek has a heady moment of pleasure for instinctively being able to provide what Stiles needed when he carries the last box back out to the others. The feeling is strong enough that he needs a second to shake himself free of it. He can’t just go to fucking pieces every time the kid shows him a little bit of appreciation.

How desperate is he?

Stiles has got Derek on a short leash without even really trying.

And it’s not like he can turn things around now either. Not since the rocky start they had—the one Derek caused. Anything he does now, Stiles is going to treat with some degree of suspicion. That’s just a given.

If Derek is suddenly going to try his hand at being more agreeable, then Stiles will only think he’s got some kind of hidden agenda. He can’t just try and convince Stiles that he’s changed his mind and that maybe he’s a little more interested in him then he first believed he was.

At best, Stiles won’t believe him, and worst, he’ll make fun of Derek for repressing his apparent big gay feelings for so long. The thought makes him queasy.

Derek sits down next to Boyd, setting the pizza box next to the pile of swiftly emptying others and throws it open. He takes two slices for himself and leans back against the couch with a sigh, trying to ignore the urge to turn his head toward the direction of the hallway leading toward the dining room.

Jesus, they make out a little, nearly get naked and Derek’s a total mess. What’s worse is he knows exactly what it means. He’s seen his other teammates get like this when they start dating a new girl.

Whipped.

Derek’s totally fucking whipped right now.

What a shitshow.

They’re watching Star Wars. A new Star Wars that Derek’s never even heard of before.

Leia and Han Solo had a kid, and he’s a fucking dick. Derek has the continuous urge to smack him across the face at least 90% of the entire movie. The pack seems to feel the same way because they’re throwing out a million unflattering remarks that even Derek balks at a little.

They’re about as mouthy as Stiles when they’re riled up. And then they’re dissolving into a heated
discussion about another Star Wars movie that came out last year, another one after this movie and Derek’s more lost than before. Since he doesn’t remember that one either, though from the way the pack is talking about it so freely, they all went to see it together at the theatre.

Is there anything he does remember? Fuck, if there were a few small things coming back to him at least he wouldn’t feel so out of it. But apparently Derek broke his fucking brain when he took that bullet for Stiles.

If he could just remember something-

He focuses on the movie instead where the grumpy scavenger girl has picked up a lightsaber from a vault under the cantina. He’s pretty sure it belongs to Luke Skywalker. That’s a pretty good throwback.

Derek’s in the middle of his second pizza when he hears Stiles laugh in his ears, unexpected and amused.

It’s so relaxed that it makes his chest hurt. Does he ever sound like that with Derek? Or does he only really drop his guard around Lydia?

For a second he worries if Stiles likes men as well as women. Did Derek ever ask that? How is he supposed to know if Stiles doesn’t want him anymore? As subtly as he can, Derek shifts his weight, lifting the edge of his jeans to peer down at the mating mark on his hip.

The colours haven’t changed at all. The bond is as strong as ever. Fuck, he needs to chill out. If he can’t trust his own mate to stay faithful whatever his fucking sexuality then Derek’s the one with the goddamn problem.

Fuck. Thinking about this has got him tied up in all kinds of knots. Derek lets go of the material of his jeans and hides the relief from his face as he takes another slice of pizza.

Cora snorts, and Derek turns at the sound to catch her staring at him, intently enough to show she’s been watching for a while. Watching him check Stiles’ mark.

Derek refuses to feel embarrassed that he got caught out.

But suddenly there’s a Stormtrooper shouting that Finn is a traitor, pulling out this ridiculous weapon to fight him and Derek’s distracted by how ludicrous it is. Because the Stormtroopers he remembers are nothing like that and they definitely couldn’t aim for shit.

Then there’s all this fighting and explosions happening and he’s too distracted to worry about feeling sorry for himself that half of his most important memories are gone or that Stiles seems to be having a great time in the other room with someone else.

Cora is still smirking at him.

The pack has emptied every box before the movie finishes. Derek looks at the wreckage of cardboard and can’t help but marvel at the extent of their collective appetites.

When it doesn’t look like Stiles and Lydia are finished anytime soon, the young looking girl who doesn’t smell like any supernatural creature Derek’s met before puts on a new movie. Before retreating back to lay in the arms of that other werewolf kid, the one who still looks like a teenager, even younger looking than Stiles. Who went patrolling with Derek’s cousin a few days ago.

He thinks his name is a short one, maybe something common. Luke or something like that. Sooner or
later it’s going to get easier to remember who every member of the pack is called.

The girl puts on Mad Max: Fury Roof and Derek has never been more impressed or amazed by what women are capable of. He’s also never even heard of this new adaptation. But there are probably plenty of movies he hasn’t seen now. Or that he’s seen and doesn’t remember.

Derek scoots back a little, shifting into a more comfortable position and watches the most outrageous car chase across a scorching desert wasteland that he’s probably ever seen in his life.

It’s pretty fucking awesome.

Stiles is kind of exhausted from trying to consider every single angle that the Silva pack might attack them from. Lydia keeps yawning as well, which means she’s tired.

They were really in the zone tonight. Stiles all but forgot about anything else while they tried to come up with as many plans and contingencies as possible. He would’ve forgotten to eat too, if somebody hadn’t come and left them a box full of pizza. Stiles’ favourite too. Plenty of pepperoni.

Must have been Scott.

When Allison finally returns to collect her mate and take her home, Stiles realises just how much time they lost to discussing possibilities and outcomes and how best to counter all of them.

“When did you guys go?” Stiles wonders, rubbing at his eyes.

“The forest is nearly completely rigged. Malia wanted to stay out and keep working with my dad.”

Stiles nods, accepting that information quickly. “I’d better tell Boyd and Erica she won’t be home until later. They’ll worry.”

“Already done,” Allison says. “She really needs to start using her phone again. I know she hates carrying it when she shifts, but how is she going to call anyone for help if something happens?”

“I’ll talk to her about it.”

“Let her boyfriend and girlfriend handle it,” Lydia mutters, leaning easily into Allison’s arms. “They can probably convince her.”

“Probably,” Stiles says, making no effort to hide his doubt.

He wonders if Derek’s already gone home with Cora yet. Is he back to avoiding Stiles now that they were practically dry humping in the living room?

He really has no idea what to expect. But when he follows Lydia and Allison back out to join the others there’s Derek, pressed up against Boyd’s side with this kind of glazed expression on his face as his chin dips.

Stiles recognises that look. It’s when Derek’s really interested in something but he’s too tired to keep
his eyes open so he's fighting against sleep. Usually he doesn’t win out long before his eyes fall shut and his head is tipping forward.

It’s so endearing that Stiles literally can’t handle it sometimes.

Like now for instance.

Why does College Derek have to look so sweet and be literally the fucking opposite of that? Stiles resists the urge to groan at the sight. God, what he would give to be able to crawl into Derek’s lap right now and cuddle the hell out of him.

God, *spooning*. Stiles misses that.

“Alright guys, I’m off to bed,” he says abruptly, watching Derek’s head jerk up. “Crash here if you like. Make sure you all keep your cell phones on you in case they send some of their pack members into Beacon Hills to scout out the place before their arrival next week.”

Cora gets up, stretching herself out so that the bones in her back crack loudly. She waves halfheartedly and goes to head out of the house, tilting her chin at Derek in silent question. When he shakes his head, she continues onward without him. Stiles feels a rush of hopefulness pour into him. Maybe Derek's going to stay here now instead of with Cora? Stiles' sleep patterns will thank him at least.

Isaac, Corey, Parrish, Mason, Boyd and Erica follow her out with sleepy farewells. Hayden and Liam look like they’re going to crash here. The more the merrier, Stiles is cool with it.

Derek rocks to his feet, rubbing at his eyes when he turns to face him. Stiles realises there’s two people missing.

“Where’s Scott and Kira?”

“On patrol,” Derek says, watching him closely.

“Huh,” he says thoughtfully.

Then who brought in that pizza? The rest of the pack says goodnight and Stiles waves them off as he heads towards the staircase. He can feel Derek behind him as he yawns.

“You want a pillow again? Come on.”

Derek doesn’t respond. Stiles wonders if he feels awkward being alone together now that they were so close to physical intimacy. The whole two steps forward one steps back thing.

Stiles tries not to let the possibility of that disappoint him.

Their bedroom is empty when Stiles opens the door and leads him inside. “Have at it,” he says, pointing at the bed as he toes out of his shoes, thinking longingly of a shower to clean himself up and finally sleep.

He turns once he realises that Derek hasn’t moved.

“I think we should sleep together.”

Stiles goggles at him.
“I mean for scents,” Derek explains quickly. “We don’t smell much like each other anymore, not like we’re mated. If we share a bed leading up to the day they arrive, that should be enough time for it to seem convincing.”

There’s a faint flush to Derek’s cheeks and somehow Stiles thinks it’s because he’s not just being resourceful and bolstering their chances of not dying when the Silva pack turns up.

Derek wants to share a bed with him.

It takes everything in Stiles to hide the glee bubbling out of his chest. Does he want to snuggle too? God, Stiles is praying he wants that. He can’t believe this is happening right now. It must be some kind of miracle.

“You want to shower first?” he offers hesitantly, feeling like if he talks too much he’s going to spook him.

Derek stares behind him at the open door leading into the en suite bathroom. “Uh, you go first.”

Stiles is too nervous to say anything else, so he smiles sheepishly and disappears into the bathroom. He strips off quickly and ducks into the shower, disappearing under the spray to wash away sweat and anxiousness.

He doesn’t take very long. Purely because he’s afraid when he comes out that Derek will have changed his mind and fled for the hills. He brushes his teeth quickly too, listening hard for any sounds of Derek moving about or making his escape.

God, Stiles really hopes he’s still there when he comes out.

He realises a problem once he’s finished spitting in the sink and dries himself off. He didn’t bring in a change of clothes. There’s no choice but to walk back out there naked. Which of course, Derek’s seen before but now there’s all this new tension. Stiles wraps the towel around his waist, throws his dirty clothes in the hamper and hurries back out.

And Derek is still there. Stiles almost reels at the sight of him. Somehow he really hadn’t expected him to stick around. He feels exposed all of a sudden when he darts over to the dresser, avoiding eye contact.

“Maybe don’t uh breathe in for a bit,” he says, thinking of how much worse it might be when there’s no clothes diluting his scent at the moment.

And if Derek starts touching him like he did before-

Stiles is gonna get slick before either of them can decide that might be a bad idea.

When he turns Derek is staring blankly at his naked chest like he’s seen something he didn’t expect to see. But he manages to nod and swallow hard before disappearing quickly into the bathroom, holding a pile of clothes in his hands.

Stiles realise that he went through the dresser to get stuff to wear and waits until the door snaps shut before dropping the towel and stepping into a pair of clean boxers. The shower turns on in the other room and Stiles feels awkward all of a sudden, wondering if he should get in bed or wait for Derek by standing in the corner.

On second consideration, he realises how weird he’s being and climbs into the bed already. He curls up on his side and tries to calm down. Their bed is big enough that the both of them can sleep
comfortably without touching if they want, but Stiles doesn’t really know what Derek’s angle is. He has no idea exactly what he wants from this.

He falls into a light doze but jerks awake at the sudden shift of weight on the mattress. Derek’s climbing into the bed. Stiles’ heart is pounding when Derek moves about to get comfortable. He’s within touching distance now but he hasn’t tried to reach out. That’s a pretty big signal.

But if this is about strengthening their combined scents then it’s going to take much longer if they’re not touching at all.

Fuck, Stiles can’t do this. He can’t share a bed with Derek, be this close and not-

“Can I-?” he starts, half hope, half desperation.

“Yes,” Derek says, sounding breathless, not even letting him finish the sentence.

But Stiles is gonna need more than that blanket consent. “Can I cuddle you?”

“Yeah, fuck.”

Derek timidly turns on his side, offering Stiles his back- like he wants Stiles to press up against him. As if he’s going to let Stiles be the big spoon. Which of course they’ve done plenty of times before. But this is College Derek right now and this seems like a huge step between them. Even after all the frantic making out.

There’s no denying they’ve got physical chemistry but trying to forge a new emotional connection when they both have pretty sizeable trust issues is another beast altogether.

Stiles nudges closer and guardedly slots himself up against Derek, pushing his knees up behind Derek’s and slowly slinging an arm around his waist. He’s shirtless so the touch of bare skin is a little startling. A shudder goes through Derek’s body before he relaxes completely, settling into Stiles’ arms.

He pushes his face against the back of Derek’s neck and lets out a happy sigh.

“Thank you,” he murmurs, hearing the way his voice sounds.

Raw and honest.

Derek sighs softly and Stiles drifts off to sleep almost immediately, his body relishing the familiarity of the contact.

It’s the best sleep he’s had in ages.

Derek wakes up to Stiles’ boner pressed against his ass cheeks.

The heat of arousal throws him into alertness, because it feels good having Stiles behind him and it’s even better knowing how well rested he is. Derek doesn’t even realise he’s moving his hips in short little increments until Stiles lets out a soft moan and slides his dick along the line of his ass.

The noise brings a rush of goosebumps on his skin. He really wishes neither of them were wearing
underwear right now.

So they could do what?

Derek can feel the exact moment that Stiles comes fully into awareness and realises what he’s doing.

“Shit, sorry,” he says at once, easing his lower half away and putting distance between them like he’s embarrassed.

Derek’s still hard and presses his lips tightly together so he won’t let out a groan of frustration. If he remembered who he was then they could fuck as much as they like. If he remembered who he was this wouldn’t be so difficult.

If he remembered who he was Stiles wouldn’t be rolling out of bed right now.

He disappears into the bathroom and Derek turns onto his back and glares at the ceiling, reaching down to cup his cock, heat stirring even as the touch leaves him unsatisfied.

It smells like the both of them in here. Derek was blocking most of it out the first time he came into their bedroom but now he can sense all of it. The faint smell of their bodies, Stiles’ slick, come, and the traces of sex in the air. That’s not all he can sense either.

There’s a lot of lingering chemosignals in the room. Familiarity, overflowing happiness, home. This is their place. Their sacred space. And there are so many happy memories here.

Derek throws his arms over his head, soaking them all in.

There’s a pattering noise striking against the window pane and Derek realises that it’s started raining. He gets up just to crack open the window a bit, so that the smell of it fills up the room.

It’s soothing.

Derek likes the rain. It’s a good element. With a purifying edge to it that he can respect. Water and rain can overwhelm fire, extinguishing it. Just like it can cool the burning destruction of rage and anger.

He tips his head back and inhales again, letting the scents mix in the room. He can hear the steady thrum of Stiles’ heartbeat when he turns off the shower head in the bathroom. Derek can hear him moving about in there, getting dressed before he finally emerges.

It’s harder to breathe for a second when Stiles returns, because his mating mark is gone. Derek can smell the makeup he's wearing. He knew that he was going to start doing this, covering up the fading colours but it's another thing to actually see it this way. He doesn't like it, but it's not his decision what Stiles does with it.

But when he crawls back into bed with him without any hesitation, Derek forgets about the mark altogether. He wonders if he can reach out and pull him in close now that it's daytime. If Stiles will let him do that.

“It’s raining,” he says, with a contented sigh.

Derek opens his eyes and turns to see Stiles burrowing himself comfortably under the covers. “How-how d’you sleep?”

He wants to stroke his fingers along Stiles’ arms, trace the shifts of muscle and the protruding veins,
touch his face, kiss his throat. All of it. “Yeah- really good,” he admits, keeping his hands to himself. “You?”

“Perfect,” Stiles declares sleepily.

Then he leans over and kisses Derek unthinkingly on the mouth.

It’s so quick that he doesn’t have a chance to react before Stiles tenses and jerks back. His eyes are wide like he’d forgotten again that Derek doesn’t remember him anymore. His hand makes an abortive movement to touch his chest but pulls back at the last second.

Derek wishes he hadn’t let surprise get the better of him. So they could have kept going. He feels cheated somehow.

“Uh- sorry,” Stiles says uncomfortably.

As if the idea that he can’t control himself when it comes to Derek either doesn’t sit right.

“I’m mated to you,” Derek mutters. “I don’t want you to be sorry.”

“We’re not going to be soon enough. The mark is fading,” he replies, unable to meet Derek’s eyes.

Responsibility stirs uneasily in his chest. He doesn’t want the mark on Stiles’ neck to disappear but he doesn’t know how he can stop it. He might want things from Stiles but it’s nowhere near strong enough to strengthen a mating bond.

It’s mostly about fucking. He’s not in love with Stiles. And he can’t make this better.

“I wish it wasn’t,” he confesses, turning his face away.

For a second there’s the lightest pressure, of Stiles’ hand resting against his forearm before he rolls out of bed and quietly leaves the room.

Derek wonders if it might have been kinder not to have said anything at all.

They’re in the middle of preparing two cups of coffee when Stiles brings it up.

“We should probably scent,” he says, without any of the feeling Derek might have expected behind it.

That’s definitely unexpected. He’d been pretty against the idea a couple of days ago.

“Scent mark? I thought you said I wouldn’t be able to handle it. You said if I got anywhere near your scent glands-”

“I know,” Stiles says. “But what you said last night. You were right. It looks stranger if we don’t have evidence of scenting, of at least sharing space together.”

When he says it like that it all sounds very… rational. Derek didn’t think anyone could make an intimate act of affection between mates, the spreading of scents, sound so calculating but apparently Stiles can.
He was interested before, Derek could smell exactly how interested when they got caught up in the
moment. But now he’s acting the same way he did when he was looking at that map of Beacon Hills
with Lydia, planning the best move strategically without emotion clouding his mind.

Derek doesn’t want to do emotionless.

The sight of Stiles, leaning against the kitchen counter to get comfortable before he tips his throat
back like an offering doesn’t sit right. Even with him jutting his hips out unconsciously as Stiles
always seems to do whenever he’s leaning against something and shifting his weight around.

Derek thinks he doesn’t even know that he’s doing it.

His expression is almost completely blank and Derek doesn’t want it like this, with Stiles acting like
it’s a chore. He’s going to make it so he can’t stop himself from reacting. Derek knows how to make
it good and with their bond’s increasing sensitivity, it wouldn’t take very long to have Stiles relaxing
into it. At least that’s what he hopes.

He inhales only a small hit of his scent, just so he doesn’t drown in it. This time he wants Stiles to be
the one feeling like he’s out of control.

Derek steps forward, slowly, so Stiles knows exactly what he’s doing. He rests his hands against the
edge of the counter, on either side of Stiles’ body, caging him in without actually trapping him there.

He’s close enough to watch Stiles’ Adam’s apple move when he swallows. Derek’s does his best not
to smirk at the sight of it. Not as unaffected as he’s trying to act.

Derek leans in.

They’re as close as possible without touching. Derek can feel the heat from Stiles’ body seeping into
his clothes. Very carefully, Derek presses his face into Stiles’ neck. He shivers at the first touch, but
Stiles immediately goes loose under him like this is all he’s been waiting for.

But Derek doesn’t push forward like he thinks Stiles is expecting. His nose travels slowly across
Stiles’ skin, inhaling in small fragments. In soft, teasing touches. Stiles keeps swallowing as if his
mouth is suddenly dry.

When Derek exhales against his throat, drawing closer to his scent glands, Stiles starts to shake. It’s
intoxicating, being this close and Derek needs to shut off his senses to stop from being affected,
especially when he scratches his beard against Stiles’ skin.

He doesn’t expect his reaction. Air rushes past his teeth in a sharp hiss before he’s able to cover the
choked moan.

Derek hasn’t really had a beard before.

In College he would always shave and only really had stubble when he left it too long between days.
Derek’s hair grows fast, usually his five o’clock shadow makes an appearance before two pm. But
now he’s got facial hair and Stiles is apparently into the feeling of it against his skin.

*Really* into it from the soft noises he’s making.

Derek spreads his scent unhurriedly, listening to the way Stiles’ heart is beating faster by the minute.
When he feels his hand brush against his stomach, getting a hold of the fabric there, Derek grins
exultantly into his neck.
Especially when his other hand hesitantly edges past Derek’s hip before resting on his lower back. Derek huffs out a surprised breath when Stiles pulls him in tighter so that their bodies are flush against one another.

It’s much better this way. Derek can feel exactly how much Stiles’ is affected now once he reaches his scent glands, resting just under the curve of his jaw. He opens his mouth but doesn’t press his tongue out to taste the skin there since that’s not what this is about. They’re scenting each other, for appearances sake.

Even if that’s not all he wishes it was.

Derek doesn’t really know what happens. But soon enough his cheek is pressed against Stiles’ throat, his eyes have slid shut and it feels like he’s in the middle of a scenting high even if he knows that he’s not.

It’s comforting and somehow Stiles’ hands are in his hair too, holding him, keeping them together. Just like it should be.

Derek can’t believe how right it feels.

“Well this is a nice change.”

Stiles drops his hands and Derek turns around to scowl at whoever is standing in the doorway of the kitchen, interrupting them. It’s Laura. And she’s holding a small duffel bag with a smile on her face. Specifically smiling at the expression Derek’s unleashing.

He relaxes once he realises it’s her.

“Laura,” he murmurs, rushing forward and pulling her into a hug.

Stiles is at his side when he pulls away, visibly trying to calm himself. Derek’s stuck on the tantalising flush to his cheeks when he hugs Laura as well, visible relief at the sight of her.

Even his own sister is a bigger asset to Stiles than Derek is. It’s probably a new low, feeling jealous of his own sister, but Stiles has pretty much turned the fucking structure of his universe upside down.

“You caught a taxi in?” Stiles asks once he draws back.

“Cora got me on her lunch break,” Laura says. “Where’s Peter then?”

Derek folds his arms. “Not here.”

“But he’s around,” Stiles mutters as if the idea is distasteful. “Lurking.”

Laura doesn’t exactly jump for joy. “Perfect.”

Her eyes linger on the cups of coffee sitting on the counter behind them. She seems tired. Derek steps back and hands her his cup without her needing to ask which Laura accepts gratefully after dropping her duffel bag by the wall.

“Where are you staying?” he asks. “With Cora?”

“Here,” she says, before taking a sip.

Stiles retreats back into the kitchen to grab his own mug. “We have more than one guest room in the house, dude.”
“I’ve looked through the house,” he grumbles.

Because it’s not like he hasn’t attempted to get familiar with this entirely new life he’s living. Even if it’s batshit backwards and unpredictable as all fuck. He’s trying at least. Finally.

“You’ve hidden from me in the house,” Stiles clarifies. “But let’s be real here you haven’t really looked around.”

“I’ve spent plenty of time in your bedroom,” Derek shoots back, just for the pleasure of seeing Stiles react.

He turns his head, but it’s not hard to see that he’s flustered. Even more so with Laura standing here as a witness to it. Derek’s surprised when Stiles returns to them again, carrying a fresh mug for Derek.

He accepts the offering with a heavy look. Stiles meets his gaze pointedly as if he’s warning him not to push too far.

“Are you trying to be cute with me right now? Is that what’s happening?”

The directness of the question throws him off. “I’m always fucking cute.”

Stiles snorts. “Sick burn there, babe.”

Derek knows his face is hot when he turns back to focus on Laura. One of her eyebrows is raised while she stands there innocently drinking more coffee. He thinks he knows exactly what she’s thinking.

That he and Stiles are playing house, acting all domestic. Which is a far cry from what they were like last week.

Derek knows exactly how it looks. But at least Laura has better tact than Cora. She’ll wait to get him alone first to talk about it. Something else for him to look forward to. Derek really doesn't want to talk about any of this if he can help it.

“C’mon,” Stiles says, changing the subject. “Let’s go out for breakfast. My shout.”

Laura is definitely interested. “I could eat.”

Derek could eat too. But food isn’t the only thing he’s been hungry for lately.

"So how has the new job been?" Stiles asks Laura once they’ve ordered breakfast and the waitress has disappeared back into the kitchen.

Laura’s on her second cup of coffee but she seems pretty relaxed, and very happy. Stiles feels bad for dragging her away from her life, her mate. She’s probably got a million more things to do with her time.

"It's been really good. It's super busy. When I sit down at the end of the day all I want to do is take a nap. What about you two? You seem a lot more- comfortable."
Stiles glances guiltily at Derek who’s got an arm slung across the booth they're sitting in, resting against his shoulders. They might seem more relaxed around each other but that's probably from all of the sleep deprivation. Having a good night sleep for the first time in a while has made them much more agreeable.

Stiles definitely feels less like he's going to stab people at any provocation now so that's good.

"It's just from exposure," he mutters. "I grow on people."

"What like a fucking infection?" Derek retorts, rolling his eyes.

It takes monumental patience not to reach out and pinch the exposed flesh of his arm in revenge. Stiles is a fucking saint. Laura still smiles at them though and guzzles more of her coffee.

The waitress returns ten minutes later balancing all three of their plates. She puts down Laura's egg's Benedict, Derek's big breakfast and Stiles' omelet with a certain degree of skill that means it doesn't end up in any of their laps. Stiles smiles at her in thanks and picks up the cutlery to get started.

He's not even really looking at the food, he's focused on Laura's horrifying description of the man currently staying in the penthouse apartment of her hotel.

Derek snatches at his wrist before Stiles can lift the forkful of food to his mouth. "Don't eat that," he says sharply, interrupting his sister. "It has coriander in it."

Startled, Stiles glances down at his plate and sees that Derek is right. And then realises what he's just done.

"How did you know I'm allergic?" he asks, surprised. "Did you- did you remember that?"

It's a pretty mild allergy but it can cause a lot of discomfort. Red, swollen skin and insane itching. If Stiles had it in huge doses, he would probably go into anaphylactic shock. Derek seems kind of confused by his own actions and Laura and Stiles watch him closely while he figures it out.

"I don't think so," he admits. "I just knew you couldn't eat it."

"Huh," Laura says. " Weird."

Stiles doesn't really want to make a scene and call the waitress back but he quickly realises he doesn't need to when Derek switches their plates around, giving Stiles his food without another word. It's a pretty decent move actually. Stiles is still reeling over the coriander. How did Derek know that? He knew it instinctively, without questioning himself.

Super weird. Is it possible that his memories are coming back?

He knows he still looks increasingly hopeful, so Stiles ducks his head and picks up Derek's cutlery to get started on his food. He doesn't want to make Derek feel bad that he's disappointed he's not remembering things yet. That's not his fault.

He takes a bite and it's really good food. Derek definitely chose the right dish. And Stiles is reaping the benefits.

If he's not complaining, Stiles is happy. And he seems pretty satisfied with the omelet anyway. Stiles is still kind of touched by the gesture though. Derek's actually acting kind of- nice.

College Derek. Nice. Two things that seriously don't go together.
Stiles feels like he's the one who's been hit in the head.

Once they're finished eating, Stiles pays the bill and Derek tries not to get wrapped up in the idea of an omega paying for him. If he said anything about it Stiles would probably only laugh. He knows he's got a few backwards ideas about how things are supposed to be. It doesn't mean he can just push down the automatic response.

He wants to look after Stiles. He wants to take care of him, protect and provide for him. Those urges clearly aren't going anywhere. But clearly Stiles wants to do those things for him too.

It's a strange thought, knowing there's someone standing right next to him who actually wants to treat him right, to look after him. Derek doesn't know what to do with that information. The only person who wanted to look after him was only ever Laura.

And it's not hard to see that she fucking loves Stiles. They get along surprisingly well, considering how antagonistic Cora has been lately, and Derek doesn't know what to do with the friendly teasing between them. Stiles fits here, he realises.

With Derek. And his family. Stiles somehow, of all the fucking people in the goddamn world belongs here. Just like this.

He's quiet when they walk back to where the jeep is parked. Derek's got a lot of thoughts in his head right now and nearly all of them don't make any sense. This is basically impossible. He doesn't know how to be around Stiles, his fucking mate, like this. Derek barely knows how to be around anyone right now.

Stiles drives them back to the house after and doesn't bring out the paperwork today, focusing all of his attention on Laura. And Derek. And just spending time with them both.

The day passes much too quickly.

Liam calls at six am and Stiles hears Derek groan at the blare of music in the quiet of the morning even as he rolls out of bed, snatching up his cell phone with sudden alertness.

“What is it?” he asks, the threat of urgency waking him up quicker than anything else could.

This could be anything. An attack. A dead body. A pack member dead.

“There’s an unfamiliar werewolf in Beacon Hills. Hayden caught their scent on patrol twenty minutes ago.”

Oh shit. “Has she tracked them down?”

“No, we’re following the trail now. They’ve been moving all through town—“

“Combing the place,” Stiles finishes heavily. “For when the Silva pack arrive.”
“Shit.”

Derek’s sitting up in bed next to him now, listening carefully to every word.

"I’ll call the pack. We’ll see who can miss out on work to help you find them. Keep me updated and be careful."

“Sure thing.”

Liam hangs up and Stiles is already out of bed, heading out of the room. He needs coffee for this. And to talk to Scott and Kira. Luckily they don’t start work until eight o’clock. He hurries downstairs and knocks quietly on their door.

“Yeah?” he hears Kira call, sleepily.

Stiles opens the door, catching sight of them both cuddled up together in bed. “Hayden caught the trail of a strange werewolf in town.”

“The Silva pack?” Kira guesses, rising quickly at the news.

They’re turning out to be a lot more trouble than they’re worth. Stiles is really wishing he didn’t even bother trying to contact them in the first place. They could have gone on for some time before every running afoul of them.

If Peter hadn’t gotten involved-

“Yup,” Stiles says. “Can either of you skip work to help with the search?”

Kira frowns. “The Physio is short staffed today. I’ve got a patient scheduled with severe neuromuscular dysfunction.”

Scott thinks about it. “I should be good to duck out. We haven’t got any important surgeries scheduled. Deaton can handle things without me.”

Stiles pulls him into a hug when Scott climbs out of bed and gets within reach. They’re going to need his help, Scott’s gotten pretty talented at tracking over the years.

“Never change, Scotty,” he says.

Scott pats his back helpfully and grins at Kira over his shoulder. When he pulls away Derek is hovering in the doorway. But he doesn’t look like a jealous rage monster so that’s a nice change.

“Coffee,” Stiles decides, squeezing past Derek, unable to resist patting his bare chest as he does.

Laura comes out of the room down the hall, rubbing her eyes after clearly being alerted by the chaos going on in the house. Stiles is sorry they woke her but it's probably better that she be informed of the situation.

“The Silva pack?” she wonders, when Derek trails after Stiles into the kitchen.

So even she knows exactly what kind of clusterfuck to expect. Derek's folding his arms like he's readying for a fight.

“The Silva pack,” he agrees.

Honestly they’re the fucking worst. And Stiles hasn’t even met them yet.
Scott and Laura head out to help Liam and Hayden search for the strange wolf running about town and Stiles manages to scrape together a fair amount of pack members to assist in the search.

He’s just getting dressed, with Derek finishing up in the shower when Kira lets out a wild shriek. Stiles is already bounding down the stairs to her and Scott’s bedroom, while his heart feels like it’s exploding in his chest.

The Silva pack are here. They’ve finally launched their attack.

But there’s only one person stumbling out of Kira and Scott’s room and he’s thrown a haphazard hand over his eyes. “What the fucking- Kira?”

“Jackson?” Stiles say, astonished at the sight of him. “Why the fuck didn’t you call first?”

Jackson turns around solely for the purpose of glaring at him. “Like I need your cult slithering out of the woods to kidnap me again.”

It’s more obvious now that he’s standing here in person that his accent has changed a little from living in the UK for so long. It’s become a strange mixture of American and British now. And his scowly, handsome face is just as infuriating as ever. He does commercials for sports drinks now. He's got his own perfume line.

Jackson is such a douchebag.

Stiles rolls his eyes, even as he hears Derek’s footsteps approaching. “We’re not a cult, dude. And you need to get over that kidnapping thing. You were a freaky lizard at the time.”

Green scales ripple across Jackson’s face like a warning. He’d better not pop that fucking tail. Stiles does not want to see that if he can help it. He’ll probably never sleep again.

“What the fuck is that?” Derek demands, pressing up against Stiles’ back like he’s going to physically drag him to safety. “Are you a fucking lizard?”

Jackson dumps his duffel bag unceremoniously onto the floor. “Ha ha so amusing. Should I bow down to thank you for the bite that turned me into this? Is that how I show my undying respect, needle dick?”

Derek recoils, with his hands still caught in the fabric of Stiles’ shirt. “I bit you?”

Jackson’s harsh expression wavers in confusion before he turns to Stiles for answers. “I- are you fucking with me?”

This is the part that Stiles definitely wasn’t looking forward to. There’s no way that Jackson won’t be delighted to hear about their struggles. Especially if Stiles is the one suffering the most out of the whole ordeal. Jackson’s gonna love it.

“Derek’s got amnesia,” Stiles admits bracingly.

There’s a tense moment when Jackson looks between them both and processes that news. Before he starts laughing, loud and unpleasantly like he’s relishing this exact moment and trying to commit it to
memory.

He is such a dick.

“That’s- perfect,” he crows. “Did Derek finally realise that he mated down?”

If that’s not a kick in the balls then Stiles doesn’t know what is. He glowers at Jackson, wondering if it’s worth it to punch him right in in his smirking face. His knuckles still haven’t properly healed from the last time he hit someone, but Stiles is willing to make that sacrifice.

Well he would have if Derek didn’t already push past him and get a fistful of Jackson’s shirt first, yanking him forward. “Don’t talk to him like that. You might think you’re big time, but I can still kick your ass.”

That’s a little debatable right now but Stiles appreciates the gesture all the same. And it’s not that he wouldn’t love to see someone wail on Jackson or anything, but right now they’ve got more important things to be doing with their time. It’s still pretty gratifying to see Jackson’s eyes widen though.

But they need to focus on tracking down that lone werewolf scoping out the place before they can report back to the Silvas.

“Whoa okay, settle down,” he says, rushing forward to lay a hand on Derek’s back. “Jackson’s only half serious. Probably. Nobody pays attention to him anyway.”

“Oh fuck you, scrotal sack,” Jackson snaps, slapping away Derek’s hand. “I can get a flight back to the UK within two hours. Don’t fucking test me.”

Stiles’ hand is still resting against Derek’s skin but he’s already rolling his eyes. Jackson might pretend he’s not a team player but he totally is. He wouldn’t have shown up if he truly didn’t give a shit about the pack. Wouldn’t have even answered Stiles' phone call.

He just prefers to be prickly most of the time to cover up his own vulnerabilities. He and Derek might actually have a few things in common.

“Quit pretending you’re not going to help us.”

This is just wasting everyone’s time. Jackson is such a drama queen. “I’m not fucking messing around.”

Stiles really doesn’t have time for this. He wants that werewolf from the Silva pack and he’s going to get them.

“What’s with all the noise?” calls Isaac from the kitchen before he’s walking out to see what’s up. Scott must have called him in to watch over Derek and Stiles in case the werewolf decides to come to the house.

Jackson loses some of his steam at the sight of him. And Isaac stops in his tracks.

That’s new.

“Hello,” he says, looking startled.

Stiles isn’t exactly sure what’s going on. But Jackson’s expression is only marginally less hostile than it was before. There isn’t a lot of things that can make that happen. Lydia normally falls into that group. And Allison and Danny.
“Hey,” Jackson says in a strangely different tone than before.

As if he’s suddenly calmed down.

“Where am I supposed to be staying if Kira’s getting naked in there?” he mutters gesturing rudely at Scott and Kira’s bedroom.

“Scott and Kira are living here until their house is finished being built,” Isaac explains.

“Didn’t Lydia tell you that?” Stiles mutters, rounding out the final points of his plan. “We’ve got the room here. But you need to clear out for a couple hours. All of you do.”

“What,” Derek says, flatly, instantly on guard.

Stiles didn’t think he was going to get so overprotective with a foreign rival werewolf in town. Actual Derek, yeah definitely. But College Derek? He didn’t actually expect he would care that much.

He doesn’t know whether to feel pleased or annoyed that he was wrong.

“We need the werewolf,” he explains. “We know they’re out in the woods somewhere. Only way they’ll come in close is if they think the weak human mate is alone and unprotected in the house.”

“It won’t work,” Derek protests. “They won’t risk it, they’ll think it’s a trap.”

“They’ll risk it,” Stiles insists firmly. “Taking out the human mate of the head alpha is too good a move to pass up. It would completely destabilise us and destroy you- if you still had your memories, of course.”

Derek frowns at him. “Because they’ll assume they can easily take out the human leader of our pack?”

He doesn’t even realise what he’s said until Stiles smirks. “You did. And they don’t have human pack members so it’s pretty much guaranteed they’d underestimate us.”

He knows that what he’s saying makes sense but Derek’s expression has been steadily worsening the more he talks. He is not at all pleased with this plan. He doesn’t want Stiles in danger. Apparently both Derek’s can agree on that.

“We’re not doing this,” Derek says. “This is fucked.”

“Makes sense to me,” Jackson shrugs, just to be an asshole. “I’m hungry anyway. Let’s go get food while Stilinski plays bait.”

Isaac watches Stiles for his opinion on the matter but it’s the best way to get them out of the way for a few hours so he shrugs. “Alright. But I’m picking the place.”

Jackson doesn’t even protest, which seems odd considering he’s probably on one of those rigid, controlled diets to keep optimum fitness. There is something else going on here. If Stiles had the brain capacity to worry about this shit, he’d spare some time to figure out what the hell Jackson is doing.

“I’m not letting you stay here,” Derek insists, if anything, seeming more agitated that his other packmates have agreed to it so easily. “Alone and unprotected.”

“It’s not your decision, buddy,” Stiles points out helpfully. “It’s mine.”
Derek’s agitation is acquiring a desperate edge. “You said they’re bloodthirsty.”

“And I’m not?” he retorts. “Dude, I’ve killed people, like to death, okay. I can take care of myself.”

Derek’s expression freezes as he tries to compute this new information.

“Get him out of here,” Stiles mutters. “Or he’s not going to leave and then we’ll never get our hands on that werewolf. They’re too slippery for the pack to catch them out in the forest. Even with all the traps the pack has rigged up. This is our only chance.”

Derek looks like he’s going to keep fighting this but Isaac takes hold of his arm and starts dragging him towards the door.

“Just be logical dude. This is how we get an advantage. If you can’t play along then Jackson can always use his venom on you. I’m sure he’d love to offer his services.”

“Couldn’t agree more, Stilinski,” he says. “Maybe I’ll use it on you as well.”

“Yeah right, fuck off lizard boy. Just go already.”

Derek lets himself be encouraged out of the room. “If you get yourself killed, I’ll-”

“What kill me yourself? Thanks, man. Real helpful.”

Jackson flips Stiles off before heading off to join Isaac and Derek. He carries out his duffel bag as well which is kind of offensive. What on earth does he think Stiles would want to steal from him? What a douchebag.

Stiles waves them all out the door and doesn’t bother locking it. For this to work he’s got to seem as weak and defenceless as possible, but not enough that it makes the werewolf nervous. He can read the environment. If Stiles isn’t genuinely afraid of him, he’s going to know something’s up.

Kira comes out of her and Scott’s room a few minutes later, dressed for work and a little embarrassed that Jackson walked in on her getting changed. She overheard most of the conversation because Derek was practically shouting, so she just squeezes Stiles’ arm and tells him to be careful before she heads out.

And then Stiles is finally left alone. Unprotected. Bait.

He moves into the kitchen to make some toast while he waits. He'll give it an hour, just enough time for the pack to herd them towards the house before he makes his move.

Stiles puts on a load of washing while the bread is in the toaster and he's quick enough that it isn't burnt when he returns to the kitchen. He slathers on the peanut butter and shuffles into the living room to get comfortable on the couch. He munches on the toast and lets his mind wander. Waiting is going to feel like forever.

By the time an hour has passed, the washing machine has finished its cycle and Stiles is nearly out of his mind with boredom. He disappears into the laundry room where the load is waiting for him.

Then he grabs out the washing basket and starts filling it up with damp clothes. If he’s outside hanging them on the washing line, he’s not going to look like much of a threat. Plus he’s got an idea of how to make himself seem more vulnerable. The werewolf is no doubt watching the house. The Silva pack wouldn’t have sent them for anything other than perfect intel.
If they’re within hearing distance, Stiles can start luring the werewolf in.

He’s got his phone out and quickly sends a text to Lydia asking her to call him in twenty minutes. Then he stuffs it into the back pocket of his jeans and takes the basket outside.

The sun is out today at least, and there’s a bit of a wind picking up which will probably work best at spreading his scent around.

Once the werewolf catches it, he’ll know straight away that Stiles is the head alpha’s mate. It’s a good thing Stiles thought to start covering his mating mark on the off chance that the Silva packs sent scouts earlier than agreed.

He’s hanging up a pair of Derek’s comfy sweatpants that really show off all of his assets, when his phone finally rings.

“Hey Lyds,” he says, placing the phone between his ear and shoulder while he picks up the last pair of black boxers in the washing basket and throws them on the line.

“Stiles, we’ve got a problem.”

He purposely lets his imagination run wild. Picturing what it would really be like. If someone in the pack had died. Derek. Or Scott. Kira. Allison. He may know everything’s fine, but letting his paranoia get the better of him is more than easy. He knows his pulse is already racing.

“What happened?” he demands, letting the panic come free. “Who’s hurt?”

“We lost the werewolf from the Silva pack.”

It’s very easy to let the fear become real. There are a lot of ways this could go wrong. The werewolf might not take the bait at all, might use this chance to head out of town with the information they’ve already gathered.

He’s stationed Chris and Malia at the town line leading out of Beacon Hills, Boyd, Liam and Laura at the edge of the Preserve disappearing into the mountains and Hayden and Allison are past the highway leading north towards Greensville and Lake Almanor. Parrish and Scott are blocking the entrance to the Valley.

They’ve cut off every area of escape. This werewolf isn’t going anywhere if they can help it.

“There’s no one else here with me,” he says, glancing uneasily around the woods. “I’m totally alone. I thought you said you had the werewolf!”

He lets the memory of the both of them in the woods when the hunters attacked overwhelm him. The way Derek shouted at Stiles to get back to the house after he’d shoved Stiles behind him.

He remembers the way the gun went off, how it split the air before Derek slumped over face first into the dry leaves. Stiles didn’t even get the chance to step forward before the hunters were shooting at him next. He’d returned fire and managed to hold them off until the rest of the pack arrived.

Derek was unconscious when they’d lifted him up and managed to get him into Stiles’ jeep after Stiles sprinted to the house and drove it back. There was so much blood. His panic isn’t really an act anymore.

“We thought we had them,” Lydia says sounding urgent.
“Where did you last see the werewolf?” he demands, scooping up the empty washing basket and taking a step back towards the house. “Where did you lose them?”

“Edge of the Preserve. Derek’s coming back to you but it’s going to take him ten minutes at least.”

“Why did he leave me alone?” he demands, voice shaking. “I don’t think I can fight off a werewolf.”

It’s not a lie. Stiles doesn’t think he can fight off a werewolf, he knows he can.

“I know, I know. We didn’t think they’d get so close to the house.”

“But we’re right near the Preserve,” Stiles hisses, nearly tripping over his own feet. “The werewolf could be right here! What do I do?”

“Hide,” she says quickly. “Or get into your car and drive the hell out of there. Seriously, Stiles, you’re in danger. Derek might not get here in time if they decide to come after you.”


He stumbles into the house, dropping the basket by the door and hurrying into the hall to grab his keys. He knows his heart is still thundering in his chest and if he’s not leaving chemosignals of panic and fear all over the place then he’s not doing his job right.

Stiles gets his keys and hurries out to the garage, picturing someone is right on his heels to add to the effect. He unlocks the jeep and goes to climb in, cursing loudly when he drops his keys on the floor of the driver’s seat.

He bends down to retrieve them when he hears the scuff of a shoe against the cement floor. Stiles waits, pretending to search while he reaches out underneath the seat to pull the baseball bat free.

He waits until the exact moment he can feel the werewolf pause quietly behind him, then Stiles twists around and swings.

The runes glow when the bat makes contact with the werewolf’s head. He goes down in an eerily similar way that Derek did, knocked out by the blow because Stiles was very careful not to kill him.

They want insurance. Not a body.

The werewolf looks pretty fit and young, still in his late twenties at least. Stiles gets out some wolfsbane soaked rope they keep in the back of the garage for these kind of reasons and starts securing their new prisoner.

Hopefully the Silva pack might be less inclined to kill Ethan and Aiden if their scout doesn’t return to relay information. Stiles could let them know they have their werewolf, but it’s much easier to let them just sweat it out.

That way, their pack is the one holding all the cards.

Stiles texts the pack in the group chat once he’s finished restraining him. Got him, he types out and sends before pocketing his phone again.

“You just couldn’t resist the helpless human omega,” he mutters to the unconscious werewolf when he starts binding his feet, making it so that he can’t go running off anywhere.

When he’s more rope than werewolf, Stiles shuts the jeep door and sits down on one of the many paint cans stowed in the back of the garage to await the packs return. He whistles to himself while
his body starts to calm itself down again after he induced it into such a panic.

He’s twirling the bat between his fingers, watching the unconscious werewolf carefully out of the corner of his eye in case he’s already woken up and is about to try something.

He stirs a few minutes later and struggles for a short while before realising he’s completely covered in wolfsbane doused rope and can’t break free. When the werewolf looks around and locates Stiles in the corner of the room his blue eyes flare angrily.

“Howdy,” he greets, wagging his baseball bat in welcome.

The beta werewolf growls at him.

Stiles grins back lazily.

When the werewolf realises he’s well and truly screwed he turns away and refuses to meet Stiles’ eyes for the rest of the time they’re sitting there. The pack shows up about ten minutes later and Derek comes bursting into the garage, moving so quickly he half tramples the werewolf in order to get to Stiles.

“Whoa, whoa,” he says when he’s swept up into Derek’s arms. “I’m fine. It’s all good, big guy.”

“Where are you hurt?” he demands.

“I’m fine,” he insists, when Derek starts patting him down, searching for invented injuries. “Really, he was too overconfident. It was easy.”

Derek finally glances back at the foreign werewolf who’s determinedly staring at the ceiling ignoring everybody and has to snort. “You’re amazing,” he says finally, looking wholly impressed.

Stiles is feeling pretty smug.

“Not bad, Stilinski,” Jackson whistles, making no effort to pretend kicking the werewolf’s leg is an accident.

Laura comes in after him, peering at the werewolf with interest. “Not bad at all,” she agrees.

Then Isaac appears behind her, followed by Lydia and Corey. The rest of the pack is probably waiting outside as well.

“Put him in the ground?” Isaac suggests.

Stiles nods and Jackson helps Corey drag the werewolf outside. Derek waits until he’s out of hearing range.

“I thought we didn’t kill people?”

Stiles takes his bat and follows the rest of the pack outside, heading into the backyard again. “We don’t. We’ve got an underground dungeon, of sorts, for housing uh- uncooperative guests.”

He gestures at the spot where the pack is taking their new prisoner. There’s a slab of metal sitting just at the fringe of the woods, looking for all intents and purposes like the entrance to a bunker.

Technically it is. That’s where they’ll keep the werewolf until the Silva pack arrives. Once they discover that both packs are housing prisoners, it’s going to be a lot easier to start up a discussion. This gives them a much needed advantage.
“Are we going to tell them we’ve got one of theirs like they’ve got two of ours?” Allison wonders as Hayden gets the metal plate open and Corey and Jackson disappear into the bunker.

“Not yet,” Stiles replies. “I say we let them sweat for a while, keep them thinking they’ve got the upper hand.”

“Good idea,” Mason says. “If we let them feel cocky about the outcome, then they’ll just screw themselves over when they arrive.”

“Exactly.”

Scott and Parrish come around the side of the house a few minutes later, appearing much more relaxed. “You got them?”

Stiles nods. ”We got him.”

“I’ll talk to him, see if I can find anything out.”

They pause when Jackson re-emerges from the bunker. “You’re here?” Scott says, unable to cover his disbelief as he shoots a glance at Stiles.

Parrish doesn’t seem that impressed either. Jackson has made more enemies in Beacon Hills than friends. Nobody really expected him back anytime soon. Small miracles or whatever.

Jackson scowls at them both as if that’s the answer he’s going with. It’s no shocker. Jackson would communicate only in glares and unpleasant expressions if it were humanly possible.

“Play nice, boys,” Lydia says, rolling her eyes.

Corey comes out of the bunker a second later, frowning. “Jackson paralysed the werewolf,” he complains. “We won’t be able to question him until it wears off.”

“Why’d you do that?” Hayden demands when the rest of the pack rounds on him.

But Jackson only shrugs, unrepentant. “He mouthed off.”

“Oh, great,” Mason mutters. “That was super helpful, man.”

Jackson’s claws pop out.

“Jesus, calm the fuck down,” Stiles mutters. “We need someone keeping an eye on him at all times. Who’s on first shift?”

“I’ll do it,” Isaac offers, stepping forward.

Corey moves out of his way so he can climb down into the bunker alone. It’s fairly big actually. The bunker could fit the entire pack if they really wanted to try squeezing in. Not that it would be a great idea to stuff them all into an enclosed space like that though.

“Let’s head back to the house,” Allison suggests, trying to offset some of the tension. “Get reacquainted again. Not kill each other.”

Jackson stomps off inside with a final contemptuous glare in everyone’s direction. Such a team player.

“I support that,” Stiles says, brushing his fingers against Derek’s wrist as he passes him by because
he’s weak and apparently can’t resist.

He doesn’t flinch which is a nice change at least.

Stiles is a-okay with not feeling like some kind of parasite. That’s definitely progress. He goes to follow after Jackson and the rest of the pack but Derek slides in next to him and curls an arm around his waist.

“Got to keep up appearances, right?” he mutters, without even looking at him.

Derek’s got a fair point, but since they’ve caught the wandering rival werewolf and he was clearly alone it doesn’t seem very likely there’s anyone new lurking about.

For now at least. And those two hunter mercenaries are still around somewhere. Who knows how many other people the Silva’s will send before they finally arrive next week?

They’re about to find out.
“I’m not getting up,” Stiles declares when Derek snuggles in closer with a sigh and presses his face right into Stiles’ neck. “Nope. Not happening. If the Silva pack comes right now, they can have Beacon Hills. Whatever.”

“Nice,” he mutters sarcastically into his skin. Because College Derek in the morning is snarky.

“Let’s do twenty questions,” Stiles suggests.

Derek groans and pulls away, but not far enough to extract his arms from around Stiles’ waist. Which is a very good thing. “So you’re not getting up but you’re still gonna talk my ear off? Why am I being punished?”

“Oh har, har,” Stiles mutters, threading his fingers through Derek’s hair in order to smush his face deeper into the pillow. Ah, sweet pillowed revenge.

“Hey,” Derek grumbles, pulling his legs up in order to plant his feet against Stiles’ thigh and nudge him off the bed.

He's not expecting the bed mutiny at all, so Stiles goes toppling off way too easily, hitting the floor with a loud thump. “Ow, hey fuck you.”

Derek laughs, spreading out victoriously to claim the mattress as his own while Stiles clambers back up. “You dick,” he says, catching sight of Derek’s teasing grin as he flops heavily across his chest.

Breath leaves him in a satisfying whoosh. “Fuck you’re heavy, little omega.”

“Taller than you,” Stiles corrects. “And omegas don’t have to be little, skinny, or fragile dude.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he mutters, just as Stiles starts shifting off of him. “Where are you going? Thought you said you weren’t getting up.”

He catches at Stiles’ bare thigh so that instead of getting off of him he ends up slipping between Derek’s open legs, achingly close to his junk. Derek’s easy smile changes, like he’s surprised at the contact and Stiles is abruptly very aware that they’re lying there in only their underwear. And Derek’s underneath him with lips that look very kissable right now.

Uh-oh.

Derek’s gaze lingers on Stiles’ mouth and the air between them feels thick with tension and anticipation. If Stiles pushed his hips up just a little he’d be all but sitting on Derek’s dick and that is great place to be. He knows from experience.

He does his best to stay still, to not throw his leg caught between Derek’s over his thigh so that he’d be straddling him completely but his heart is rabbiting in his chest just from imagining.

And Derek can hear it. “What’s your heartbeat doing right now?” he wonders around a frown. “I haven’t done anything.”

Please, like he needs to do anything to get Stiles in the mood for some frisky fun. He gets hard
watching Derek’s eyelashes flutter sometimes. It's really not going to take much. Derek swallows heavily once they both realise that Stiles’ underwear is damp.

He’s not embarrassed about his slick, but the timing probably isn’t that great. He doesn’t want to set Derek off so that he’s all instinct, wanting something that he might regret after. He doesn’t want him to lose this kind of control.

“You might want to let me go now.”

And Derek does. He gets a hold of Stiles’ thighs and manages to lift him up, scooting over so there’s enough room on the bed to deposit him. The space is good for the moment. Best way to avoid accidentally influencing Derek with the signals his body is shouting.

He tries to ignore the arousal in the air but it’s hard when Derek doesn’t go far, pulling Stiles close to his side, encouraging him to sling a leg across his hip. Stiles is hard and so is Derek but he doesn’t seem to mind having Stiles’ dick pressed against him. And it's right up against him. This is torture.

“So twenty questions,” Stiles manages, just to change the topic and ignore the prominent bulge in Derek’s underwear that shows his interest. “You don’t know me. I don’t know College Derek-quickest way to start learning stuff about each other.”

Derek’s willing to play along. “Are you going to torture that werewolf you caught?”

Stiles hesitates. “Not- physically? We are trying to get in his head because we need all the information he has. Once he starts talking, we can get an angle on him and go from there.”

“And if he doesn’t start talking?”

The answer to that seems pretty self-explanatory. They’re going to have to make him talk, as painlessly as possible. The intensity of that interrogation is really up to the werewolf.

Malia and Boyd are watching him right now.

“It’s my question,” Stiles points out evasively. “When you put your arm around my waist yesterday-was that really for show?”

Derek closes his eyes. “No,” he admits. “I- it’s really hard not to touch you. Harder than I thought it would be.”

It shouldn’t make him so happy to hear College Derek is struggling, but the fact that he’s struggling with the urge to touch Stiles sounds like a blessing.

“Are you- are you on suppressants?” Derek asks unexpectedly. “I know you put a bottle of rut suppressants in my duffel.”

Stiles thought it was the best option. “I’m taking suppressants. Usually we don’t bother with- but I thought that would make things even more complicated. Have you been taking them? I wasn’t trying to force you or anything, I just thought it would be easier.”

“I’ve been taking them,” Derek admits. “I’m used to it. Coach likes us on suppressants on the field otherwise we get too aggressive.”

That makes sense. Alphas get infinitely more antagonistic in the days coming up to their rut. Stiles hadn’t wanted to broach this subject at all, because he hadn’t thought that College Derek would be receptive to idea. And he’s already been hostile enough.
If Stiles didn’t know his cycle like the back of his hand he would have worried from the way he was acting that Derek was going into rut.

“Have you always liked guys?” Derek asks after a pause, then looks self-conscious about the question.

“No,” Stiles admits, happy to play along. “For a while I seriously thought I only liked girls. Heteronormativity at its finest. But I figured out pretty quickly that wasn’t true when I wrote a research paper on the history of male circumcision in high school and spent hours googling pictures of dude’s dicks. And then of course, you came in with all your leather jackets and grumpy expressions and it was like instant boner alert.”

Derek snorts. “History of male circumcision? Hold on, I wear leather jackets? While I drive my Camaro? Am I a fucking werewolf cliché now?”

Stiles laughs because at least College Derek can see it. “Just a little bit. Did you always want to play college football?”

He hesitates to answer the question, enough that Stiles thinks maybe Derek isn’t going to be honest with him. “I’m a born werewolf, being active is in my blood. I played basketball, baseball, football, swimming anything that let me show off my superior strength.”

“And when you weren’t showing off?”

Derek shoots him a look. “It’s my question now.”

“But you didn’t really even answer my one. Stingy, dude.”

“Are you bi? Am I?”

“That’s two questions,” Stiles points out, shivering when Derek’s fingertips trace across his bare thigh. “And that’s not helping the boner situation at all.”

Derek glances down and smirks. “I’m aware.”

He has no idea where all this sudden non-hetero confidence is coming from but Stiles is not at all complaining.

“I’m bisexual,” he explains. “You’re not particularly hung up on labels but you’ve always said pansexual fits the best.”

Derek is still stroking Stiles’ thigh, only now he seems puzzled. “Which one is that?”

“My question,” he repeats, startling when a hand lays flat against his lower back, just above his ass. He’s not expecting the touch so he accidentally moves away, pushing his erection further into Derek’s side. The little shudder he lets out isn’t aversion at all.

It’s taking everything in Stiles not to eyeball Derek’s dick. “Uh- and when you weren’t showing off?”

He glances away. “I- I like to read. Sometimes. I thought maybe- if football fell through I might’ve liked English Lit.”

Stiles has never heard any of this before. He’s seen Derek read books, obviously, but he’s never mentioned how deep the interest went. Usually he doesn’t have the time to sit down and read for fun.
Not with the pack, the precinct and Stiles keeping him so busy.

Not to mention the fact that Derek doesn’t particularly enjoy talking about this chapter of his life. As if he’s got anything to be embarrassed about in his College days. His attitude was shitty, but who wasn’t shitty in College? It’s not like he submitted a paper on the history of male circumcision to his economics teacher. Not Stiles’ finest hour.

“We’ve got a library,” he says. “We collect as much information on the supernatural as we can just to be prepared. You like to help me when there’s a new big bad in town and we don’t know what it is. We do research together sometimes.”

“You mean we’re nerds,” Derek mutters, lifting his hand off Stiles’ thigh and using his arm to hide his face as if it’s deeply unsettling. “We’re gay nerds who watch kid’s movies.”

Stiles grins. “We also play dungeons and dragons sometimes.”

“No!” he groans.

“Okay no. Not since that first time we tried and it ended with an all pack brawl.”

Derek’s quiet for a minute. “Did you always like me? When we first met you said we hated each other.”

“We clashed. A lot. I was only like sixteen and I thought you were basically a big hulking werewolf serial killer with a really rocking bod. Which only made you more terrifying.”

He’s quite for a while. Thoughtful. “I can’t imagine you being afraid of me. You’re so—“

“Badass?”

“Stubborn.”

Stiles laughs since hey, College Derek seems to know what he’s talking about for once. He resumes stroking Stiles’ thigh again and all of his attention narrows down to that distracting sensation.

“Were you really disappointed?” he asks. “When you found out I was your mate?”

Derek doesn’t reply right away and Stiles would assume the worst if his other hand hadn’t made its way down to cup his ass cheek in the meantime. He’s still wet, but they’re not addressing that at the moment.

“It’s nothing against you,” he says eventually. “You’re a guy, there’s no way I wasn’t going to freak out. I was in denial, not disappointed.”

His hand slides a little lower, inquisitive and Stiles reaches back to catch his wrist. “Careful,” he warns, aware of how damp his underwear is.

Derek’s hand withdraws, resting on the edge of his ass again and Stiles can concentrate on the conversation.

“Why—“ Derek starts, but seems to stop himself. The pause is weighted with some real insecurities. “Why am I one of the leaders of this pack? It doesn’t seem like— you know… that you need me all that much.”

Stiles didn’t even think of this. Of course he’s going to feel like his place here is unstable. The Silva pack is coming, they’ve been planning without him and he doesn’t remember how to fight. Stiles
didn’t even give him a job to do.

At the time it had been all about keeping what’s most important to him safe, but now he can see what a gross oversight that was. Derek matters, of course he does, but maybe Stiles hadn’t been so good at showing it. Neither has the rest of the pack. It’s hard though when Derek isn’t acting like himself. He’s become much more unapproachable.

“I’m sorry,” he says, when he can find his voice. “I didn’t mean to make you feel like that. We were trying to protect you. You’re a huge part of leading this pack. Dude, you’re the level headed one, you’re the one with the most experience with the supernatural, you’re the one who stops me from going too far.”

“Too far?”

Stiles wonders if they should get into this. “My moral compass is pointed in a very specific direction,” he explains. “Focused only on the people I care about. You’re more of a save-everyone guy, like Scott. Though maybe you’re a bit more realistic about it.”

Derek is quiet while he considers this. “But I can’t even fight—”

“Maybe not now,” Stiles says. “But who do you think taught me?”

He seems surprised by that as if he hadn’t even thought about it. Stiles wonders how badly he’s been internalising these doubts. He doesn’t show it at all.

“Okay, to be fair my dad showed me a bit of self-defence first. But you’re the one who really taught me how to handle myself. You taught most of the pack too. It might seem like things are running along without you now, but that’s because we’re trying to cover your responsibilities in the group. But we can’t do everything.”

Derek pats at his lower back eventually, to signal for him to ask another question. Stiles has so many he’s got no idea where to start.

“What’s your favourite band?”

“Right now?” Derek asks, leaning into Stiles’ touch when his fingers end up sifting through his hair. “The Middle East.”

“Huh.”

None of Derek’s answers have really been what he’s expected. Neither have his questions. Stiles is kind of enjoying it though, like he’s seeing a different, younger version of Derek before all the fighting and the claws and the blood.

The fire is still with him though. Stiles doesn’t think that will ever really leave him, like a permanent scar. The same one left behind when his mother died.

In some ways though, this Derek seems a little softer, a little more open with certain things. But that’s probably because at this point in his life he was still trying to act normal, like he still fit in with everyone else. It must show on his face somehow.

“What? Don’t I listen to that kind of music anymore?”

“I’m counting that as your question,” he says. “You don’t really listen to music that much. Except maybe when you’re at the gym and it’s usually a lot more uh- energetic then, you know to pump you
Derek understands his meaning but that doesn’t make him any happier about it.

“What bothers you so much about your life now?”

It takes Derek some time to formulate what he’s thinking into words. “I’m so different. How is this meant to be my life when I don’t even fucking recognise myself in it? How did I go from the most popular guy on Campus with a future career on the field to living in this shitty town again with a new pack. Like how did I change so much?”

Stiles sighs. “Laura or Cora might be better equipped to handle this one. I didn’t know you in College. But my best guess would be you stopped pretending.”

Derek’s hands moving on his skin go still. “Stopped pretending what?”

“I don’t know that you’re a big crowds, people person? That you’re not prickly? That you’re some straight charming playboy with perfect reflexes who hasn’t been truly fucked up by trauma?”

He’s tracing patterns on Stiles’ thigh again, but he doesn’t realise straight away that Derek is drawing lines between his moles, idly connecting them. “Did I tell you? About- about Kate?”

Stiles tenses up. “No, you didn’t. I put the pieces together myself.”

Derek stares at him and doesn’t talk for a while. “I didn’t tell anyone. I still hadn’t told anyone. It’s weird to think I did eventually, but I don’t remember it. I kept this secret to myself. For years. Years, Stiles. You’re telling me you just figured it out?”

“I like puzzles,” Stiles says, defensive. “I like research. I get hyperfocused on something and then I have to figure it out. That’s how my brain works. There were parts of that story that didn’t fit, parts of you that didn’t fit- it caught my attention.”

Derek’s back to touching him again.

“Do I do anything anymore?” he asks. “I don’t play football. I don’t read. I don’t listen to music. I don’t party. You guys make me seem so serious. Don’t I even know how to have fun?”

That’s a lot of words at once. Even for Stiles.

“Which one is your question?”

“Am I happy?”

Jesus, like that’s not going to cut Stiles in two. “You’re a hard read, but yeah, I’d say you’re happy. Really happy. You’re sad that Laura’s in New York. You miss her most days. And you’re annoyed Peter’s the one keeping her away. You miss your family too, sometimes. But you love the pack. You want to protect them and keep them safe. You- you love me.”

Derek’s eyes shift towards the mating mark on Stiles’ neck which he hasn’t covered up with makeup yet this morning. “I already knew that. I wouldn’t have marked someone I didn’t love.”

He doesn’t know what to say to that. It’s a far cry from how he’d first reacted, seeing the bond bite on Stiles’ neck. Did he always know that he’d only mark someone he was in love with? Was all the posturing before that really just denial?

“What’s your favourite movie?” Stiles wonders. “You keep dissing our choices, even though I know
for a fact that you love Emperor’s New Groove, don’t front.”

He doesn’t try to deny it. “The last Airbender movie. It only came out this year.”

“No,” Stiles, gasps, reeling away from him, horrified.

Derek starts to laugh and draws him back in, encouraging Stiles’ thigh further across his body until he’s all but locked up against him. “Relax. That was fucking terrible. Me and a couple buddies got drunk after to try and bleach it from our minds.”

Hell, that’s a relief. For a second there, Stiles thought he’d never be able to respect Derek’s taste in films ever again.

“Understandable.”

His fingers are idly playing with the waistband of Stiles’ underwear now and it’s hard to focus on anything else. The hint of anticipation is killing him. Derek doesn’t seem like he intends to do more than that but Stiles is hard all the same, ready for anything. It's very easy to remember what it's like. Having Derek's fingers. His tongue. His cock. And he still wants that, even now.

At least it’s not urgent. Not yet. Derek doesn’t seem too bothered by his own predicament either.

“They didn’t try and make more did they?”

“No. Thank fuck. What was your real favourite movie?”

Derek mulls it over. “I don’t know. The Mummy is a fucking classic. Memento was a real trip. Rock n Rolla. Legend of Zorro. 10 Things I Hate About You. Ferris Beuller’s Day Off. Inception blew my mind.”

That's a surprising amount of films. Derek never really admitted he was much of a movie buff. But that's more to do with his personality. He's got a real habit it of keeping things close to the chest. Stiles doesn't mind. That just gives him more things to discover.

“I can’t believe I didn’t know you liked so many of these movies. Okay, let me guess, your favourite character in Ferris Beuller was Cameron?”

Derek frowns. “Why would you think that?”

“He’s a grump, you’re a grump. I thought he’d speak to your soul or whatever.”

“I’m not grumpy,” Derek says grumpily. “I’m pissed off.”

Stiles grins at the distinction. “Your turn.”

“When did you know exactly. That you liked me?”

There are so many moments. Stiles isn’t sure exactly where to start. When Derek stepped in front of an out of control Isaac and protected him. Or when they were at the high school pool where Jackson the kanima turned up and Derek pushed him away and told him to run. Even when they were sort of enemies at the time. Or when his dad had been kidnapped and Derek believed him, he’d wanted to help.

There are so many instances where he felt that flash of something. The hint of warmth, unexpected emotions stirring and the promise of more. Stiles isn’t sure he can remember every single one of them.
“I don’t know,” he admits. “It was always just there. Maybe not when I was certain you were a serial killer though. I mean, not that I wasn’t still getting fear boners or anything.”

Derek stares at him. Yeah, that probably sounded weird.

“Who’s your favourite Ninja Turtle?” He asks, quickly changing the subject.

“Really, Stiles?”

What? He stands by the question. It's an important reflection of College Derek's character.

“Raph. Who’s yours?”

“I can’t choose,” he protests. “They’re the Ninja Turtles, man.”

“I want to kiss you,” Derek says abruptly, without any prompting.

Well. Stiles was not expecting that. “That’s not a question.”

“Can I kiss you?” Derek remedies and he really does not have the right answer to that.

The smart answer.

“Holy God, yes, okay. That is a hard yes.”

Derek rolls over, into his space and does it.

It’s good. Derek’s mouth is hot even if his lips are a bit chapped. It’s soft too, mouths barely brushing together as if Derek’s trying to familiarise himself again. The kisses are slow, chaste and lingering and when Derek draws back to breathe, Stiles can feel his own lips tingling. They probably should have brushed their teeth first.

But Stiles really doesn’t care.

It’s amazing. He can’t get enough of it. Which is awesome, because Derek leans in and kisses him again. Stiles’ mouth parts under the pressure and he groans at the first slide of tongue. The sound must be encouraging because Derek braces his hand next to Stiles' head and presses in closer.

He doesn’t know if Derek will like him throwing his arms around his neck so Stiles leaves them by his side, fingers flexing as he grips the sheets. Derek tilts his chin up and crowds in closer like he’s trying to climb into Stiles’ skin.

Apparently they're both super into that though, because neither of them stop even as Stiles' body fizzes with giddy energy. Derek briefly pulls away, pupils blown and wide eyed. Just to stare at him while breathing heavily. Stiles knows he must look flushed and out of it, like he usually does after kissing Derek but the sight of it must do something for him.

Because Derek says, “Oh God,” and moves in to kiss him again.

Soft and slow soon gets forgotten in the newfound urgency of their bodies. Things move much faster from there. Stiles ends up on top of Derek, hands braced beside his shoulders on the mattress as he leans down to reclaim his mouth.

Derek’s hands are on his sides, gripping him encouragingly as Stiles’ hips jerk forward. He ends up yanking at his hair too firmly from the sensation and Derek hisses against his mouth, pushing his crotch up against Stiles’ almost reflexively. The both of them are probably holding on too tight, but
he doesn’t care.

He’ll take the bruises that are bound to show up around his waist any day. Stiles won’t be the first to let go. So Derek urges him backwards, until their dicks are completely lined up, a perfect position for rutting up against him. Then he starts moving.

Stiles sobs at the rush of pleasure, kissing Derek sweetly and hating himself for what he’s about to do.

“We’re not having sex,” he pants out, pulling his mouth away and sounding sharper than he meant to.

Derek stops moving immediately and looks confused.

“Huh?”

God, he’s so hard and the friction between them is beyond anything he could ask for. He doesn’t really want to stop.

“This is complicated enough and I don’t want a repeat of what happened on the full moon run,” he says, swallowing unevenly. “I can’t deal with you looking at me like that again. Like I disgust you.”

Derek traces his fingers across the mating bite on Stiles’ neck. “It’s not like I can deny I don’t want you,” he says, pushing the very noticeable bulge up against Stiles’ crotch.

It’s a very big point. Stiles knows from experience.

“Could have fooled me,” he mutters.

Derek is staring at his lips again. “So you don’t want to do this?”

Jesus like Stiles would ever really want to say no to that. But they shouldn’t. This is hard enough without adding that to the mix. “We shouldn’t have sex.”

“Who said anything about sex?” Derek mutters. “We’re still wearing underwear, aren’t we?”

That’s-

Well technically that’s fine. Right? They can get away with that. It shouldn’t complicate things too much. “Oh God, yes, shut up, okay,” Stiles groans, rolling his hips again. “I’m- I’m gonna kiss you now.”

“Yes,” Derek breathes, leaning up to meet him.

They kiss frantically, Stiles rolling his body along Derek’s dick, trying to ignore how wet his underwear is. Derek moves so enthusiastically that he nearly throws Stiles off completely. He’s kind of surprised by his own strength for a second, like he’d forgotten he’s rolling around with a human and Stiles can’t help but laugh at his expression.

“Shut up,” Derek mutters, though his mouth is twitching like he’s trying not to smile.

It’s a good look on him.

“Hey it’s impressive. That’s some real passion there, almost tossing me off the bed for a second time. So romantic.”
Derek just smirks. “All part of the plan. It's my ultimate seduction technique.”

“I’m swooning,” he says, undulating his hips with another laugh again that Derek joins in on.

They’re still laughing when he leans down again. He moves on to kissing Derek’s stubble next, laying kisses onto his neck. Just kissing isn’t easy though, Stiles has to resist sinking his teeth into the soft skin there. Biting is definitely not a good idea. Stiles doesn't want to set off his alpha instincts. So he traces it with his tongue instead.

Derek’s laughter dies off in favour of shuddering against him. “Wait- ah- God, hold on- Jesus, fuck.”

“What? What?” he gasps, pulling back. “Are you gonna-?”

Oh fuck, he is. That’s so hot.

“Shut up,” Derek groans. “I haven’t done this with- we’re still mated. Everything’s more heightened and sensitive with you.”

Whoa. Actual Derek’s never mentioned that before. But Stiles is thrilled by the new information. Does the connection actually make their sex better? He never thought to ask that question after they exchanged mating bites. Stiles has no complaints on that front but now he’s interested to know what Actual Derek might have to say about it.

But he’s being kissed again and any of those questions get filtered into background noise. It’s so fucking fantastic that Stiles is just about ready to sell his kidney in order make it a permanent thing.

Derek drops back onto the pillows again and Stiles can’t help but stare down into his face. Jesus, his eyes are so fucking beautiful. Like a goddamn kaleidoscope of colours. Who even has eyes like that? Derek is impossible in a lot of ways.

“Stiles,” he groans, sounding desperate and looking so perfect like this.

“Oh God, are you gonna come?” he gasps, rolling his hips harder, grinding against Derek nice and slow. “Yeah, you should totally do that. That’s awesome.”

“F-fuck,” he curses, gripping Stiles’ side and trying to get him to move faster.

But he doesn’t ever want this to end. God, this is so stupid. So much for that no-sex rule. He gave up on that way too easy. Jesus, Derek smells good.

“Stiles,” he repeats, and suddenly his hands are shifting to Stiles’ ass instead, controlling the rhythm of his hips, speeding the movement up.

And that's- a really fucking good idea. Stiles sighs into his mouth when Derek starts to come. He can feel his body tightening as he orgasms and Stiles so close now with the smell of slick and come in the air. He can feel the outline of Derek’s dick pressed against him, the way his stomach muscles shift and tighten convulsively and his pleasure crests.

Derek’s hands grip his ass, sliding in the damp underwear and his fingers graze against his entrance when he tries to reassure him to keep moving. Stiles is already sensitive from producing slick and comes from that brief touch alone, collapsing against Derek’s chest with a satisfied moan. He can't talk for a while. Or move.

When Stiles manages to lift his head, Derek kisses him as if trying to prove he’s not freaking out now that they're bodies are cooling and the desperation is gone. For someone who first laughed at the idea
of mating a guy, he’s handling sharing an orgasm with one pretty well. So far at least.

“That was fucking amazing,” he says and Stiles grins into his chest, unbelievably pleased.

“We are really good at that,” he feels the need to point out once he’s got his breath back.

Derek sniggers a little as his hand slides comfortably down Stiles’ back. “Obviously.”

“I should shower,” he says eventually, despite how content he’d be to lay on Derek’s chest forever.

“And brush my teeth.”

“One more question,” Derek prompts.

He wants Stiles to think right now? When he got to rub himself all over Derek until he came for the first time in forever?

“Hmm?”

“Do- do you regret that?”

Stiles sits up and scoots himself down Derek’s body until he’s eye level with the mating mark on his hip. He leans down and kisses it, feeling Derek twitch responsively under his mouth.

Then he pulls away.

“No,” he promises, climbing to his feet and stumbling into the bathroom to get cleaned up.

And he’s not lying.

He can hear the shower running and Stiles is in there right now, naked, cleaning himself off. Cleaning the come off. Because Derek gave him an orgasm.

If he’s being honest maybe he was expecting to have a little bit of a crisis about that. He’d planned to hide it though when it happened. Especially since that’s how Stiles expected he would react, why he thinks they shouldn’t go further than they already did.

But Derek feels really good. Really fucking good. Definitely in his top five orgasms and they came in their underwear like a pair of losers. That’s the kind of desperate fumbling that teenagers usually get up to. Derek can’t stop grinning about it. Maybe it’s the fact that they’re mates. It’s a mates thing making the sensations more intense, the orgasms more pleasurable, more lasting.

But more accurately, he suspects it’s a Stiles thing.

He should not be able to make Derek this hard without even fucking trying. But that’s exactly what keeps happening. Ever since they’ve been sharing a bed, the frequency of his dick being involved and ready for anything has increased exponentially. Maybe it’s like a leftover Pavlovian effect, being in this bed where they’re naked all the time and fuck whenever they want.

Or when they rut against each other in their underwear until they come.

God if it’s so fucking good like that, what would it be like if they actually-
He hasn’t really thought about fucking Stiles a lot since he lost his memories. Mostly because he’s been so hung up on the idea of Stiles screwing him and whether he should be horrified. But now it’s definitely on his mind.

It would be different with a guy wouldn’t it? Definitely not the same as having sex with a girl. And infinitely more different with an omega.

Derek’s never fucked an omega. Well, except for Stiles, but it’s not like his brain is willing to provide the memories of those times. He’s hooked up with betas mostly, though he did have a memorable night with another alpha at one of their frat parties. If he didn’t heal so rapidly, she’d have left his back covered in scratches.

He realises suddenly that there’s something staggeringly different about this. About what just happened between them. And it doesn’t have anything to do with the fact that Stiles is a guy. Or an omega.

Derek hasn’t really had sex that isn’t somehow violent. Kate had been- well, but after her he’s kind of ended up following the same pattern. Girls who are no good for him, who are nasty, who don’t think he wants anything remotely soft. Who look at him like he's a hard fuck. The ones who think because he’s an alpha werewolf that he should be screwing them against a wall. And that’s what he's been doing.

He's never done this before.

Not like what they just did. And this somehow ended up being more intense. Derek’s not sure he’s ever laughed during sex before. Or leisurely rubbed up against someone until they’ve both come. He’s never really been in serious relationships. He could probably attribute it to that, to the hooking up culture, but somehow he thinks it’s more because he’s never slept with the right people.

He’s had good sex. Sure, but he’s never really felt this great after. Maybe it’s the mating instincts playing with his head? But when Stiles wanders out of the bathroom a little while later wrapped up in a towel, looking satiated and relaxed when he offers the now empty shower, Derek thinks it hasn’t got anything to do with that at all.

Stiles is just special.

Derek comes downstairs while Stiles is busy with Scott trying to make coffee for everybody in the dining room.

Kira's already taken her travel mug full of brew and darted out the door with a happy wave. Stiles is even making coffee for Jackson, though he’s sorely tempted to spit in it when he obnoxiously inserts himself into the kitchen, inspects their coffee beans and demands a better-quality roast than what they’ve got.

Until Scott managed to banish him back into the dining room again. That's a skill Stiles sorely needs to learn.

Scott is still facing the open doorway when he starts frantically patting at Stiles’ arm.

“What? What, dude?” he grumbles, trying to pour even amounts into way too many mugs.
“Derek-“ he says urgently. “Shit, Stiles, look what he’s wearing-“

Stiles’ head jerks up just in time to catch sight of Derek stomping down the stairs and into the dining room and his jaw drops.

He’s wearing a snapback, Stiles’ snapback in fact, and a tank top that shows off his arms. He’s in a pair of shorts that Stiles has literally never seen before, and it hugs his ass and thighs so well that he lets out a helpless whimper. What the shit.

“Oh my god, oh my god,” he groans, putting down the coffee pot hard enough that it makes a sharp sound on the counter top.

He looks like such a dudebro that Stiles can’t handle it. How is he still hot like this? Stiles can't compute at all right now.

Scott’s nose is wrinkling. “Dude, come on.”

“Did you see that?” Stiles hisses. “Derek’s wearing a snapback, Scott. I’ve never seen him put on a fucking hat in my life. Oh my god. And shorts. Shorts, Scott. Did you see his thighs?”

Derek pretty much only wears jeans or sweatpants. And his deputy uniform. Stiles has literally never seen so much bare calf unless Derek is naked. Or swimming in the fucking ocean. This is a morning miracle. That's the only explanation.

“Get your dick under control Stilinski,” Jackson shouts from the dining room.

Stiles is flushed and not shameful enough to deny he’s got a boner right now. Derek's got a cap on backwards. He showing off so much more skin than anyone is prepared for. And Stiles needs to fuck him into the mattress. Like pronto.

“Get your dick under control,” he retorts automatically, unable to get rid of that image of Derek from his mind. It's been branded into his brain.

It's a good thing Derek's not in the kitchen right now. Stiles tries to get it together and glances at Scott who seems kind of surprised by the unexpected arousal he’s broadcasting.

“What?” he says defensively. “He looks fucking hot, Scott. Come on, this isn’t fair. What am I supposed to do?”

He can hear Isaac’s laughter and a heavy thump from the dining room.

“My sister is in here,” Derek calls out, sounding embarrassed but Stiles really has no regrets. Even with all the werewolf ears present.

He hasn’t seen Derek dressed like this before. It’s going to take some time to adjust to the new mental image. Jesus.

“I’m fine,” Laura pipes up, boldly. “Not like we didn’t already know you’re thirsty for my baby bro.”

“Laura!” Derek protests.

Stiles snorts and turns his back on the open doorway where he knows Derek is just beyond looking all delicious and unfair. Focus, he tells himself, firmly filing the image away for later. Is this how Derek used to dress when he was in College? Showing off all his… assets?
His phone buzzes a second later and it’s a text from Laura.

**Derek’s face when you said he was hot,** it says and underneath is a photo of Derek looking flushed but also insanely pleased with himself.

Stiles smiles.

Derek rounds the corner a second later. “Delete that,” he says immediately.

He’s still wearing that damn snapback and holy God, he *really* looks incredible. Stiles is open mouthed at the sight of him, even when he manages to hold his cell phone out of Derek’s reach. “Nope,” he says. “I’m keeping this.”

Derek isn’t really that upset though because he brushes past Stiles, hands everywhere and nowhere at once when he aims for the nearest mug of coffee. Stiles wishes they were back in bed again. Except with Derek still in that hat. If only the Silva pack didn't exist.

“Stiles,” Scott protests. “I know he looks great and all but can you at least try to get a hold of yourself?”

Derek seems surprised. “Are you bi too?” he demands curtly.

Stiles grins at Scott’s startled expression. “Uh- yeah? I don’t see how-”

“More than half the pack is very much Not Straight,” he explains, passing Derek the right mug full of coffee. Made just the way he likes it.

He's actually not that surprised about it. Derek's reacting less and less to the lack of heterosexuality in his life now. Stiles can't believe the progress. He wonders if Derek would let him blow him now if he asked, but realises he's probably getting too hopeful. That's too much, too fast. Baby steps.

“These aren’t my clothes, are they?” Derek guesses, accepting the mug and catching Stiles' fingers almost unthinkingly.

“The hat's mine,” he reveals, squeezing Derek's hand teasingly. “Tank top is yours. No idea where you found the shorts. I’ve never seen you in them in my life.”

Derek glances down at himself. “Never?”

“No that I have a problem with it now.”

“Yeah, we all know how much you’re loving it, Stilinski,” Jackson drawls. "So how 'bout you shut up and bring me my coffee already.”

Trust Jackson to ruin a moment. “I’ll spit in it,” he threatens, and Derek half chokes on the sip he was taking, amused.

Then he’s concerned, inspecting the contents of his mug suspiciously. “You didn’t-“

“No,” he promises though that seems funny somehow since they were happily swapping spit a little while ago.

Jackson comes in next, fed up with waiting as he shoves past them all. He pours two mugs full of coffee and glares at Stiles’ raised eyebrow.

“What?” he demands.
Stiles thinks he’s got a pretty good idea who that second cup is for. Guess he’ll be carrying the third one for Laura. Jackson’s got Isaac taken care of. Whether Isaac is going to let him into his bed though is another story. Stiles would definitely hesitate to let the lizard man climb under his sheets. That’s just common sense.

He’s almost willing to forgive the attitude until Jackson’s face scrunches up. “Ugh. You guys had sex.”

Scott’s head snaps towards Stiles so quickly it’s a shock his neck doesn’t crack. “What?” he demands, before subtly inhaling. “Oh my god, you did.”

Derek is red as a tomato at this stage. It's ridiculously endearing. But he doesn't flee the room in shame and horror so that's a good sign.

“No, we didn’t,” Stiles insists. Because technically there was a barrier of clothes separating them. That sort of counts as not sex right?

Oh whatever, they had sex.

Jackson snorts. “Right you guys just happen to smell like each other’s come. What a coincidence.”

Derek seems to recover himself. “Sounding a little bitter there, Jackson. Like we all don’t know you smell like your own hand, when you’d rather be smelling like that curly haired kid out there.”

“Isaac,” Isaac clarifies helpfully from the dining room.

“No, you won’t” then Jackson’s heartbeat went uneven. “Shut up, fuckface,” Jackson snaps, though the usual heat is gone. He's too flustered to sound angry or threatening. Isaac has apparently uncovered a new superpower that Stiles is very impressed with. The ability to silence Jackson is a true gift.

Derek’s hand is on Stiles’ hip now and he has no complaints whatsoever. “Did I hit him a lot?” he wonders. “I think I would have liked that.”

“Anyone would,” Stiles agrees solemnly, touching him right back.

Jackson and Isaac take over werewolf watching duty for Malia and Boyd and the house gets much
quieter once Jackson disappears into the bunker. Laura heads into the kitchen in search of food and makes a disappointed sound that catches Stiles’ attention.

He looks into the cupboard over her shoulder and realises it’s been a while since they went to the store. If they leave it any longer with a house full of hungry werewolves the cupboards are going to end up woefully bare.

“So what’s the plan for today?” Laura wonders. “Anything we need to do before the Silva pack arrives? Because food is a good plan.”

“Nah, I think we’re okay, the pack will call me if anything’s wrong or if they get something out of the werewolf. We’ll go get groceries.”

“You want to go shopping?” Derek demands as if he didn’t realise life would continue as normal even with the threat of an upcoming werewolf invasion.

Stiles isn't sure that he wants Derek going into town without any of his memories to help him not die. “You can stick around here if you want. Going into town might be a little overwhelming.”

Derek seems kind of amused. “You think grocery shopping is gonna be overwhelming?”

It's not just that. But Stiles doesn’t know the best way to explain it. He’s pretty sure Derek’s just going to laugh and not take it seriously. Actual Derek doesn't know how to take it most of the time.

“You’re kind of popular,” he parses out. “People are going to want to talk to you. You’ll have to socialise.”

“I’m popular?” he repeats blankly. “With who? Which people?”

Oh boy. He glances over at Laura who’s already grinning. There’s a strong part of her that absolutely loves this. Stiles can’t deny it’s awesome. Derek's had enough of feeling like a pariah to last a lifetime.

“You’ve kind of hit it off with a lot of uh- elderly women.”

Derek stares at him. “Old ladies? I’m popular with fucking old ladies?”

Jackson’s laughter can be heard from the outside. They mustn’t be in the bunker yet. Stiles really wishes he’d spat in his coffee earlier.

“You’re an amazing deputy who takes his job seriously. Plus, I don’t think you realise how good you look in that uniform. You are definitely popular around town.”

Stiles might be a little biased though. Sue him. Derek's practically having conniptions at this stage. “You’re making me sound like a stripper.”

Jackson’s laughter gets louder and even Laura needs to hide a smile behind her hand. “You’re an irritable cop who still takes the time to help little old ladies cross the street,” she says. "Of course they love you.”

Derek’s face is turning kind of red. “Not just old ladies though,” Stiles continues. “You’re kind of a big hit with everybody after you saved that little kid from a burning car last year.”

Something in his body language changes at the mention of fire and Stiles can still remember how the burns covered his forearms, fingers and back when he came home that night. It took three days to
heal. The little girl, who was human, took a lot longer for her burns to get better, but Derek lessened the damage by covering her in his deputy jacket as he pulled her free of the car. She only ended up with superficial burns on her hands and legs.

Derek saved her.

And her mother kept showing up at their house to bring him food for at least a month afterward. Her wife kept trying to apologise to Stiles for constantly bothering them, but it was free food, and the pack was more than happy to eat every last bite.

Plus there was the added bonus of Derek getting all embarrassed by her gratefulness every single time she showed up. His ears started turning red whenever her car pulled into their driveway. Stiles kind of loved it. He was less impressed with the way Derek took the brunt of the fire damage, as well as the little girl’s pain after.

Stiles was rubbing cream onto his burns for days. He’d worried they were almost bad enough to permanently scar before Derek’s healing finally kicked in. So to say he’s a popular deputy in Beacon Hills would be an understatement.

“Oh and remember when he helped that omega in heat fight off those three guys trying to mount him? Got him to that heat centre, unharmed.”

“Laura, knock it off,” Derek mutters at the praise, as if he somehow doesn’t deserve it.

But Stiles remembers that day. How angry Derek had been that those guys thought because the omega was in heat that he was willing enough for any of them. At least the law was on the omega’s side. The three men were sent off to a training centre, in the hopes that professionals might be able to teach them control. It was either that or prison.

“Sheriff was so impressed he put you as first on scene for heat incidents after that since you could keep your head about it. You complained that the smells you brought home were making Stiles antsy. Only you weren’t really complaining.”

Stiles’ face heats up. He remembers that too. Smelling the heat or rut of other people on Derek sometimes when he came home from the station. It drove him a little wild, made him a little irrational with the need to show Derek that they were together. Even if Stiles knew that he’d never do anything to jeopardise their bond.

His instincts still rioted at the thought of losing him. They’d had a lot of sex. A couple of times the smells on Derek had even triggered Stiles’ heat early, as if his body was trying to stake a claim on his mate. It had been a little humiliating, to lose control of himself like that but Derek had taken it in stride. Stiles always thought that he was secretly pleased about it, because Stiles had never had this problem with possessiveness before they were mated.

Sometimes instincts are just shitty. It took some time before Stiles was able to manage it completely without jumping Derek’s bones every time he smelled like sex and someone else.

“Your control is amazing,” Stiles agrees, though at the expression on Derek’s face he can see he’s remembering what happened during that first scenting incident between them. “Uh usually. And I’m typically more level headed than that. But alls I’m saying is if you’re not up for all the attention, it’s probably best to skip coming into town. Lots of people are going to want to talk to you. Ask if you’re okay, that kind of thing.”

Derek is frowning now. “So I’m just gonna be swarmed?”
“Pretty much,” Laura says, shrugging.

He takes a second to consider the pros and cons of that. “Whatever. I still want out of this house. I’m in.”

“That means you can’t be rude to them,” Stiles warns. “No swearing at little old ladies.”

“Are you fucking serious?”

“Yeah exactly like that,” Laura agrees, grinning. “Come on, it’ll be fun. You’re practically a celebrity around here these days, Deputy Hale.”

Derek’s kind of frowning but also looking pleased at the same time. He likes knowing this. That people in town like and respect him. Stiles is glad to see it.

He grabs the keys to the jeep and his wallet and they’re barely heading out the door when his phone rings.

“Hold on, shit,” he says, glancing at the caller ID. “It’s my boss.”

Stiles steps outside, shutting the door behind him. Derek watches him pacing across the front porch through the window and doesn’t like that a crease is steadily forming on his forehead.

“Do you think something’s up?” he asks Laura, who’s watching the same thing.

She’s eyeing Stiles as he talks but when he stops moving entirely, listening intently to the person on the other end of the line, she reaches a decision. “Yeah, something’s up.”

“He works in DC right?” Derek says, hating the feeling he gets at the thought of Stiles leaving right now. “They’re not calling him back are they?”

Laura shakes her head. “No, they can’t. He’s taken mate injury leave. Legally they can’t call him in.”

Derek wonders how it’s like living like this. How long is Stiles away for when he’s working in DC? Do they still see each other a lot and keep in contact? Does Derek miss him when he’s away? What do they do if Derek goes into rut, or Stiles is in heat and they’re in different states altogether? How does this work?

“Is he gone a lot?” he wonders. “How often do I see him if he works in DC?”

He must fail at the casual tone because Laura reaches out to rub soothingly between his shoulder blades like she used to when he was a kid. “He’s gone about five days every two weeks or so. They let him work from home a lot, but he needs to check in every now and again, pick up new case files and all that other bureaucracy crap. He loves his job, Derek, but he loves coming home to you even more.”

He doesn’t know what to say to that. Except that he feels really good about it. Stiles coming home to him. Derek still can’t believe what they did this morning. In bed. How incredible it was. Or that the pack could smell it on them. Derek can still smell it now. The faint traces of Stiles’ come.

The pack made fun of them for it, but they didn’t care. Not really.
Derek can tell the difference.

Stiles is back to pacing again and he can read the anxious lines on every inch of his body. Derek opens the front door and steps outside almost automatically to reach him. Stiles turns at the sound of his footsteps and there’s no words for how good it makes him feel that he instantly moves towards him, thoughtless and easy.

“Oh huh,” he says, reaching out to touch Derek’s snapback, before his fingers are trailing down the side of his face, tracing his jawline, catching the strands of hair that curl past his ear.

Derek swallows and Stiles’ heartbeat slows down, his body relaxing around him as if he’s being comforted just by this. From Derek standing here. He’s never been this for someone. Able to make them feel better just by being present. It’s powerful.

“I’ll do my best,” Stiles says, fingers playing with the material of Derek’s tank top now. “I’ll have it done by tonight and I’ll send the paperwork through.”

He touches more freely now. Maybe because he knows Derek’s not going to reject him like before. How much has Stiles been holding back? He hangs up the phone before Derek can finish the thought but he still seems agitated somehow.

“What’s going on?”

Stiles scowls. “One of my case files just got updated to high priority. They think the suspect might have resurfaced and it’s likely he’s already in the process of selecting and stalking his newest victim. I need to look at the file and try to find some new evidence by tonight before the guys in DC take over.”

Derek can see where this is going. “You can’t come into town.”

He can almost taste the frustration coming off Stiles in waves. “No, I can’t, sorry,” he says. “You should take someone else with you if you still want to go. Laura might not know everyone that tries to talk to you.”

Derek glances back into the house where Laura is standing with Boyd and Malia. He’s not denying the idea of leaving Stiles gives him a bad feeling. Especially with the threat of upcoming danger looming over their heads. And some of this new closeness they’re sharing.

But he does want to get out of this damn house. Stiles needs to do his work. They have to compromise somehow.

“I’ll ask Boyd,” he says. “We won’t be gone long. I’ll be nice.”

Stiles grins and steps closer. Derek’s arms open and come around him. He’s warm and perfect and fits there without any problems.

“You don’t have to be nice,” he mutters into Derek's neck. “Just do what you’re comfortable with.”

What he’s comfortable with. He’s not entirely sure what that is. But with Stiles in his arms it’s a lot easier to figure out.

It feels a lot like this.
Laura is going to drive Stiles’ jeep into town, taking his wallet and a list of what they need to buy as well. Boyd decides to come along with them but Malia has been in the woods nearly all night and heads home to sleep it off. By the time she’s disappeared, Stiles has already found the files he needs and is getting set up in the dining room.

He’s got another cup of coffee waiting faithfully at his elbow and he looks determined. If anyone can find a new lead for this case, it’s Stiles.

“He was over exaggerating, right?” Derek wonders as Laura drives them past the winding driveway out of the woods. “I’m not that popular, am I?”

Laura looks like she’s trying not to laugh. “You have a habit of making friends in spite of your-unfriendliness.”

He would be offended, but he suspects that's the nicest way Laura could have said it. He can't help it though, people are irritating.

“They like you,” Boyd confirms.

Somehow that’s not an encouraging answer. Are they gonna bother him the entire time they’re here? Does he have to do small talk with all these strangers? Maybe he was too cocky before. Maybe he’s not ready for this.

“We’ve got your back,” Boyd says suddenly. “We’ll look out for you.”

He doesn’t doubt that. Not anymore. Laura parks the jeep and Derek climbs out of the passenger seat, turning to watch the parking lot. There’s a black woman moving past with a trolley full of groceries and her face lights up at the sight of him.

“Deputy Hale, good to see you on your feet,” she says. "Though I’m sure Stiles has been taking good care of you.”

There’s an innuendo in there somewhere. He's sure he heard it. Derek has no idea what to say. Do people usually smile this much?

“Hey Mrs Johnson,” Laura greets easily, climbing out of the car. “Derek’s got amnesia.”

Her smile slips a little. “Yes, Mariana did mention there were complications in his recovery.”

“Complications,” Derek snorts.

“Bit of a fucking mess, isn’t it?” Mrs Johnson says understandingly.

Derek’s surprised into a laugh. “Yeah, you could say that.”

Laura gestures at the opposite end of the parking lot. “We’ve got to get going, Mrs Johnson, but it was good to see you.”

“Of course, honey. Give Veronica my best. She’s a wonderful woman.”

Laura glances quickly at Derek, and he can see how she tenses slightly at the words. Who is this old lady talking about?

“I- I will.”
“Steer clear of Betty in there, Derek,” Mrs Johnson. “She’ll want to do an invasive inspection to be certain you’re really alright.”

That sounds a little disturbing. “I’ll do my best, ma’am.”

Mrs Johnson smiles again. “Well at least he hasn’t forgotten his manners.”

Derek’s face feels warm when she pushes the trolley on with a final wave. He really doesn’t want to come across Betty now that he’s been warned of her wandering hands. How does he usually handle this stuff?

“I guess we’re avoiding Betty at all costs then,” Laura decides, striding towards Costco.

“At all costs,” Boyd agrees. “Women her age should not be so handsy.”

“Nobody should be handsy,” Derek mutters, irritated by the idea that he’s somehow the target in all of this. “That shouldn’t be a thing.”

Laura nods her agreement. “Let’s just be quick and get this over with.”

They start walking towards the main doors.

“Who’s Veronica?” he asks, suddenly remembering the woman Mrs Johnson mentioned. She must be important from the way Laura reacted.

Just like she’s reacting now. “I told Stiles I wouldn’t get into this.”

“Get into what?” he demands, glancing at Boyd. “What’s wrong?”

Laura’s heart is beating a little faster, and she smells nervous. Boyd is doing that thing where he politely doesn’t get involved in the conversation. Which means he knows what it’s about.

“Nothing’s wrong, and I guess since things have been… better with you and Stiles lately it shouldn’t matter that much.”

Derek is really behind here. “What shouldn’t matter that much?”

“Veronica is my mate,” she admits.

“Your mate is a girl?” he says, surprised. He didn’t expect this.

“Yeah, an omega.”

“Omegas and betas don’t-,” he starts automatically before actually thinking about it.

Laura’s smile is wry. “I assure you, they do.”

Right. Okay. Omegas and betas can be mates. Sure. Anyone can do anything they want. Stiles is right, there really aren’t any set rules to this stuff. He needs to stop getting caught up with socially constructed ideas.

“I’d like to meet her,” he says. “Again.”

She squeezes his hand. “You will. Again. I promise.”

The automatic doors open and they step inside together.
“Shit,” Boyd says immediately upon entering the air conditioned space, but his eyes are focused on an old woman with streaks of pink in her white hair, walking determinedly towards them. “Betty.”

Derek feels his stomach drop. “Oh no. Fuck that. No Betty.”

He grabs Laura’s wrist and takes off in the opposite direction, without making it look like they’re trying to escape her. Boyd vanishes for a little while, risking life and limb before he returns with an empty trolley for them to use. He doesn’t look like he’s been groped by an old woman but Derek doesn’t know if he’d recognise that expression to begin with.

“Stiles is going to love this,” Laura mutters. “He hates Betty.”

“What?” he demands, glancing nervously over his shoulder as if she might have somehow managed to keep up with them.

“Yeah. She knows better than to come near you when Stiles is around. You at least try to be polite. Stiles is one unwanted touch away from breaking her hand.”

What the fuck?

“She’s an old lady,” he says, a little shocked.

“She’s a pervy old lady,” Boyd clarifies. “Stiles hates that she enjoys making you uncomfortable.”

So his mate is ready to beat up elderly women for him now. Derek can’t say that he’s really that surprised. Stiles would totally do that.

“Well I’m cool with not going anywhere near her~”

“Deputy Hale!” a woman cries and Derek nearly jumps in surprise.

It’s not handsy Betty though. Thank fuck. She’s a bit younger. Probably in her fifties or early sixties. Derek doesn’t mean to give her a blank look but it’s not like he recognises her.

“Oh of course, sorry, the amnesia,” she realises quickly.

“This is Emilia Shannon,” Boyd explains. “You helped track her teenage son after he’d been missing for three days.”

Mrs Shannon shakes her head in an odd mixture of fury and amusement. “He and his friends thought it would be a wonderful idea to skip school and go on a three day camping trip without telling me first,” she explains cheerfully. “He’s still grounded as a matter of a fact.”

“Nice,” Laura says appreciatively.

“It’s good to see you back in town as well,” Mrs Shannon says. “But I hope it’s not for the reasons that usually follow one of your visits.”

Right. Laura probably only turns up in Beacon Hills when things are about to get dangerous. “We have some- potentially unfriendly guests arriving,” she admits.

Mrs Shannon accepts that information without any kind of alarm. “I do hope nobody gets killed.”

“They won’t,” Boyd promises. “We’ve got this handled.”

“Strongest pack in town, you’d best hope so,” she replies, somewhat bemused. “I’d better get out of
here. I saw Betty prowling aisle six and that’s not good for anybody.”

Boyd shifts uneasily and Laura glances behind them as if the old lady has been summoned. “Why did you think we were in a hurry?” Laura wonders, grabbing the hugest jar of Nutella Derek’s ever seen and depositing it in their trolley.

“Good luck,” Mrs Shannon says, peering around the corner of the aisle as if she’s expecting to be attacked. Derek can’t blame her for it.

She disappears with a cheeky smile that makes him think she’s probably a forgiving parent. Maybe that kid he found will get his freedom sometime soon. If he learnt his lesson at all in the first place.

“Let’s get this shit done,” Derek mutters as Laura crosses Nutella off the list with her pen.

They get lost.

Pretty quickly in fact. Costco is huge. And Laura doesn’t remember much since they’ve changed the setup of the place since she’s been here last. Boyd is no help whatsoever. And the threat of the mythical creature Betty tracking them down isn’t taking the edge off.

Two more old ladies have stopped to talk to them. Derek doesn’t remember their names but they smiled a lot at him like they were happy he’s alright. It’s super weird. It’s like a gang of grandmothers have adopted him as their own.

Derek’s only living grandparents died in the fire. This is a strange thing to get used to. But it’s not just old ladies being nice to him either. A lot of the other shoppers in the store smile at him too, as if they recognise him when he passes. Or they know he’s a cop.

It does kind of seem like he’s popular. It’s a bit of a change to what he remembers life in Beacon Hills after the fire. The pitying looks. The whispers of concern. It was even worse knowing Derek didn’t deserve any of it. But they don’t stare at him like he’s a charity case anymore.

In fact he might actually prefer this.

Their trolley is half full. They’ve still got to work their way down the list. If they can find the rest of the items.

“How do you not know this?” Derek mutters, annoyed that their fate is now to live out their lives trapped in this fucking store forever. Or to endure an uncomfortable interaction with a lecherous old woman. “You’re the one with the head full of memories here.”

Boyd gives him a patient look. “Surprisingly enough I don’t live and breathe Costco.”

He seems like the type of guy who doesn’t anger easily either. That’s a good quality to have.

“Wait, wait,” Laura says. “This is the aisle we need.”

Derek scans the list and starts grabbing the correct items, while Laura crosses them off. Boyd helpfully pushes the trolley along while keeping an eye out for Betty.

They manage to find everything they’re looking for as well as locating the check out counter. The check out boy seems to know them all as well because he smiles at them with an ease of familiarity before he starts scanning their items.

Derek’s finishing up emptying the trolley onto the conveyor belt when he feels somebody pinch his
“What the fuck is your problem?” he snaps, louder than intended as he turns around to glare at them.

And of course it’s fucking Betty, who they failed at evading, and apparently she’s surprised that her less than accepted advance wasn’t well received. “Oh, it’s me Derek, Betty,” she squeaks, trying to sound all sugary. “You mustn’t remember-“

“I remember I didn’t give you permission to touch my ass,” he snaps, angry enough not to bother with politeness. “What the hell makes you think that’s okay? Because you’re an older woman?”

“Oh no, I was just being playful, honey-“

“I’m not your honey and that’s sexual assault,” he snaps. “The only person I’ll let touch me like that is my mate. So keep your damn hands to yourself.”

Betty takes a step back, red faced. “Yes, of course, Officer.”

Derek startles a little at the way she addresses him but spins back to face Boyd and Laura, who’s gaping at him. He’ll probably get into shit for this. He didn’t even try to be nice. But the old broad made him so angry-

“That was amazing,” the check out boy whispers. “She’s always pinching my cheeks without asking.”

Laura’s looking at him like he just pulled another kid out of a burning car with his bare hands. “Stiles is going to love this.”

Derek just chewed out an old lady.

Maybe he really is a dick.

“That will probably give her a reason to keep her hands to herself in the future,” Boyd says, grinning as Laura steers the trolley laden with groceries towards the jeep. “Malia would have just broken her fingers.”

Derek squints at him. “Hold on, are you the one dating my cousin?”

“Let’s not get into this right-“ Laura starts uneasily.

But Boyd just tilts his chin up defiantly. “Yeah,” he says. “And Erica. We’re all dating. Is that a problem?”

Huh.

“No,” he realises. “It’s not.”

Boyd relaxes after that and Derek feels a little relieved when the sudden tension disappears. He actually likes Boyd. He doesn’t want to make him think otherwise. Laura unlocks the back door to the jeep and starts loading up the groceries. Derek lifts one of the heavier bags and passes it to her.
A car backfires in the parking lot and he twists sharply towards the sound on reflex. That’s when he sees them.

Only he’s not standing in the parking lot of Costco anymore.

The woods are dark and loud in his ears, filled with Stiles’ pumping heartbeat, the crunch of fallen leaves under heavy boots. Stiles’ scent sours with the surprise of panic and fear, adrenaline shifting his feet forward as the two men step into the clearing.

They’ve got guns and night vision goggles with their weapons cocked and ready to fire. One has a beard, uneven with scarring and the other has a tattoo of a small blooming flower on his left cheek. Derek’s eyes shift towards the most important thing in this clearing right now but Stiles’ eyes are human, weaker than his, and although he can sense there are enemies near he can’t quite see them.

The men must realise he’s human since his eyes don’t flash and he’s struggling to see but they aim their guns anyway. They’re not hunters. They don’t follow a code. They don’t care if they kill Stiles.

And right now he’s closer. An easier target. Werewolves are fast. They can heal. Humans can’t. They might have wolfsbane bullets, but it will kill Stiles just the same. For a werewolf though, maybe slower.

But they’re aiming at Stiles. He can see the muscles in scarred man’s arm shift in preparation to shoot.

No. Not Stiles.

Derek dives as the gun fires and then his skull splits apart to Stiles’ screams.

“Stiles,” he shouts, moving to protect someone that’s not there. He steps in front of Laura and Boyd, shielding them with his body just as the two hunter mercenaries hear the sound, and instantly recognise him.

“Derek?” Boyd says, sounding concerned.

“I know them,” he says quickly. “They’re the ones who tried to kill Stiles.”

He points at the two men and Boyd moves forward just as they turn and run, bag of supplies swaying between them. He can see the outline of weapons underneath their clothes but they don’t even try to stop and fight. They disappear into a car that’s probably stolen and fly out of the lot so quickly they burn rubber.

“The hunters?” Laura demands, claws extended. “You saw them?”

“I know them,” Derek repeats. “I remembered them. They were going to kill Stiles in the woods.”

Laura glances at Boyd. “We need to get you to the station.”

That’s the last place Derek plans on being. The memory was violent, terrifying. He needs to see Stiles face to face. Just to be certain he’s okay. He feels agitated and pumped up, just like he does before he’s about to run out onto the field for a game. That restless energy needs to go somewhere. To Stiles.

“No. I’m going home. Stiles is alone there.”

“No, he’s not,” Boyd reminds him. “Jackson and Isaac are still with the other werewolf. We need
you to come with us to the station. We need your help to identify them.”

Derek really doesn’t want to go. He’s sweating in the heat, but it’s a cold sweat and there’s a slight tremor in his hands. That first memory had been jarring. “Stiles saw them. Why didn’t he already do this?”

“It was too dark. He couldn’t see much. Not enough to do a composite sketch of their faces.”

“I’ll drop you guys off,” Laura says. “We need to call the pack and let them know we’ve caught sight of them again.”

“What are they still doing here?” Boyd wonders, helping her put the last of the bags into the jeep as quickly as possible.

“To finish the job,” he mutters.

But maybe that’s not entirely true. They had their guns just now, why didn’t they try and kill them? Why did they run? Derek walks the trolley back to put it with the rest of the abandoned ones and tries not to let it show how anxious he feels. He knows Laura and Boyd are worried. But not as worried as he is.

They were just going to kill Stiles. Without blinking. Because he’s Derek’s mate. Stiles’ voice interrupts his thoughts and he realises he’s hearing him across the parking lot. Laura’s called him to let him know what’s happened.

“Is Derek okay?” Stiles demands instantly and he’s walking back towards his voice, wanting to hear more.

He sounds distracted like he’s juggling too many things at once. Derek doesn’t doubt that he is.

“He’s fine. I’ll drop Derek and Boyd off at the station with your dad and then I’ll come home to unpack the groceries.”

Stiles murmurs an affirmative to her plan. Though he’s definitely uneasy.

“I want to talk to him,” Derek says, holding out his hand.

Laura nods and passes him her cell phone.

“Hey,” Stiles says, and Derek can hear the anxiety in his tone. “Are you alright?”

“I remember that night,” he says quietly. “They were going to kill you. Because of me.”

Derek never realised that his life became like this. Somehow always putting people he cares about in danger, just by being near him. He’d thought he’d left all of that behind after the fire. Is this what their life is like? Are they never safe?

“They didn’t,” Stiles says firmly.

“I don’t want to leave you alone,” Derek admits. “It- it doesn’t feel right.”

“I’ll be okay,” he promises. “Still got plenty of work to do on my end. If we can identify those hunters the Silva pack sent after you it might make it easier to catch them.”

Stiles’ dad will be there. His mate’s father. Derek doesn’t even know how to make a good impression. What if he puts his foot in it? What if Stiles’ dad hates him?
“Your dad is at the station.”

“Right. Right. Okay, look it’ll be fine. My dad likes you.”

Stiles’ dad likes him. But if he’s been hearing anything about how Derek’s been acting since he left the hospital, that’s probably changed. Stiles got his take-no-shit attitude from somewhere.


“As in brawling with my dad or being murdered by werewolf hunters?”

“Both.”

Stiles snorts. “I can do that.”

Derek wishes he could see his face right now. “Be careful.”

“You too, big guy.”

He passes the phone back to Laura and goes to sit in the passenger seat. She doesn’t waste any time driving them to the station. Stiles must have called ahead because his father is standing outside the station when they get there, waiting for them.

He’s aged a bit since Derek last saw him, and he looks a little different with the new Sheriff’s badge. More serious.

“Oh-“ Derek says as Laura drives off with a wave, abandoning them.

What should he say here? It’s not like he’s ever met the parents before. He’s never dated long enough for it to become that serious. But this is different. He’s mated this man’s kid.

“How are you doing, son?” Sheriff Stilinski asks, not reaching for his gun upon sighting him, which still doesn’t help Derek relax. “I know it’s been a while- you probably don’t remember me-“

“No, I remember you,” he says. “You were at the house that night. The night of the fire. You stayed with us.”

Sheriff Stilinski nods grimly as if the memory isn’t pleasant for him either. “Let’s get this sketch started. Stiles said over the phone that Boyd got a glimpse of them as well?”

Boyd shrugs. “A little.”

“Then you two can talk to the sketch artist together. Now I already spoke to the deputies here, told them not to crowd you but there’s no guarantees. They’re gonna be happy to see you.”

Derek remembers that he works with these people and that they’re probably his friends. Or at least on friendly terms. Colleagues. That hellhound works here too. More people for him not to remember. At least he can do this one thing- identify those fucks who tried to kill him and Stiles.

There’s rage in him now. That he could kill someone, his own uncle even, doesn’t seem so outrageous anymore. These mercenaries would have to be in the system. They can’t have gone around killing for the Silva pack without earning a rap sheet.

Derek just hopes there’s enough on it to track them down and stop them.
It feels like hours before Laura returns to fetch them and by that time every single deputy in the precinct has made some excuse or other to enter the room Derek’s sitting in with the sketch artist and Boyd to chat.

He doesn’t remember any of them. Though they feel the need somehow to express that they’re pleased his brains didn’t get blown out. Derek gets it, but when one after the other keep coming into to interrupt with a similar sentiment of relief and pity at his lost memories, it really starts to get on his nerves.

At least Parrish brings them coffee and lunch from the bakery across the street. Maybe he’s not so bad as Derek first assumed.

Even the sketch artist asks a few probing questions before Derek realises that he’s supposed to know her as well. Or at least she’s trying to prompt him into remembering. As if it’s just a switch that can be flicked. If he can’t remember his own fucking mate, then he doubts that his colleagues would somehow be the ones to jog his memory.

It’s definitely a trial in patience before the Sheriff turns up to shoo the other deputies away. Stiles’ dad is pretty much the same as Derek remembers. He's easy going but firm, and he doesn't seem to begrudge Derek for the past few weeks though he's certain Stiles has kept him informed. He's a good man and he seems concerned with making sure Derek's comfortable.

He's the only reason that Derek keeps his temper under wraps the entire time. He doesn't swear at anyone.

When the composites are almost done, Derek’s about ready to dive out the fucking window if it means he gets to escape. Being around people who aren’t his pack, and somehow expect him automatically to remember things is very draining. He just wants to go home to Stiles. To see how everything’s doing.

Did he find a new lead for his case? Or is he freaking out that he won’t finish in time?

When they finally leave with Laura, the sun is starting to set. They’ve nearly lost the entire day.

Derek’s just happy that they’re finally leaving. The deputies tried to show him his desk before he could make it out the door as if that might boost his chances of memory recovery somehow. But in the end it was just a fucking desk with a picture of Stiles and the rest of the pack on it and it doesn’t mean anything to Derek.

They mean well, he’s assuming, but the moment is awkward.

Derek's happy to leave straight after. He’s ready to go home.

Laura parks in the garage and Derek’s out and heading towards the front doors before the engine is off. He follows the sound of Stiles’ steady heartbeat into the dining room, Boyd and Laura at his back. And Stiles hasn’t moved.
He looks up from where he’s seated at the table, case files and loose sheets strewn all around him in some kind of organised chaos. Derek can’t tell if his day went well or if there’s more work to be done. The mess isn’t telling him much.

Stiles smiles at them, but there’s a faraway kind of glazed quality to his eyes as if he’s coming out of a lengthy hypnotic trance. Has he actually not moved at all since they left?

“Hey there,” he says, voice strangely raspy as he gets to his feet and steps towards them.

Derek only has the time to wonder why he sounds like that before Stiles says, “whoa, head rush,” and promptly collapses, legs caving under him.

Luckily he’s close enough to catch Stiles before he falls, but it’s a close one. He’s a dead weight and clearly just passed out. It’s only a few short seconds before Stiles is stirring again and conscious but it’s enough to freak Derek the fuck out.

Is Stiles sick? Is this a normal thing he does like the panic attacks? When he throws a desperate look at Laura and catches her expression of surprise, he knows it’s something she doesn’t recognise. But somehow it’s vaguely familiar. He thinks this has happened before. Or maybe he’s seen it happen.

“Whoa,” Stiles mumbles incoherently, patting Derek’s bicep in an absent touch, reaching out from the hold he’s got around Stiles’ waist to stop him hitting the floor face first.

His hands are trembling and Derek suddenly remembers how it went down the last time he was so absorbed in a task.

“Have you eaten at all today?” he demands, voice full of disapproval.

Stiles presses his cheek tiredly against Derek’s chest, using him almost entirely for support. “That depends. What time is it again?”

“It’s five pm, Stiles,” Laura says, cottoning on. “Have you drunk any water either?”

He hesitates and Derek is already frowning at that reaction when he tries to think about it. “Uh-oops?” is his answer.

Goddamnit. Derek doesn’t like this one bit. It’s worse because there’s a strange feeling sitting in the back of his mind that he’s the one usually monitoring Stiles when he’s hyperfocused like this. That Derek is always making sure that he still eats and drinks during these moments. Somehow this feels like his fault.

“How did you not eat?” Laura wonders, disbelieving. “You helped pack away all those groceries.”

Stiles groans, letting his eyes fall shut. “Yeah, but I didn’t eat them, did I?”

“That’s not something you brag about,” Boyd points out.

This is ridiculous. Derek’s had enough of this. He lifts Stiles into his arms, and he’s not as heavy as he’d complained this morning. It’s pretty easy to carry him. So Derek does, right into the kitchen, where he deposits him on the edge of the counter.

He gets out a can of sprite from the fridge and passes that to Stiles first.

“You need the sugar,” he explains and while Stiles busies about pulling the tab back and drinking, Derek takes a look at the open fridge and tries to decide which food groups Stiles needs to eat first.
“You are not going to cook me some weird table length feast as a way to show your concern, are you?” Stiles wonders. “I can’t eat that much.”

“Did you find the connection yet?” Derek asks, pulling out things at random.

A sandwich, he decides. He’ll make Stiles a sandwich and load it up with as much ingredients as possible.

“I think I’ve found something,” Stiles admits. “Which is how I fell down that research rabbit hole. Didn’t mean to lose track of time. Did you guys finish the sketches?”

“Yeah,” he says, unwrapping the bread and grabbing out two slices. “You’re dad is putting them both through the system now. He reckons they’ll come up.”

Should he make two sandwiches? Stiles doesn’t eat as much as werewolves, but he still eats a fair amount. He settles for crackers they bought today instead, sliding them next to Stiles’ thigh as he guzzles the can of sprite.

Derek gets distracted watching his throat move before he starts buttering the bread.

"How did it go?” Stiles wonders. "With my dad?"

He doesn’t know for sure but the Sheriff didn't shoot Derek so that's good. "Alright, I think. He's a good man."

Stiles smiles. "You've already said that."

"And he's still a good man," Derek replies. "After so many years."

Boyd follows them into the kitchen and helps himself to Stiles’ crackers, while Laura heads outside towards the bunker. She’s probably just as curious about this new werewolf they caught scouting the place. Derek thinks he was born, not bitten. Like them. Maybe he’s finally up for talking.

“It was bad, wasn’t it?” Stiles says eventually, colour warming his skin again and alertness stealing back into his eyes. “That first memory.”

Boyd is watching him closely.

“I would have preferred anything else,” he mutters, trying not to think about it. “It was- it was the fire all over again. Watching people I care about die.”

Stiles carefully sets the can down as Derek starts cutting up slices of ham. “I’m sorry that’s the first thing you had to remember.”

Derek focuses on the sandwich and doesn’t look at either of them. “Look, it’s not- it's not the first thing I remembered.”

“What?”

“I’ve been having dreams,” he admits. “Though I’m pretty sure they’re not dreams.”

Stiles doesn’t get it. “Dreams?”

“Sex dreams, Stiles,” Boyd mutters, rolling his eyes. “He’s clearly talking about sex dreams.”

Derek can almost feel the embarrassment in the air.
“For how long?”

“Since the full moon run? They’re very- uh vivid.”

Stiles laughs and picks up more crackers to munch on. “Damn straight.”

Boyd's somewhat serene expression is covering up any discomfort he might be feeling. He’d be good at poker. Or in a crisis.

Laura comes flying back inside a second later, excited. “They got him talking.”

Derek pauses in the middle of adding cheese and tomato. The werewolf? He finds it hard to believe that he suddenly felt like being chatty. He’s barely been a captive for two full days and they haven’t even been depriving him of food or water.

And Stiles said they weren’t going to physically torture him. The Silva pack wouldn’t have made him a scout if he cracked so easily. There’s got to be another trick behind this. Stiles has that look about him where he’s thinking he can drop down from his spot and walk off outside to see for himself. Only he just passed out a couple of minutes ago and there’s no way in hell he’s going anywhere.

“Bring Jackson and Isaac in here,” Derek says, giving Stiles a pointed look to stay where he is. “While one of you guards the werewolf.”

“I’ll get them,” Laura says, walking back outside. “But Jackson won’t want to come in. He’s having too much fun.”

She returns with Isaac a minute later and by then Derek’s finished making the sandwich and has put it into Stiles’ outstretched hands.

“Oh my god,” he moans around the first bite. “You’re amazing.”

Derek takes some of the crackers beside him just for an excuse to hide his reaction. He provided for his mate, and Stiles liked it. Simple things take on a whole new meaning now that he has a mate.

“Tara is surprisingly chatty,” Isaac declares, seemingly a little smug when he joins them.

“Tara,” Boyd repeats.

Isaac shrugs. “Apparently that’s his name. I don’t think he planned on cracking so early but Jackson-put on a bit of a show.”

“He went full kanima?” Laura wonders, impressed. “With the freaky wings and everything?”

“Oh yeah,” Isaac nods, gleefully. “It was fucking terrifying. Tara was more than happy to answer our questions after that. Once he stopped crying.”

Derek’s not sure he believes that. And neither does Stiles.

“He did not cry,” he says, frowning at the thought.


And now Derek’s thinking that he really doesn’t want to see Jackson’s full transformation. He’s got enough of a power trip as it is. He’d love to know the pack was afraid of him.
“And what did he say?” Stiles asks, taking another bite of the sandwich. He hasn’t tried to move yet, which is good.

Derek’s not going to be able to keep him there for long though. He should eat more food. There are crackers left. Derek could cook him dinner. Yes, that's perfect.

Isaac loses some of his enthusiasm and Derek’s draw out of the weird providing-food-for-mate haze he’s disappeared into. “He said the Silvas don’t destroy packs.”

Stiles snorts at that and nobody appears convinced.

“He said they absorb them.”

“They what?” Derek demands, expression twisting.

Isaac is frowning now as if he doesn’t relish repeating this. “They take what they deem as the strongest members from the rival pack and bring them into their fold. That’s what Tara’s job is as a scout. To observe the rival pack and distinguish the strong from the weak. If those members won’t join, then they crush them.”

Stiles is thoughtful, still chewing his sandwich.

“And what about the pack members they see as weak?” he asks.

Isaac’s expression is grim. “They’re the ones the Silvas kill first.”

Fucking perfect.

Derek can’t wait to meet them.
Stiles jumps off the counter and looks determined. Derek realises he’s not going to be able to stop him from moving about.

“Let’s go talk to him,” he suggests.

Of course he's forgetting the part where he passed out a little while ago. Where the hell does Stiles get all this energy?

“No that it isn’t appealing chatting with our prisoners, but I’m gonna stick around here,” Laura says, moving towards the fridge to get herself a drink.

Derek follows Stiles outside and towards the bunker. Boyd and Isaac are behind him somewhere but he doesn’t pay any attention to them. Stiles opens the door to the bunker and turns to face him as he climbs down.

His only got eyes for Derek as he disappears down into the dark and Derek can’t keep his eyes off him either. He thinks he could probably look at him forever.

Is this what being in love is like?

Derek follows Stiles in and is instantly hit by the smell of wolfsbane. It’s not powerful enough to hurt him, but it does irritate his nose a little. It’s from the ropes Tara is tied in.

And Isaac wasn’t lying.

Derek can smell the fresh tears. Tara was crying after all. And Jackson is looking incredibly smug that he’s the one to make it happen.

“This has been fun,” Jackson says, because naturally he’s enjoying himself right now. “Thanks for the invite, Stilinski.”

“You are terrifying,” Stiles cheerfully agrees and Derek thinks he’s actually being half truthful.

Jackson preens at the words anyway, stepping back and leaning against the wall like he’s about to accept an award. Or stand in for a photoshoot. It’s probably because Isaac is peering through the opening in the roof to watch the proceedings.

Tara is surprisingly silent considering he’s not gagged.

“So you absorb packs,” Derek says, taking a step towards him.

The werewolf lifts his eyes towards him but doesn’t speak. So Derek stares him down and folds his arms and waits. Stiles’ phone chimes. But Derek doesn’t look away when he pulls out his cell phone.

“Danny got back to me,” he says and Derek pretends he knows who that is.

Revealing his memory loss to an enemy is definitely not a good idea.

“He’s been digging around the Silva pack, trying to find out how many of them we’re up against.
Only one of them has a criminal record though, otherwise they’re squeaky clean. Or smart enough to appear clean.”

“Which one?” Derek asks. “Who’s got the criminal record?”

“Randy Andham,” Stiles says, reading the text. “He married into the pack. Got done for grievous bodily harm.”

Derek is still watching Tara when he speaks, and he might have got his heartbeat under control but there’s no way to hide how his expression weakens incrementally. His mouth twitches like he’s trying to keep his silence.

“Got something to say?” Derek asks. “Not a fan of Randy?”

Tara snorts but doesn’t say anything else. The fact that he’s not willing to say anything isn’t a tactic. Not when Derek knows Jackson literally terrified him into opening his mouth earlier. It’s more like Tara can’t say anything bad about Randy.

Like he’s-

“He’s Jessica’s second, isn’t he?” Derek realises. “That’s why you can’t badmouth him.”

Tara glares at him. Stiles looks up and steps closer to Derek. “You’re right,” he agrees. “I don’t think Tara could say anything about him even if he wanted.”

“He’s a monster,” Tara says, like an outburst.

His face screws up straight after like he’s swallowed a lemon. Randy is definitely the Silva pack’s second. Stiles is already turning towards the stairs and Derek knows his mind is moving quickly. He’s on to something and he doesn’t want to say anything in front of the rival pack member.

“Get him some water,” Derek says, just to seem more like he’s in charge. “He smells dehydrated.”

Jackson rolls his eyes behind Tara’s back, but Isaac agrees readily from above them as he helps Stiles out of the hole. Derek turns and follows him out. They don’t speak until the metal door is sealed shut again.

“What’s going on?” he asks, catching Stiles’ elbow. “What are you thinking?”

“Nothing good,” he admits. “If they’ve only got one werewolf with a police record in their entire pack then they know how to manipulate the system. Might even have some plants in their police department.”

He wouldn’t put it past them. Technically their pack has plants in Beacon Hills department too.

“How did you know that?” Stiles asks him. “About that Randy guy?”

“They’re a werewolf pack,” Derek shrugs. “They’re more traditional than we are. Wait- do I have a second?”

Stiles thinks about it. “Laura probably? Or Boyd. Scott’s my second.”

Derek only snorts. “In a traditional pack you wouldn’t have a second, Stiles,” he says. “You’re my mate.”

He rolls his eyes at that. “Fuck, that’s boring.”
“Yeah, our pack can insult and disrespect us openly like Jackson does.”

“Exactly,” Stiles agrees. “Free will and all that.”

Yeah okay. Derek would take that over the Silva pack any day. Anything’s better than a bloodthirsty pack. He’s about to reply when the sound of a car pulling up in the driveway distracts him. Derek thinks the engine might be familiar.

“Who’s over for dinner?” he wonders, turning his head.

Isaac listens as well. “It’s Cora,” he says. “She must’ve just finished work. Laura’s gone out to meet her.”

Derek can hear them at the front door.

“We should talk,” Laura says and she sounds abrupt, and kind of angry.

Derek takes an automatic step towards her voice, curious to hear what’s going on. Did they have a fight he didn’t know about?

“Oh boy,” Cora says. “Always loved that greeting. What can I do for you sister mine?”

“It’s about Derek.”

Oh no. This isn’t good. Derek doesn’t want them to start fighting. They’re both stubborn enough not to back down.

“For fucks sake what’s the big deal now? He’s been panting after Stiles all week. They’ve been in a good place. Did he ruin it again?”

Derek might resent that. Except he knows what kind of mess he made when he first woke up. There’s no way he’s doing that again. He’s not going to lose Stiles for anything. Not when he knows now what kind of person he is, and how hard he must have fought to keep him.

He’s not planning on ruining this.

“He hasn’t done anything,” Laura says patiently. “But I’ve got a problem with what you’ve been doing.”

Cora makes an indignant sound. “For real? You’re kidding. He was never going to pull his head out of his ass without a push.”

“But that wasn’t up to you, Cora,” Laura says. “Have you thought at all about how hard this is for him?”

“For him?” she demands, sounding irritated. “What about Stiles?”

“Stiles isn’t your brother. Stiles isn’t the one who couldn’t even tell us that he was interested in men. Who didn’t feel comfortable telling us that he’d fallen in love, and was pining after someone he thought would never want him.”

Derek thought that?

“Oh come on-“

“You know how hard it was him the first time around.”
He feels Stiles’ hand on his arm and their conversation is no longer important. He’s glad that Laura is looking out for him, but he’s not sure he wants to rehash this.

“Derek,” Stiles says, and from the look on his face it’s clear he’s repeating himself.

“Cora and Laura are fighting on the front lawn,” Isaac explains.

There’s genuine concern on his face and he doesn’t withdraw his hand. Derek wants to hold it between his own, but Isaac is there and he doesn’t want to share this with him.

“Are you here or are you drifting?” Stiles says, trying to find out if he’s using his werewolf hearing to listen to the conversation.

“I’m here,” Derek promises. “Let’s go make dinner. You should eat more.”

Stiles purses his lips together but Derek’s ready to fight him on this. He reaches his arm around his waist and encourages him back toward the house. And Stiles takes his hand, interlocking their fingers together as if Derek asked him to do so without saying anything.

Somehow he thinks he did.

Laura comes back inside when Derek’s helping Stiles chop vegetables. Isaac is back outside with Jackson after he fetched a glass of water for Tara and Boyd is napping in the living room.

“Where’s Cora?” Stiles asks once he realises Laura is alone.

Derek hears Cora’s car pull away in the driveway and fade into the distance. He turns back to the chopping board and tries not to hunch his shoulders too much. He wishes Cora didn’t decide to go, but when somebody pisses her off she can’t be reasoned with. Not until she cools off again.

Derek remembers that at least.

“Did you really need to say all that stuff to her?” he asks, without meeting her gaze.

Laura’s hand rests against his back for a brief pause. “Yeah,” she says firmly. “I really did.”

“Your timing could have been better,” Stiles admits. “We really don’t need any extra shit right now.”

Laura shrugs and reaches over him to steal a cut up piece of tomato. “If anything, I’m helping reduce the possibility of tension.”

Stiles glances quickly at Derek, then down at his mouth and heat kicks up in his groin at the intent look. “Trust me, there’s already plenty of tension around here,” he replies.

Laura laughs and knocks Derek’s shoulder comfortably. His cheeks are warm when she lifts herself up onto the counter and gets comfortable. His attention shifts down to Stiles’ fingers and he gets much too distracted by the sight of them. He’s got really nice hands.

When Stiles reaches out to catch his wrist and stop Derek from almost chopping his finger off, he realises he’s not at all focused on the task at hand.
“Ugh.”

“Careful there,” Stiles teases. “I like those fingers.”

Derek flushes and his mind falls straight into the gutter. He’s probably used his fingers for sex stuff. They’ve been inside Stiles, jerked him off. Fuck, Derek wants to kiss him again.

Stiles must be able to read it on his face. Because he smiles and nudges his shoulder against Derek’s.

He leans in just as Laura’s footsteps snap out of the room. Stiles drops his knife with a clatter, catching hold of his face and dragging him in for a kiss. Derek drops his knife too, and then his arms are around Stiles, his mouth is hot and open and Derek lifts him into the air.

Stiles’ hips jerk forward automatically and Derek lines them up, holding him close as the kiss goes deep and messy. If nobody else was home right now-

The metal plate for the bunker slams closed and Derek jerks back at the sound. He peers over Stiles’ shoulder out through the kitchen window but it’s only Isaac returning.

“We should have the whole pack over tonight,” Stiles says. “There’s more stuff we should talk about.”

Derek isn’t sure he wants to deal with the entire pack right now. Even if it’s good to have them around. He’d rather have Stiles all to himself. Before the Silva pack arrives and Stiles has no time for them anymore.

“We’re going to have to make a bigger casserole then,” he replies, unwillingly releasing his grip on Stiles and stepping back.

Stiles is busy sending out a group text so Derek heads to the fridge and starts piling up more ingredients to make a bigger portion, large enough to feed a pack of hungry supernatural people. It’s a good thing they have three casserole dishes.

Stiles fetches out the pasta and puts water in a saucepan to boil when Scott and Kira get home.

“Oh thank God, I’m starving,” Kira announces as she kisses Laura’s cheek in greeting and pats Boyd’s shoulder.

Scott comes in and scoops Stiles up in a hug and Derek only feels a twinge of jealousy, comforted by the fact Stiles has been giving him bedroom eyes all day. Stiles grins and smacks Scott on the back as they start talking about his work and what happened at the clinic today.

Derek ends up having a conversation with Boyd, Laura and Kira about how horrible Jackson’s true form must be and only Laura seems keen to get a real look at him. Derek could do without the nightmares, thanks.

Trust Laura not to be intimidated by scales and wings.

Isaac stumbles into the kitchen when they’re putting two casseroles into the oven with his shirt askew, and his face a little flushed. Derek recognises the smell coming off him immediately.

“Ugh did you and Jackson-?” he demands, disturbed by the idea that he’d somehow find Jackson attractive.

Especially with his personality.
Isaac pushes some stray curls off his face. “Nothing happened,” he insists, too quickly to be believable.

“But something was about to,” Stiles points out, smirking at the thought.

“Are you kidding?” Isaac mutters, unembarrassed. "Have you seen what he looks like now?"

Stiles rolls his eyes. “Yeah, he’s got more muscles sure, but it’s still all wrapped up in a terrible Jackson like package.”

Derek clears his throat pointedly.

“He’s got nothing on you though,” Stiles amends hastily. “Seriously dude, you’re like a Greek God or something.”

Right. What a save. Derek pushes down the urge to punch Jackson in the face for catching Stiles’ notice, but that would probably upset Isaac. Besides, he knows how hot Stiles is for him. They’re mated. He’s not going to go running off with Jackson of all people.

Derek still wants to punch him in the face though.

“Have you thought this through, ‘zac?” Laura puts forth, in what Derek knows is her breaking-it-gently voice. “He’s going back to the UK after this.”

Isaac shrugs, but he’s no longer meeting anyone’s eyes. “You know, it’s nothing. I’m just looking to get laid.”

“Good luck with that,” Kira says, actually sincere despite the sarcasm Derek’s waiting for.

Malia comes through the front door next, hand in hand with Erica and they both kiss Boyd hello before greeting the rest of the pack. Stiles wisely gets someone else to cover the guard shift in the bunker, and to keep Isaac and Jackson out of an enclosed space together.

It doesn’t seem like they were doing much guarding just now anyway.

The Argents show up next and although Derek tenses up a little at the sight of them, he doesn’t openly protest when the father/ daughter duo disappear outside to question Tara and relieve Jackson.

When he comes back inside, he doesn’t seem pleased to lose his spot in the bunker. Something tells Derek that he enjoys traumatising other werewolves. Maybe because the rest of the pack doesn’t take him seriously.

Not even as a freaky fucking flying winged beast.

Derek doesn’t know how it happens but somehow Kira and Scott are disappearing into the cupboard and pulling out a few bottles of alcohol for the rest of the arriving pack. When Derek looks up from the mess he’s cleaning up Kira, Scott and Erica are already in the middle of making cocktails for the rest of the group.

*Pink* cocktails.

Stiles gets one of the first ones and accepts it eagerly with a sound that shows he’s impressed with the presentation. Derek’s eyebrows feel like they’re climbing off his face.

“What?” he says. “You’re not really gonna turn down a cocktail are you?”
“It’s pink,” he mutters, offended by the sight of it.

Stiles is not in the least concerned. “You know pink was originally a boy’s colour right? Before they started associated it with femininity?”

Pink? He stares at Stiles and doesn’t have the words to reply.

“You’re gonna deprive yourself of the chance to get drunk off something sweet and colourful?”

Derek takes the glass out of Stiles’ hand and takes a cautious sip. He can taste the vodka but it’s not going to do anything for him. He needs alcohol from the werewolf batch that Scott is making right now.

It doesn’t taste bad though. Derek doesn’t hate it. Stiles must see that because when he takes it back, there’s a smile on his face that’s sweeter than any cocktail. Derek just wants to pull him into his arms and take him upstairs to their bed. Instead, Scott hands him a pink cocktail and he refuses to let himself feel foolish over something as meaningless as a colour.

It’s good though. Boyd makes a joke that nearly has Derek choking on his drink and the rest of the pack laugh for so long, and so wildly that he doesn’t have it in himself to be embarrassed by the drink in his hand.

Cora comes stomping into the room twenty minutes later when Scott is making another round of drinks for everyone, and Parrish and Lydia who arrived five minutes before that. She doesn’t speak to Laura, just catches sight of the alcoholic drinks being poured and snatches the wolfsbane vodka out of Scott’s hand, chugging the bottle for a troubling amount of time before she stops to breathe.

Stiles is sitting on the counter behind Derek with his arms around his waist and his head resting on his shoulder and Derek’s been so caught up in the confusing feelings of having Stiles wrapped around him that he hasn’t been able to talk for a while. Cora doesn’t say anything, but grabs a hold of his wrist and tugs him out of Stiles’ grip.

“What-?”

Cora doesn’t explain, but keeps dragging until she’s pulled Derek out into the backyard. He doesn’t protest because she’s not going to talk until she’s good and ready so Derek glances back at Stiles through the kitchen window, and makes eye contact once he realises he’s watching too.

Cora takes another swig of the vodka. She doesn’t look happy.

“It’s been recently brought to my attention that I might have crossed a line before,” she admits bracingly. “I wasn’t trying to be a dick even though you were pulling it off pretty spectacularly.”

“Cora,” Laura warns from the kitchen.

“Butt out,” she growls back, irritated.

“Look I get where you were coming from now,” he admits, meeting Stiles’ eyes again. “You were just trying to keep me from losing something I would never want to give up.”

Cora raises an eyebrow. “That’s a bit of a different tune to ‘he’s a guy’.”

Derek cringes at the words, but it’s not like he has any right to be upset by them. He’s the one who spoke them after all.
“I’m just- seeing things a lot differently now. I might not remember him, but I wasn’t going to make the same mistakes as I did with- Kate. I would never have mated him if I didn’t mean it.”

“You meant it,” she promises. “Trust me, Derek, you meant it.”

Derek can hear Stiles’ heartbeat in the kitchen as he takes out the two casseroles dishes and puts the last one in. It’s steady, relaxed.

“I know I did.”

“So I guess, I’m sorry then,” Cora mutters. “I’ve been a bit shitty.”

He’s not going to argue with her about that, but Stiles is right, there’s a lot more going on right now. “I’ve been fucking shitty. I’m College Derek, remember?”

“Well yeah, but I’m still sorry anyhow. I wasn’t thinking about how hard it had been for you the first time. I didn’t cut you any slack.”

Derek’s kind of glad that she didn’t. He’s not so sure he would’ve deserved it.

“So you met the parents today, huh?”

He snatches the bottle from her and takes his own swig. Cora makes her own guesses based on that response.

“That bad, huh?”

The alcohol actually burns for once and Derek’s gasping by the time he’s finished. “I’ve never had to meet the parents before. I’ve never been this serious about anyone. It’s-“

“Intimidating?”

“Fucking terrifying you mean.”

Cora shrugs and takes the bottle back. “Trust me, the Sheriff likes you. You’re actually pretty well liked despite your whole closed off exterior.”

“Yeah, I’m starting to figure that out.”

“Come on,” she says, grabbing his arm. “I smell food and we all know you want to be all up in Stiles’ business anyhow.”

“Cora,” he hisses, embarrassed.

“What?” she demands. “It’s not like he can hear you.”

But the rest of the pack can. Fuck, he needs another drink before he can deal with this shit. Or maybe he really does just want to touch Stiles again.

“Everyone else can,” Jackson mutters from somewhere in the living room. “And I still think you could do better-“

Derek snarls just as there’s a sharp smacking sound that definitely means somebody was nice enough to hit Jackson up the side of the head.

“How are you such an ass?” Erica demands and that’s a question left to the ages.
“I can’t believe I dated him for so long,” Lydia drawls.

“Hey!”

Has half of the pack dated each other? Oh fuck, has Stiles dated more people in this pack as well? Besides Malia?

Derek heads back into the kitchen where two of the casseroles are sitting to cool off as the last one cooks in the oven. Stiles passes Derek his drink once he gets within reach and drags him back into his arms. He’s got no complaints whatsoever.

The rest of the pack starts turning up as he’s getting comfortable again. Though the young looking ones aren’t happy.

“What’s up?” Scott asks at the sight of their faces.

“We saw Peter out while we were on patrol,” the young werewolf who interrupted him and Stiles hooking up the other day says. “Mason thinks he was looking for those two hunters.”

“You can pretty much guarantee that,” Laura mutters. “He’s all about making things worse.”

“Dad’s still running the photo composites Derek and Boyd helped make,” Stiles says. “They’re going to turn up and we’ll get them.”

“Before or after the Silva pack arrives?” the Argent hunter wonders as he steps into the kitchen again.

Derek automatically shifts Stiles further behind him and it doesn’t escape Chris’ notice. He’s not going to apologise for being wary.

“Hopefully before,” Stiles says, ignoring the tension. “Did you get anything out of him?”

“Tara is feeling very- talkative,” he admits. “Allison’s still questioning him now. What did you guys do to him?”

Laura sighs. “Jackson showed the werewolf his true form.”

Jackson, who’s perched artfully on the edge of the counter next to Isaac, helpfully raises his pink cocktail in greeting. Chris doesn’t really have much to say to that besides a frown.

Lydia squeezes past him to reach the door, no doubt to see how her mate is doing. She’s carrying one of the pink cocktails when she disappears outside. Derek’s not sure how appropriate it is for prisoner interrogation.

“Is everyone nearly here?” Stiles wonders, peering about and mentally counting heads.

“Corey and Hayden are on patrol now,” the young werewolf says. “But otherwise, that’s everyone.”

Scott’s nose twitches. “I think the last casserole is done.”

He and Kira helpfully open up the oven and pull it out with a pair of mitts. “Let’s set up the table then,” Parrish suggests. “I’m starving.”

The pack starts moving about the kitchen, fetching out plates and cutlery and Derek’s foot gets stepped on more than once. Though Jackson is the only one who does it on purpose. Not before he steps on Stiles’ foot first.
Derek is getting ready to rip his head off, but luckily Isaac is ahead of him, stomping Jackson’s foot hard enough that his cursing sounds almost entirely British for a moment.

They clean up the mess that Stiles made of the living room as best they can. Before Stiles takes over and pushes the paperwork into one pile, shifting it to their office. He’ll probably be working on that after the pack leaves. He’d found a lead when Derek last spoke to him but whether or not it’s enough to appease his boss is another story.

Once Stiles has cleared the rest away, the pack starts setting the table while the last casserole is still cooling down. Isaac and Boyd carry out the other dishes and sets them in the centre of the table for the pack to start dishing out food.

Derek snags the seat next to Stiles and the table is littered with pink cocktails when he piles some of the cheesy pasta bake onto his plate. Kira is on his left but he hands the spatula to Stiles first so he can fill his own plate.

At least he’s eating now.

“So I’ve been thinking,” Stiles says, around his first mouthful. “That we’re looking at plan B here.”

“Plan B?” Cora snorts.

“Yeah, Derek’s nowhere near remembering anything right now but we’ve got to be practical. They’re a traditional pack. With a little effort we can have them making the assumption that we’re a traditional-ish pack too.”

The pack titters with some kind of amusement at the idea. Derek doesn’t believe for one minute that they’re a traditional pack.

“What I mean,” Stiles continues patiently. “Is that we make it into some wolfy dictatorship. With Derek in charge.”

He nearly drops his fork at the mention of his name. “You want me in charge? Are you insane?”

Scott looks nervous. “But Stiles- you mean, you actually want-“

“To make it seem like Derek is the one making the big decisions? Solely leading the pack with his hot piece mate demurely standing at his side? Yeah, Scotty I pretty much do.”

Derek’s speechless at that. Did Stiles just refer to himself as a hot piece and demure in the same sentence? That’s basically the opposite of his personality. Though Derek’s not denying Stiles is a hot piece.

“And how the hell do we pull that off?” Isaac demands. “We’re not that kind of pack.”

“We make it seem like Derek is making all the decisions,” Stiles says. “So nobody is looking at me, when he says stuff, or waits for my opinion on the matter. I want to seem like the invisible alpha mate omega, you know? That’ll make it so much easier to screw them over if it goes to shit.”

“Yeah, that’s fucking swell and all Stiles,” Derek mutters. “But how in the fuck am I going to make it look like I’m in charge when I have no idea what’s going on?”

“I’ll write things down for you,” Stiles says. “We can at least make it appear like we’re a typical alpha-omega bonded pair. That’s the kind of rigid institution they’d respect.”
“Gross,” Erica mutters.

“Yeah, I know,” Stiles agrees. “But think of the irony. We can totally screw them over with their own bigotry and ignorance if they buy into it, so win for us.”

Derek is not so sure he’s following. “So you’re saying you want the rest of the pack to disrespect and basically disregard you in order to prove that we’re like those bloodthirsty assholes who are about to invade our home and probably disrespect and disregard you?”

Stiles pats his arm. “Yeah, that’s about it. If they’re not paying attention to me, it gives me a better chance to scope out all their weaknesses. Like they tried to get Tara to do for us.”

“Did he ever say who he ended up deciding was weak or strong in our pack?” Isaac wonders. “The ones he was going to tell the Silvas to kill when they arrived?”

“I think Allison could get him to tell you,” Chris says. “He might not have had the chance to analyse every single pack member.”

Derek’s doesn’t want to know about this. Who cares what their enemies think about them?

“So who cares?” Stiles mutters, echoing his thoughts. “We need to focus here guys.”

“I need to focus on my plate,” Cora mutters. “I’m fucking hungry, Stiles.”

The conversation dissolves in favour of the food and it’s pretty good considering Derek hasn’t tried cooking for himself since he moved into the dorm. It’s a good thing Stiles helped.

“Fine,” he mutters, around another mouthful. “But after.”

“I’m not sure we’ll be convincing, Stiles,” Parrish declares. “We’ve spent years living like this. We can’t just shake all that routine and mutual respect to pretend we’re like these jerks.”

“I’ve got no problem with it,” Jackson pipes up.

“Because you’re so full of respect already to begin with,” Scott mutters, clinking forks with Stiles as if they’re high-fiving with cutlery.

Derek’s too busy trying not to choke on the food in his mouth as laughter bubbles out.

“You’ve got to admit though it’s not a bad plan,” Erica points out. “They’re already going to undermine and underestimate Stiles because of his status, why not make it easier for them?”

“Can you even do that?” Derek asks him. “Play the meek omega?”

Stiles glares at him. “Why? Think you’ll enjoy bossing me around too much?”

Derek can’t quite keep the distaste off his face at the idea. He doesn’t like the thought of Stiles shrinking himself to fit someone else’s boxes. It doesn’t sit right.

“Jeez don’t look so horrified, I’m kidding,” Stiles mutters.

He takes another bite of food and doesn’t answer. Derek's not sure he can do it. He can’t stomp around like some big shot alpha with the expectation that Stiles will obey him without question. The thought turns his stomach.

Stiles seems to realise he’s not handling it very well because he drops his hand below the table and
reaches out to squeeze Derek’s thigh. It’s only because he saw Stiles move that he doesn’t jump at
the touch. When Stiles spreads his hand out comfortably and rests it there, his appetite is back.

But he’s hungry for a different kind of thing.

Stiles takes another bite of his food, politely oblivious and Derek can’t look at him anymore. Not
when he does these kind of casual touches like they’re nothing, like they always do this.

He doesn’t want to pretend Stiles is beneath him. Not when he’s only just realised how much he
isn’t. How wrong he’d been to ever think that in the first place.

Derek doesn’t want to be like the Silvas.

Even if it is just for pretend.

Derek doesn’t talk much when Stiles explains the best way to act like he’s not a leader of the pack.
In fact, he’s all but retreated into his internal fortress of solitude when the pack starts on the last
casserole dish and cleans it off in record time.

Stiles is going to have to talk to him about this later. When they’re finally alone. He wishes he didn’t
have to work all day. He wishes that the house was empty and there was no Silva pack coming to
visit.

He wishes he and Derek were back in their bed.

While the pack cleans up in the kitchen, Stiles finishes with his paperwork and sends all the new
evidence he’s gathered in an email to HQ. They can do something with what he’s got at least. It’s a
start.

From the loud laughter and clattering, the pack is still a little bit tipsy from all of the cocktails. Stiles
feels lightheaded as well. But that might be from the lack of food and water he’s had today.

He probably should have eaten more. Derek kept loading up his plate enough as it is. He fumbles for
the corner of the table when the world around the edges gets a little fuzzy. Stiles thinks he’s about to
fall over or pass out when there’s a hand at his back, steadying him.

“Are you alright?” Derek asks, sounding worried.

“Yeah,” Stiles says, unable to hide his relief at the sight of him. “Just stood up too fast again.”

“What do you need to eat more?” Derek wonders. “Or drink water?”

What he manages is a sheepish shrug. “I should probably leave those cocktails to everybody else.”

Derek is watching him intently. “Fucking right.”

Stiles reaches out to cup his face, unbearably pleased that Derek needs to swallow afterward. As if
the touch makes his throat feel heavy.

“What’s with all this planning tonight?” Derek asks him. “I thought we were going to be ourselves.”
“They’re not going to want that,” he says. “Having an omega treated as an equal leader of the pack. They’re going to think you ‘permitted’ me all this freedom.”

Stiles knows Derek thinks that’s fucked up on so many levels. Even if he’s told Stiles his parents never really enforced those shitty expectations that came with statuses growing up.

Stiles knows he doesn’t want to live like that.

“You earned your right as a leader,” Derek insists furiously. “It’s got nothing to do with whether or not you’re mated to me. I bet I was a lousy alpha.”

“You were,” Stiles agrees with a certain degree of humour. “But that was years ago. You’ve evolved since then.”

“Oh great,” he mutters. “As long as I evolved.”

Stiles grins before stepping in close to kiss him. He’s not quite like the Derek Stiles remembers but he’s becoming someone he would have fallen in love with. Stiles knows that at least.

It’s a lot harder to keep his distance now. Not when College Derek is looking at him differently, listening when he speaks, cuddling him close in bed like he never wants to let go. Stiles doesn’t want him to let go either.

With all his hormones out of control right now, Stiles might assume he’s about to go into heat. But he’s still on his suppressants and he’s been careful. Derek’s just throwing him for a loop.

As always.

“I don’t know if I can treat you like that,” Derek admits, when the rest of the pack has camped out in the living room and crashed. Lydia and Allison switched guard duty with Malia and Erica and Scott and Liam are out on patrol now.

Stiles should be patrolling with his best friend, but after the dizzy spells he’s had today, Derek and pretty much everybody else insisted he take it easy. In fact, they’re heading upstairs to go to bed right now.

“Like what?”

“Like you’re just my dutiful omega, like I don’t respect you.”

Stiles can’t believe it. He’s surprised into a laugh. “You didn’t have a problem with it before.”

Derek actually reels back like Stiles struck him and he hates that he put that expression on his face. “But now I know better,” he says quietly. “And I don’t want to put you through that again.”

“I know this is hard,” Stiles says. “But the more surprises we have for the Silva pack the better.”

“You were definitely a surprise,” Derek admits but he still seems torn.

Stiles starts getting undressed as Derek peels back the covers on the bed. “Will it make you feel any better if everyone else is going to be acting that way too?”
Derek glares at him as he starts unbuttoning his pants. “No, Stiles. In fact, that’s going to make it fucking worse.”

Fuck. He really chose the wrong time to realise his ignorance and attempt to positively change it. Stiles wants to be mad about that, but he honestly can’t find it in himself to be.

“I get where you’re coming from dude, but this is the smartest play here. And I’m not the only omega in this pack.”

That seems to pull Derek up short. The confused expression on his face is entirely bewildered and endearing. Stiles tries not to feel too pleased that Derek didn’t even notice there was another omega.

“What?”

“I’ve talked about it with Erica and she’s okay with pretending we’re just lowly omegas.”

Derek reaches out to take hold of Stiles’ hand. “Which one is Erica again?”

Stiles does his best not to feel threatened by the question. “The blonde one. Fast with her claws. Dating Boyd and Malia.”

“And you’re sure she’s alright with this?”

He shrugs. If anything, Erica found the idea amusing. But Malia and Boyd didn't think it was very funny.

“I can’t do it.”

Derek looks all torn up. Enough that Stiles wants to say to hell with it, let the Silva pack find out exactly what kind of leader he is.

“I can’t treat you like I treated you before,” Derek continues in a low voice. “Not now when I know how much of a mistake it was, once I’ve seen- how incredible you are.”

He can’t speak in the face of that. Is College Derek trying to romance him here? Because he was not expecting it at all.

“Oh my God you are making it incredibly hard to resist climbing you like a tree,” he groans and his heart beats faster at the way Derek’s eyes turn heated.

Stiles is slick before Derek even tries to kiss him. They tumble onto the bed together and Stiles ends up atop Derek’s chest. The heat between them is familiar and welcome. He can already feel how hard Derek is. Jesus, what he wouldn’t give for a mutually beneficial orgasm right now. What he wouldn’t give to see Derek naked again.

They’re both panting, breaths stilted and desperate when Derek gets two handfuls of Stiles’ ass and grinds him up against his cock. Stiles hones in on Derek’s neck with a sharp hiss, rolling his hips faster at the sensation, heat and lust fogging up his brain as he kisses his throat.

God, he’d do anything to get Derek naked and inside him right now. He’s sick of his fading bond bite, of having to cover it up every morning.

Fuck, he just wants Derek. In any form. But Derek pulls back instead, raking air into his lungs as his chest falls and rises.

Stiles gestures shakily between their bodies. “Why aren’t we doing this again?”
Derek’s quiet for a moment. “Because it wouldn’t be fair to you.”

Say what now? Since when is College Derek so considerate of Stiles’ feelings? That’s not the answer he would have expected. “Definitely feels like it’s unfair,” he mutters glancing down at both of their erections.

Derek smooths his hands over the back of Stiles’ thighs. “I can wait,” he promises. “We don’t have to do anything.”

Stiles resists the urge to sigh as he rolls off of him. That’s right. He’s not going to make this more complicated. He’s going to be good. He’s not going to have any orgasms. This is not a great trade off at all.

“Tell me a secret,” he suggests, just to distract himself as he rolls to the side, lying beside Derek. “Something no one else knows.”

Derek seems surprised by the question and takes a second to think about it. “I think- it would be very easy to fall in love with you again.”

Stiles feels incredibly warm all of a sudden. Especially when Derek curls up around him, holding him close.

“Tell me a secret,” Derek breathes, against his throat.

He shouldn’t. Stiles isn’t very good at laying himself bare. Even if it is for someone he loves more than anything. This kind of honesty is always hard.

“I’m-” he starts, hesitating. “I’m terrified of losing you.”

Derek doesn’t respond straight away and Stiles regrets mentioning it in the first place.

“Which Derek?” he asks. “The one I was- or the one I am?”


“About this act you want to-“

“It will be easy,” Stiles promises. “You grew up in a pack didn’t you? You know the rules and the traditions. Just channel your inner Talia and we’ll do the rest.”

Stiles knows Derek can do it. He can be a great leader when he’s not chasing after power. When he actually knows what’s important.

“I’ll do it,” he finally agrees. “But I’m not going to enjoy it.”

Stiles leans in and kisses his jaw. “I didn’t think you would.”

Stiles’ phone rings just after Derek’s started to doze off. It doesn’t go off for very long. Stiles sits up so quickly it’s like an explosion’s gone off, instead of the short buzzing sound echoing down the room.
He hadn’t realised Stiles was so on edge. The rest of the pack is sound asleep downstairs. Nobody felt like heading home tonight and Derek can’t find it in himself to think about why.

It’s Stiles’ father calling and his heartbeat shows his nerves. “Dad?” he says, once he answers. “Are you alright? What’s wrong?”


Derek raises an eyebrow at Stiles in the dark although he can’t see him. He didn’t think the composite he’d made with Boyd would turn up results so quickly. Shouldn’t it take longer?

“They made Interpol’s wanted list.”

“Huh,” Stiles says, hand sliding over Derek’s bare hip in the dark. “I guess I don’t need to guess what they did to make that list.”

The sheriff makes a sharp, displeased sound. “You really don’t.”

“Email me their details,” Stiles says. “I’ll take a look over them tomorrow morning. Thanks for keeping us in the loop, Dad.”

“Sure thing. Sleep well.”

“Night.”

Stiles hangs up and curls into Derek's body, spreading out until he’s comfortable again. Derek doesn’t know what he should say, so he turns toward Stiles and holds him close.

“We’ll get them,” he whispers into Stiles’ hair. “We’ll keep everyone safe.”

Stiles lets out all the tension under his skin at the words, going lax like a deflated balloon. He snuggles into Derek’s chest until his breaths even out.

Sleep claims them both.

Derek senses invaders in his territory and wakes up with a snarl, automatically covering Stiles’ body. The sudden violent pounding of his heart as he jerks beneath Derek’s bulk means the movement woke him up.

“Derek? What the fuck?”

He lifts himself up so he’s not crushing Stiles, hovering with his claws out but they’re intentionally spread away from Stiles’ very unprotected skin. Avoiding the chance of hurting him.

How did they get so close? Where is the rest of the pack? The ones who are supposed to be patrolling Beacon Hills right now? Stiles’ cell phone starts buzzing again.

“Derek-?”

“The Silva pack,” he mutters grimly, tensing all over as he hunkers down unconsciously to protect
his mate. “They’re here.”

Derek leans back to look at Stiles and his eyes are wide before they narrow. He doesn’t seem surprised and he doesn’t bother to reach for his phone. Derek thinks about how he invited the whole pack over last night, how he organised it to make it seem like Derek’s in charge.

“You knew they would come early?”

Stiles shrugs. “It’s what I would have done.”

He rolls out from under Derek and darts into the bathroom. He doesn’t need to follow him in to know he’s applying that heavy duty make up to his neck. Covering the bond bite. Derek moves to the dresser and pulls out a pair of jeans, struggling into them.

“But you knew they’d be here today, specifically?”

Stiles seems pretty calm considering. “I guessed.”

Derek wonders what Stiles is like when he’s not guessing. Probably just as dangerous. Maybe more so.

“We’ll meet them out on the lawn,” Stiles decides. “And invite Jessica and her second to stay in the house with us.”

Derek stumbles in the middle of stuffing his leg into his jeans. “You want them to sleep under the same roof? Are you crazy?”

“Keep your enemies close and all that. It’s not very likely they’ll accept the invite. They won’t trust us.”

“What about the people on patrol right now? Do you think they caught them?”

Stiles glances at his phone. “Nope. That was Parrish calling. He was on patrol with Allison this morning. They’ve probably followed the Silva pack here.”

Scott comes barging into their room without knocking, having clearly realised there are enemies afoot and overheard their conversation. “What about our special guest?” Scott demands, claws out and ready for a fight.

It’s the sight of that that makes Derek nervous. They could die here today. Stiles could die, if he’s not strong enough to protect him.

“Jackson covered the bunker last night,” Stiles replies. “They won’t find it unless we let them.”

“Stiles—“

He comes out of the bathroom, mating mark covered as he makes a beeline for Derek. “It will be okay,” he promises. “What would Talia have done?”

Derek feels himself stand up a little straighter. “She would greet her enemies, look into their eyes and decide whether or not the conflict needed to be settled in blood.”

“You can do this,” Scott says, unexpectedly. “Alpha Hale.”

A strange whistling in his ears follows the words and Derek throws a long sleeved Henley over his bare chest and strides out of the room. The pack is already waiting for them downstairs. They’re
ready for this, even if Derek isn’t sure he is.

He doesn’t bother putting on shoes. Talia Hale had a strictly bare foot household and he wants to be as comfortable as possible around these new strangers. The younger pack members smell nervous and Derek realises they’re looking at him for guidance. At Derek and Stiles.

He’s meant to protect all of them. And Derek’s going to. He might not remember who he used to be, but he remembers who his mother was before the fire took her.

“Stay behind me,” he tells the others as he moves towards the front door.

He’s about to open it when he notices that Stiles is still at his side. “That’s you too,” he says as lightly as possible.

Stiles smiles wryly and steps back. Derek wants to reach out and take his hand now more than anything. Instead, he opens the door and steps out. Nobody attacks him as he walks towards the pack of werewolves who are waiting for him on the lawn.

There’s too many of them. That’s what he first thinks. Then he catches sight of Jessica Silva at the centre. The sight of her is enough to give him pause. She’s much younger than he assumed. Much younger than the impression Stiles or anyone else gave him. Her eyes are bright and alert as she tracks the pack members visible behind him.

Derek doesn’t like that her gaze lingers on Stiles the most, as the visible human at the front of the pack.

“Welcome Alpha Silva,” he says. “I see you’ve taken liberties with our invitation of hospitality. Tell me, have the traditions changed to allow so many guests in my territory at once?”

Jessica Silva breaks out into a slow smile. “The rest of my pack is merely here to pay their respects to you, Alpha Hale.”

“You would test my hospitality by adding your own conditions to it?”

The smile on Jessica’s face shifts marginally and the rest of her pack exchange glances. Derek smells the tension in the air.

“They will not linger,” she says. “I know the laws.”

Alpha Silva waves her hand and more than half of the werewolves step back and retreat until she is left with only five other werewolves, as is the custom for visiting packs. Whether or not the rest of them actually leave Beacon Hills will eventually become clear.

“I welcome you then, Alpha Silva of the Silva pack,” he says, reciting the words he hasn’t heard in years. “No harm will come to you in my territory if you abide by our customs.”

“I accept your welcome, Alpha Hale of the Hale pack,” Jessica Silva replies. “I will abide by your customs as is the law of the moon and the earth.”

They incline their heads as one, a mark of mutual respect. Now the introductions are to be made.

“I introduce Randal, Aiysha, Danielle, Clive and Nora-Jane.”

She does not gesture at any of her remaining pack members. During this stage is when most pack wars have started. It’s smarter for her not to single anyone out. She did not announce a second or a
mate either. Though Derek could probably sniff them out if he wanted. And they already have their suspicions about Randy.

Jessica Silva stares at Derek expectantly and he realises he’s supposed to introduce his own pack members. By name. Which would be fine, if he could remember all of their names correctly. *And* under pressure.

He can’t let Stiles speak for him either. That’s not the custom. Derek, as the alpha of the pack needs to introduce them all. And if he can’t remember their names it’s going to raise suspicion. It will seem strange. Leave the Silva pack with questions.

Derek knows how to appear calm when he’s not, so his heartbeat doesn’t betray him as he turns to glance at his pack. The blank expression on Stiles’ face shows he’s figured out the same problem. Except Stiles can’t help him here.

This is on Derek.

Shit.
Derek glances at the pack standing behind him. There’s no other option. He’s just going to have to wing it and hope that his brain somehow subconsciously remembers all of them.

Fat chance.

He licks his lips first, feeling Stiles’ eyes burning into his back as if he’s mentally trying to will Derek the information.

“I introduce, Laura, Cora, Scott, Kira, Malia, Lydia, Allison, Chris, Boyd, Isaac, Erica, Jackson, Parrish, Mason, Corey, Hayden, Lee-“

The stutter of a heartbeat tells Derek he got a name wrong but he keeps going. “And Stiles.”

Jessica can hear how Derek’s heart thuds at the mention of Stiles’ name, despite his best efforts to avoid singling him out. He can see the calculating look on her face. Dammit.

But at least the formal introduction ceremony is over. Now they’ve just got to play nice and not give the Silva pack a legitimate reason to attack them. That way if it ends in a fight, their pack will have the right to defend themselves.

“My alpha twins you have already met,” he adds, without hiding the disapproval in his voice.

Stiles steps forward. “Where are Ethan and Aiden?” he demands, which might be going against their plans to make him seem demure, except Stiles adds a fearful little waver to his voice.

As if he’s a concerned parent. Not one of the leaders of this pack. Arguably their only leader in action at the moment. Derek knows he’s nowhere near ready to host these other werewolves right now.

Jessica has a polite smile, but the handsome looking man next to her with sharp eyes curls his lip. Derek can see the scars across his arms and his throat. From the slash of claws. He’s been in a lot of fights with alphas. They’re the only ones that take longer to heal, that could possibly leave scars.

Derek doesn’t need to think like Stiles to know this man is Randal.

The head of the Silva pack gestures to someone in the distance and Derek can hear the sound of a van door sliding open, then three new heartbeats. The van must be soundproofed.

There could be a whole group of them in there.

He hears chains rattling next and realises that the alpha twins he hasn’t met are chained up and being released by the third heartbeat. He knows the rest of the pack with sensitive hearing are listening as well, but no one reacts to the sound, which is what Jessica might have wanted.

If she goads them into attacking first, they will have disobeyed their own laws.

When the pack stands stoically behind them and does little else, Derek feels a strong rush of pride. Especially when the scarred werewolf sneers.
The twin werewolves come into sight a second later. Stiles lets out an audible gasp and snatches at Derek's wrist just like a terrified omega would and it's like he's flipped a switch because that's when the pack finally shifts uneasily.

They're identical. Derek can't remember if Stiles mentioned that, but he doesn't know if the old Derek knows how to tell them apart. It's safer not to try. If he gets that wrong, like he got one of the pack member's name wrong it's just going to make things worse.

Just like the twins are looking now. They're pretty battered. One has a black eye and the other's whole left side of their face is swollen. They can't stand up without supporting each other. The Silva pack must have been dosing them with wolfsbane to mess with their healing ability.

Or their wounds are fresh.

Neither is a good thought. Derek doesn't like this at all. They're definitely trying to goad them. This kind of insult can't be ignored.

“They have come to harm in your territory,” Derek says, unable to keep the anger out of his voice.

But Jessica only shrugs. “They did not abide by our customs.”

Derek stares her down when Stiles squeezes his wrist, still looking nervous. Even his heart beat is elevated. How the hell is Stiles so convincing at this? It's messing with his alpha instincts. Derek has to keep ignoring the urge to pull him protectively into his arms.

“You have witnesses to this?” Derek asks, knowing the procedure.

His mother has punished werewolves for not following their customs on their land before.

“Of course,” Jessica replies easily. “Nora-Jane witnessed-“

“A werewolf from your own pack? Why was your emissary not present?”

A third party is supposed to be present whenever two packs meet. As the neutral force. As the words come out of his mouth Derek realises that Stiles never mentioned one for their pack. They have an emissary right? Jessica could use that to weaken their claims if they don’t.

Alan Deaton used to be his mother’s emissary but Derek has no idea whether he still is. Or if he’s even in Beacon Hills anymore. He thinks Scott mentioned him once a few days ago but he can’t remember why.

Jessica inclines her head towards the woman standing behind Ethan and Aiden. The one who helped unchain them.

“Nila stood witness,” she says. “But I do not see your emissary present, Derek Hale. Unless it is the little human omega hanging off your arm.”

Derek resists the urge to snarl.

She’s trying to rile him up. They want an excuse to fight. He’s not going to give them one. Besides Stiles is probably loving this. They’re seeing him exactly how he wants to be seen. Whatever he’s doing is working.

“Deaton’s here,” Stiles whispers, quietly, but all of the werewolves present can hear him.

A man Derek hasn’t seen in years steps out from inside the house, behind the rest of the pack. He
seems a little older but he hasn’t exactly changed much. Deaton nods at Nila and some kind of silent communication occurs between them.

The smile slides off Jessica’s face.

Derek can sort of see her plan now.

She wanted to show up unannounced so they wouldn’t have their entire pack present and ready to face them. Without their emissary here to offer neutral advice it would have left all the power to the Silva emissary. Who clearly seems biased.

He doesn’t remember Ethan and Aiden but he knows they wouldn’t be breaking custom laws on another werewolf pack’s land. Especially if Stiles thought to send them as ambassadors. They’d have to have diplomatic skills for Stiles to entrust that task to them.

They would never have blundered like this.

And that can only mean the Silva pack emissary is not impartial. If Deaton hadn’t been here and a fight had started, it’s no question of who the right to defend would have gone to.

That’s why they brought the twins in as they did. To incite a fight. One that their emissary would have taken their side on as the casting decision. At least that was their plan. Except Stiles has been keeping the pack on standby ever since they got the letter warning of their arrival, ready to show up at the house at a moment’s notice. And he’d been encouraging sleepovers this past week.

He must have texted Deaton sometime when Derek was in full panic mode. Probably when he was in the bathroom applying makeup to his bond bite. Maybe Deaton’s been on standby for this moment as well.

Stiles has been prepared for them long before the Silva pack could have realised.

“I will see to their wounds,” Deaton says, crossing the distinct boundaries between the two packs without hesitation.

He doesn’t smell afraid either. His heart betrays nothing as he approaches the twins. The other emissary steps back, glancing uncertainly at Jessica. This was clearly not the expected outcome.

That becomes more certain when a police cruiser pulls up just beyond the driveway and Parrish and Allison climb out. They’re both armed, Allison with a crossbow casually slung over her shoulder and both look equally forbidding when they approach the group. Derek watches the Silva pack’s attention shift between the new arrivals and the others crowding at the front of the house, realising they’re trapped between them.

Jessica's heartbeat goes slightly uneven but her pack steps aside to let Allison and Parrish pass, though their eyes track the gun in Parrish's holster carefully. The deputy nods at the new wolves but Derek can tell they don't like the cop being there.

Derek is so fucking impressed with his own pack right now. But he manages an even tone when he steps aside and gestures at their open door. Stiles, amazingly, steps with him without a word, half hiding behind his bulk, still gripping his hand tightly.

He’s such a walking stereotype for everything Derek thought omegas were that he can’t believe he ever thought of them like that in the first place.

“If you’d like to step inside, we can begin talks of peaceful collaboration.”
Jessica glances quickly at the scarred werewolf. Almost too quickly to be discernible. But Derek catches it. And he knows Stiles does. There’s her second. Definitely Randal then. But she sticks her chin up proudly afterward and leads her pack into the house. They’re tense as they walk between his pack. Derek wonders if this method works for them every time, or if this is the first occasion they’ve had to step into a rival pack’s home before.

Derek watches them until they disappear out of sight into their living room with some of his pack following at the rear.

Stiles’ heartbeat, which had been elevated earlier, starts going haywire. Noticeably haywire. Derek turns to him, worried he’s slipping into a panic attack only to see he’s grinning broadly at him.

And that’s when he realises.

Stiles is somehow inducing this reaction. He eyes Derek meaningfully and glances over at the bathroom opposite Scott and Kira’s bedroom. The soundproofed bathroom. Because every room in this house is soundproofed.

Derek goes with it, lets his instincts react naturally.

“Scott,” he hisses, knowing full well that the rival pack can hear them in the house. “Stiles is having a panic attack again. Distract them for a few minutes.”

Scott glances at Stiles, hearing his heartbeat but seeing from the expression on his face that something else is going on. He catches up quickly. And then he starts smelling nervous, agitated.

Are all his pack members this good at imitating emotions?

“Shit, okay,” he whispers quickly. “I’ll cover for you. Get him some water before he passes out.”

He gives them a thumbs up, completely opposite to the anxious tone of his voice and Stiles winks at him. Then he disappears into the living room with the rest of the pack. Stiles quickly drags Derek into the bathroom, locking the door behind him.

Derek doesn’t know what he’s expecting.

But it’s definitely not for Stiles to gasp out, “dude. You were amazing,” before kissing him on the mouth.

He kisses back just as enthusiastically, but inside he’s feeling supremely satisfied with himself. He didn’t screw things up for them. Derek actually helped the situation. Mostly.

“I got someone’s name wrong,” he mutters into Stiles’ skin, nosing at his cheek. “I completely forgot about the emissary.”

“No,” Stiles gasps. “It’s totally on me. I forgot about that part of the ceremony. We haven’t had a visit from another pack in ages. You’ve been telling me for a while you don’t remember everyone’s names. I shouldn’t have thrown you to the wolves like that. You handled it fucking beautifully, man.”

Derek grins at him and his cheeks are heating up. Fuck, is he blushing right now? “I still fucked it up,” he protests. “I messed up a name. I heard-“

“Technically you didn’t,” Stiles pants. “Hayden calls Liam, Li all the time.”
Liam. Fuck. He was so close. Stiles is pulling him in again. “Doesn’t matter,” he promises, earnestly. “We’ll just call him Lee until the pack leaves. The other pack shouldn’t notice the difference.”

Stiles’ enthusiasm is kind of blinding, and wholly addictive. Derek’s kissing him again before he can even think about the dangerous pack hanging out in their living room.

His mouth is hot and eager and Derek actually has to pull back before he starts getting too interested. He can’t walk out smelling of sex when he’s supposed to be comforting his mate.

When he pulls away Stiles is still trying to get his breathing and his heart under control. But it has nothing to do with how great a kisser Derek might be. He’s still coming down from whatever he did to make it seem like a panic attack in the first place.

“How are you doing that?” Derek asks curiously.

“Not easily,” he admits. “I usually need to imagine a previous panic attack. Put myself right back in that moment.”

Derek’s no expert but that doesn’t exactly sound enjoyable. “Are- are you okay?”

Stiles grins but his heart is starting to slow down. “I’m great,” he says, still sounding a little breathless. “She’s not Jessica Silva.”

Derek stares at him. “What?”

“She can’t be,” Stiles continues, quickly. “Jessica Silva is much older. She must be her kid or something. Only way they’d have let her lead the pack. And she doesn’t seem very experienced either.”

“They’ve still got the emissary on their side,” Derek points out. “Just because she might not be experienced doesn’t mean they aren’t a threat.”

“True,” he agrees. “But I think Deaton might be able to get through to her.”

“How did he even get in here?” Derek demands. “I didn’t even know he was still our emissary.”

Stiles just leans back against the sink, seemingly pleased with the situation. “I got Isaac to leave the back door unlocked and I texted him to warn him the Silva pack was here. Scott’s been keeping Deaton in the loop about everything.”

Trust them to have this all sorted out beforehand. It’s no wonder this pack has stuck together for so long, despite the odd selection of supernatural beings in it.

“I think Tara was right,” Derek admits. “That Randal guy seems like our biggest problem.”

Stiles’ mouth thins into a straight line. “Yeah. I agree. He’s not here looking for an amicable solution. He’s here for a fight.”

Exactly. And that’s a problem. If Jessica is inexperienced they might be able to convince her that a solution without bloodshed is their only option. But in order for them to do that they’ll have to keep Randal out of her ear.

And that’s not going to be easy.

Derek takes Stiles’ hand. “What am I suggesting we want to happen between our packs?”
“Something they’ll never go for,” Stiles answers. “We don’t want them agreeing to something quickly just so they can leave, recover with a new plan and possibly bring back more of their pack to attack us.”

“So you want to draw these peace talks out?”

That doesn’t seem like a great idea. Derek’s not sure an extended period of exposure to this pack is going to work. He’s already riled up. And the rest of the pack might be handling things really well so far but there’s always a limit to how long that can last.

“Yeah, until we can convince them into a peace treaty and back them into a corner.”

“How the hell do we do that?” Derek demands.

Stiles only smiles at him. “Don’t worry. We’ve done it before. We just keep suggesting things they’re totally against, gradually pushing at their limits and then pushing further. And then before they know it, they’ve given way too much ground than they intended.”

Derek’s not doubting Stiles or the pack. But somehow he doesn’t think things with the Silvas will be so easy. If Jessica is a figurehead here, that means there’s someone else in the background pulling the strings. He doesn’t like that thought.

But this does seem like their best option.

“So what am I asking for then?”

Stiles mouth slowly transforms into a confident smirk. “Nevada.”

Oh shit. Now way. Stiles can’t be fucking serious here. “What? We’ve going to ask for their territory? Are you fucking out of your mind?”

“No,” he grins. “Not all of it. We’re going to ask for Carson City.”

“Their state capital?” Derek repeats, repelled by the arrogance of it.

“Yeah,” Stiles agrees, nodding his head. “Then when they lose their shit and push for somewhere else, then we’ll ask for Death Valley.”

“Why do we want Death Valley?” he wonders. “It straddles the border between Nevada and California right near Vegas. And there are plenty of other packs in those territories nearby. I thought the point was to keep away from bloodthirsty packs.”

“Well we don’t really want that either,” Stiles explains. “That’s when we’ll ask for Lake Tahoe.”

That’s a surprise. “You want Lake Tahoe?”

“Yeah. The Silva pack has been spilling over into Californian borders for a few years now,” he says. “If we take that then we expand our territory all the way down to South Lake.”

Derek takes a second to comprehend the sheer volume of that kind of territory. “Stiles, I know you think our pack is strong. But we can’t hold that much land. The territory is too big for us to cover or defend.”

“I know that,” he says. “But if they concede it to us. It’s an official roadblock that they can’t get around in the future when they keep expanding. It will force them away from us for a long time.”
Derek can see what Stiles is trying to do now. “You’re trying to stop them from edging closer to Beacon Hills. To our territory.”

He nods. “They’ve been extending territory for years now but they’ve only started moving steadily towards us in the last two. It’s why I contacted them. They must have heard about us, so they’ve been subtly presenting a challenge, hoping to wipe us out.”

There’s been so much fucking planning in this Derek wonders how Stiles could keep up with it all. He’s not surprised the Silva pack has been coming for them. That’s what packs do when they hear about another strong pack rising in the ranks. They either join with them or destroy them.

The Silva pack might be playing at diplomacy but there’s no mistaking they’re after the latter.

“We’ve been in here too long,” he realises, thinking of the bloodthirsty pack waiting for them in the living room.

“Shit,” Stiles mutters, and then his eyes start welling up with tears.

Derek’s heart is pounding when he steps towards him. “Fuck, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” he laughs, still tearing up. “All for show. Hey, do tears smell different? Should I make sure that they’re distressed tears?”

Fuck, this kid is terrifyingly manipulative. How is Derek supposed to know Stiles hasn’t used that against him? “The chemicals in tears smell different,” he admits. “We can tell the emotion in them.”

Stiles goes quiet for a few minutes, thinking deeply and soon enough his eyes are flowing with fresh tears again. They smell of panic and distress. Jesus, this fucking kid. His face is reddening, cheeks hot and wet and Derek touches the door before raising a questioning eyebrow. Stiles nods like he's ready, and only when Derek unlocks it does he actually sniffle.

His emotions are plain.

“Pull yourself together,” Derek commands harshly, pulling forth images of Kate and the simmering anger that never fails to bring out. “You’re embarrassing me.”

“Yes, alpha,” Stiles says, but his voice is wobbly when he reaches up to wipe the tears from his face.

It doesn’t hide anything, which is entirely the point. Stiles wants the Silva pack to see him go to pieces in tense moments like this.

Derek leads him back into the living room where both of the packs are waiting, standing on opposite sides of the room. No one but the alpha twins, Ethan and Aiden felt the need to sit down which seems pretty telling. Nobody is expecting a long stay here.

He purses his lips together, expression drawn and addresses Jessica Silva. “My apologies,” he says, as she glances at Stiles hiding behind his back, quietly weeping. “If you’d join me in the dining room.”

When one of the twins looks like they’re going to attempt to stand, Derek waves a hand at them. “Stay here. You’re wounded and I don’t need you.”

The twins seem a little surprised by his bluntness but after sharing a glance they stay where they are. He hopes Stiles will find a way to explain the situation to them. They don’t even know that he has no clue who they are.
Derek encourages both packs towards the main table that is big enough to seat all of them and gets settled at the head of the table. Jessica chooses the opposite end and Randal stands behind her back, like he’s protecting it while her emissary, Nila sits to her left and the rest of her pack takes up the other seats.

Deaton sits to Derek’s left and the rest of the pack leaves an open seat for Stiles on his right while they all get comfortable. Stiles hangs back warily with Erica before they take their seats. Boyd and Malia completely ignore their mate but leave an empty chair for her.

The omegas sit down last and Derek observes the only other male werewolf from the Silva pack sit down at the same time they do. So Clive is an omega as well.

He also can’t help but notice Jessica steadily refuses to look at one of the women in her own pack, beta by the smell of her. Derek thinks she might be intentionally trying not to show any interest.

Maybe they’re lovers?

“Omega,” Derek says, addressing Stiles without looking at him. “Bring the maps from my office.”

Stiles turns his neck to bare his throat submissively to Derek before he stands up to do as he’s been commanded. Derek feels like he needs to shower off the attitude he’s wearing right now but focuses on Jessica at the end of the table instead. This is what Stiles wanted. And if he’s going to be a dick, he might as well commit to the role.

“If you need anything,” he says to the Silva pack. “Don’t hesitate to call on the omegas to bring you food or refreshments.”

Jessica nods but none of her pack make any suggestions. They don’t trust what Derek or his pack might give them. As if their laws are going to allow Derek to poison their water and get away with it. Still, the distrust is not surprising.

Stiles returns to cover some of the awkwardness in the air and he’s seemingly gotten himself under control by then because he’s no longer crying. His face is still pink and blotchy though, and wholly distracting. Derek's got to get his head together.

He unrolls the map out across the table without a word before taking the seat at Derek’s side quietly.

“You’ve come here today to discuss a future of peace and cooperation between us,” Derek starts. “But the strongest bonds between packs are created in the exchange of land and territories.”

Jessica Silva raises an eyebrow. “What are you suggesting, Alpha Hale?”

He pauses, staring the Silva pack down unflinchingly, showing his resolve. “I want Carson City.”

Chairs scrape when two of Jessica’s wolfs stand up with shouts of protest. She growls at them, eyes flashing red and the two beta females drop back into their seats after a beat, admonished.

Jessica’s gaze meets his across the long table. Her lip curls.

Here we go, Derek thinks.
Holy shit Derek is amazing. He was seriously made for this. Stiles has been staring obediently at a spot on the table for the last twenty minutes while Derek goes through with their plan beautifully. He’s beyond impressed with his skills right now.

Stiles was right. The Silva pack turn their noses up at the thought of giving up Carson city and Jessica can barely keep her betas under control when Derek suggests it. No. When Derek demands the territory.

Stiles should not be getting turned on seeing Derek command an entire room. But that kind of confidence is insanely appealing. Especially when he’s been so uncertain about everything since the attack and losing his memories.

College Derek is pulling out all the stops here, reminding him so much of Actual Derek that he’s practically squirming in his seat. Or he would be if that were the actions expected of a fragile little omega.

He’s not loving the dehumanisation that happened as soon as the rival pack arrived here but hey, that was the whole point. Stiles signed up for this because he wants to play behind the scenes and largely be ignored.

So when Jackson interrupts the discussion to request that Stiles fetch him a drink, he nods dutifully and goes to get it even if he wants to punch Jackson so hard in his teeth that he forever ruins any chances of another photoshoot in his lifetime. He resists. Barely. Though he can feel the heat coming off Derek as he slips past to enter the kitchen even if he manages not to react.

That doesn’t mean Stiles can’t read him. There’s a reckoning coming for Jackson as soon as the Silva pack is gone, that’s for sure. Not that Stiles even needs Derek to beat up Jackson for him.

Stiles can do that himself.

He moves towards the cupboard, grabs out a glass and gets filtered water out of the fridge. It is beyond tempting to spit in it. Stiles only just manages not to. If Jackson figures out he did it, then he won’t drink the water and then the Silva pack is only going to be more on edge thinking they’re trying to poison people.

When he returns Jessica is politely inquiring into the territories they’d be willing to give up as well. But Derek barely even blinks, suggesting Calneva, which sits on the northern border of Nevada and California and is basically useless. There’s nothing out there except maybe an old casino, a lodge and endless desert.

Stiles needs to hide his reaction or he’s going to laugh. Especially when he hands Jackson the glass of water and Jackson glares at it like he wants to sniff it suspiciously but knows he can’t.

When Stiles goes to sit down he can feel one of the members from the Silva pack staring at his ass. He doesn’t react to that either, though from the beginning Derek’s been more than clear that Stiles is his mate.

Once he sits down, Stiles surreptitiously glances around the room and accidentally makes eye contact with the second, Randy. Who’s blatantly staring at him and not even bothering to keep the thoughts off his face.

Ugh. Stiles ducks his head and pretends to sit there quietly in confusion as if he has no idea what these kind of discussions entail. The pack is shifting restlessly, the overall expectation of a fight making it hard for them to remain still and chat idly about land.
The only one not moving is Erica, who’s seemingly taking her role just as seriously as Stiles. She hasn’t spoken since the Silva pack arrived. And hasn’t shown her claws once. Stiles is pretty impressed.

“Omega,” says a slimy voice and Stiles’ head snaps up once he realises it’s Randy, and he’s the omega being addressed. “I need refreshment.”

Only the way he says it makes it very clear he’s not talking about drinks. Stiles resists the urge to show what he really thinks about that request and stands up to go back into the kitchen again.

Except he hears footsteps behind him.

“My omega is more than capable,” Derek says sharply, and Stiles realises that Randy was about to follow him into the kitchen. “He doesn’t need supervision.”

Randy just wanted to get him alone. Probably so he could try something. It wouldn’t have worked out in his favour though. But Jessica’s second only smiles, showing off teeth that look unnaturally sharp. “I have very specific tastes.”

Ugh, gross. Derek’s expression doesn’t flicker, but he nods at Boyd and suddenly Stiles is being escorted into the kitchen by Boyd and the unpleasant werewolf Randy.

Boyd doesn’t say much but he doesn’t need to. He just stands there menacingly and folds his arms. Randy looks a lot less like he’s interested in checking that Stiles pours him a fucking glass full of water and not rat poison and more focused on inspecting every inch of his body.

When Stiles hands him the glass, Randy shows off a cruel kind of smile. “You’re very obliging aren’t you, omega?”

Stiles doesn’t meet his eyes but he’s seriously considering kneeling him in the balls if he tries anything further than an unoriginal sounding come-on. Seriously? What the fuck is wrong with this guy that he actually thought that might work. Ignoring the fact that Stiles is mated, a human being, not a fucking status for this dickface to fetishize, he also has some fucking standards.

“For my alpha,” he says, deliberately sounding a little breathless. “Yes.”

Randy’s eyes trail over his body again, lingering on his unmarked neck. Then he glances at Stiles’ noticeably unmarked wrists and raises a thoughtful eyebrow. Stiles can see him slowly figuring it out.

Then he’s staring at Stiles’ clothing with more interest. As if willing Stiles naked so he could see the mating mark. And maybe something else. Man, he really wants to kick Randy in the balls.

Boyd inclines his head pointedly toward the dining room and Stiles nods quickly and hurries back out again.

He wants to get as far away from Randy as possible. He could almost be as creepy as Peter.

Stiles keeps yawning. They’ve been talking for hours and because of Jessica’s damn antagonistic second, Randal, their discussions on territory have been getting nowhere. It hasn’t escaped Derek’s
attention that he’s set his eyes on Stiles either. Derek’s fucking mate.

If he were within reach of his claws, Derek might have started a pack war for that reason alone.

Stiles is sitting dutifully at Derek’s right but he’s got his head pillowed on his hand, yawning and letting his eyelashes flutter so no one could possibly think he was even listening.

Derek knows he is though and he understands how much of a struggle it is for Stiles to stay this idle for such a long period of time. Even when he sleeps he’s still moving about. Derek surreptitiously dropped a marker pen into his lap a few hours ago and Stiles has been fiddling with it under the table ever since. He’s not exactly sure why he did it but Derek was right in thinking it would help.

Except now Stiles looks like he’s about to drop off in the middle of this important meeting and he’s so convincing that Derek keeps glancing at him to make sure he doesn’t have to stop his head smacking against the table.

The other pack has noticed as well and he can tell by their polite expressions that they’re thinking pretty disparaging thoughts about Stiles right now. And omegas in general. Erica is sitting there so quietly that Derek almost doesn’t even recognise her.

The Silva pack’s omega is just as quiet. But he’s seemingly more anxious, and very aware of Randal at his back when he paces behind the seats. Derek thinks whatever reason Clive is so on edge is a good one.

When Randal tried to get Stiles alone in the kitchen, Derek was ready to kill him. Diplomacy be damned. It must have shown on his face because Jessica sent him a look so sharp when he’d returned that he hasn’t looked at Stiles since.

But everyone is watching Stiles now.

Derek thinks about why he's falling asleep in the middle of this talk and realises it's to give an excuse to end the meeting. It’s tradition that the mate be present at these discussions even if they’re seen as the kind of token piece of furniture that Stiles could never be. They can’t continue without him.

Which is good, because Derek can’t see this going anywhere as yet. Not with the Silva pack subtly undoing everything they’re trying to build between them. They might not have gone along with his demand for Carson City, but he’s barely had the chance to suggest Death Valley as an alternative, before they were asking for Lake Davis which is barely a few towns over, across the mountains and way into Californian territory.

Derek’s been trying to counter that demand ever since. But maybe it’s better to leave it here for today.

“My omega is tired,” he says, purposely addressing Stiles as omega. Stiles’ fingers twitch under the table and Derek wonders if he's internally laughing at him. “We will resume these talks tomorrow. Alpha Silva please accept the rooms we’ve made up for you and your pack to rest in.”

There are general murmurings and Derek taps Stiles on the shoulder who startles like he’s slipped into a doze with his eyes open. He flushes with embarrassment once he realises that the meeting has ended and everyone is staring at him.

Derek has no idea how the hell Stiles is pulling this off so easily. He’s never gone so long without hearing him talk. It’s sort of unnatural. He doesn’t like it. And he doesn’t want Stiles in the background.
He takes his hand and leads Stiles towards the staircase, giving Boyd a meaningful look to ensure the other pack gets settled in without any issue. They have two spare bedrooms. Three if Laura stays with Cora. Jackson stubbornly refuses to go anywhere but where the action is. So he’ll be staying here.

After the shit he pulled with Stiles today though, Derek makes sure he’s sleeping on the couch. Malia and Mason take, Ethan and Aiden with them and Derek assumes they’re going to explain the situation once they get them home. He’s guessing that they have their own apartment somewhere in Beacon Hills because none of the other pack members mentioned living with them.

Boyd tips his head like he caught the message and Derek wraps an arm around Stiles’ waist, taking him up to their bedroom.

A snatch of harsh laughter has him turning around and Stiles heads on into the bedroom without him. He’s barely trying to peer over the railway to see who it might be when Stiles is reappearing at his elbow, looking grim.

Derek goes to open his mouth to ask but Stiles only shakes his head and beckons him into the room where they can shut the door and not be overheard.

“Someone’s been in here,” Stiles says once Derek closes the door.

“What?”

“Yeah, they’ve disturbed a few things. Tried to put them back but not well enough. Can you smell-?”

Derek inhales, getting hit with a fresh helping of Stiles’ natural scent and shakes it off before he tries to get his hands on him again. Once he concentrates, it’s fairly easy to pick up a scent that shouldn’t be here.

An interloper. But one that is familiar.

“Is it Peter?” Stiles asks, picking the answer right out of Derek’s mouth.

He nods, surprised.

“Can you tell me what he touched?”

Derek can actually, if he focuses enough. The scent leads him straight into the bathroom. He opens the medicine cabinet and points to the different bottles that Peter covered with his scent.

“Which one did he linger on?” Stiles asks.

Derek takes another breath. “It’s this one,” he says, picking up one of the bottles.

Stiles frowns, taking them out of Derek’s hand. “Those are my suppressants,” he says with a sense of finality.

Derek feels a flash of fury at the serious boundary Peter crossed. “What the fuck is his problem?”

“He must have come through the door this morning when Isaac left it open for Deaton,” Stiles realises.

That’s beyond disturbing. His uncle is sneaking into the bedroom where Derek sleeps with his mate now? Is he completely unhinged? Or is he working with the Silva pack like Stiles suspected he is?
Right now, Derek thinks whatever his reasons, they're not good.

Stiles uncaps the bottle and Derek leans in towards him. “It’s not empty,” Stiles observes, expression drawn. “They look the same.”

Derek wrinkles his nose. “But they don’t smell the same. What the hell do you think he’s doing?”

“Switched the pills out with placebos probably,” Stiles shrugs.

What the actual fuck. It's no wonder the rest of the pack hates him if he's constantly doing shit like this. “Why the fuck would he be messing with your suppressants?”

“To induce my heat,” Stiles assumes. “Keep us both distracted.”

A shudder passes through him at the thought. Yeah, Stiles in heat. Definitely a distraction. One they can’t afford right now. One Stiles shouldn’t have to deal with when his mate has no memories of him. None ones that involve their clothes on anyway.

And Derek still isn’t too sure if they were just dreams. The point is, he’s got no idea how to help Stiles through a heat.

Yeah, he sat through biology class in high school like every other hormonal teenager was forced to, but that doesn’t mean he knows what he’s doing. Fucking and heat sex are two different things. And if he’s not one hundred per cent confident then Stiles could get badly hurt, or be uncomfortable.

Stiles going into heat is the last thing they need.

“You said I killed him,” Derek mutters, staring at the pills that Peter’s tried to mess with. “How long did that last?”

Stiles sighs and tips the pills into the toilet before flushing them down the drain. “Three short blissful months.”

Whoever the fuck Peter is now, Derek kind of wishes he’d stayed dead a little longer. Maybe permanently. How the hell could he keep betraying his family like this? Stiles is bending down and pulling out a jar of dark ash from underneath the cabinet.

“You don’t mind if I use this?” he asks. “I don’t trust that Randal guy. But if I seal the bedroom you’re trapped in here.”

“Do it,” he encourages. “I don’t like the way he was looking at you.”

Stiles’ expression twists to reveal his disgust. “Yeah, join the fucking club.”

“Do we need to get you more suppressants?” he asks, skin warming at the thought of what would happen otherwise. “How long until-?”

“It’s fine,” he says. “I took one this morning. A real one before he switched them out. I’ll get some tomorrow.”

Derek watches him when Stiles moves out into the bedroom and lines their bedroom door with mountain ash. There’s a strange smell in the air and Stiles seemingly does something because when Derek looks around the room, the ash is lining the windows as well.

“Not bad,” he admits and Stiles grins on his way past him to the shower.
“Man, I need a shower to cleanse the feel of that dude’s eyes on me,” Stiles says, tearing off his shirt without embarrassment.

Derek’s eyes zero in on his chest, on the way his body moves when he bends over to unzip his pants. His mouth is dry before Stiles is standing in his underwear. “I need a shower too,” he admits, trailing after him unthinkingly. “Need to wash off all that shitty alpha posturing.”

Stiles glances back at him with renewed interest. “Wanna join me?” he wonders, waggling his eyebrows.

Fuck, does he ever. But they said they wouldn’t.

“Stiles,” he mutters, sounding pained. “We said no sex.”

The fact that he’s saying that to a man right now and sincerely regrets not being able to have sex with him is mind blowing. Derek can’t believe he’s here right now.

Stiles just raises a teasing eyebrow. “So you don’t want to see me naked?”

Fuck.

Derek’s tearing off his shirt pretty much immediately and stepping out of his pants and underwear. Just as Stiles scrambles to get out of his boxers.

“Fuck it,” he mutters and he’s crowding Stiles into the shower and kissing the shit out of him.

Stiles laughs, leaning back to get the water running and at a good temperature and Derek finally catches up with the fact that they’re both naked and he can see everything between them. And he means everything.

Stiles’ dick is a fucking sight even half hard as it is now. Derek wants it in his mouth more than ever, but he resists. There’s so much more that he wants to do right now. Derek’s half under the water, pushing Stiles up against the tiled wall and groans when Stiles’ hands reach around to grab hold of his ass, encouraging him close.

Soon enough he’s hard as a rock and the smell of Stiles’ flowing slick is driving him crazy. He’d give anything to get inside him right now. God, it’d be so easy. Push right into the place where Stiles is hot and open.

“Fuck,” he pants into Stiles’ throat, teeth grazing the soft skin there.

“Oh God,” Stiles is saying, panting unevenly into his ear.

He’s got a hold of Derek’s hand and before he even knows what’s happening Stiles is bringing it around and between his ass cheeks.

“Stiles,” he moans, fingers sliding through the slick there, tracing the opening and feeling his heat.

But Stiles said they shouldn’t. They’re not going to do this.

“Please,” he groans, pushing at Derek’s wrist, reassuring and drawing him in.

Derek has to. He has to. His finger slides into Stiles like it’s meant to. Like it belongs there, Stiles’ body clutching him tightly, pulling him in deeper.

He’s hot and achy and open and Derek’s cock is pressed up against Stiles’ hip when he presses a
second finger inside. Stiles is already rocking on his fingers by then, mouth pink and bitten when he tugs Derek in to kiss him.

He’s steadily moving against him now and Derek’s covering his belly with precome as he crooks his fingers, trying to make it as good as he can. Stiles is impossibly tight. Derek’s losing his mind imagining Stiles wrapped around his dick and they’re kissing wildly when he works a third finger inside.

Stiles pants into his mouth and shifts his hips faster, reaching around to get a hold of his cock, furiously jerking himself off. Derek groans, getting the friction from Stiles’ moving hips, dragging his cock against Stiles’ belly, feeling the body against him roll with pleasure.

Derek probes a little further, searching for that spot inside Stiles that is hardwired to his pleasure. He knows when he finds it because Stiles stiffens against him and keens, panting into his chest as his hips start to lose their rhythm.

When Stiles’ body locks up and comes, the smell of it does something to Derek because he’s thrusting against Stiles and shooting across his hip a second later, covering Stiles in his come as his orgasm explodes through him.

Derek pushes Stiles more firmly against the wall, out of the spray while he twitches on Derek’s fingers, still wet but sensitive after his orgasm. It’s irrational but he wants to watch his come slide down Stiles’ skin, mark him up even further.

Stiles seems to know that but doesn’t care, flushed and satisfied when Derek slowly withdraws his fingers.

“Wow,” he says, lips so tempting Derek has to lean in and kiss him again.

When he pulls back Stiles is grinning lazily.

“We are really not good at that no sex rule,” Stiles sighs, before laughing and letting his eyes fall shut as his chest heaves.

Derek looks down and realises he’s got some of Stiles’ come on his skin. Slowly, while Stiles isn’t watching, he scoops it off and puts it into his mouth. The burst of tang and salt is a little overwhelming but Derek likes it. He wonders if Stiles’ slick tastes the same.

Fuck.

He really does like men as well as women. No way to pretend otherwise. Derek’s got no idea how he’s supposed to keep his head when he actually gets inside Stiles for the first time. Well, for the first time he remembers.

“You okay?” he asks Stiles, when he stops leaning on the wall and pushes them both back into the spray.

“I’m so good,” he moans, sounding so much like he did a few minutes ago that Derek flushes.

He kisses Derek again and then they’re cleaning each other up together. Laughing, when Derek slips and nearly falls over completely.

He’s loose and relaxed when they finish up and get towelled off, throwing on fresh boxers and climbing into bed together. Stiles picks up Derek’s phone and starts sending texts to the pack. No doubt asking them to do things for him whilst appearing to be their head alpha. Whatever they need
to do to keep up appearances.

“What about your dad?” Derek says suddenly, realising how unprotected he could be right now. “Is he alright?”

“I sent Laura over to check on him,” Stiles mutters, looking oddly touched anyway. “He’s going to stay with Parrish for a few days until the Silva pack is gone.”

“Good,” he mutters rolling over and pressing up against Stiles’ back, holding him close.

Derek doesn’t want anyone to get hurt.

But he’s not stupid enough to think this isn’t ending in a bloodbath.

There’s footsteps outside the hall.

The sound wakes Derek up and he doesn’t need to shake Stiles awake in order to tell him. Since he stirs almost instantly.

He’s expecting something when the footsteps get closer, maybe for the door to rattle or something. The handle to turn. But whoever it is must not be able to get past the mountain ash barrier that Stiles created before they went to bed.

Stiles’ heart is surprisingly steady, but Derek’s is pounding when he hears the claws scratch slowly across the door, like the caress of a lover but much more ominous. There’s a werewolf out there who wants to get in.

They sit up, watching the door expectantly but that’s all that happens. Derek’s thinking of so many different reasons they could be here but the most obvious seems to be staring them both in the face.

It’s so much easier to take over a pack when their head alpha is dead.

Some fucking peace talk.
Hey guys, sorry its been a while since the last update, I had my assignments due/exam period like I mentioned and I've only just finished (one exam left now). This fic hasn't been abandoned and I have every intention of finishing it♡

When Derek wakes up the next morning, Stiles is already sitting up in bed beside him, furiously typing out words onto his cell phone.

“What is it?” he asks, thinking of the person prowling outside their door last night. “Is someone-?”

“Everything’s fine,” Stiles promises. “This is just some planning.”

Derek drops back onto the pillows with a sigh. More planning. More peace talks. More pretending he’s a dickface alpha while Stiles shrinks back into a corner.

Maybe a war between their packs would have been easier.

“Who do you think it was?” he asks. “Last night.”

Stiles hums thoughtfully as his fingers fly across his phone screen. “Randy is the most obvious,” he says. “But because he’s the most obvious I’m not so sure I want to throw all my theories into one basket. It could very easily have been Jessica. Or the omega.”

Derek rolls toward him, draping an arm casually across Stiles’ waist as he inhales a short burst of his scent. It’s getting easier now, in small doses. He’s not likely to lose his mind over it as much as he did before.

Though that might be because they’ve been having sex.

Fuck.

Heat pools in his stomach and Derek has to force himself back to the present conversation.

“You don’t trust the omega?”

Stiles snorts. “You’ve met me,” he says. “You know what kind of trick we’re trying to pull over them. Would you?”

He’s got a point.

“Not in the least.”

Strangely Stiles looks incredibly satisfied with his answer. Maybe he wants Derek to be aware of what omegas are capable of. He thought he knew, after Kate, but clearly he’d hardly scratched the surface then. Because Stiles is so capable sometimes that he feels like he should be afraid. But he
“We should probably head downstairs,” Stiles says, finally putting his phone down.

Derek knows he should at least ask what Stiles is planning, but there’s a very high chance that most of it has nothing to do with him. He’s supposed to be keeping the Silva pack’s attention focused on the Hale alpha.

Not working behind the scenes like Stiles clearly is.

He watches Stiles slip out of bed, amble slowly over to the chest of drawers by the wall and start riffling through it. A second later and he’s throwing on some pants and a shirt.

Derek rolls out of bed with a reluctant sound. In College he had all these ideas about running a pack, fantasies really, but he had no idea just how frustrating the reality of it would be. Or how much work he’d have to put into it. Being the centre of attention isn’t as impressive and heroic as he’d assumed when he was younger.

“More peace talks today?” he asks, wondering what Stiles wants him to talk about. How he should best distract their attention.

He tugs on a shirt and jeans, feels it when Stiles steps back intentionally into his chest like he wants Derek to hold him. Derek steadies himself by putting a hand on Stiles’ hip.

“Maybe not,” he says. “I figured we could try some pack bonding today. Get them to loosen up, maybe make the territory discussions a little easier.”

Stiles aims high. Derek will give him that at least. Even if he's out of his goddamn mind.

“How in the hell do they manage that if the Silvas are expecting an attack every second? When they don’t even trust the Hales to give them food that isn’t poisoned? As if any real fucking pack bonding is even possible right now. What the fuck is Stiles even thinking?

“You want us to train with them?”

“Fuck, no,” Stiles says. “Showing them any of our moves could be dangerous. Especially if they’re sizing us up for a fight in the future. No, a pack run would be safest. If we played lacrosse or something they could try to kill one of us off and make it seem like an accident. Incite a pack war that way.”

“Jesus,” Derek mutters.

Is there anything they can do which the Silvas won’t use in some way as a means to harm or kill them? How the fuck is Derek supposed to bond with these people when Stiles is so insistent on reminding him that they’re waiting for the chance to strike at every turn? Doesn’t exactly encourage cooperation.

How the fuck does anybody relax around that? It’s no wonder that everyone in the house is so tense.
Not when one wrong move could end in a bloodbath.

“Suggest it over breakfast,” Stiles tells him. “Present it like an offer so it’s on Jessica to decide. Her pack feels too cooped up already, they’ll jump at the chance. Plus they probably want to inspect our territory since they’re planning to take it for themselves eventually.”

Derek frowns. “Then isn’t showing them our territory a fucking terrible idea?”

Stiles shrugs, but he’s smiling when he moves away from Derek’s hand and towards the door. “Which is why we only show some of the territory.”

“Which part?” he asks when Stiles disappears into the bathroom to brush his teeth.

Derek follows after him, picks up his own toothbrush and accepts the toothpaste Stiles hands over once he’s finished with it.

“The woods,” Stiles says, placing the toothbrush under running water before sticking it into his mouth. “Beacon Hills Preserve. It’s the biggest part of our territory and there’s nothing much special out there. Besides trees and dirt, I mean.”

Derek shouldn’t be able to understand Stiles around a mouth full of toothpaste but he does. They must talk a lot like this in the mornings. And it’s not like there’s much that keeps Stiles’ mouth shut anyway. Derek loads up his own toothbrush with toothpaste and gets to brushing, eyes caught on the way Stiles’ hair is sticking up at odd angles. It wasn’t like that when they went to bed last night and there's something kind of ridiculous about it.

He doesn’t want to find it endearing, but he does.

“Alright, I’ll make the suggestion,” he agrees once he’s spat out a mouthful of toothpaste into the sink and placed his now clean toothbrush back next to Stiles’. “Then negotiations again after that?”

Stiles dries his hands off. “We’ll see how we go. I’ll signal you to let you know. Right now we just need to get a feel for them. So far we don’t know much, besides that Randal’s our biggest threat. For now.”

“Alright,” he says, not feeling very enthused.

Derek isn’t exactly jumping for joy to play this role again.

When Stiles heads out of the bathroom without taking his suppressants, Derek’s suddenly reminded that he doesn’t have any. Because Peter tampered with them. Where the hell is his uncle now? And what is that fuckface doing? He’s clearly put some messed up plan into motion. One that most likely, works against everything that Stiles is trying to do right now with the Silva pack.

Peter never seems to do what anyone wants. He was the same for Talia, even if she’d somehow managed to bring him under heel. Not without great difficulty. Peter is not what people would call cooperative.

But Derek knows he’s never crossed lines like this before. At least not that he remembers. There’s some sinister plan being put in action, he fucking sure of it. Peter’s a dick. But he’s getting steadily creepier about it. Derek’s not sure what he’s going to do if he sees him again.

Knock his teeth out maybe.

He fucked with Stiles’ suppressants. Which on its own is creepy enough without thinking of why he
might have done such a fucked up thing. He wants Stiles in heat, so that Derek will lose it in the accompanying heat haze. Where the only the driving need he’ll have will be to be inside him, to make him come on Derek’s knot.

To breed Stiles full. Until it takes.

Fuck.

“Dude, you alright?” Stiles ask, raising an eyebrow at him. “You’re face just went kind of slack.”

Jesus, Derek’s so fucking thirsty for this kid. Even the idea of getting him pregnant doesn’t fill Derek with a sense of panic that the thought had in the past with his other partners. And Derek fucked around a lot back then.

“I just- your suppressants.”

Stiles stares at him closely, noting the flush to Derek’s cheeks. “I’ve got it handled,” he promises. “Though I’m pretty sure that’s not what you were thinking about, right?”

Has it always been a fucking thousand degrees in this room?

“I know it seems kind of ridiculous to keep returning to that ‘no sex’ rule after what we did last night but I really don’t think we-“

“I get it,” Derek says, colouring. “It’s a bad idea. I just- thinking of your heat and-“

“Yeah,” Stiles says, swallowing heavily. “God, yeah.”

“Fuck,” Derek replies, shakily. Have they always been standing this close together? Derek can nearly feel the warmth from Stiles’ chest. “I’m- I can’t even handle thinking about it without going out of my mind.”

Stiles pushes his fingers consideringly across his lips and Derek wants to put them in his mouth. “Are you- are you still taking-?”

“Yeah,” Derek promises, knowing he sounds breathy. “I’m still taking suppressants. I just- thinking of-“

“Trust me,” Stiles says meaningfully. “I know. We weren’t exactly restrained when it came to constantly and vigorously-“

“Stiles,” he groans, squeezing his eyes shut and trying not to imagine it.

He needs to be focused today. Derek’s not getting the pack killed because he can’t think with anything besides his dick. He can pay attention to something other than Stiles. He can do that. Sure.

“You’re right,” Stiles agrees, stepping back, scratching the back of his head. “Focus, that’s what we need. Not sex.”

Then Stiles bends down to disrupt the mountain ash barrier surrounding the inside of their room which kept their unwanted guest out last night. Derek stares at his ass and doesn’t look away, not even when Stiles straightens up again and turns back to face him.

He makes a sound then like he might not entirely agree with his own words and it’s taking all of Derek’s attention to pretend there isn’t a bed two steps away and how easy it would be to drag Stiles back down onto it, get him out of all his clothes and-
“The Silvas,” he says, like he’s trying to remind himself, remind them both. “Murderous. Vicious. Evil.”


Fuck, this is hard.

There’s a knock at the door and Derek tenses up at the sound, immediately stepping in front of Stiles and blocking him from view when he opens it. It’s Scott, and Derek relaxes at the sight of him.

“Sleep well?” Scott asks significantly, with a weighty kind of meaning and a grim expression that tells Derek he knows about their visitor last night.

Did he hear them walking up the stairs? Or catch them in the act? Stiles steps closer with interest like he’s about to ask just that but the door is open now so anybody can hear their conversation. Back to all the fucking pretending.

“Yes,” Derek agrees, because it’s not like he can say otherwise.

Scott shifts a little and it looks like he’s got something he wants to mention but that he’d rather not do it. Derek has the distinct feeling it’s something shitty.

“Randal would like for the omega to make him breakfast.”

It’s a far cry from the suspicion Randal had yesterday and surprisingly trusting since they refused any of the food or drink that was offered yesterday. It takes a second for Derek to realise who Randal specifically has in mind to complete the task though.

Scott throws an awkward finger gun Stiles’ way and Derek’s fists clench when he turns to see his reaction. There’s a flash of anger there since there’s nobody else around to witness it, and it’s infuriating to think that Stiles has to be treated like this. But there’s no stopping him once he’s made up his mind.

“Yes, alpha,” Stiles replies, without a hint of feeling, and Derek could almost believe that it doesn’t bother him.

Almost.

Derek’s not even sure which alpha he’s addressing right now, but he reaches out to take his hand and squeezes it as comforting as possible. Stiles only rolls his eyes, as if it’s nothing. But being constantly treated like shit isn’t something that can just be shaken off.

“Of course, our omegas are happy to please the Silvas,” he says, hating the taste of the words leaving his mouth. “We welcomed them here to build a strong bond between our packs.”

He’s probably laying it on too much, but Stiles gives him a thumbs up when Scott makes a face at the words and turns to head back downstairs, aware the reply wasn’t meant for him. Derek follows after, sensing it when Stiles steps into line behind him. Dutifully.

If Randal makes one fucking comment-

He doesn’t know what he’s going to do. But he doubts he’ll be able to get away with killing Jessica’s second without that blowing up fucking spectacularly in his face.
Derek’s on edge. Stiles can tell. Especially after Randy’s less than transparent request. If there was ever a time to poison his food it would be now.

But he’s got other things to worry about right now than murdering that dickweed. Stiles barely reaches the foot of the stairs before he hears the expectant rattle of the bottle.

He turns at the sound and suddenly Erica is there, barely meeting his eyes as she passes by, reaching out quickly to grip his hand like she’s struggling and needs his support.

A second later she’s letting go and disappearing up the staircase after slipping the pill into his hand. She went out and got the new script for his suppressants this morning. He texted her where the best place was to hide it in their bedroom in order to prevent any of Peter’s repeat performances.

Stiles can’t be seen just carrying them around. It might start questions. Questions he does not need to be worrying about answering. And they should steer clear of mentioning Peter as much as possible. Particularly when Jessica has vengeance on her mind.

He doesn’t watch Erica go as she slips upstairs to reach their bedroom, but he puts the pill in his mouth as casually as possible and swallows it dry, relying on the fact that anyone else in the nearby rooms will be studying the alphas rather than Stiles.

He sees the mistake a second later. The Silva's omega is there standing quietly in the corner of the dining room, watching him carefully.

Fucking Clive.

He seems nervous to be standing there alone. Is it because he’s unprotected? Or because he’s safer without Randy breathing down his neck?

Stiles still doesn’t know what to make of that one. But he definitely doesn’t trust him. Clive meets his eyes awkwardly and does a little half shrug as if he’s trying to say, I won’t tell if you won’t.

Stiles will believe that when he sees it. Seems a bit strange for one of the Silva's pack members to be so helpful. Why wouldn't he be loyal to his own pack? And if he is, then he’s clearly working some kind of angle that Jessica requested of him.

Either he's working for Jessica or for himself. Stiles isn't sure which one might cause more trouble.

There are sounds of voices in the living room and he can hear that the television is on. He doubts the Silva pack is sitting there watching cartoons. Using the TV to block out the sounds of their whispered conversation more like.

It’s too early for this much plotting in the morning.

He passes Kira on the way to the kitchen and she’s standing there frowning, ready to head to work once she's made her coffee. The expression on her face makes it seem like there are things she wants to say but is trying to resist. Stiles knows that feeling.

Jackson and Allison are out patrolling today, in case there are more members of the Silva pack roaming around Beacon hills then there should be. Stiles hopes somebody was able to sneak down into the bunker to feed Tara this morning.
Isaac texted him last night about the problem because Randy had been keeping tabs on everyone in the house, especially whenever they tried to go outside. Visiting Tara is going to be difficult.

But it’s not going to help their cause if they accidentally kill him. They’ll just have to figure a way to keep Randy distracted while somebody gets into the bunker. Stiles is the best candidate for that since it’s clear he’s drawn that fuckers’ interest.

If things were in their favour it would be a hard pass on Stiles’ part to spending any amount of time near that asshole, but they’re not out of the danger zone yet. If he has to put himself in the line of fire then so be it.

The Silva pack are coming out of the living room and into the dining room when Stiles is making his way into the kitchen. He hears footsteps behind him and spins at the sound, catching Derek following him into the kitchen automatically.

Because they’ve been cooking together lately like they always do and of course that’s the one habit Derek remembers to keep up. Of all the things.

Stiles shoots him a sharp look as Derek catches his eye and seems to realise he shouldn’t be doing the cooking. Aiysha and Danielle are watching curiously as Stiles stops and lets Derek come to him.

From his expression, Stiles can tell he’s thinking quickly when he steps forward and grips the back of Stiles’ neck with his fingers.

He realises pretty much immediately that Derek’s about to make a demonstration of power to cover the slip up and thinks fast about what he’s supposed to do. About what Derek’s going to do. Does Derek want him to bare his throat?

Stiles doesn’t get the chance to think what the best response is because Derek leans into the tender part of his neck and closes his teeth over it.

He bites into Stiles’ skin, not enough to break it, but with enough pressure so that he can feel it. The heavy duty make up is still covering the fading mark there, but Derek’s teeth unconsciously know where to bite.

The unsteady groan that falls out of Stiles’ mouth isn’t an act, overcome by the possessive display from a mate that has been showing next to no interest in him in the past two weeks or so. It’s a significant claiming act, putting his teeth to his throat. One that might not have thrown Stiles’ instincts haywire before the accident.

But since he’s now got a mate who doesn’t remember him and refused to touch him for a steady length of time, and that mate is now putting his teeth to the spot where Stiles’ mating mark is, the effect is almost immediate.

Stiles goes boneless. Instinct clouding his brain where common sense should rule. He slumps completely, almost drops to the ground when his legs cave under him, but Derek manages to catch his arms and hold him upright.

There’s a sharp inhale from the dining room but Stiles has no idea who it came from. The pleasure is so overwhelming that he can’t focus on anything else. Derek’s teeth slowly release their grip and he pulls back. When he meets Stiles’ eyes his expression is a little apologetic at the dazed look that Stiles returns. He must’ve known what it would do.

Shakily, Stiles reaches up to touch the place on his throat where Derek’s jaw closed over his skin. He can still feel the impression of his teeth. And Stiles knows exactly what kind of signals his body is
giving off right now. But his mating mark feels charged, and extra sensitive.

He remembers there are other people in the room, and that this is a display for them only.

“Thank you, alpha,” he manages, voice strange in his own ears.

“Where’s Erica?” Derek wonders, without even looking at him. As if Stiles has already served his purpose. “We have a lot of hungry mouths to feed.”

“Clive will assist your omegas,” Jessica says. “In the meantime we can discuss-“

“How would your pack feel about a run through Beacon Hills Preserve?” Derek wonders, dropping his hold on Stiles’ arms and stepping back like he doesn’t exist anymore.

Stiles’ hands are still shaking when he staggers into the kitchen, and moves out of sight in order to lean against the counter and recover the use of his limbs. It’s good that the Silva pack saw his reaction. An omega falling apart at the first possessive display from his alpha.

Nothing surprising about that. Stiles knows it’s going to help in the long run. Add to the list of things turning him into a walking omega stereotype right now. But all he can focus on is trying not let his anger bleed out.

Because the werewolves will be able to smell it. And omegas don’t get angry. Or at least when they do nobody takes them seriously. And Stiles can feel it stirring up in his chest. Derek knew exactly how he was going to react to that. He put his teeth to Stiles’ fucking mating mark, knowing full well that any responses to that gesture would be heightened.

It was so fucking clever that Stiles almost can’t feel angry about it. Except he’s remembering the fading bond bite on his neck and the fact that barely two weeks ago Derek didn’t want to be his mate.

He might be playing nice and appear extremely interested in being intimate, but it still doesn’t change the fact that by the end of all of this he might not even want to be mated. Not if his memories never return. Maybe even if his memories do return.

There are some parts to Derek that feel so foreign to him now. Stiles doesn’t know what to expect. But it doesn’t change the thought that Stiles’ mating mark is going to fade away eventually. Or that Derek won’t be able to stop it. Even if he bit Stiles in the same place again it wouldn’t stop the mark fading.

Mating marks are all about intent. If the intent isn’t right, or strong enough then it won’t work. Which is why people don’t get mating marks out of random hook ups. The intent needs to be present first.

Of all the places Derek could have put his mouth for a power move, the fact that he chose Stiles’ bond bite seems unnecessarily cruel. Kind of like overkill.

Especially if he didn’t mean any of it.

Stiles takes a deep breath and moves towards the fridge just as Clive enters the room. He’s eyeing Stiles closely before he takes a cautionary sniff of the emotions in the air, gauging the situation after the performance he and Derek just gave. Luckily Stiles got control of himself before he revealed anything too damaging.

“What does your alpha like to eat?” he asks politely, gesturing at the rows of food inside the refrigerator and inclining his head pointedly at the walk-in food cupboard. “Your pack?”
Clive hesitates. And glances carefully about the room but before he can respond Randy is entering
the kitchen. His eyes rake over Stiles with interest, trying to scent the remnants of his reaction to
Derek’s teeth unabashed. It’s a testament to his arrogance that he’s scenting Stiles pleasure, and not
acknowledging that his alpha mate is the one who brought about the response.

Man, Stiles really hates that guy.

He doesn’t like the way he crowds up behind Clive’s back either. The omega tries to make himself
smaller, goes impossibly still when Randy’s claws grip the back of his neck. It’s not the same as
what happened between Stiles and Derek. Not like something intimate between mates.

Clive only tenses up, looks like he wants to bolt.

“Make sure our meals don’t have any special ingredients,’ Randy hisses and there’s no mistaking his
meaning.

Stiles resists the urge to suggest that if he intended to kill Randy it wouldn’t be as subtle as that.

“Yes, alpha,” Clive says and winces when Randy’s claws press too deep.

Randy drops his hold, satisfied and Clive’s skin heals itself even as a few drops of blood disappear
under the collar of his shirt. Stiles can smell it and Clive’s fear is just as easy to sense as well.

He doesn’t respond to the omega’s distress. If they truly wanted to win them over, the best way to do
it is by playing to their sense of decency. And the sight of another omega being mistreated surely
would arouse the Hale omega’s compassion.

Stiles can’t do anything for Clive. Not yet. And he’s not entirely sure that this isn’t part of the game.
Clive could very easily be faking, like Stiles has been. He needs to weigh every possible option first
before making any moves. And stepping to the defence of the Silva’s omega is about the stupidest
move possible.

Randy slinks out of the room just as Erica comes in timidly, and steps towards Stiles to help him
carry one of the cartons of eggs towards the stove top. She tries to appear like she’s sorry that they
had to start without her and Erica mostly pulls it off.

It doesn’t help that Stiles can't possibly believe that there's anything remotely meek about her. But
she's doing well.

“Meat is fine,” Clive says, returning to Stiles’ previous question as if nothing happened.

Stiles bends down to retrieve the bacon strips from the second last row in the fridge.

He pulls out the fry pan from the drawer next and meets Erica at the stovetop. “Bread’s in the
freezer,’ he says. “If they want toast with their meat.”

Erica’s mouth twitches like she’s fighting the urge to smirk and suddenly Stiles feels a little better
about the current situation with her standing there next to him in solidarity. Whatever just happened
earlier. Stiles will sort it out.

If Derek thinks he’s not going to mention it at all then he really hasn’t been paying attention.

Erica ends up cooking the bacon while Stiles sorts out the eggs and Clive fixes the toast. He doesn't
say much while they're cooking and Stiles can't decide whether he's playing a role or if he really is
reserved. Somehow Stiles just doesn't buy it.
He spends an uncommonly long time with the butter and if Stiles wasn’t already so busy with his own thoughts and making food and pretending he’s less than he is, he might think that Clive is drawing things in the butter with his knife. But he hasn’t got time to worry about Clive’s peculiarities when they’re supposed to be feeding two packs. Clive carries out the plates full of toast and Erica starts loading the bacon onto two plates as well.

Clive left the lid off the butter so Stiles goes to put it back on before stuffing it into the fridge before he sees that he was right after all. Clive was drawing things in the butter with his knife. Well. Writing messages more like.

Stiles frowns at the words written there.

_Don’t trust them_ it says. Which might be a good warning if Stiles was the trusting sort. But he’s not. What exactly is Clive trying to pull here? Is he attempting to trick them into thinking like he’s on their side? Or is this a genuine warning?

Erica sidles up next to him, glances at the message in the butter and raises her eyebrow. Stiles just shrugs silently back at her before picking up the knife and smoothing out the message, removing it completely before placing the lid back on the butter and putting it into the fridge.

He’ll worry about what Clive is up to later.

Derek fucked up. He knows he’s in the shit. When he’d gone to help Stiles with the cooking, he’d needed a posturing alpha display to cover up the mistake. He didn’t even know what he’d had planned when he stepped into Stiles’ space but his body had known what to do.

He hadn’t realised that his teeth had bit into the mating mark until Stiles had jerked under his mouth and sagged completely. He might have passed it off as an act except for how fast Stiles’ heart started beating or the way he’d almost instantly fallen apart under him.

He knows that Stiles is a great actor, but even his response had gone beyond what was necessary. Stiles wouldn’t have shown that much of himself, even if it was to help the façade he’s keeping right now. When Derek had let him go, Stiles had only staggered away.

Because Derek put his teeth to their mating mark.

He crossed a line. Derek knows it. It’s not fair what he did. The situation is painful enough for Stiles, knowing his bond bite is fading. And that area of his throat is sensitive.

Derek hadn’t planned it. He’d done it instinctively. But that doesn’t mean Stiles will thank him for it.

He could have done anything. Anything else but that. He didn’t mean to rub the situation in Stiles’ face. They’ve been doing better lately, sure, but they’re nowhere near renewing a fucking bond bite. Even if Derek had broken the skin, it wouldn’t have worked.

He’s not in love. He doesn’t even remember being mated.

And Derek shouldn’t have taken advantage of that.

Laura’s been watching him ever since Stiles disappeared into the kitchen and Derek can almost feel
her judgement pressing into his back. He knows that he’s supposed to be playing a role, but he really
didn’t mean to be a dick about it. Especially not in front of the rest of his pack.

At least the Silva pack hasn’t picked up on anything. Not even when the twins walked into the
dining room, all healed now, and took a seat at the table. From the way they both nodded to him first
and didn’t say anything else, Derek figures they know about his memory loss by now.

Stiles must have got some of the other pack members to tell them. Maybe Cora since they’re sitting
next to her now. Or the young werewolf whose name he got wrong so they have to call him Lee.
Maybe the Liam kid and his girlfriend told the alpha twins what had happened.

Derek’s not sure how they even found the time. Did the whole pack stay here last night like last time?
Or did they go home first? Or maybe they were patrolling the house, making sure that none of the
Silvas could get up to anything. That certainly didn’t stop the person outside their room last night.

Without Stiles’ mountain ash, they might have been in trouble.

“We’ll join you on a run through your Preserve,” Jessica says, drawing Derek back to the situation at
hand. Guess Stiles was right after all. “Then we shall return to our negotiations.”

“But of course,” he agrees. “After breakfast is finished I will lead you into the Preserve. It’s a good area
for a shift.”

He doesn’t mention a full shift, though there’s no doubt that Jessica might suspect he’s capable of it.
His mother was known for the rare gift. It’s not unreasonable that it’s a skill she could have passed
on to her children.

Derek’s not sure though if that’s a talent he’s meant to be keeping to himself.

At least they agreed to join them on a run. Though technically they have no reason to fear any
danger. As guests of the Hale pack they fall under his protection during their visit, as is the custom.

Their blood can’t be spilled on his land. Derek knows that. And Jessica knows that too which is why
she agreed so readily. Plus she’s probably interested in scoping out their territory since their pack has
plans to take it from them. Stiles was right about that.

They fall into idle conversation while Stiles and the other omegas cook food in the kitchen. The
Silvas doesn’t talk very often but Derek thinks that’s out of calculation rather than shyness or lack of
social skills. They don’t want to say too much. Or reveal anything.

The rest of the pack manage to keep the conversation rolling anyway and Kira leaves to for work in
the interim. The rest of their pack is present though. Except for Jackson, Parrish, the Argent girl and
her father, Chris.

Scott had to go into work today as well because Deaton is here serving as their emissary and they're
the only two who work at the clinic. Derek knows that Scott was reluctant to leave considering how
unsafe things seem right now, but he also didn't have much of a choice.

As for the other pack members who are missing, Derek has no idea what any of them are doing.
He’s got a good guess that some are out on patrol to make sure there aren’t more of the Silva’s pack
invading their territory while the peace negotiations are underway.

Cora’s been trying to talk to the three beta women for the past half an hour, but they’ve been giving
her nothing but short one word responses. Derek’s tuning them out but when the one that Jessica
carefully avoids looking at most of the time, Nora-Jane, snorts with sudden unexpected laughter, he
glances over at them. Cora seems undoubtedly pleased with herself even as Nora-Jane quickly glances at her alpha and the smile on her face freezes.

Derek doesn’t know what’s wrong between the two of them, but there’s a tension there that doesn’t exist with Jessica’s other pack members. He doesn’t know what to think. One of the twins asks Lydia a question and suddenly the group is breaking off into smaller conversations. Derek doesn’t know if he’s meant to join them and make small talk as well.

He can still vaguely taste the make-up that covers Stiles’ mating mark on his tongue.

Five minutes later Stiles, Erica and the Silva’s omega bring out plates heaped with food and both packs dig in without ceremony. Derek can’t help but notice that Stiles won’t look at him. The omegas sit down and take their share of the food and any conversation is lost in the act of filling stomachs.

He knows he’s not supposed to react to the tension that he thinks he can feel emanating from Stiles, but it’s almost impossible to ignore. He eats and tries to act like nothing is wrong but he knows that there’s going to be a fucking problem as soon as they’re alone together.

It's shitty. Because they’ve been doing so well lately. They’ve been getting along, Derek has just started to see how truly amazing Stiles is. And already he’s fucking blown it.

He’d be angrier about it if this whole situation wasn’t a lie. But he’s not meant to be giving anything away so he’s not supposed to acknowledge that Stiles is very likely pissed at him, and it’s more than likely that Derek’s upset by the idea.

They eat quickly because everyone wants to get out of the house and Derek knows the time has come when Stiles excuses himself to put on running shoes so he can go walking in the woods with them.

The omegas won’t be running. Of course, because when were they allowed to do anything? Derek can’t believe he ever bought into any of this bullshit for even a second. But when Stiles heads up to their bedroom he takes his chance.

“I’m sorry,” he says immediately, once he’s closed the door behind them, ensuring their privacy from heightened hearing. “I shouldn’t have-”

Stiles, who is in the middle of slipping on his shoes, snaps his head up, eyes narrowing sharply and Derek is absolutely certain that he’s fucked up.

“Do not put your teeth to my bond bite again unless you mean it,” he says curtly, and he isn’t exactly angry.

It’s more frustrated than that. Right because Derek dangled everything that Stiles wants in front of him and basically said that he can’t have it. That was a pretty dickish thing to do.

“But good power move,” he continues, without any further emotion. “They were eating it up. And now they’re going for the run. That’s good.”

Derek suddenly realises there might be another plan at work here. Even if he doesn't like how Stiles is switching off his feelings like this.

“You want them out of the house?”

Stiles only shrugs. “I want them away from the bunker. Isaac hasn’t been able to get in there without
raising suspicion.”

“To feed Tara?”

“And give him water,” he agrees. “Randy is a problem.”

Derek isn’t going to deny that point. Anybody could see that Randal is an utter fuckface, but a dangerous one.

“I’m sorry about what I did. I know, in front of everyone it wasn’t-“

And now Stiles looks interested. “What are you saying? That if it we weren’t currently involved in the tense political climate of a potential rival pack war that you would have claimed me and meant it?”

Jesus, what a fucking question. How could he know the truth of that answer? The bond bite is all about resolve. Derek doesn’t know how to leave a mating mark on a good day, let alone bite someone and have it actually end up as a bond bite.

And who’s to say that if he did bite Stiles that it wouldn’t backfire? Who knows what would happen if he tried to fix an already fading bond bite? There’s no guarantee that it wouldn’t make things worse. Especially if it’s already his fault that it’s fading in the first place. And Derek’s not confident that he has the right intent for the act.

If not, then it doesn’t work. Bond bites are complicated things by themselves without throwing a fading mark into the mix. Derek has no idea what would happen if he did bite his mate. And he doesn’t want to get Stiles’ hopes up for something that he might never actually do. He’s not that much of a piece of shit.

Why did he have to put his teeth there? If he’d ignored the urge then they might not have had this conversation for a while. Until Stiles’ mating mark had nearly completely faded. Or when the Silva pack was long gone.

Or dead.

They really don’t need to be worrying about this right now. Not when Derek doesn’t have any fucking answers for him.

“I don’t know,” he admits honestly. “You know I want you. But it’s not fair for me to pretend that I want it to be like before when I’m not in love with you. If I bit you for real, it probably wouldn’t even work.”

Stiles’ mouth twists and Derek realises he could have admitted that with a softer degree of gentleness.

“Sorry,” he says, not meeting Stiles’ eyes.

He can’t see the pained expression there.

“It’s not like I’m surprised,” Stiles says practically. “You weren’t even admitting you were interested in dudes last week. I wasn’t expecting any miracles.”

Fuck. Derek almost thinks he’d have preferred Stiles to be upset. Anything but this brutal acceptance. Has he given up now? Does that mean that if Derek were to look at the bond bite on his hip bone it would have already begun to fade?
“You don’t have to say it like that,” he mutters. “Like there’s no fucking hope.”

Stiles laughs a little. “Right. Okay, man.”

He finishes putting on his shoes and heads for the door before Derek can think to say anything else.

The run is good. The betas are pretty fast, Aiysha the fastest, and Derek decides not to do a full shift. If it does come to a fight, it's smarter to keep that up his sleeve. Stiles hangs back with the other omegas during the run, but Derek can tell he approves of the decision. Boyd and Malia end up in a race and soon enough both of the packs are involved and they're sprinting through the trees, moving as fast as they're able while the wind rushes past their ears.

At one point Randal is moving too fast and skids down an embankment, tumbling through the leaves. Clive is just ahead of him, and Randal falls towards him like he's intending to land on the omega and crush him. But the omega shifts out of the way in time and Randal falls flat on his face.

The pack tries not to snicker, but even Jessica's own pack seems amused by the result. Randal's rage is so strong that Derek can physically feel it, even when Clive falls back again with the other omegas.

Stiles is keeping up with the werewolves surprisingly well though he tires earlier than Derek actually believes he would if he wasn't pretending to be something he's not. Derek uses his fatigue as an excuse to go back. Which is most likely what Stiles intended. Either way he's happy for the excuse. He'd rather not be out here at night with a rival pack where any kind of unexpected 'accidents' could happen.

It turns out Stiles was right about the run after all. Their packs haven't bonded, but some of the tension between them has eased. Maybe this will help with their negotiations later on.

Derek's hopeful at least. The quicker they get rid of the Silva pack, the quicker he can focus on his problems with Stiles. Derek doesn't know exactly what he wants to do, he can't just make himself love him, but he wants to do something.

They walk back to the house together and Derek has to resist glancing back at Stiles every few minutes. Chris, Jackson and Allison arrive to join them after Boyd and the twins disappeared twenty minutes ago to relieve them of their to patrol.

The two packs get water and open up soda cans once they're back in the kitchen. And Derek can't help but notice the Silva pack doesn't hesitate to drink now.

There's an easy kind of understanding between them all when the group moves back out into the dining room where the two emissaries are waiting for them. Back to negotiating again. Derek really just wants to get this over and done with now. But Jessica talks first.

“I think it’s time we discuss the real reason why we’ve been struggling to reach an agreement,” she decides and Derek does his best not to immediately stiffen at the words.

What the fuck does that mean? Do they know about the games Stiles has been playing? Are they finally launching their attack?
“Let’s talk about Peter Hale.”

Oh fuck.

Cora makes a noise. “Here we go.”

Jessica raises an eyebrow at her. “You are unwilling to discuss the crimes of your uncle?”

Derek tries to glare her into silence but Cora isn’t even looking at him. “You’re kidding, right? Just add it to the long list of his previous bullshit.”

“Peter Hale is not a part of this pack,” Derek says firmly before Cora can say anything else. “He may carry the Hale name, but he is not one of us.”

“And yet he carried your name into our territory and spilled blood.”

“Without my consent,” he says, trying to keep his temper under control. “Peter uses other people for his own convenience.”

“Especially if those people will bear the consequences of his actions,” Laura puts in. “He has not been a part of this pack for some time, and we’ve done our best to keep him out of our affairs and out of trouble.”

Jessica glances between his sisters. “So there is no love between you?”

Laura folds her arms and glances quickly at Derek without responding but Cora’s expression says it all.

“Then perhaps the solution I came here seeking is possible after all.”

Derek really doesn’t like the sound of that. Or the way Randal’s mouth is curving up into a bloodthirsty smile behind his alpha.

“Peter Hale killed two of our own, in your name,” Jessica continues. “I ask for your blessing to make this right without inciting a war between our packs. Blood for blood.”

Derek stills. “What?”

Stiles’ hand lands on his knee beneath the table and it’s the only thing that prevents him from jumping to his feet.

“I’m requesting your permission to seek Peter Hale out and spill his blood for our fallen brothers. You do not love him, he is not part of your pack and he causes trouble in your name. I only ask for his life, in answer for the two he ended. I think you’ll find this offer is more than fair.”

Of all the questions she could have asked, this is the last thing Derek expected of her. He glances over at Deaton who sits between the two packs, opposite their own emissary, Nila. When he nods at Derek, it’s to say unequivocally that the request is permissible, the laws are still upheld. That the offer is fair and worth considering.

They want him to agree to let them murder his fucking uncle.

“I-“

Stiles squeezes his thigh hard enough that Derek can feel his nails.
“I would discuss this with my pack first,” he decides. “They have been affected by Peter’s actions in the past and should have a say in this decision.”

Jessica nods and stands up. “We will give you an hour,” she says, and Derek tries not to panic at what a short amount of time that is.

The rest of her pack gets up and follows her outside of the house, her emissary included. Derek wishes that when they get out there that they just keep walking. Life would be so much easier.

“That’s kind of perfect isn’t it?” Cora says, as soon as the Silvas are out of hearing range. “We couldn’t have asked for a better solution.”

Stiles’ hand ends up on Derek’s shoulder, as if he knows he’s about to burst to his feet. “What the fuck are you saying? It’s Peter, Cora. We’re not letting them kill Peter.”

“Oh boy,” Lydia mutters, slipping down in her chair like she’s settling in for a long argument.

“Derek,” Laura starts. “I know it’s not great. But it’s our best option right now. At least until the next pack war he throws us into. Our problems are never going to stop until someone puts Peter down.”

“Like a dog?”

“He’s not good for us,” Malia says. “You heard what he did to the Silva pack and that brought two hunters here who nearly killed you. We’re lucky they’re not asking to kill another pack member.”

“It is within their rights,” Deaton agrees. “Since Peter killed two of their own.”

“It’s our best option,” Chris says firmly. “We accept this deal and they’ve got not excuse to stick around and spend more time planning how best to take our territory.”

“But this is Peter we’re talking about,” he says, amazed at how fucking calm they’re all being about this.

“You’re not going to find the support you want here,” Jackson points out irritatingly. “Peter’s fucked up way too much shit for us to feel sorry for him now.”

Derek whirs on Stiles next. “And what about you? What’s your opinion on this?”

Stiles doesn’t even blink. “All she’s asking for is your blessing, Derek,” he says. “To kill Peter they’d have to catch him first.”

Of course there’s a fucking loophole. As if that somehow makes it better. He has no idea why he thought Stiles would ever agree with him on this. “I’m not giving someone permission to kill my uncle,” he snaps. “Same as I wouldn’t give them permission to kill anyone here.”

“Derek.” Stiles starts, reaching out to touch his arm.

But he moves out of his grip. “I need some air.”

He stomps out through the kitchen, heading outside into the dark and he barely takes a frustrated breath of air before he’s catching the scent of blood in the breeze. Derek moves towards the smell immediately, still angry from the confrontation but ready to direct it toward another source.

He can see the Silva pack around the front of the house, awaiting his final decision but the scent of blood is in the trees, closer to the back of the woods, past the bunker.
Derek catches the voices next.

“Please,” a pained voice whispers, and Derek recognises the omega’s voice instantly.

It’s Clive.

“Shut up,” Randal hisses, followed by the sound of a strike and Clive whimpering in pain. “Fucking omega, you embarrassed me today. You’re lucky I don’t kill you right here.”

Clive is openly crying now, begging for Randal to stop, but he merely laughs at the sound and Clive's moans of pain grow louder. Derek’s about to take a step closer and really sink his claws into something before he realises that will violate their custom. Randal is a guest on his land. Derek can’t just kill him.

That would really start a pack war. So he steps back instead and moves quietly towards the house. He’s still hidden in the trees when Clive staggers past, bruised, cut lip and looking like Randal went to town on every inch of his skin with his sharp claws.

It’s a fucking horror show but the skin is already healing, leaving no visible marks besides the dried blood as he hurries away, half delirious with pain. To clean himself up maybe. And that’s when Derek realises this has probably happened a lot before.

And from the scent of Randal, he enjoyed it. And the way he’d laughed, the sick fuck.

Derek’s had enough of this. It’s time they actually did something.

He ends up moving back to the house so quickly that he’s a blur. Stiles is standing in the open doorway, squinting into the darkness and jolts when he catches sight of him and the hard expression on his face.

Stiles steps back in confusion and Derek moves into the kitchen, shutting the door hurriedly behind him. He doesn’t say anything when he stalks back into the dining room but from the look of the rest of the pack they’re surprised to see him back so soon. He can tell that they expected to hash out this argument much later on.

But Derek isn’t worried about that now. They can sort out the Peter problem later.

“Derek,” Stiles tries to start, picking up on his volatile emotions. “We don’t have to do this. We can stall-“

“Change of plan,” he says, fiercely. “We need to kill Randal. And we need to do it now.”
The pack exchanges wary looks behind Stiles. He can see the confusion on Laura’s face, the way both Chris Argent and his daughter turn grim, how Isaac’s slowly raises an eyebrow and Malia leans forward with sudden interest.

The rest of the pack has varying responses.

Cora doesn’t seem pleased that he’s shifted the discussion away from what they should be doing with their uncle. Jackson looks bored. The young ones seem nervous, the Mason kid especially, but they don’t balk at the idea of killing someone like he anticipated.

Everyone reacts to his words.

Everyone but Stiles. He doesn’t even blink.

“Okay,” he agrees, like it’s that simple. “How do you want to do it?”

Derek’s so overwhelmed by Stiles’ instant support that he doesn’t even worry at how readily he agreed to commit murder for him. “What- you don’t even want to know why?”

But Stiles only shrugs. “It’s the omega, right?”

How in the hell does he know that? Derek’s expression must show his bewilderment because Stiles lets out a sigh and takes the empty seat next to Erica. “From the way he acts around Randal it’s not hard to guess what you saw.”

Yeah, no shit. Derek almost wishes that he hadn’t seen anything. To know that something beyond fucked was going on under their roof-

It makes his skin crawl. And he doesn’t even want to think about how long this might have been going on for. Has Randal been hurting Clive for years?

“You can’t be serious about this,” Cora mutters, annoyed. “This is a shitty plan. We’ll start a war.”

“They spilled blood on our land,” he insists, heatedly defending his decision. “We-“

“They spilled their own blood,” Deaton clarifies. “That does not break any of the laws. We do not have a legitimate reason to move against them.”

That’s such bullshit. Why can’t they kill this fucker and be done with it?

“Are we sure this isn’t part of their game?” Isaac wonders. “Like Stiles said, Jessica could have coached Clive on this.”

“He left us a message,” Erica says suddenly. “When we made breakfast this morning. He wrote out ‘don’t trust them’ in our butter.”

Why didn’t Stiles mention that?

“It doesn’t matter either way,” Derek insists. “We have to stop this from happening. We have to stop Randal.”

He can see that they’re mostly on board. Nobody wants anybody being tortured for someone else’s
sick amusement. At least he knows his own pack has limits. “If we’re going to do this,” Stiles starts carefully. “We need Randal to break a law so sacred that there’s no possible way he can wiggle out of it. Or that his emissary can intervene.”

Jackson snorts. “We’re really going to kill this guy just cause dickless here said so?”

If there was ever a time to hit Jackson now seems like a perfect opportunity.

Instead Derek glares at him. “He was slicing the guy’s flesh open with his claws outside just now and fucking laughing about it.”

Cora’s nose wrinkles and Isaac shudders at the image that brings to mind. Derek has to agree it was pretty fucking disturbing.

“This isn’t the smart play,” Chris admits after a lengthy pause. “This move will put us at a disadvantage, make us vulnerable to their retaliation.”

“Not if we’re organised about it,” Lydia puts in. “We just need to manipulate Randal into an unforgivable act where the only suitable response is death.”

And how the hell are they meant to do that? Somehow Derek's confident his pack will be able to figure it out. They've gotten out of worst scrapes before. Probably.

“Even if they are messing about with this omega,” Jackson mutters. “Who’s to say they aren’t doing that on purpose so we’ll intervene and give them a reason to attack us? I know you don’t agree with this, Stilinski.”

Stiles leans back in his seat.

“No, I don’t,” he admits, and Derek’s stomach sinks. “I think this is a very neat solution to all of Jessica’s problems, and I think this is what she had planned from the beginning.”

“You think she orchestrated this?” Liam demands. “Why?”

“He’s unstable,” Malia says. “Uncontrollable.”

That's for sure. Derek wishes he'd never let such a monster in their territory.

“It’s the best way to get rid of an unruly second who’s more than likely to turn the others against her,” Stiles explains. “That way it won’t cause dissent within their pack and we’ll be the ones to blame. She hasn’t cemented her role as the alpha yet, if she were to kill Randal herself she might have a mutiny on her hands. Jessica could have ordered Clive to antagonise Randal in order to put us in this exact situation.”

Derek can’t believe anyone can be that viciously manipulative, but he’s been proven wrong about that time and time again.

“So what? Can we actually trick Randal into doing something that will give us the right to kill him?” Allison wonders, glancing over at Deaton as if he might know.

That’s an answer that Derek doesn’t have. But he’s confident that Stiles will. Especially if he’s been thinking that this was Jessica’s intention all along.

“I think we’re going to have to give Peter what he wanted after all,” Stiles admits. “Me in heat.”

The floor falls away under Derek’s feet. “What?” he gasps.
Stiles shrugs, unembarrassed. “Randal doesn’t have much control. And he’s already shown his interest. If I’m in heat he’ll try to-”

“No,” Derek hisses, horrified by what he's suggesting.

“Makes sense to me,” Jackson interrupts unhelpfully. “That douchecanoe is seriously thirsty for Stilinski.”

“Attempting to take an alpha’s mate unwillingly is the worst of crimes to commit during a peace talk between packs,” Deaton says thoughtfully. “The punishment would mean death.”

Chris folds his arms, thinking deeply. “It could work. They wouldn’t be able to protest the decision.”

“Hold on,” Cora says sharply. “What do you mean give Peter what he wanted?”

Stiles glances at Derek quickly as if he’s offering him the chance to decide whether he wants the rest of the pack to know this. But there’s no point hiding it now. “Peter snuck into our bedroom yesterday and switched out Stiles’ suppressants for placebos,” Derek mutters, fist clenching at the thought again.

He might not be willing to sign his uncle’s death warrant, but Peter messing about with Stiles’ suppressants is making it a hell of a lot easier to consider changing his mind.

Laura makes a strangled noise in the back of her throat. “Are you serious? What the fuck is he doing?”

“That’s not the point,” Stiles says. “We’ll be finding out what Peter’s up to soon enough. I think this is our best option.”

Like hell. As if Stiles is going to put himself in danger for this. Especially around someone like Randal. And that’s not their only problem.

“Stiles,” Derek says, struggling to keep his voice low. “Do you not remember our conversation this morning? Randal’s not the only one who’ll lose control if you’re in heat.”

It’s embarrassing talking about it like this in front of his entire pack, but it’s not like he’s got another option. Derek needs to make sure that Stiles understands what a fucking terrible idea this is.

“We can work around that,” Stiles insists. “I still think this is our best bet.”

Is he out of his fucking mind? How in the hell are they able to work around Derek going wild at the thought of Randal putting his hands on Stiles in the throes of heat? And then what do they do after Randal is dead? When Stiles is still in heat? Does he want Derek to help him take care of it?

“What about afterward?” he demands. “You said it yourself it was a bad idea to be in that state when the Silva pack is here.”

“I can make do,” Stiles says firmly. “We can work with this.”

“But it’s not like refusing to take your suppressants for a day will immediately bring on your heat,” he points out, irritated. “We can’t just magically put you into heat on demand.”

Derek might not know much about omegas and heats but he knows that at the very least.

“Actually,” Deaton begins, helpfully interrupting. “In Stiles’ case it would be possible. Because of the state of his mating mark and the lack of physical… intimacy between you recently, you would be
able to induce Stiles’ heat quite quickly.”

The pack turns to look at him and Derek’s cheeks feel hot enough to melt steel. Stiles unconsciously licks his lips and Derek fights the urge to go over to him immediately.

“You-“ he starts, pauses and starts again. “You want us to-?”

Have sex? Is that what Deaton is trying to say?

“He’s saying you need the give the mating mark a little… attention,” Laura refines somewhat awkwardly.

Derek meets Stiles’ eyes, remembering what he’d said earlier. *Do not put your teeth to my bond bite again unless you mean it.* Does that mean Stiles will drop this now then? He already said that’s what he doesn’t want. So what are their other options?

Stiles meets his gaze determinedly and Derek realises that he’s willing to throw out the boundaries he set in order to get this done. Derek wished he didn’t give up on those so easily. He know he upset Stiles earlier by doing it. How is Stiles going to feel if Derek does it again, in private this time, for longer and not for show? Does Stiles even want that?

“You can’t be okay with this,” he says, uneasy at the idea.

But Stiles only twists his neck, considering. “I’ll do what it takes.”

That’s worse. Knowing Stiles doesn’t actually want it from Derek unless it was for real but he’s willing to compromise his needs for this. Derek hates it. “I’m not- we’ll find some other way to-“

The front door opens.

Derek tenses all over but it’s only Scott and Kira, returning home from work. They seem tired and a little puzzled at seeing the Silvas camped out on the front lawn before they close the door on them.

“Hey,” Kira says once she catches sight of the pack. “How come the Silvas-?”

“They want us to make a decision on whether or not to give them permission to kill Peter for murdering two of their pack members,” Isaac explains.

Scott looks startled. “Really? And what have we decided?”

“Oh, we’re not talking about that now,” Hayden says impatiently, waving her hand dismissively at the question. “We’re discussing how to kill Randal.”

Scott’s eyes widen.

“What?” Kira demands, surprised, before glancing at the rest of the pack. “I don’t much like him either but why are we considering murder now?”

“He’s torturing their omega,” Laura explains unhappily. “Derek just saw them outside. And apparently Randal was- enjoying himself.”

Kira’s expression turns disgusted. “Enjoying?”

“He was laughing,” Derek mutters, trying not to picture it. Unpleasant doesn’t even cover the situation he overheard. “We need to take him out.”
Scott glances at Stiles and frowns. “Are we sure about this? Do we want to risk everything if there’s a chance this is all a trap?”

“We’re all in agreement at this point,” Chris says. “He’s too volatile. If we don’t kill him now, he’ll be a danger to us later.”

Kira takes the seat beside Hayden and Scott goes to stand behind her. “So how are we doing it then?” she asks.

“Stilinski’s going to take one for the team,” Jackson says and a snarl comes out of Derek’s mouth before he can control himself.

“Whoa,” Stiles says, taking a step closer, hand out to try and settle him.

Derek reels back, surprised at himself. His fangs are out. He is not handling this well at all.

“Stiles is going to induce his heat,” Cora explains, watching her brother carefully. “He thinks since Randal hasn’t got very good control he’ll—“

“What the hell, Stiles?” Scott hisses, glancing behind him as if the Silva pack will suddenly be standing there. “You’re going to get this guy to try and sexually assault you?”

Stiles folds his arms, unashamed. “Not like he hasn’t been trying to already. Besides it will give us the influence we need to demand his death. They couldn’t refuse even if they wanted.”

Scott and Kira exchange quick glances and Derek wholeheartedly agrees with the sentiment. “This sounds like a really risky move, Stiles,” Kira says, tentatively. “Are you sure-?”

“Yes,” he says. “We’re doing this.”

Derek really wishes they weren’t. But how else are they going to be able to get rid of Randal?

Even if they managed to think of a way to kill him without leaving evidence, the Silvas would still suspect them of foul play. In order to avoid a fight, they need Randal to step out of line first.

Derek hates to admit it but this will be the best way to do that.

Randal won’t even try to resist. Even if he was born a beta. Derek knows he’s got his sights set on alpha status anyway. It’s only a matter of time before he kills an alpha and assume their role. The attention he gives to omegas might even stem from frustrations surrounding his own status.

Derek thinks that this will work.

But that doesn’t mean that he has to like it.

Derek definitely does not like this plan. Of that Stiles can be absolutely positive. He nearly bit Jackson’s head off when he made an unfortunate comment about Stiles taking one for the team.

He’d dropped his fangs and everything. Even Stiles had been a little surprised at that. The situation has put all of his protective instincts into overdrive, that much is obvious. He might not be able to do what needs to be done in order to get to Randal.
They might have to lock Derek up somewhere to put this plan properly into action. Stiles isn't so sure that Derek will be able to stand by and let-

Well, Stiles has no intention of letting Randal do anything. He knows how to take care of himself. Especially when he's in heat. Stiles isn't nervous about that. But he is worried about Derek.

He's a wild card right now. And his reactions aren't predictable like they used to be. They need to be able to rely on him for this, but Stiles doesn't know if they can. Derek might not be able to deal with this at all.

Stiles knows what he has to do so that they can get rid of Randal. Even if it’s something he knows he can’t have otherwise. He’s trying not to think about it. Stiles knows what happened the last time Derek put his teeth to his mating mark.

His reaction had been strong earlier but what happens when Derek bites him again and it’s not just for show? What happens when he takes his time?

Stiles knows that he’s more sensitive to his attention now. After they’ve gone mostly without touching since the accident, without being physically intimate. And now with a fading mark on top of that, Stiles knows that his body is extremely receptive to anything Derek might want to offer.

More so than he is usually.

It’s his body’s way of trying to re-establish the bond between them. So he’s aware that inducing his heat is risky, and that having Derek clamp his teeth over his bond bite is going to bring up a lot of emotions that will make this harder.

He’s only going to be reminded of how different things are between them now. Stiles won’t be able to deny the disparities between College Derek and Actual Derek again, even if they’ve been getting along lately.

And this Derek doesn’t love Stiles. He doesn’t want to be mated to him. So acting like they are will only bring all that pain back to the surface. Stiles doesn’t really want to be reminded how much things have changed.

But he’s willing to do it if it means putting Randal down.

He can’t stop thinking about the expression on Derek’s face when he’d come back into the house, after what had happened between Randal and Clive outside. There’s no way Derek will be able to look past that. And he shouldn’t. Stiles had been hoping to get rid of Randal soon enough. Derek just moved it up on their timeline.

And Stiles is willing to do whatever he can to make sure this works out. Even if he’s aware of the possible emotional pain it might bring, he’s also aware of the pleasure. In the kitchen earlier it had nearly brought him to his knees.

Stiles isn’t denying that he wants that from Derek. That he wants a lot more. This isn’t going to be easy. But it’s an outcome that he figured might happen. Whether or not it turns out he’s actually prepared for it is another question.

“So what are we telling the Silvas when they return?” he asks, because they need to talk about Peter even if Derek would rather avoid it.

If it came down to a group vote right now, the results would not at all be in Peter’s favour. Derek must know that since he doesn’t suggest they put it to a vote. But his mouth tenses considerably. This
is hard for him.

Actual Derek would have struggled with it too. Only he would have reached the right decision much quicker than College Derek. He knows all the things that Peter has done in his life so he’s less able to forgive them.

Stiles is hopeful that College Derek will reach that decision himself eventually, but they just don’t have the time to sit around and wait. Peter is a problem. A problem that needs to be removed.

They all can see it.

Even Derek. Though he’s trying to pretend that he can’t.

“All right who’s for letting them kill Peter?” Cora demands, already raising her hand in the air.

Derek shoots Stiles a stricken look as nearly all of the pack raises their hands as well. The only three who don’t are Scott, Kira and Hayden.

No surprises there.

Derek steps behind Stiles’ chair, and puts his hand on his shoulders like he needs the support. Stiles’ hand shakes when he raises it with everyone else’s. Maybe he’s not recovered from the incident in the kitchen earlier. Stiles shouldn’t be getting this overwhelmed by Derek now. Not when Derek is the one who’s been switching off his senses.

Stiles doesn’t understand his own reaction. But he can feel Derek’s fingers just below the area of his bond bite and it’s like somebody stuck him with an electrical wire. Jesus, he really is so fucking responsive now. Stiles needs to get control of this. Before Derek really starts giving his throat some attention.

“If we give them permission now,” Derek says, agitated and upset. “Then it’s something we can’t ever take back.”

“If we don’t give them permission,” Jackson says. “Then they’re only going to use it as an excuse to move against us.”

And since when is Jackson the voice of reason? It hasn’t escaped Stiles’ notice that he’s been making the most practical suggestions since the Silva pack walked outside.

“Has anybody been able to get to Tara yet?” Kira asks quietly. “Has he still not had any food or drink all day?”

Yet another problem they’re trying to contend with.

“Randal is still outside now. He’s too close to the bunker,” Stiles says. “I say we sneak someone out there when they’re coming back in through the front door.”

“Who though?” Isaac wonders. “Who won’t they notice is gone?”

“Me,” Kira offers. “I’ve been out of the house all day anyway because of work. They won’t notice me.”


Kira only pats at Scott’s bicep. “I got it. No sparking.”
“So that’s it?” Derek demands. “We’re just telling them yes because that what they want?”

Stiles understands that Derek doesn’t like this. But it’s not as if the Silva pack is going to be able to find Peter immediately and kill him. He’s much more slippery than that. If anything, agreeing to this might keep Peter out of their hair for several years until the search for him dies down. Stiles isn’t going to deny that would be great for them.

Or that he’s really that concerned about what would happen if by some miracle they managed to capture Peter after all. He suspects that Derek’s already realised that. And that he doesn’t want to hear it.

“The twins and Boyd should be back soon from patrol,” Stiles says, changing the subject. “Who’s going out to relieve them?”

“Parrish texted, he’s on his way over,” Cora says. “But we can’t send Erica or Stiles out, because omegas would be ‘allowed’ to patrol.”

“I’ll go,” Isaac says, glancing quickly at Jackson.

“I’ll-“ Jackson starts.

Yeah like that's a great idea.

“No,” Derek says firmly, thinking the same thing. “We need you focused. Not leaving as an excuse to hook up.”

“I’ll go with Isaac,” Liam offers, arm still wrapped around Hayden. “I’ll meet you back here?”

“Yeah, be careful,” she says and leans in to kiss him.

Isaac and Liam head out the back door of the kitchen while Laura disappears into the food cupboard and comes back with a gigantic container of water and non-perishable food supplies.

She raises an eyebrow at Kira. “Can you carry all this?”

But Kira only snorts and takes the pile of things from her. Hayden goes over to check the windows.

"You ready?" Hayden asks. "Randal and Clive aren't there anymore."

Stiles glances over at the front door and heads out towards it to open it and let the Silva pack back in. "So we're decided?" he asks, just to double check. "We tell them yes?"

Derek glares at him. "I'm not okay with this. Look I understand why we have to do it but if it comes down to it, I'm never going to let them kill Peter."

That's not exactly surprising. But Stiles can respect his reasoning. Hopefully it doesn't come to Derek having to witness his uncle being murdered by the Silvas. Stiles really hopes that it doesn't come to that.

When he opens the front door, Kira slips out the back. None of the Silva pack even look at him as they walk past except for Randal. Stiles keeps his head bent low and feels Randal's eyes linger longer than they should. The Silvas joins them at the dining table.

"Have you reached a decision?” Jessica asks Derek.

Stiles is pretending to look at his feet but he can almost feel Derek's urge to glance over at him.
Thankfully he manages to resist. It can't seem like he ever looks to Stiles for answers.

"The Hale pack gives you permission to kill Peter Hale," Derek says after a significant pause. "His death will not bring war between us."

Jessica nods and has the sense not to smile. Good. Stiles isn't sure that Derek could handle that right now.

"Then let's move forward," she says. "And finally form the alliance that was attended between us."

Yeah, for however long that lasts.

They talk for a while. But the Silva pack doesn't give up any of the territories that Stiles wants, and Derek doesn't allow them anywhere past the California state boundary.

But it is easier than before, Jessica and her pack don't get offended by his suggestions now. And Jessica's willing to talk. That's the best they could have asked for. Well, until they kill Randal of course.

Kira returns after a while, but she comes back without raising much attention. Nobody really asks her what she was doing outside, though Clive and Danielle stare at her for a significant time. Nobody asks Clive why his skin seems raw and red and freshly healed.

They eat dinner, the omegas cooking again before Derek suggests bed. Stiles gives him a look, knowing exactly what they're planning on doing behind closed doors and he tries not to let himself get swept away in excitement. Stiles wouldn't really be doing this if he could avoid it. He doesn't actually want this version of his mate, Derek knows that. Even if he'd rather not think about it.

Derek waits until they're alone and the door is shut behind them. “I think it’s time we talked about some of the uh- urges I’ve been having.”

Stiles smirks.

“Trust me, dude. I’ve been very aware of those urges. Most of those I share.”

Derek’s cheeks are flushed and this is going to be much more embarrassing than he realised. “Not not this one.”

That’s finally captured his attention. Stiles turns to him, with a raised eyebrow.

“I keep getting distracted by what comes afterward,” he admits, staring at the spot behind Stiles’ head.

But Stiles still isn’t catching on. “Afterward?”

“I want sex,” he says. “But my instincts seem more interested in what sex with you could provide.”

Stiles’ fingers twitch and his expression is a little bemused. “Provide?”

“Whenever I think of you in heat- my instincts- all they want is to knot you until you're pregnant.”
He’s embarrassed by his own declaration, but also not as much as he might have ever believed before. There’s a flush to Stiles’ cheeks now, his pupils are large and the smell of him says he’s not opposed to the idea.

“We’d- just started talking about it,” he admits, to Derek’s surprise. “A few weeks before the accident.”

“About- us and kids?”

Is that why the thought of getting Stiles pregnant hasn’t been freaking him out?

Stiles only shrugs. “We’re in a good place financially right now. Our relationship- before- was stable. We thought it was a good time to start talking about it.”

“And- did we reach a decision?”

The reply doesn’t come straight away. Stiles hesitates as if he doesn’t know whether or not to give Derek that answer. He doesn’t need to hear it though. Derek already knows.

“We were going to start trying, weren’t we?” he says. “That’s why whenever you mention your heat all I can think about is.”

“Well,” Stiles says reddening. “That’s a pretty natural reaction. But maybe it’s more heightened because of our uh- lacking sex life lately.”

Derek doesn’t say anything for a while.

“So- do you understand what I’m trying to say?” he asks. “I don’t have the control to deal with this- you in heat- we’ve got no idea what will happen. Or how dangerous this could be for you.”

Stiles only smiles at him.

“I hear you man, you’re worried. I get that, but I know you, I trust you and you’d never intentionally hurt me. So I need you to trust me on this. I know what I’m doing. And the possible results far outweigh the risks.”

That's not exactly what he wanted to hear. “So you’re willing to let me bite you again? Even when you explicitly told me not to. Not unless I meant it for real?”

Stiles’ expression twists. “Some sacrifices have to be-“

Derek groans. “God, don’t talk like that. This is going to be hard enough to do knowing you don’t want it.”

He stands up so quickly that Derek takes a step back. “You think I don’t want it?” he demands, voice rising. “It’s because I want it that I told you not to. Because getting some poor half-assed version isn’t good enough for me. I want everything I had before. Even if you never get your memories back. Even if you never end up like the Derek I remember. I still want you.”

Derek doesn’t know what to say. He can’t find the words. Stiles hasn’t been so open about his feelings on this. He doesn’t know what to think. Only that it thrills him that Stiles wants him. Even as the man he is now, one who doesn’t remember Stiles and is nothing like the old Derek.

Stiles still wants him.

“I want you too,” Derek blurts out. “It’s not just physical or sense memory or instincts. I have-
feelings.”

Stiles’ face softens, though there’s a quirk to his mouth that makes it look like he’s trying not to smile. “Feelings?”

“For you,” he says. “But you’ve figured that out by now.”

Stiles rolls his shoulders a little. “Well, I didn’t want to assume.”

Derek snorts at the suggestion. He’s certain there’s not a single thing in this world that Stiles hasn’t first had his suspicions about. “Are you sure-?”

“I am,” he says firmly. “How do you want to do this?”

Derek glances at Stiles, the way he’s moving into a comfortable position on the bed, starting to tilt his neck up for easier access. He feels a pull of heat so strong that it’s like somebody punched him in the gut.

“I think on the bed- is a bad idea,” he admits.

Stiles glances at the mattress he’s currently sitting on. “Well it’s looking like our only option because when you get your teeth in me I’m not going to be able to stand.”

Derek hesitates. “Does it- hurt you?”

The question makes Stiles’ mouth fall open a little, pupils expanding. “No,” he says breathlessly as he remembers. “It feels like I’m having about ten orgasms at once.”

Derek swallows. Maybe he shouldn’t have asked. Stiles pats a spot on the bed invitingly and Derek’s already moving, knee braced on the edge of the mattress before he stops himself.

“What if I try to- you know.”

Stiles watches him. “What? Get inside me? Much as I’d love the idea of sitting on your dick while we do this, I’ll make sure you don’t.”

That’s not really inspiring his confidence here. Derek is definitely sceptical. “And what if it happens like last time? We both get too overwhelmed to remember that we’re not supposed to be doing this?”

But the idea doesn’t bother Stiles at all. “Then we have sex,” he says. “And it will be awesome, and we can discuss things from there.”

“Stiles-“

“Do you want to? Or not?” he asks. “Because I’m in.”

Fuck, why does this have to be so hard? Derek’s in, of course he is. But he doesn’t want it to be like he’s taking advantage of the situation as an excuse to be able to fuck Stiles. Even if he’s not opposed to the idea. But that’s not really the point.

“You’re not taking advantage,” Stiles says, seemingly pulling the words from Derek’s brain. “This is going to be enjoyable for both of us, regardless of whether it ends in sex.”

Derek doesn’t reply. He climbs up onto the bed fully until he’s moving between Stiles and the pillows, dropping behind his back so that Stiles is now sitting in between the v of his open legs.
“I think- like this,” he says, sliding an arm across Stiles’ stomach and dragging him gently backwards until he’s flush against Derek’s chest. “It would be easier.”

He can smell Stiles’ arousal already, hear the uneven beat of his heart. “Okay,” he agrees, sounding out of breath.

“Okay,” Derek agrees, keeping the palm of his hand flat against Stiles’ stomach, just above the waistband of his jeans, holding him there.

He likes that Stiles leans into his touch, muscles loosening as he relaxes. Derek runs his fingers softly through Stiles’ hair before encouraging him to turn his neck, offering up his throat to Derek’s mouth.

His cock is already pressing up heavily against his jeans, feeling the heat from contact with Stiles’ ass. There’s clothing between them, but all Derek can think of is removing those barriers and sliding his dick home inside his mate.

That’s right. *His* mate.

Derek’s fangs are extended before he has to make the conscious thought and he dips his head down towards Stiles’ throat to gently trace it with his teeth. Stiles gasps immediately, a pointed shiver wracking his frame as the smell of his slick invades Derek’s nose. His hips roll against Stiles’ ass almost automatically, an instinctive move to signal his intent when he worries the sensitive flesh.

It’s better than he imagined. Stiles grips the wrist of Derek’s left hand still barely above his waistband, and clings to it harshly enough not to be ignored. Derek flexes beneath the hold, pleased at the strength in Stiles’ fingers when he can’t pull away.

He finds the spot on Stiles’ neck where his brand already sits, a claim willingly bestowed to his mate, a promise of their future. When Derek sets his mouth to the spot this time, he’s surprised at the welcoming flare of heat at his right hipbone where his own mark sits.

Why didn’t he feel that before?

Stiles whines out a desperate sound and Derek can smell the answering rush of more slick from the touch. His tongue laves the spot with more intent, feeling the steady, pleasurable sharpness from his hip answer it.


Derek’s leisurely thrusts against Stiles’ ass change pace, faster in the heat of urgency. His briefs are damp now with his precome and the smell of Stiles’ slick is everywhere.

He does what Stiles asked. He slides his teeth along until he feels a sharp flare of *something* from his bond bite, and then he knows that’s the exact place where he first claimed his mate. Stiles cries out, moving against Derek’s crotch, hips lifting into the air at the sensation.

Derek bites down.

Stiles whines and jerks in his hold and for a second Derek thinks he’s coming as he gasps brokenly in the stillness of their bedroom. He isn’t though, he just goes looser in Derek’s arms, making these sweet little punched out sounds that have Derek wishing his cock was inside him. When the seconds tick by and Derek doesn’t release his hold, just keeps his teeth firmly in the impression of his past bond bite, Stiles death grip on his wrist shifts as he tugs Derek’s hand away from his abdomen.

Derek doesn’t stop what he’s doing to ask questions. He’s supposed to be stimulating the area of
Stiles’ neck, giving their mating mark as much attention as possible. But when Stiles drags his hands over the raised bulge of his erection, Derek’s fingers twitch and his teeth bite down a little harder.

Stiles whimpers, twitching in his arms as his hips start to move against the added pressure of Derek’s hand.

“Don’t stop,” he pants. “Oh God, please don’t stop.”

Derek doesn’t stop.

He holds Stiles tighter, giving him the pressure that he needs and when Stiles lets out a long drawn out whine, he realises his knot is starting to form in his jeans. A response to omega in his arms.

Derek doesn’t knot very often. He needs the right balance of hormones and stimulus for that and usually the suppressants help moderate it. But here they are. Stiles shudders in his arms and it’s some time before Derek finally relaxes his jaw to release him. After that Stiles falls against him with a sigh.

“Are you okay? Do you think that’s enough?” Derek asks, trying to ignore the restriction of his jeans.

He’s brushing Stiles’ hair off his face when he lets out a little breathless sound. “Yeah, man. Beyond fine over here.”

Derek can smell it but he’s not sure that he’s supposed to ask. “Did you come?”

Stiles laughs a little, chest rising and falling as his breathing evens out again. “Yeah. Twice.”

“Twice?” Derek demands, shocked.

“It’s super sensitive,” Stiles sighs contentedly, curling up between his legs. “Did you-?”

“Doesn’t matter,” he says, flushing.

Stiles turns to look at him. “So that’s a no,” he says, reaching down to palm at Derek’s jeans.

He hisses at the sensation and draws his hips back.

“Too sensitive?”

“I’m still-“

“You’re still coming?” Stiles says, incredulous. “Did you knot?”

Derek lets his head fall back against the headboard with a groan. Jesus, this kid is so fucking forward about everything. “Stiles.”

“Do you want me to-?”

That would be a bad idea for certain. “I’d better keep my pants on,” he admits, through clenched teeth.

Derek’s control now is tenuous at best. He’d rather not test those limits.

Stiles stares at him carefully, gauging his response. "Do you need some space?"

He thinks of the last fragments of his control, barely holding him back from trying to start something
between them. "Yeah," he admits.

Stiles wriggles free of his grip and scoots further down the mattress. "I'll just- shower. Yeah."

Then he rolls to his feet and disappears into the bathroom. Derek bites his lip and tries not to focus on the smells in the room. His knot is sensitive and still coming copiously in his briefs. He still has no idea how he's supposed to deal with Stiles' heat after all this.

Stiles wards their bedroom again after they've both showered and when they're going to bed, he admits that Deaton might have been right to assume Derek stimulating his mark would bring on his heat.

He doesn't smell any different, but Derek knows that's not the only way to tell if an omega is about to go into heat. And Stiles knows his own body. Now it's just a question of when. And Stiles seemed confident that it might start tomorrow.

Derek's in no way ready for it. But then it's not exactly all about him is it? Stiles is the one who has to suffer with this, who has to deal with Randal. He's gotten the worst part of this plan, no doubt.

Even so, it's a long time before Derek finally falls asleep.

Both Derek and Stiles wake up early.

It's not a conscious decision. Derek's too wired about Peter and Stiles and Randal to sleep deeply anyway, and Stiles seems to wake up like he's been disturbed by something. There's nobody outside trying to get in though, and when Stiles breaks the barrier the hallway is empty.

They make their way downstairs and Stiles gets started on the coffee machine since nobody is up yet.

If his heat doesn't start today, Stiles has already set out some ideas on negotiating for territory instead. Derek's mostly prepared for anything. Mostly.

He's staring out the kitchen window thinking about Peter, and the execution he's permitted the Silva pack to pull off when something shifts between the trees. Since his mind is on Peter already it takes him a second to realise that he's actually staring at his uncle half hidden in the woods behind their house.

What the hell is he doing here? Derek just told the Silvas that it was okay to kill him!

"I need some air," he mutters, moving towards the door and stomping out onto the mildewed grass before Stiles can stop him.

Peter steps out of sight by then but Derek knows that he saw him. He's barefoot, and his feet are cold and wet by the time he's reached the spot where he saw his uncle. Derek's not stupid enough to say his name out loud in case somebody from the house hears him. That is, before he realises that he's walked far enough that it might not be so simple to be overheard.

Except now Peter is nowhere to be found. Did Derek imagine him? Is he hallucinating?

"Hello, nephew," he says, stepping out from behind a sycamore.
Of course he's here. Apparently he can't resist all the attention even when people are trying to kill him. "You can't be here," Derek says. "The Silva pack is inside and we've given them permission to kill you without inciting a pack war."

Peter merely raises an eyebrow as if it's of some mild interest to him. Derek might think he'd be more concerned about that.

"We?" he asks. "Or do you mean the rest of the pack. Surely you don't want to have me killed."

"I don't," he admits, uncomfortably. "Which is why you should leave."


Derek glances back at the house where Stiles is waiting. And who expressly warned him not to let Peter know what happened to his memories. But what's the point now? When Peter's already guessed and the Silva pack plans to kill him?

"Amnesia," he admits. "Those hunters who came because of you, shot me in the head."

Peter doesn't seem exactly surprised by that. "Oh my bad."

Derek grits his teeth.

"But surely you can see how terrible things have gotten?"

He's not sure he has any idea what Peter is talking about actually. "What things?"

"The state of your pack, Derek," he says, like it's obvious. "Overrun with true alphas and upstart omegas."

He better not be talking about Stiles. Derek watches him stonily and doesn't answer.

"Don't deny you haven't enjoyed these past few days, being the alpha of this pack that you're supposed to be," he says, and that pretty much confirms how long he's been sneaking around the place.

Does he know about Tara in their bunker then? What else does he know? This can't be good.

"Don’t you want to take back what’s yours?" he wonders. “He’s already disrespected you in every way possible. He’s running your pack, he’s …. He even putting you on your back and mounting you like an alpha."

Derek's stomach drops out. “What? How do you- you were there that day,” he realises. “Out in the woods somewhere, listening to us.”

Fuck. How long has Peter been lurking around?

“Don’t you want to lead your pack like the natural order of things says you should? Don’t you want your omega put in his natural place, beneath you?”

Is he serious? After the things Derek’s seen these past few days, how could Peter honestly believe that he wants Stiles beneath him. What the hell is he even trying to say right now? What is he trying to convince Derek of?

"Come on," Peter continues with a curled smile. "What happened to the Derek I know? The one
who wouldn’t let one little omega walk all over him.”

Derek stiffens at the words. “Don’t talk about him like that.”

“I can help you, you know,” Peter says, taking a step closer. “Put things back into balance again.”

Only Derek's pretty sure that he doesn't want to help at all. At least not in the way the pack wants or needs. What happened to Peter to make him like this? To turn against his own family and to wish to see them fail? To relish the very thought?

“It shouldn’t be like this, Derek,” Peter insists. "A pack that follows a wilful omega, one who likes to shame his alpha by putting him on his knees. I can help fix the problems that you created.”

He knows what Peter was like in high school. Always doling out advice. But the thing is, is Stiles never tried to make him feel shameful about the things he wants, not like Peter is trying to right now. And he knows what’s happening. He’s gotten better at reading manipulation from people since high school. Since Kate.

When it comes down to it is he really going to believe Peter over Stiles? Stiles who has protected him, defended him when he’s made mistakes, and supported him even after the way he treated his mate in the beginning?

“Come on, Derek,” Peter says. “Make the right choice here.”

“I will,” he agrees.

It’s time he finally stopped listening to Peter. "You should go before they realise you're here," Derek tells him, glancing back towards the house. He can hear someone else moving about now, someone other than Stiles.

A werewolf by the sound of it. Peter smirks like he welcomes the challenge but he steps back and disappears deeper into the woods again. Derek's almost relieved to see him go. He's still standing amongst the trees when he first smells it.

Need swells instantly in his gut, the ache to provide and satisfy as Stiles’ heartbeat increases inside the house.

He can hear him standing in the kitchen and it takes everything in him not to turn back and get there first before anyone else can. Because it’s happening now just like they planned.

Stiles is in heat.

And the werewolf has already entered the kitchen. Derek can see his face through the window.

It's Randal. Fucking fuck.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

I know everyone has a love/hate relationship with all my cliffhangers haha but there isn't one this chapter (though I should mention that it would have been meaner to end my last chapter after Derek's POV in the beginning of this one so the last cliffy could have been much worse)

Also a heads up for everyone, there is discussions of rape in this chapter, a character makes a few gross insinuations but no explicit attempts are made. Let me know if I need to update any of my tags, I don't want to trigger anyone reading this

Derek takes a step forward before remembering he’s not supposed to intervene. This is all part of the plan.

His claws are out and his body is aching with the need to move, to do something but he manages to stay where he is. Barely. He jolts forward when Randal steps closer, all but pressing himself up against Stiles. Derek’s listening so intently to Stiles’ heart beat, waiting for the right moment to interrupt that he doesn’t hear the footsteps behind him.

“Well this is interesting,” Peter admits, standing at his back to see what Derek’s watching.

His teeth are bared at the sight and Derek's fighting the growl rattling in his ribs. “Shut up, Peter,” he snaps, focused only on Stiles. “I told you to go.”

“I’m assuming the reason you’re not intervening here is because it’s another one of that omega’s underhanded schemes.”

Randal is saying some despicable things to Stiles right now and Derek’s doing his best not to lose control. When he drags Stiles out of view from the window, Derek knows it’s time to stop this once and for all.

He stomps forward, ready to render Randal’s head clean from his body, but Peter’s still chatting away behind him.

“I think it’s time that omega stopped running the show, don’t you?” he says, suddenly. “And I handle this circus like you clearly need me to.”

Derek does not have time to listen to Peter’s crap. He waves him away with an angry sound and barely takes another step forward before there’s something heavy whacking him over the back of his head. He goes down in a heap, the pain beyond anything, splitting his skull open like a cracked egg.

And then, nothing.
He wakes up with a howl of rage, loud enough that it disturbs the critters and birds in the woods around him. Enough that he can hear the rest of the house stirring awake at the noise.

Derek’s in the kitchen so quickly that he nearly rips the door off its hinges.

Stiles is gone. The smell of his heat has turned the air into a sauna, thick syrupy sweetness burning in the back of his throat. His cock twitches automatically at the sensations, but his twisting emotions keep him in check.

Stiles is gone. Peter is gone.

He can smell it in the air. Peter and Stiles’ scents together. And Stiles is gone. Because Derek’s uncle took him.

If Stiles was with the man he’d known before the fire, then Derek wouldn’t have any cause to worry. But Peter isn’t that same person, the fire burnt more than his flesh, it burrowed into his brain and scorched out his compassion.

Now he’s the type of man who tries to kill his niece. Who switches out Stiles’ suppressants. Who hits his nephew over the head and knocks him out.

And Derek is afraid of what he’ll do. Stiles can handle himself, but he’s in heat and the processes going on in his body are going to be keeping him distracted. Derek has no idea what Peter wants with him. He can’t even guess.

Peter is a man he doesn’t recognise anymore. And Derek needs to get to Stiles before he does something unforgivable.

But Randal’s still here and needs to be taken care of. He’s slumped against the cupboard underneath the sink, and his prick is hanging out of his pants, still half hard. The rage he feels at the sight of it almost makes him lean down to rip it off himself.

Only Scott and Kira come rushing into the kitchen first. Followed by Jessica and Nila.

“What the hell is this?” Scott demands, genuinely shocked when he realises that Stiles is gone.

Laura, Cora and Jackson come in next, followed by Isaac who’s still pulling his pants on and looking like he’s recently had a roll around. Probably recently left Jackson’s bed by the looks of it.

The rest of the pack that is still sleeping in the house come in next, followed by Jessica’s betas and Clive. Parrish is still staying with Stiles’ father, and it looks like Lydia and one of the twins are out on patrol.

Everyone else is here, staring at the mess Randal’s made of himself on the kitchen floor. Most of their surprise is real this time.

“Randal tried to force himself on my mate,” Derek spits, furiously. “I want his death.”

Jessica seems to sense the tension in the room because she’s careful to respond or to make any sudden movements. Her betas seem to sense the danger of it too because Derek can see them eyeing the Hale pack, observing that they’re surrounded.

“What is the proof of this, Alpha Hale?”
Derek gestures wrathfully at Randal’s uncovered penis. “That’s my mate’s heat you can smell in the air. He broke the most sacred of laws.”

She hesitates again and Derek’s ready to claw her throat out. “I can see that evidence, Alpha Hale. But if we were to have a witness—”

“You do,” comes a muffled voice, and the door to the walk in food cupboard opens. Deaton steps out holding a jar of loose leaf tea. “I was here during the event. Randal forced himself on Stiles but was interrupted by Peter’s arrival before he could commit what he’d intended.”

“Peter Hale?” Jackson demands. “He’s here?”

“He took Stiles?” Mason realises, putting a hand to his mouth in horror. “While he’s in heat?”

Derek is already going out of his mind with worry.

“And what were you doing here?” Nora-Jane asks, not convinced. “Why were you up so early?”

But Deaton only shrugs at the suspicion in her voice.

“I rise with the sun. And the Hale pack keeps my favourite loose-leaf tea which I prefer to drink in the morning. I emerged at the sounds of struggle and by then Peter had incapacitated your beta and snatched Stiles. I was unable to stop him.”

Derek realises that Stiles wanted Deaton here for this specific reason. To bear witness to Randal’s crime. It’s probably why he didn’t do anything until Peter arrived. Why he didn’t intervene like Derek should have. He knows that he let down his mate when Stiles likely needed him the most. So much for this plan going perfectly.

“Derek,” Laura says urgently. “You’re bleeding.”

He doesn’t even bother to reach back and feel the area that’s been constantly throbbing since he woke up. “Peter hit me over the head with a branch,” he growls, rage filling him with energy. “I want Randal’s blood.”

Jessica realises there’s nothing she can do. Their emissary stood witness. She can't wiggle her way out of it this time. They'll have Randal's death or she'll forfeit her and her pack's safety in their territory. That's their laws.

“You have it,” she concedes. “But first I want to hear him speak.”

Clive steps forward then, head bent innocently low so that Jessica doesn’t even really see him until he’s standing between Randal’s legs and slamming his foot down. Hard.

Randal wakes up with a scream of pain, and even Derek’s eyebrows rise at the ferocity of the act. Nobody has ever stepped on his dick before, especially not when it’s hard. It’s not a position he’d envy even if Randal deserves it.

“Clive!” Jessica shouts, astonished.

Clive bends his neck in submission and steps back, but he doesn’t stay quiet. “You know why, alpha. You know.”

For a second Derek swears he sees a flash of shame in Jessica’s eyes.
“Omega,” Randal roars once he’s recovered from the pain and recognised who inflicted it on him. “You’re dead. I’m going to hurt you so badly you’ll be begging for my cock.”

Derek lets out a snarl and steps between them at the violent words, Clive hastily backing away as he lifts Randal up by the scruff of his shirt until his toes are dangling off the floor.

“You forced yourself on my mate,” Derek snaps, fury making his voice deepen. “Your blood is mine. Alpha Jessica has given me the right to your death.”

Randal’s eyes bug wide before he’s noticing everyone else in the kitchen, realising the danger he’s in. “He wanted it,” he protests, but the lie is beating in his heart. “He asked for it.”

“You fucking liar,” Cora growls, eyes flashing and taking a step forward as if she plans to rip his head off with her bare hands.

Isaac grabs her wrist to hold her back, but barely. Just enough for a warning. The rest of his pack is ready to kill Randal themselves. Derek can taste the anger and violence in the air. Along with the honeyed temptation of Stiles’ scent, drawing him in, inviting him closer.

“Where did he take Stiles?” Derek asks Deaton, smelling where the trail of Stiles’ heat leads before he can answer.

“Through the front door. Stiles was unconscious I believe.”

Derek doesn’t wait for anyone else. He stomps towards the front door, pulling Randal along by the scruff of his shirt and when he stumbles and falls, dragging him along the floor.

Both packs follow him outside and Derek dumps Randal on the grass. His claws are out still and it would be so easy to kill him.

But his penis is still hanging out of his pants and his eyes are wide with rage and fear and Derek’s thinks he’s never seen a man so pathetic. He doesn’t think he can kill him in cold blood like this, not if it wasn’t in the heat of the moment. And he doesn't want to be brought down to Randal's level. He won't inflict pain purely for his own enjoyment.

Right now all he wants to do is find Stiles. But Randal still can’t be allowed to live. The pause hangs pointedly around them until Jackson is swooping in, half transformed and tears Randal's throat open with his claws, hard enough to almost separate his head from his neck.

It’s over very quickly.

There’s gasps of horror and shock and maybe something else from the people behind them and Derek doesn’t even have it in him to react. Jackson flicks the blood off his claws with a slow smile, relishing the fear from the other pack. Even half transformed he’s terrifying. And he knows it.

“You owed me,” Jackson shrugs, to explain himself.

“After helping keep your scrawny ass on the soccer field after last May, you owe me,” Derek retorts almost automatically, without thinking.

Jackson’s eyes widen a little before he glances at the others. But Derek doesn’t have time for this.

“What does that mean?” Isaac asks, suddenly interested. “Did you remember-?”

But Derek's already turning back to the Silva pack. “Keep them here until I have Stiles,” he
commands. “We still don’t know for sure that they aren’t working with Peter.”

Jessica’s eyes shift colour. “Alpha Hale this is not-“

“If they make a single move, kill them,” he says, bluntly. “If they’re innocent then they should be happy to wait here and do nothing. But if not, kill Nora-Jane first.”

Jessica gasps sharply, a wild look overtaking her face. Nora-Jane automatically reaches out for her before managing to stop herself. It doesn’t matter. They’ve already shown enough.

Derek steps closer. “That’s right,” he says. “If my mate dies then so does yours, even if you haven’t claimed her yet.”

With the threat against Stiles so real, Derek’s willing to do anything to protect him.

Jessica’s eyes narrow. “We have a scout,” she says. “We sent him ahead of us. He's still on your territory now. He will reach the rest of my pack to tell them you have declared war on us.”

Derek does not have time for any of this. “You mean Tara?” he wonders sharply, watching her flinch.


“Cries too much,” Jackson adds, smirking.

Jessica stops protesting after that.

“Scott,” he says, turning towards him with urgency in his blood. “Do you have this?”

Scott glances at the other betas, then at Kira and one of the twins. “Yeah, we’ve got this. Go get Stiles.”

“Jackson, Laura with me,” he says, already stepping towards the trail Stiles’ heat has left. “The rest of you stay here. This doesn’t have to end bloody, Alpha Silva, but it will if you try to start something.”

She doesn’t reply but Derek didn’t expect her to. He’s got to find his mate.

“You smell him?” Jackson says, once they’ve started running into the woods, following the trail.

Laura nods grimly, keeping pace. “He smells unmated.”

Derek’s stomach drops out underneath him. “You don’t think Peter would-?”

He can’t even finish the sentence. But they increase their running pace when he sprints through the trees, trying to reach the end of Stiles’ trail before it's too late. He’s going to stop his uncle no matter what it takes.

When Stiles wakes up he’s tied up on a bed, with hands restrained behind his back in a fucking hotel room and his head is aching something fierce.
Peter is hovering over him.

“Well, well,” he says because Peter can't resist the opportunity to be smarmy. “Sleeping beauty awakens.”

“Fuck you,” Stiles replies automatically, trying to think past his arousal.

His underwear is uncomfortably damp and he’s more than half hard. A state he would’ve preferred to never be in around Peter. At least his heat hasn’t completely robbed him of his faculties.

There’s no way he’s interested in fucking Peter right now. Thank God.

“Yes?” he demands. “Feel free to unveil your fucking plan already. You haven’t got much time until the rest of the pack gets here.”

Peter only smiles pleasantly at the threat.

“Who says we’re still in Beacon Hills?”

Stiles feels a flicker of uncertainty, but holds firm. “You couldn’t have travelled that far in the short amount of time since you knocked me out. Plus it’s too conspicuous carrying around an unconscious omega in heat. Someone would have stopped you, or noticed. So we didn’t go very far. And there’s a menu for Beacon Hills Pizza sitting on the coffee table over there.”

Peter frowns and glances over at the table and Stiles uses his distraction to wiggle his body until he’s sitting upright. He’s practically wrapped up in ropes all the way down to his bare toes so Stiles isn’t likely to be running anywhere.

But he sure as hell isn’t going to lie down on this bed while Peter is in the room and plotting another typically megalomaniacal scheme. When he realises there’s no menu after all, Peter turns back and his expression is a little wry. At least he confirmed Stiles’ suspicions. Still in Beacon Hills at least.

“Clever, clever, Stiles,” he admits, more amused than annoyed. “You’re talents are wasted on a man like Derek.”

Stiles freezes at the suggestion. “What about Derek?” he says sharply. “What did you do to him before you came into the kitchen like a bad smell?”

Peter shrugs and sits on the edge of the mattress and Stiles feels his irritation spike at the way it dips under his weight. Peter doesn’t smell good on a regular day, but he’s especially unappealing to Stiles now, when his nose is so sensitive. And his body is essentially channelling the constant need for sex until it's satisfied.

“He got about the same treatment as you,” Peter says with a shrug. “Maybe not so gentle.”

He’s not lying. Stiles doesn’t let himself show relief, not when Peter is going to use something like that against him. As least Derek isn’t dead. That's all he can be glad for right now. Otherwise he'd have killed Peter with his bare hands the first chance he'd gotten.

“You know I did wonder about it,” Peter continues conversationally as he moves closer and puts his palm against Stiles’ throat.

He hisses in disgust, trying to wrench away from the touch but the ropes only impede his movement. Stiles doesn’t roll very far. Where did Peter even get this fucking rope from? Has he been carrying it around waiting for the perfect opportunity?
“What the fuck are you talking about?”

“The makeup,” Peter says. “I was curious why you would hide your mating mark, but it’s all coming together now. Derek’s amnesia. Your skittishness. He doesn’t remember you, does he? He doesn’t want you anymore.”

It would hurt less if it wasn’t so close to the truth. “Is that why you dragged me out here?” Stiles demands. “To discuss my feelings?”

Peter merely laughs. “Yes, I did wonder about your mark, but I suppose that’s not the correct wording is it? Perhaps your lack of a mark is more fitting.”

Stiles sighs impatiently. What was the point of all this? So Peter could strut around for a while and let himself believe he’s the smartest man in the room? Truthfully, the thought is a little disappointing. Stiles was expecting more of a challenge mano e mano.

“That’s what the makeup was for, smartass.”

Peter grins and disappears into the bathroom for a moment without deigning to reply. What a dick. Stiles frantically glances about the hotel room, trying to see anything he could use to break himself free. But Peter’s clearly already swept the place.

Dammit. This isn’t looking good. Stiles is finding it harder to concentrate. If he could make himself come a few times, the situation might be a bit clearer. If that were even possible.

He hasn’t moved when Peter returns carrying a hand-held mirror. He holds it up to Stiles’ neck and angles it so he can see his bond bite. Stiles rolls his eyes.

Peter seems to realise he’s not getting it and his grin only widens with further delight. “I removed the make up when you were asleep,” he says, gleefully.

Which a) is creepy as hell and b) what the fuck?

“What?” he says, losing some of his calmness. “No, it’s-“

But Peter swipes his finger across the spot, and besides the faint sensation of revulsion, the make-up doesn’t smudge. Because in this at least Peter was telling the truth. He did remove it while Stiles’ was unconscious after all.

Derek’s bond bite is gone.

Stiles can’t believe that it actually faded. And after Derek basically lavished it with his attention the other night. This has to be some kind of cosmic joke. God, Stiles had never thought it would happen. They’d only just started to get on the right track, he’d been so hopeful things would just-

Fall into place.

“You smell unmated, omega,” Peter purrs, absolutely overjoyed before he pointedly stares at Stiles’ crotch.

Where the effects of his heat are becoming increasingly visible. Stiles shudders under the feel of his gaze. Majorly uncool. “You better not be insinuating what I think you are,” he warns.

Peter sits down again, but he’s closer than before. “Surely you’re willing to consider what an ill-mated match the two of you were. Together we could-“
“Ugh,” he says, interrupting Peter with a loud gagging sound. “You’re kidding right?”

The reply displeases him, from the way Peter's expression flickers. “Come on, Stiles,” he says. “You know he can never keep up with you. Even if he satisfies you sexually-“

Stiles makes another choking noise.

“He’ll never satisfy you intellectually.”

What the fuck is even happening right now?

“Derek’s not stupid,” he snaps. “What the hell are you even talking about? He’s my bondmate, he’s everything I want otherwise I would never have marked him in the first place. Just how deluded are you? And even if his mark is gone my mark on him remains. We’re still bonded.”

The argument doesn't seem to be penetrating his thick skull because Peter only smirks disbelievingly. “You know as well as I how hard it is to sustain a one-sided connection.”

“I don’t care,” he says furiously. “I won’t ever let it fade. So whatever you want me to do, join you, fuck you, let you kill me- it’s not gonna happen.”

Peter’s expression becomes more twisted. “I think you overestimate your power here, Stiles. You can’t stop me from doing anything.”

And the real Peter Hale rears his ugly head. Stiles isn't surprised at all, though he suspects maybe he should be. But he's always known that Peter will stop at nothing in order to get what he wants.

“It won’t work,” he says. “You try and bond me and it won’t take. The intent is wrong and I don’t want you.”

He doesn’t answer for a while and Stiles tries to get into his head. What is Peter planning? Why has he done all this? Stiles knows it isn't just about him, it's more than that.

“Are you in league with the Silvas?” he asks. “Did you team up with them in order to get them to send someone to kill Derek? So it wouldn’t appear like you were involved?”

Peter shrugs, unconcerned that he's been accused of trying to kill yet another family member. It's definitely one of his more well known and recognisable patterns of behaviour. “Close, but not exactly. I sent them for you.”

Stiles stares at him, mouth half open. He’s sweating, skin flushed and the room feels much hotter than it actually is. “For me? How-?”

“I’d hoped he wouldn’t be quick enough to save you. That he’d blame himself for your death and spiral so much that he’d need to lean on his family for support.”

The 'family' part heavily implying Peter and no one else. Has this been some elaborate plan from the beginning just so he might be able to control Derek?

“You’re sick,” Stiles says, horrified.

“Things don’t always work out like we plan,” Peter says, with a remote expression. “Derek was fast enough, and foolish enough to take the hit for you.”

At first he doesn’t know how this could have been the plan and then suddenly he does.
“You want me out of the way,” Stiles realises. “Because you’re more likely to be able to manipulate Derek then you are me. And you want to take the pack without turning them all against you.”

Peter folds his arms and leans back a little as if mentally congratulating himself on a great idea. Stiles cannot believe the state of delusion he’s in right now. “Even if I’d died, even if Derek died, you would never have been allowed into the pack,” he says. “Not after you tried to kill Laura, tried to kill Lydia. None of them would ever have trusted you.”

But Peter only raises an eyebrow at him. “I don’t need them to trust me, I only require their obedience when the time comes.”

“They won’t obey you,” Stiles says confidently. “All of this was for nothing.”

Peter’s not so convinced. “Not for nothing. I do have an unclaimed omega in heat tied up like a nice little present on my bed.”

No thank you. Stiles wants nothing to do with that sick thought.

“First of all,” he says over the slickness between his legs and the roaring in his ears. “Gross. And second of all, there’s no conceivable outcome where you get what you want here. Ever.”

Peter stands up and crowds in close again. “Hmm, so determined,” he says. “We’ll see how long that-“

Stiles might be completely tied up, but he still manages to pull his feet in and kick out hard in the direction of Peter’s balls. From the gasp of pain he lets out before reeling away, Stiles is fairly confident that he hit the mark.

Small victories.

But the fact that his arousal is stinking up the room is really complicating things. God, if he could just get a hand around his dick to bring himself off this might not be so difficult to bear. He needs to be able to focus, and that’s harder to do when his brain is literally being overshadowed by his need to get a knot inside him.

When Peter turns back his claws are out and his eyes are flashing his anger. “A little eager, are we?”

“Let’s not pretend that this is consent,” Stiles says coldly.

Peter laughs then.

“How did you get the Silva pack on your side?” he wonders just to try and distract him for a little longer. “Was the whole requesting permission to kill you just an act?”

“Oh no,” Peter says, amused. "The Silva pack woman truly wants me dead because of the threat I pose to her authority.”

That’s not in the least shocking. If Stiles had had his way they would have disposed of Peter years ago, when he’d first started causing problems for them. Call the rest of the Hales sentimental but they hadn’t exactly been on board with the idea.

And Stiles can see where Jessica’s dislike might have originated. Peter must have tried to take over their pack as well. He really is more of a power hungry leech than Stiles first thought. Is that what Peter’s trying to say?
If he wants to be in charge so badly why not try it with another pack that doesn’t already know what a piece of shit he is? Stiles thinks that would certainly have been easier. Though Jessica’s clear hatred of him suggests Peter wasn't too successful on that front.

“I knew Jessica was smarter than that,” Stiles mutters, satisfied at the idea. "She would never have believed anything of you, no matter how well you can lie.”

“Oh, she didn’t,” he agrees, letting Stiles change the topic of the conversation, shifting it away from his heat. “But an alpha with a shaky hold on her pack is useless to me. I needed someone more bloodthirsty, of a like mind for power as I have.”

That answer seems fairly obvious. “Her second then. Randal.”

“Hmm,” Peter agrees. “He’s distasteful of course, but still a useful tool. He made sure to give the hunters your photo instead of Derek’s and he’s been supplying so much beneficial information since he arrived here. Desperate to prove himself actually.”

“And he’s most likely dead,” Stiles points out, because Peter should be made aware of his many, many fuck ups.

At least Stiles hopes Randal's dead. He’s praying that Derek didn’t lose his mind over the untimely kidnapping thing and forget completely about what they’d originally intended. Eliminating Randal is more important. Stiles can still deal with Peter. Even in this state.

He’s been trying to free his hands for the past ten minutes because Peter is no sailor and didn’t tie him up properly. It’s tight for sure, but it’s not one of those knots where escape would be impossible. He might have to dislocate his thumb but it would be worth it.

Stiles has definitely had enough of dickheads trying to force themselves on him just because he's in heat.

Peter doesn’t appear too concerned about Randal’s demise. “Oh, I don’t know. Your plan was an embarrassing failure from where I was standing.”

“So, leaving a witness to Randal breaking the sacred laws, knocking out the omega in heat and kidnapping him, with Randal unharmed to allow those left behind to suspect the circumstances weren’t just fortuitous but you were colluding all along, that was the embarrassing failure was it?”

He doesn’t answer but the way his mouth curves downward is a mark of his resentment. Peter clearly hadn’t thought this attack through as much as he’d like to believe. If all but confirming there was some association between himself and the Silvas was his initial intention. Stiles highly doubts it.

“I admit, that was poorly handled,” Peter says. “And I certainly would have killed that meddling emissary if I’d had the time, but I figure I still have the advantage.”

Stiles has almost popped his thumb free of the restraints. “And how is that?” he wonders.

“You smell unmated,” Peter repeats, eyes glinting with the hint of triumph. “When Derek finds us he’s not going to be focused on me. Once he smells you, he’ll frenzy.”

Stiles flinches at the suggestion. He knows how ripe he smells right now. Derek will be distracted, and that will make it much easier to ambush him. And If Derek’s in the same room-

“He won’t,” he insists. “He has control.”
“After he lost all his memories?” Peter wonders innocently and Stiles really fucking hates this guy.

“It won’t matter,” he says, trying to sound bored. “He won’t come alone.”

Peter bares his teeth like he’s trying not to laugh. “Yes, he will. You wouldn’t believe the arrogance of my nephew.”

Derek knows better than that. Even if he was anxious about Stiles’ safety. He has a pack that he trusts. They’re a team, not an autocracy like Peter wants them to be. Peter is grossly underestimating his nephew’s skills here, and his intelligence. Stiles is hoping that will bite him in the ass soon enough.

But for now these fucking ropes.

Derek follows his instincts, letting them lead him directly to Stiles, so absorbed in his mate's scent that he's unable to respond to any of Laura or Jackson’s questions.

When he comes out of the woods behind the back of a building, he doesn’t need to peer into the any of the windows to realise it’s a motel. Peter brought his mate, who’s in heat and unmarked, to a hotel.

Derek’s whole body clenches with outrage and he lets the trail lead him straight to the room where Stiles’ smell is the strongest.

“Hold on.” Laura says as they reach the door. “Shouldn’t we check it’s not a-“

Derek kicks the door down.

He barely takes two steps inside before something heavy is crashing into his head. Something hefty and plastic and he crumples under the weight of it, collapsing onto the horrible smelling carpet. He can see the broken pieces of the what hit him out of the corner of his eye and it’s a fucking old TV. Peter hit him over the head with a TV.

“Derek!” Stiles cries out, sounding anxious and livid all at once.

There’s a scuffle and angry shouting and what sounds like glass breaking but Derek can’t focus past the throbbing in his skull. It feels like his brain just got scrambled. Again. What is it with everybody hitting him in the head?

He groans with pain, but on the next inhale he gets a mouthful of Stiles’ heat. Yes, that's his biggest problem right now. His mate needs him.

“Peter!” Laura shouts. “You fucking-“

When Derek manages to get up again, Laura is climbing out the smashed window that Peter dived through to escape. Jackson is standing at her back, and he’s already beginning to transform, the strange scales rippling across his skin.

Derek staggers towards Stiles who’s wrapped up entirely in ropes. His eyes are wide and frantic as he struggles to get closer to Derek, and he must be doing something with his hands because the ropes go slack and begin slipping off his body as he frees himself.
“Are you okay?” he grits out, clutching at his head, which is bleeding freshly again. For the second time today.

“T’m great,” Stiles says, stumbling into Derek’s chest and pressing himself wholly up against him. “Are you okay?”

Derek tilts Stiles’ chin up and to the side, exposing the empty expanse of his neck. Where he’s unmarked. “I need- I need to- let me-“

“Yeah,” Stiles says, without asking him if it will work this time. If the bite will take.

Derek puts his teeth to the spot he can find with his eyes closed, feels the answering heat shudder through his own bond bite. It’s one sided now, but still strong. Stiles’ love for him hasn’t wavered.

When Derek bites him this time, he breaks skin.

Stiles moans deeply and jerks in his arms, heat and blood and love sealing them back together. The connection flairs up between them, powerful and bright and Derek doesn’t need to worry if it’s working or not.

He already knows that it has.

When he pulls back, Stiles is dazed and soft from the mating high, and Derek can smell his come. The mark sits red and dark, thrown into relief against Stiles’ pale skin. Absently he reaches his fingers up to touch the tender area. When he trembles at the touch, Derek realises how sensitive it really is.

“It worked?” Stiles breathes around a soft noise. “But before it-?”

“I love you,” Derek says. “I know I haven’t given you much reason to believe that lately, but I mean it.”

Stiles groans and his arms are coming around Derek’s neck as he hikes his leg up awkwardly and curls it around his hip. “I’m so fucking horny I don’t know anything right now. I want-“

Derek lifts him up properly, wrapping both legs around his waist so Stiles has the right amount of purchase to get himself off. “There you go,” he says, keeping his voice calm and soothing. “I got you, baby. Take what you need.”

Stiles is far along in his heat. His eyes are half lidded and his face is painfully flushed when he starts to rock his hips against Derek’s cock. Derek doesn’t move against it, knows that encouragement is only going to remind Stiles that he wants Derek inside him right now.

And he’s not going to knot his mate in a crappy hotel room because he doesn’t have the self-control to wait. Once Stiles starts coming during his heats, his need only increases, and Derek knows they’re going to be in trouble if they dive in too fast.

When Stiles’ hands come away it's wet with his blood.

“H-hurt,” Stiles pants, his speech slurring as his eyes roll back and he comes, grinding his body against Derek’s. “Fuck, you’re hurt.”

Derek bites his lip to keep from making any noises that will distract Stiles even more. He unwraps his legs from around his waist and pulls Stiles into a bridal carry, feeling the heat and wetness of Stiles’ slick burning into his forearm as he holds him close.
Stiles only groans louder and starts trying to grind his ass against Derek’s arm.

“It’s okay,” he says, turning about and taking him out of the room. “I’m okay. Let’s go back to our house where I can take care of you.”

“Good,” Stiles gasps, hips still moving. “Good idea.”

“Laura,” he says, listening in now and keeping his voice level. They sound like they’re fairly deep in the woods by now. “Did you get him?”

Her curses are all the answer he needs. It doesn’t matter. The Silva pack wants his blood, Peter will be more than occupied in the next few days. Derek’s going to worry about him later. He’s not on the list of priorities right now.

“Forget him,” he says. “You two go on back to the house. We’ll meet you there.”

“You sound different,” Jackson says suspiciously, the noise muffled by his horrifying fangs. He must be fully transformed by now. “What’s wrong with you?”

Derek only shrugs even if neither Jackson nor his sister can see it. Stiles has pressed his cheek against Derek’s chest with a heavy sigh, revealing the red mark on his neck. The sight of it fills him with deep pride.

“I’m more clear headed than I’ve ever been,” he assures them. “Laura can you call the department on your way back? Get Deputy Clark over here to close off the scene.”

Stiles’ heart beat is getting louder, and he’s scrabbling at Derek’s neck again, trying to pull him down in order to be kissed. Derek’s got his work cut out for him right now. He’ll have to worry about the thousands of dollars worth of property damage later.

“Hold on,” Laura says abruptly. “Derek is that-?”

Derek steps back out into the motel parking lot just as Mrs Lee is running out of the main office, phone half pressed to her ear. “Don’t go anywhere,” she yells. “I’m on the phone to the Sheriff’s-“

He turns towards her, automatically reaching for his badge even with Stiles in his arms before he realises that he’s still on sick leave and doesn’t have it on him. Mrs Lee trails off at the sight of him anyway, having recognised him and his mate, who he’s still carrying in his arms.

“It’s alright, Mrs Lee,” he says calmly. “I’ve sent for the Sheriff’s department already. You’ve got insurance, right?”

Mrs Lee is surprised, glancing quickly between Stiles, now sagging happily in his arms and the polite expression on Derek’s face. “I- yes. I have insurance, Deputy Hale.”

“Then it should be cleared up pretty quickly.”

“Is he alright?” she wonders, looking a little nervous.

“He’s in heat and he was kidnapped,” Derek admits. “But he’ll be alright.”

“Just peachy,” Stiles groans, flushed and smelling spicier by the minute. “Can we go now?”

Derek would love to do just that, but he’s still a cop even if he’s off duty. He can’t leave Mrs Lee in danger. “If you could return to your office before the other deputies arrive, ma’am I’d greatly appreciate it. We haven’t caught the perpetrator as yet.”
Mrs Lee hesitates for only a moment until her two young children are slipping out of the office as well, curious at all the commotion. Then she walks back towards them, slipping into sharp Korean to admonish them as they giggle and run back inside without a care.

She nods at Derek once before she follows them, locking the door behind her. Derek heads straight for the woods on the most direct path that will lead back to their house.

“You know I can walk right?” Stiles mutters a little annoyed, once they’re out of eyesight and his heat and Derek isn’t the only thing overwhelming him.

Derek feels a little overwhelmed himself at Stiles’ scent, still so inviting and willing. He can’t believe he’s managed to keep his pants on so far. Not that Stiles hasn’t tried to get him out of them since they started walking. He’s certainly determined, Derek can see that.

But Stiles is also barefoot, and Derek would rather avoid making him more uncomfortable than he already is. If he’s walking too quickly, lost in the haze of heat, he might not even notice if he gets cut by sharp twigs or pointed rocks.

“I know,” Derek says anyway. “Let me have this.”

Of all the things he’s done lately, this feels right. He wants to take care of Stiles like he should have been doing before he was kidnapped. Derek’s going to fix this however he can.

“Alright,” Stiles says agreeably, eyelids fluttering shut. “As long as I get your dick after.”

Derek groans, adjusts his grip on his mate and tries not to stare too much at his fresh bond bite. “Trust me, Stiles I’m struggling not to give it to you right now.”

Apparently the idea is pleasing to him because Stiles shifts again, biting at Derek’s exposed collarbone with a hungry sound. Derek shivers a little and tries not to stagger into a tree. That’s the last thing they need right now.

“I think I’m going to wear you out,” Stiles continues nonchalantly. “I’ve only come twice since it started an hour ago and I’m telling you right now there’s a lot of pent up energy happening up in here.”

Derek’s not worried. Stiles tends to get a little dramatic when he’s in the middle of his heat, but they’ve always gotten through it before. “Then we switch when I can’t knot you anymore and you fuck me instead like we always do. Feels like it’s been forever anyway.”

“God, yes,” Stiles groans and Derek can smell the fresh pulse of slick that produces. “You have the best ideas.”

It takes him a second. But Derek only smirks and waits for him to get there. He’s recovering from heat hormones, being deprived of orgasms and a recent kidnapping all within about an hour. It’s understandable.

But Stiles is clever. He figures it out pretty quickly on his own.

Derek sees the moment Stiles inclines his head towards him, squinting through his suspicion. “College Derek?” he wonders faintly, disbelief altering his tone.

“It’s just Derek actually,” he manages, trying not to grin.

Stiles moves so quickly that he almost jerks out of Derek’s arms. “Oh my God, Oh my god, Oh my
god,” he screeches wildly. “Derek?”

“Yeah,” he says. “I think that TV knocked some things loose, or knocked them back into place.”

“You remember?” he demands. “You remember everything?”

Derek nods and some of the humour melts away. “I’m really sorry, Stiles,” he says, ashamed of himself. “I said some awful things, did some awful things. I can’t believe I treated you so badly.”

But Stiles just waves off his guilt like it’s nothing. Derek’s not willing to believe that just yet. “Not even an issue, dude. I gave it back just as much.”

“But-

“Oh, this is so good,” Stiles moans, straining upward to kiss along Derek’s throat. “Now you’ll fuck me.”

Derek’s struggling a little to keep up with what the hell Stiles is rambling about. “What?”

“I mean, I said no sex first, sure, but College Derek like committed, dude,” he continues. “I didn’t think he was ever going to put his dick in me, not for not wanting, or for lack of trying, but Jesus College you got all noble about it.”

That warrants a raised eyebrow. “Huh?”

“Oh, he- or you I guess, saw the error of your ways and was trying to be decent and respectful when we could have been boning for days-“

Okay, Stiles clearly has a lot of thoughts on the matter. But there’s still a lot of things they need to address first. Derek doesn’t want to take advantage of the situation just because Stiles’ heat might make him more receptive to sex.

“Should we wait?” he wonders. “Let you go solo on this heat so we can sort everything out later? When you’re more clear headed?”

Stiles makes a strange sound. “I mean I’ve got toys to get me through it if you don’t want to, but I’m so on board with getting your dick in me you have no idea. It’s been more than two weeks now. That’s like a year for us. And you know I’m clear headed enough to consent.”

Derek snorts, but it’s not exactly an inaccurate observation. “I want to, too. I just don’t want us to regret rushing into it after. I understand if there are still some hurt feelings between us, if that might take some time to repair.”

“Ugh what did I say?” he groans. “About the understanding and respectfulness? You’re turning me on even more.”

Derek pinks at the words and has to look away from Stiles’ mouth or he’s going to kiss him.

“Oh God, I fucking missed you,” Stiles sighs. “Like College Derek was an asshole and a blast for sure, but I love you looking at me like that.”

Derek’s heartbeat is completely uneven now. “I’m not even looking at you.”

“Exactly,” Stiles says, all breathy like he’s already having sex. Derek will admit it’s getting harder to listen to him speak. “But you’re desperate to look at me even when you aren’t. I love that so much. Can’t wait til you fuck me.”
“Stiles,” he says, barely protesting through clenched teeth. “I’m not knotting you in the middle of the woods right now. Not after last time. We’re going to do it in a bed.”

They learnt that lesson the hard way. But Stiles only huffs at the response. “It was one splinter,” he says. “And I totally removed it.”

“From a very sensitive area,” Derek mutters. “And I want to take my time with this. Help you get rid of all that- energy. Easier to do in our bed.”

The smells that Stiles is giving off shows he’s very amenable to the idea. Derek wants to make it so good for him. After the few weeks he’s had and dealing with Peter tonight, Stiles has been through so much. Anything that Derek can do to make him feel better is as much a success as anything.

“Randal,” Stiles says suddenly. “Did he-?”

“He’s dead,” Derek replies. “Jackson tore his throat out on our lawn.”

Stiles doesn’t freak out very much at the idea. “Oh.”

“And I threatened to kill Jessica’s mate if anything happened to you,” Derek adds. “I left the rest of the pack to watch them because I couldn’t be sure they weren’t working together with Peter.”

“They were,” Stiles confirms. “Or Randal was.”

That’s the least unexpected thing of the day. It’s barely nine am and Derek just wants to take Stiles to bed and pretend this never happened.

“Do we need to take you to the doctor?” Stiles wonders, touching the back of his head gently again. “You’re still bleeding. Maybe the hospital-“

“I’m not leaving you,” Derek says. “Not while you’re in heat.”

The bleeding is sluggish now, slowing up. Derek’s certain that it’s not life threatening. It will heal on its own. Cuts on the head always seem to bleed the worst.

“God, I need to come again,” Stiles laments. “Give me your fingers?”

Derek groans and adjust his grip, sliding his hand against the curve of Stiles’ ass, cupping him and pressing his thumb into him through the layer of his pyjama pants. Stiles keens and pushes back, but he’s frustrated because it’s not enough.

“I know,” Derek says, leaning down to kissing his forehead. “It won’t be much longer. We’re almost there.”

Stiles doesn’t respond, palming the hardness in his crotch until the air is full of the smell of his come again. Derek hisses at the temptation, slotting his thumb in harder until it catches on Stiles’ hole, saturated with his slick.

He increases his pace after that.

Stiles might be handling this fine, but Derek’s not so sure how long he can last. They really need to get home.

With Derek’s speed they get back to the house eventually. When they’re at the fringe of the trees, Derek adjusts his hands again, thumb sliding out of Stiles, teeth clenching at the protesting noise he makes. When they step closer to the house there’s a crowd of people waiting for them. Including a
police car with Parrish standing by the driver’s window, arms folded grimly.

Right.

Derek forgot there was this to deal with as well.

“Oh, he’s alright,” Jessica says once they’ve stopped in front of the group, unable to hide her relief.

Derek knows she’s not really relieved about Stiles, but the prospect of avoiding the threat of death he promised if he was unable to bring him back. In all the chaos, the Silva pack waiting for them had fallen below Derek’s radar. But Stiles certainly hadn’t forgotten about them.

“Peter was with Randal all along,” Stiles says, inclining his head towards Jessica, sounding much more like himself than the fake persona he’s been playing since they arrived. “He’s probably got another one of your betas here working for him.”

Derek can almost feel the tension slice the air following Stiles’ announcement.

Jessica stiffens and turns to stare at her betas. They exchange hardened glances amongst each other as if they’re unsure who might want to rip her throat out. And then Danielle lunges at Jessica Silva with a snarl.

She doesn’t get very far.

Nora-Jane intercepts her with unbelievable speed, catching Danielle around the throat before she can even touch her mate, slamming her into the ground. A second later and she’s dead. Derek doesn’t know if Nora-Jane broke her neck when she caught her, or if her claws slashed out Danielle’s throat afterward. But they can’t deny the proof of Randal’s betrayal now.

“Alpha Hale,” Jessica manages, once she’s recovered her composure. “I have to protest the manner in which we have been treated today—“

“Oh, shut up,” Stiles mutters, rendering the alpha speechless.

The rest of the betas and Clive react considerably at his insolence.

“You got what you wanted,” he continues. “The second threatening your authority is dead and we just helped you weed out his spy. You didn’t really want territory from us, you wanted someone to take care of your problem.”


“There’s no point denying it,” Stiles says. “You got your neat little ending, after arriving here on false pretences I might add, so unless you really want to piss us off I suggest you play nice, keep out of our territory and expand yours to the north instead. It will be easier to manage from the north anyway. You don't have the strength to expand into California.”

She looks at Derek then, flashing eyes and temper flaring. “You let your omega speak like this?”

Derek stares at her. “Excuse me? What was that?”

Jessica is smart enough not to repeat herself.

“Oh no,” Stiles says, rolling his eyes at her. “Derek doesn’t let me do anything. I think for myself, I decide for myself. I don’t need an alpha’s permission.”
Jessica shifts her eyes to Derek, eyebrows raised. Maybe they should start with the truth.

“I guess it’s time to admit we haven’t been very honest either,” Derek says. “We’re not a traditional pack. We don’t have an alpha leader, or omega servants. We decide things as a group. We’re equals. We’re a family.”

None of the Silva pack has anything to say to that. The notion seems foreign to them all.

“That means we don’t let our packmates suffer abuse while they’re under our protection,” Stiles says pointedly, gaze sliding over to Clive at the back of the group.

He shifts uncomfortably, but for once doesn’t drop his head in submission at the attention.

“I couldn’t do anything,” Jessica insists, sounding wounded. “I didn’t have the strength or the support. My pack was teetering on the edge of abandoning me for Randal, if I challenged him what respect I’d gained would have eroded away all of my authority.”

“Then you manoeuvre him,” Stiles mutters openly aggravated now. “Just like we did.”

Oh that’s not good. Derek doesn’t think that Stiles should have admitted that.

Jessica raises her eyebrow and considers Stiles more carefully than she has since she first laid eyes on him. “Just like you did, you mean?” she clarifies, eyes narrowed.

Stiles grins then, slow and slyly, a conqueror finally unmasked.

“It wasn’t difficult to understand what kind of man he was,” he says with a careless shrug. “And to take advantage of that. You’ve got a lot to learn if you want to rule a bloodthirsty pack.”

Jessica shakes her head a little, beyond amazed. “How can this— you’re in heat right now.”

“And?” Stiles wonders, pushing at Derek so he lets go and Stiles lands on his feet instead of being carted around like a damsel.

The rest of the betas are staring open mouthed at him now, and they’ve clearly only just understood who’s really been manipulating things behind the scenes. Derek can’t hide how pleased he is.

“So are you willing to stay here in peace until the treaty is signed?” Stiles wonders. “Or should we kill you and be done with it?”

Jessica glares at him. “We will stay in peace, omega,”

“Stiles,” he corrects. “I’m a person not a fucking status.”

Nora–Jane snorts next to her, but Derek realises pretty quickly that she’s not laughing at Stiles, she’s laughing at Jessica’s astonishment.

“Does that mean I get to stop walking around like a fucking ass?” Erica demands loudly from beside Malia. “Thank God.”

Clive flinches at the sound of her voice, but he’s more surprised than anything. Apparently, the Silva pack still has it in them to be surprised. Aiysha steps forward next, hesitant and guarded before she stops in front of Derek’s mate. He tries to ignore his nerves at the slight challenge. But Stiles’ heat has him on edge.

“Can we please have Tara back now,” she asks carefully. “Stiles.”
He shrugs, glancing over at Scott who just shrugs back at him in response. “Anybody against it?” he wonders to the pack at large.

Nobody protests. That’s a good enough answer.

“Allright, you can have him back,” he agrees. “He’s in our bunker.”

“Your bunker?” Jessica demands, horrified.

Stiles smirks. “This isn’t our first rodeo.”

Jessica seems like she has a lot of questions for them. Derek has to admit the danger feels like it’s passed now. The thought of their packs becoming allies doesn’t seem so far-fetched with Randal out of the picture. Derek didn’t expect he’d be working with another beta, though Stiles clearly did. That had been surprising.

“Are there any other pressing matters that need my attention right now?” Stiles demands, shifting his feet as another wave of arousal rolls over him.

Derek’s trying his best to remain where he’s standing.

“Peter is still-“ Cora tries.

“I don’t give a fuck about Peter right now,” Stiles says. “He can’t do shit against a pack of our size at the moment.”

“But if he’s still around-“ Jessica protests.

“Then by all means kill him,” Stiles says turning away. “In the meantime, I’m going up to my room to have sex. Play nice team.”

Jackson starts laughing when Derek blushes and accepts Stiles’ extended hand.

“Nobody kill anybody else,” Derek says. “And maybe someone could clean up those bodies. Parrish, could you call in the coroner?”

Parrish nods and starts pulling out his cell phone. The law won’t be against them on this. Not for breaking sacred werewolf customs or for Nora-Jane defending her mate. At least these deaths won’t cause too many issues. They don’t have anywhere near a history of blood as the Silva pack does.

“Hold up,” Cora says suddenly. “Derek are you-?”

He knows what she's asking. It's the same thing Laura had been asking earlier as well. About his memories. “Later, Cora,” he warns, when Stiles starts dragging him towards the house.

So she keeps her mouth shut about his amnesia. They don’t have to tell the Silvas everything. And he’d prefer they not know how vulnerable his pack was when they first arrived. And he’d rather be helping his mate right now than worrying about what the Silva pack should or shouldn’t know.

Stiles drags him up the stairs with an urgency that Derek’s sympathetic about, as he stops fighting to control the eagerness in his own body. He can smell the fresh, contented scent of a recently mated omega, and his desperation to feel that claim more physically.

Derek’s only happy to oblige.

They barely reach the top of the staircase before Stiles is wriggling out of his shirt and tossing it onto
the floor just inside their bedroom. He’s flushed all over, far along in the stages of his heat and Derek knows for a fact that this is when his nipples are the most sensitive.

Derek’s already unbuttoning his pants as he shuts the door behind them.

“Stiles, are you sure-?”

“Yes, yes,” he says quickly, yanking off his pyjama pants. “I might have been selling some composure out there, but I really need your knot right now.”

“Okay,” Derek agrees, stepping out of his pants and jerking his underwear off. “You know I’ve got you.”

Stiles collapses on the bed, already naked as his slick permeates the room. “Yeah,” he says distractedly. “Give it to me.”

And it’s not like Derek has plans to refuse a suggestion like that.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Whoo, what a wild ride. Thanks for sticking with me to the end and I hope you guys like it!

Derek realises that they haven’t brought up any of the provisions they’ll need for the next few days.

Stiles’ heats usually last about three, but when he’s stressed it ends up being longer. Derek has the feeling that after everything Stiles’ heat will be lengthy this time around.

They’re going to need their supplies.

“Seriously, Derek?” Stiles pants.

“Sorry,” he says, hurriedly yanking his pants back up, not bothering with underwear. “We need supplies. I don’t want to have to leave you once we get started.”

Stiles lets out a wounded, frustrated sound as Derek darts into the bathroom in search of something to tide him over while Derek’s fetching necessities. They keep their toys in the back of the cabinet and Derek rifflers through to find Stiles’ favourite. It has a knotting function, but also vibrates.

He cleans it quickly, because it has been a while since they last used it while fetching one of the towels they keep on call to clean up the mess they always end up making of each other. Then he hurries out to rejoin Stiles on the bed.

Stiles sees it out of the corner of his eye and moans, spreading his legs wider to show his agreement. “Oh God, hurry up please.”

Derek sets the hand towel down by the pillow and goes about carefully easing the dildo into him, forgoing lube because Stiles’ slick is substantial already. He goes slow enough that Stiles sobs and clutches at the sheets desperately with each slow press. He waits until it’s in far enough to hit all the right spots and then engages the knotting function.

Stiles sighs in relief, working his hips back to create some friction against the mattress. “Here,” Derek says, putting the vibrations onto the lowest setting and handing Stiles the remote before leaning down to kiss his head. “I won’t be long.”

“If you are- ah- I’m doing this without you,” Stiles mutters, but Derek knows he’s only half serious. “And I’m gonna- fuck- do it so good.”

And Derek would probably deserve to be kept out of Stiles’ heat room anyway. After the shit he’s pulled lately, Stiles has every right to not want Derek anywhere near him. Derek’s surprised he’s hasn’t already been kicked out to go and stay with one of his sisters for a few nights.

Even if it’s never happened before considering the unique circumstances of the past two weeks, being exiled from his own house would be justified. At least he thinks so. Stiles is fairly blasé about
the whole thing, but Derek knows he’s just as good at hiding his emotions when it comes to being hurt.

But he doesn’t have time to think about that. Right now Stiles wants him around to help with his heat and that’s Derek’s priority. In order to keep him relaxed and safe, he needs to make sure that Stiles eats and doesn’t get dehydrated.

So Derek heads to the door and shuts it quickly behind him to give Stiles his privacy, wishing he could put up a protective barrier up as he rushes downstairs. Some of the pack are already in the kitchen, but nobody comments on the visible tent in his pants, his shirtlessness or the half-crazed look in his eye as he pushes past them.

Derek heads straight for the walk-in cupboard and reaches the shelf where they normally stock up on protein bars and snacks. They always make sure to keep their cupboard full with the kinds of non-perishable food needed for heats. Derek grabs four 2 litres bottles of water, a handful of protein bars, as well as hand of bananas from the fruit bowl.

Cora snorts at his expression as he flies past.

“Hope you enjoy grovelling,” she calls out after him.

“Not now, Cora,” he snaps, practically running to get back upstairs to Stiles.

He almost doesn’t have enough hands to open the door, but with some finagling Derek manages to figure it out.

When he gets inside Stiles is twisting alluringly on the mattress as his body shakes through an orgasm, the buzz of the dildo showing he cranked it up to the highest setting. Stiles never messes around when it comes to chasing his own pleasure.

“Oh thank God,” he gasps, as Derek snaps the door closed.

He rushes forward, setting the food and water down right near the bed so it’s within reach and starts taking his pants back off. When he crawls over to get to his mate, Stiles has already switched off the vibrator and disabled the knot in order to pull it out.

He tosses it onto the mattress without another word, catching hold of Derek’s wrist and trying to drag him back down.

Derek hesitates, but that’s only so he can roll Stiles onto his back first. He wants to do this face to face, make sure that Stiles is as comfortable as possible. He drags out a condom from the bedside table, fingers struggling to tear the packet before he finally gets it and manages to roll it onto his cock.

“You ready?” he asks, splaying Stiles’ legs until they’re crossed over Derek’s back and he’s lined up with his entrance.

“Yeah, yeah,” Stiles promises and Derek starts to push inside. “Finally. Think I might have aged eighty four years but it’s cool.”

Derek rolls his eyes before kissing along Stiles’ chest as he presses in and in, devastating warmth and slick to make every move slippery and perfect.

He reaches Stiles’ neck as he shudders with satisfaction, arching his back to take more of him at once, greedy for anything Derek will give him. And Derek will give him everything. Everything he
He kisses Stiles’ chin next, pressing his mouth to the spattering of moles that mark his face, taking Stiles’ mouth just as he starts to gasp an erratic refrain. They kiss long and frantically, Stiles a little more uncoordinated than usual, and Derek buckles into him, hard, followed by the sensation of Stiles rapidly constricting around him, encouraging his knot to form, and Derek can already feel the swell.

“Yes,” Stiles sighs, sensing it too. “Let it- give it to me.”

Derek brushes some of Stiles’ hair off his forehead, sliding his forearm under Stiles’ back to give him support, make it easier to move when his knot finally presses inside, sealing them together. He fills up the condom almost immediately, as it’s designed to expand while he keeps spurting until the knot finally goes down.

“You okay?” Derek asks, unevenly, trying to keep himself still while Stiles gets used to the sensation.

“Yes,” he moans, trying to impale himself further even with them firmly stuck for a least half an hour. “This is definitely the highlight of today.”

Derek kisses him again, unlocking Stiles’ legs and straightening them out so he won’t start to cramp up the longer they’re in this position. He marks a path along Stiles’ throat, ending up at the fresh bite as if his mouth is drawn to it.

“You know for someone who said us being mated is a mistake,” Stiles teases, and Derek flinches at the words. “You sure did kiss me a lot.”

There are so many things that he needs to apologise for. Derek hates that he might have jeopardised one of the best things in his life. He’s never been good at relationships, never really had any good relationships and it kills him to think he might have ruined this between them.

What if the things he said, the things he did- what if they can’t come back from that?

“I’m sorry,” he says, needing better words to convey the depth of his regret. “I wish I’d never- said any of it. There were so many fucked up things that I-”

“C’mon- oh,” Stiles groans, squirming on Derek’s knot. “I can see you internalising this shit. It was only- oh god- mildly soul crushing.”

He’d rather have not crushed any part of Stiles, mildly or no. The fact that he did so repeatedly is not something that he can just move past. Even if Stiles is insisting he’s good with it.

Derek isn’t good with it. He leans in to kiss any inch of Stiles he can reach.

“I love you,” he says, pushing past the swirl of emotions, the walls that always make it so hard to verbalise his feelings even now. “You’re amazing,” he says, kissing Stiles’ collarbone, his throat, the underside of his chin. “You make me feel like I could do anything, like with you I’m better.”

Stiles doesn’t reply, but that’s because Derek’s got the angle just right and his cock is firmly pressed up against his prostate. His mouth falls open, panting and struggling for air before he swallows, cheeks pinking up as he bites his lip and tries to control the reaction.

He’s the most incredible sight that Derek’s ever seen.

“Everything’s easier with you,” he continues, kissing a mismatched path across Stiles’ skin while he
grinds his hips into him. “I couldn’t remember the last time I’d laughed for real until you came along. You made me human again, made me think there was something about me worth loving even when I’d convinced myself there wasn’t.”

“Derek,” Stiles whimpers, before he comes, shooting across his stomach.

The sight makes his heart pump faster, turns his mouth dry. Derek reaches out to take Stiles’ cock in hand while his orgasm is still in force, tenderly stroking him through the aftershocks. Once he’s had enough, Stiles collapses against the pillows with a tired sigh, still moving his hips as if he can’t control himself.

“You mean everything to me,” Derek promises, into his throat. “I’m never going to risk what we have again. No matter how many times I get shot in the head.”

Stiles’ ribs shake, and he could be laughing or groaning. “No more near death experiences- oh-thanks.”

He seems a little more relaxed now, but Derek knows once his knot goes down that the need will fill him again.

“Do you want anything?” he asks. “Food? Water?”

“A drink would be good,” Stiles admits, and Derek reaches out to grab one of the 2 litre bottles.

He uncaps it and brings it to Stiles’ mouth, helping him drink his fill. His skin is still warm, but there’s a comfortable flush to him now. Stiles’ legs are twitching but that’s not unexpected, he gets antsy being forced to lie still for too long.

“Do you want to be on top?” Derek asks, capping the lid again and putting it back on the floor.

Stiles thinks about it. “Nah, this is good. I’ll let you know if I need to move. I mean, if I’m even capable of moving right now.”

It’s cheesy, but Derek’s mouth twitches anyway. Stiles is smirking, looking awfully pleased with himself when he trails his fingers across Derek’s spine, moving up to trace his tattoo. There’s a relieved kind of lightness in his eyes as if Stiles has missed these casual touches.

Derek’s trying to keep most of his weight off Stiles, by bracing his arms on either side of his ribs on the mattress. They’ve got a while until they can separate, and Stiles doesn’t seem like he’s much for talking right now. Derek remembers what they were doing last heat, and reaches into the drawer again, pulling out the notebook along with two different coloured pens.

He flips open to last page they were using where they were involved in an intense game of dots and boxes.

“Holy shit,” Stiles garbles, delightedly as Derek passes him one of the pens. “I forgot we were in the middle of this. And I was about to kick your ass too.”

“On what planet?” Derek retorts before he realises what he said and shoots Stiles a guilty look.

“No,” he groans, still shifting his ass to keep grinding against Derek’s knot. “I missed snarky Derek. Snarky Derek is welcome here.”

“Stiles,” he says, cock twitching at the intense pressure. “I don’t want to cross a line. After-”
“You won’t, you won’t,” he cries, coming again, clamping down on Derek so tightly he can’t speak.

Derek uses the wash towel to wipe away his come before pushing it out of reach again. Stiles needs a minute to get his brain back online.

“I don’t want you walking on eggshells because you were kind of a dick for a while,” Stiles says. “I was a dick right back. Feels like we’re kind of even, and you’re- fuck- certainly making up for it now.”

Derek kisses Stiles’ nipple but decides to revisit this discussion later when they’re better equipped to concentrate on it. “It was your turn, wasn’t it?” he asks, nodding at the paper.

Stiles accepts the notebook. He makes at least ten boxes and Derek watches him add it to his tally before handing it back.

They switch back and forth between turns until all the boxes have been filled. It’s an entertaining way to pass the time while Derek’s knot shrinks even if they always end up too competitive. They tally it all up after all the boxes are filled in order to see who got the most.

Stiles won, by literally one box, though he accuses Derek of letting him win which might be a little bit true. He missed a few boxes on purpose mostly because he kept getting distracted by every small movement Stiles made, jostling the knot sealing them together. It’s harder to concentrate when they’re both like this.

Eventually though he's able to pull out, despite Stiles’ protests, sitting up and getting them both to stretch out a little. Stiles grabs two of the protein bars and passes one to Derek. They end up sitting side by side, munching on the bars in companionable silence while their bodies cool down for a short pause.

That’s until Derek can smell Stiles’ slick in the air again. “You want-?”

“God yeah.”

Derek’s so lucky to still have this.

Stiles feels like he’s dreaming.

He’s giddy right now. Fucking giddy. Because Derek’s memories came back in full, not just the odd bits of information he’s been picking up since the accident. Even after Stiles had come to accept that they might not ever come back.

And he’d planned to reforge a new relationship with who Derek had changed into. It was terrifying to think he’d lost him. Lost their bond. Stiles is pretty confident he’s going to have nightmares about his bare neck for the next few days.

Or at least feel the need to compulsively check in the mirror to be confident it’s still there. It’s almost strange now to look at Derek and recognise him in his eyes. In the way he looks back.

All that history between them didn’t vanish after all. Stiles knows they would have found a way forward, somehow, but there’s a certain contentment in his heart knowing that Derek is back.
And currently fucking the hell right out of him.

Stiles clutches at him, nails digging into skin for purchase as Derek’s knot starts to form again for the third time since Derek finally brought him to bed. He’d been uncomfortable for the first few hours of his heat, doubly uncomfortable being forced to interact with Peter and Derek seems really determined to make up for that.

He’s used a condom each time and Stiles hasn’t felt the need to comment on it. Since they’ve already been talking about kids lately, and both of them were on board with trying. Stiles doesn’t think it’s because Derek’s suddenly changed his mind, but it does seem like some form of self-punishment.

Derek keeps looking at him like he’s going to go running for the hills. Not that he’d be capable of that right now. Or that he would want to. Stiles was willing to have whatever form of Derek he could even if it that meant College Derek. Permanently.

But either way, he would never have agreed to let Derek renew his mark again if he’d changed his mind about their relationship and wanted to sever ties for good.

It’s a part of Derek’s process though. Internalising the blame. Stiles knows he’s not going to let this go no matter how hard he insists that he’s cool with them, and just wants to move forward. Derek’s going to need to work through this first. Stiles recognises that. But he’s so glad that Derek’s put it aside for now in order to give him a generous amount of orgasms.

Having a partner during heat isn’t a necessity, but Stiles wants Derek here if he can have him. If Derek wants him. And from the way he’s determinedly filling Stiles up with his cock, condom or no, he seems resolute in proving that he does.

“Fuck,” Derek curses once his knot is back inside, right where Stiles needs it. “You alright?”

Jesus, is he ever. Stiles’ toes keep curling and he’s already lost track of how many orgasms he’s had so far. They should keep a tally or something. But he doubts that he’d be able to hold a pen steady right now, let alone use it effectively.

“Perfect,” Stiles promises as Derek buries his face into his throat with a relaxed sigh.

He still can’t believe it’s him. If this is what Stiles gets after being knocked unconscious and kidnapped by Peter Hale, then he’ll take a kidnapping any day.

Is it tacky to think of this as the best reward following a potentially traumatising situation like that? Either way Stiles isn’t going to question his luck. When the skin around his neck starts to burn though, Stiles will admit he gets a little concerned.

“Derek,” he groans, feeling the heat building. “What-oh God- what’s happening to my-?”

Derek takes a hold of his wrist that’s moving towards his throat, drawing it back so that he can see better. The frown on his face makes Stiles nervous. Did it fade again? Are they no longer enough for each other? Are their subconscious minds trying to say something?

“It’s darkening,” he says, puzzled. “The shape is solidifying.”

Stiles groans and rolls Derek onto his back, putting his palms flat against his chest for purchase before he starts to grind his hips again. “What- ah fuck- what does that mean? I’ve never heard of that- before.”

Derek’s face is scrunched up adorably, torn between confusion and pleasure as he tries to think.
Stiles drags his hands slowly down his chest in the interim, feeling the ridges of muscle, how he arches under his fingers.

Stiles knows that he’s going to come again soon, his cock is drooling all over Derek’s abs everytime he bears down harder on the knot. He’s tiring too, Stiles thinks they might have at least an hour break between the next bout of heat sex.

Derek’s sweaty, muscles straining to keep his strength in check, but he’s not feeling the drag of fatigue like Stiles does. Werewolves have better stamina.

“I don’t- ah- know,” Derek admits. “I’ve never seen it- either.”

Stiles lifts his leg up in order to glance down at Derek's bond bite below his hip, astonished to see that the same reaction has happened there as well. He puts his palm on top of it when Derek notices the change, trying to think what that means. It doesn’t exactly seem like the greatest sign but Stiles is too busy with his impending orgasm to ask.

His balls feel tight, stomach twitching and his mouth falls open when he starts to come, stripping his cock frantically as he covers Derek’s stomach.

The knot presses firmly against his inner walls, anchoring him in place and Stiles wishes Derek hadn’t bothered with the condom, so he can actually feel how much he’s trying to fill him up.

"I've got it too," Derek says, once he can talk. "We should ask Deaton what it means."

Stiles, who recently lost the ability to talk, can only offer incoherent noises for the time being. Derek tries to lean up to kiss him and Stiles practically falls over him in his eagerness to kiss back.

“Did you want to talk about what happened?” Derek says, seemingly more calm now that his knot is inside Stiles. “With Peter?”

“Ugh,” he groans. “Really? You want to talk about him right now?”

Derek inhales a deep breath, his shoulders rising before he purses his lips. If that isn’t answer enough that he’d rather not bring it up at all. The fact that he’s willing to for Stiles’ sake, really hits all his buttons.

“He wanted to propose an alliance.”

“With the pack?”

Oh no, this is going to be harder to explain than Stiles thought. “No, with me. The mark had faded and he was suggesting-“

Derek’s expression twists. “He didn’t.”

“Yeah, he did,” Stiles says, seeing Derek’s shock, feeling the hands tighten on his hips like Derek’s worried Peter will come in and physically snatch him away. “Tried to tell me you’d only ever satisfy me sexually. Somehow thought I was going to jump into his arms at the chance- dude, he’s real messed up. Worse than we thought.”

“What the hell is he even thinking?”

Isn’t that the million-dollar question. “I don’t know,” Stiles admits. “But I only think he was half serious about the creepy shit he was implying. Either that or I just really don’t take him seriously.”
He ends up collapsing on top of Derek's chest for a while, feeling the steady tug of the knot between them while he tries to get his breath back. He can hear Derek's heart beat pounding in his ribs so he's not as unaffected as he likes to appear. In fact it feels pretty good to rest his head on Derek's chest and try to relax for a while.

Half an hour later, Stiles feels it when Derek’s knot starts to deflate. “Oh,” he sighs as the tug holding them together loosens. “C’mon, just a little more.”

Derek groans as Stiles rolls off him and they separate before he reaches down to remove the condom, tie it off and toss it into the bin in the corner. Stiles needs another orgasm so he all but shoves his fingers back inside, trying to reclaim that wonderful fullness from Derek’s cock.

“Hey I got you,” Derek says, returning and taking hold of Stiles’ wrist to draw his fingers out, replacing them with his own. “Let me.”

Derek’s fingers are thicker, and Stiles lets him know his appreciation once they’re inside. It’s even better when Derek hovers over his cock, his warm breath fanning out over the tip. Stiles’ hips are moving already, trying to fuck himself on Derek’s fingers as he scoots in closer.

“Bet you’ve missed this,” Derek says pointedly putting his mouth in close proximity to Stiles’ junk, so that he knows exactly what he’s intending.

“Yes,” Stiles pants, knowing he’s going to come pretty much straight away.

And it’s going to be so so worth it.

Derek grins, and he doesn’t seem to realise that Stiles’ fingers constantly tugging at his hair have pushed it up in strange directions. Stiles barely starts to laugh at the sight before Derek is leaning in and swallowing him down perfectly and then it’s like he can’t even breathe.

His hands are back in Derek’s hair before he knows it, cradling his head, scrambling for purchase as he loses grip on everything but the heat around his cock. He goes off like a firecracker, coming so fast it’s like Derek yanked it out of him, leaving him shaky and weak when Derek swallows it down without hesitation, easing off but keeping his fingers where Stiles needs them.

It’s perfect and Stiles barely stops panting before there’s a sharp knock at the door. He realises that Derek forgot to lock it, just as it opens and Derek is dropping on top of him with a fierce snarl, covering Stiles’ naked body from view.

“Relax bro,” Laura says, and Stiles flushes red when it’s clear that they’re both butt naked and Derek’s fingers are still deep in his ass. “He’s all yours.”

“Was there some confusion over what we were doing in here?” Stiles asks, less flustered now and more annoyed.

“The Silvas wants to go and hunt Peter,” she says. “And since we already gave them permission to-“

Derek stiffens as he understands what she's trying to tell them. “We can’t stop them. Even if we wanted to.”

“Do we want to?” Laura wonders with a pointed expression.

“I definitely would be okay with his second death,” Stiles reassures her. “You’d think it might be more permanent the second time around. I’m feeling lucky.”
“Some of the pack is going to go too. Lydia, Allison, Jackson, the twins, Cora,” she says. “To watch them. Just in case.”

“Good idea,” Derek says, sounding a lot less affected than College Derek. “But if they do catch him we’ve got to make sure we don’t intervene. Tell Scott, Kira and Hayden they don’t have to go out with them if they don’t want to. They’re the only ones who weren’t okay with Peter’s death.”

“I’ll keep an eye on things,” Laura promises. “You two enjoy yourselves huh?”

“You can leave now,” Derek points out, shooting her a look over his shoulder to show his disapproval of the situation.

But Laura only smirks. “Enjoy the orgasms, team!”

“Be gone demon,” Stiles says, gripping Derek’s arms and waving Laura away.

She backs out of the room eventually, shutting it behind her with a snort of laughter. But that could be because all she can see is her brother’s naked ass.

“How are you doing?” Derek wonders, finally pulling his fingers free. “Do you need more?”

Stiles takes a moment to listen to the signals his body is broadcasting. “Nah, I think it’s okay. Chuck us another protein bar.”

They sit and eat for a while. Stiles manages to get his legs working in order to stagger over to the bathroom and when he comes back, Derek is busy trying to tidy up what he can. He’s totally nesting right now and Stiles loves it.

“How are you doing?” Derek asks, once they’re cuddled up and enjoying the natural intimacy between them while their bodies recover.

“That’s a lot of people hunting him down,” Stiles says. “I know Peter’s a pain in the ass, but I don’t think he’s that good. It’s about fifty-fifty.”

Derek doesn’t respond and Stiles can’t help but remember how much College Derek protested this outcome.

“Are you okay with this?”

He doesn’t seem to have the answer for that. Derek finishes his protein bar and tosses the wrapper into the trash with a shrug. “I don’t know,” he admits. “I remember how I felt when I didn’t have all my memories, but I know everything that he’s done, some of it he tried only a little while ago. I think I’m fifty-fifty about it as well.”

“It’s okay to not be okay with it,” Stiles points out. “They plan on killing him. Like to death. Kind of lasting this time.”

Derek shrugs again. He doesn’t have the answer to that either. So Stiles decides to drop it for now. His skin is starting to feel warm again.
Stiles loses track of the next few days very easily.

Thankfully Derek got them enough food and water to last them through it so he doesn’t leave the room once, except to use their ensuite bathroom or to help Stiles in there as well when his legs are too shaky to move properly.

Derek keeps him showered, fed, hydrated and gives him his knot so often that Stiles can already tell his body is too greedy, wanting more than he can handle.

They do crossword puzzles while they’re tied, speculate what the rest of the pack is doing, whether the Silva pack has actually located Peter, whether he’s dead and what else might possibly be going wrong right now.

They’ve got enough condoms to last them through it as well, and Stiles is sure that he slips into incoherent complaints when he can’t actually feel Derek’s knot filling him up with come.

Derek seems to understand, because he strokes Stiles’ sweaty forehead and whispers sweet, encouraging things as he helps Stiles into his next orgasm.

At one point he’s too sore to go again, even if his heat demands it and it’s too soon for Derek to knot him either because his body needs time to recover. Stiles doesn’t realise how frustrated he is by his own desire until Derek gets the lube out and opens himself up, giving Stiles the opportunity to return the favour.

“Oh God,” Stiles cries, once he’s inside and Derek is heat and pressure all around him. “Is it weird I almost- fuck- wish you still didn’t remember this so I could blow your mind- oh- all over again like the first time?”

Derek is already writhing, pushing his hips back expectantly for Stiles to start up a rhythm. “No,” he pants. “But I’m pretty sure- you’re still going to blow my mind now.”

“Yes,” Stiles promises nearly delirious with how incredible it is to have this again. He nearly jackrabbits into Derek he’s so enthusiastic about it. “Fuck, yes. I love you.”

“Stiles,” he groans and Derek can’t stay still like this, his body overwhelmed by the sensations as they try to move together. “Fuck. Love you. Don’t stop.”

Stiles doesn’t think he’s in control enough to speak, watching how Derek tries to impale himself, take Stiles’ cock in deeper.

He’s going to come so fast.

Stiles does almost straight away. The frequent orgasms always mess with his ability to last long when responding to stimulus. Derek doesn’t mind, he just shoves his hand between himself and the mattress and jerks off into completion, Stiles kissing the back of his neck and whispering encouragement all the while.

He knows when the heat breaks.

The need goes away and Stiles is more interested in food, than he is about having a knot in his ass.

Derek’s tired now too, though not as exhausted as Stiles is, but he senses the change almost straight away. He carries Stiles into the shower, letting him sit on the tiles under the spray while he heads back into the room and busies about doing other things. Stiles can’t hear exactly what it is he's up to.
He actually leaves the room though, Stiles hears the door snap closed behind him but he’s too tired to expel energy wondering where he went. If he’s trying to exile himself to the couch now that Stiles’ heat is over for some backwards kind of punishment though, he’s gonna be super pissed.

The warm water is nice, and despite Derek’s best efforts to keep him as clean as possible, he’s still covered in dried come. That doesn’t take too long to wash off. He knows what he must smell like now, a blended mixture of eau de Derek et Stiles.

No complaints about that. But damn is he in need of a power nap. Stiles doesn’t even realise that he’s fallen asleep in the shower, head resting against the glass until Derek’s lifting him out of there and turning off the spray.

“Hey,” he says sleepily as Derek helps him towel off to get dry, asking him questions that Stiles blearily waves away with one worded responses.

Derek helps drag Stiles to bed, which looks clean and different coloured now. Derek must have recycled the sheets when Stiles was falling asleep in the shower. Their sheets are blue now when Derek deposits him softly on the bed, throwing the duvet over him since his body temperature is back to normal.

Stiles thinks he’s going to head out to the couch so he catches Derek’s wrist when he goes to move back.

“Stay,” he says, around a yawn.

Derek touches his face, saying something about a shower and Stiles’ eyelids have already fallen shut. He wakes up again when Derek slides in behind his back, steadily wrapping his arms around his waist.

Then Stiles sleeps like the dead.

He wakes up unexpectedly without any idea what woke him, until he turns and sees that Derek’s side of the bed is empty.

Stiles glances at the window behind him and it’s still dark out but there’s a hint of light which suggests it’s probably early morning. Panic stirs him into alertness quicker than anything else ever could, worrying somehow that Derek went out to save Peter, or that he ran afoul of the Silva pack or that he didn’t get his memories back after all.

That Stiles somehow dreamt it.

He rolls out of bed, disoriented, as he searches for some pants to put on. He finds Derek’s sweatpants and slips into them instead, feeling much better after the full night’s sleep he had.

Something draws him downstairs towards their office and when he sees a slip of light beneath the closed door, it’s clear enough that his hunch paid off.

He opens the door quickly so as to not disturb Kira and Scott and anyone else nearby and hovers in the doorway, eyes falling on Derek leaning over the desk and using the light from the lamp to write. Stiles rubs at his eyes and glances at the clock hanging on the wall.
“Derek?” he says, nervously, unsure of which Derek might be staring back.

But then he looks up with the guilty expression of one who’s been caught in the act and Stiles knows exactly who he’s staring at. “What are you doing?”

He drops his pen and rubs at his wrist. From the amount of pages it looks like he’s been writing for a while. What the hell is Derek doing? Suddenly inspired in the middle of the night to follow a secret passion for penning letters?

“I was writing a letter,” Derek explains. “To myself.”

Stiles frowns at him. “You sure you’re alright there buddy?”

Derek gets to his feet, shuffling the papers and stuffing them carefully into a drawer. “I’m fine, Stiles. Really. I couldn’t sleep so I thought I’d get started on the letter. I didn’t realise I was here for so long.”

“What’s the letter about?” he wonders, curious as Derek steps around the desk and pulls him into his arms.

He kisses him before answering and Stiles doesn’t care if their breath is a little musty. For a while he never thought he’d have this again, so he buries his hands in Derek’s hair and kisses back for all he’s worth.

When Derek draws away he’s breathless and dazed but looks so relieved that Stiles’ chest aches with tenderness for him. God, he’d kill for this guy.

Derek rests his fingers on Stiles’ mating mark, just to feel it beneath his fingers. It’s so much darker now than it was before, the shape of his teeth obvious. And Derek’s is the same. Stiles vows to find out soon enough what that might mean.

But for now it’s just good to have Derek in his arms again. Stiles doesn’t even care that he didn’t answer the question.

“Let’s go back to bed,” he says, leaning over him to switch off the lamp before dragging them both outside and into the hallway.

Derek wraps his arms around Stiles’ waist and doesn’t let go of him even for a second. He has no complaints especially when they reach the staircase and Derek just lifts him into his arms to carry him up. Stiles breathes him in with a pleased sigh.

When Derek drops him softly onto their mattress Stiles grabs onto him in order to drag him down as well. He collapses on top of him with a yawn, pressing his face directly into Stiles’ neck and inhaling deeply. He’s heavy but the weight is somehow comforting.

“It’s about you,” Derek admits, kissing softly under his jaw. “The letter. I don’t want what happened to you to ever happen again.”

“Huh?” Stiles says, stroking along Derek’s naked back, tracing the tattoo there.

“If I ever get amnesia again,” he explains. “Give me that letter.”

And now it’s starting to make sense. “Those were a lot of pages. Were you just talking about how great I am the entire time? How much you love me?”
Derek huffs out a breath against his skin and doesn’t respond.

“Oh shit, really? Can I read it?”

He’s moved to Stiles’ mating mark by then, kissing the bite and laving it with his tongue. Stiles only shudders under the ministrations, dick instantly rising. “Ohh,” he gasps. “You know how sensitive it is.”

“Mmm,” Derek agrees, nuzzling him. “You can read it.”

Yeah, like Stiles wants to talk about a letter right now. “Maybe after I blow you,” he says, helping Derek out of his pants.

It’s a good thing all he bothered to wear were the pants. Stiles didn’t bother with underwear either, it always makes this so much easier. Stiles wriggles out of his own, and after Derek collapses onto the pillows with an affirmative sound, he scrambles forward to swallow him down.

His mouth is watering as soon as Derek’s in his mouth. It’s been a while since he got to do this, Stiles wants to savour it.

Apparently Derek’s been missing it too because Stiles doesn’t get to savour it for very long. Derek tries to warn him, but he doesn’t pull off, taking as much of him in as he can when Derek twitches and comes into his mouth. The dazed look on his face only makes Stiles smile wider. Then Derek gets his energy back and yanks Stiles upwards until he’s straddling Derek’s thighs and he’s wrapping a hand around him.

Stiles reaches into the drawer and spreads lube across Derek’s palm to make it easier and Derek takes a hold of him again, gripping him tight and pushing him into another orgasm.

He comes with a small cry, all over Derek again and he laughs at the mess they made, even more so when Derek spreads it out further like he’s marking himself.

Stiles climbs off of him and goes to find another washcloth. Derek seems like he’s about to fall asleep again when he returns and cleans him up. He’s too lazy to do more than toss the washcloth into the corner and snuggle up to Derek again.

This time he doesn’t wake up until the sun has risen.

Derek’s eyes open and he sighs restfully at the normal scents that Stiles is giving off.

“Thank God that’s over,” Stiles says, eyes opening and turning to face him in the warmth of their bed. “Don’t think I can have sex ever again.”

“Me neither,” Derek agrees, stretching with a soft groan, rolling over to face Stiles as well.

They stare at each other in silence for a few minutes.

Then they have sex again.

Afterward, once they’ve both showered and cleaned themselves up they get dressed, Stiles puts makeup back on again to cover his bond bite because revealing it now would only cause problems.
Then they decide to head downstairs. It’s mainly so they can see what other kind of disasters have befallen the pack since they checked out for five days.

And Derek still doesn’t know what happened to Peter.

The rest of the pack is lounging around but they get up once they catch sight of them emerging from what Stiles would definitely call their sex cave. Jackson and Cora make a few unnecessary comments but Derek is happy to ignore them until they know whether or not the Silvas ran off in the night and if Peter is still among the living.

Deaton and Nila are here which is good because Derek wants to get this treaty signed as soon as possible. He knows Stiles is starting to feel antsy about it as well. The sooner the treaty is signed the more confident they can be that the Silva pack won’t stab them in the back. Unlike Peter did.

It’s almost strange being out of their bedroom now. Lydia brings out the treaty which Jessica reviews at the dining table, drinking a cup of coffee while her mate peers over her shoulder and reads along with her. Their expressions don’t change much and Derek knows it’s not out of careful consideration. They’re not practised in hiding their true feelings yet but at least that means they like the outcome laid out for them so far.

Which means the chances of them signing are higher.

The Hale pack get Lake Tahoe like Stiles wanted, a significant road block to the Silvas expanding into California. Jessica doesn’t seem that bothered by it, and she appears to have taken Stiles’ advice about increasing her territory to the North because she asks for the area spanning from Verdi all the way to Calneva, essentially blocking them from moving into Nevada.

Derek’s got no problem giving up those boundaries, since they don’t have any intentions to infringe upon Nevada anyway. Stiles just wanted the insurance to keep them from creeping into California, which they got in the end. And things are looking much easier for Jessica to run her pack now that Randal and Danielle are gone.

Lydia amends the treaty to include the exchange of territories.

“You’re not actually Jessica Silva, are you?” Stiles says, once he and Derek have signed and passed the document back to her. “If we’re going to be forging this alliance you’ll have to sign in your own name.”

Not Jessica purses her lips but doesn’t deny it. “I’m her daughter, Adriana. My Mother was killed in a pack insurrection a month ago. Any of her allies died with her. The laws meant that leadership fell to me. Randal has been trying, and failing, to kill me ever since. In the absence of familial ties, pack leader is assumed by the second and I didn’t have the strength or support to demote him.”

He’s not surprised. The rest of the pack had these concerns about Jessica’s true identity ever since she arrived here. And Stiles had been certain it was a lie. Derek understands why she did it. Desperation can make people do just about anything.

“I’d heard of your reputation,” she continues. “Even Randal knew to be wary of the Hales. I thought you were my best chance.”

“You were right,” Jackson says with irritation. “But we’re not your fucking clean-up crew. If you can’t handle your pack without outside help then you’re not going to last long.”

“Jackson,” Derek warns, even if he knows the observation is spot-on.
They should still try and avoid offending her while they still can. Derek doesn’t want to have to kill them. After everything they’ve been through to appease the Silvas it would be such a waste.

“He’s right,” Stiles says. “You’re too inexperienced. You need someone to teach you. Why didn’t your mother?”

“She’d started,” Nora-Jane says. “She’d only shown Adri a few things here and there, not enough to keep a strong pack. Then she died.”

“We’ll show you what we can,” Derek decides, ignoring Stiles’ raised eyebrow. “This treaty ensures you can’t ever make a move against us and that we can’t move against you.”

“It’s iron tight,” Lydia says, smirking as she and Stiles share a confident glance.

They usually draw up the treaties together. Derek can’t remember when they would have had the time for this one. College Derek hadn't been paying that much attention. Possibly when they were planning their attack before the Silva pack had first arrived.

“There’s another offer we’d like to make,” Isaac says, piping up from beside Jackson. “Clive-“

The omega flinches at being addressed. “We’d like to offer you a place in our pack.”

“Excuse me?” Adriana demands, offended. “You can’t just take-“

“He’s been abused under your care,” Isaac says sharply. “It would be his right to leave without any retribution from you. Let him decide.”

Clive looks shocked by the offer, but Derek doesn’t exactly think he’s willing to stay with them. Stiles certainly doesn’t like it, but he’s not exactly going to turn him away. Isaac made the offer, they’ll honour it.

“I’m not going back with you,” Clive says finally, looking at his hands. “Tell the rest of the pack I died too, if you want. But I won’t stay here either.”

“Clive-“ Adriana starts, but Nora-Jane reaches out to touch her arm.

“It’s his right,” she says. “We haven’t protected him like we should have.”

“We’ve got cash,” Laura says. “We can set you up with a plane ticket to wherever you want to go.”

They do. Derek looks at Stiles and knows that they’re going to help him as best they can. It's the least they could do. But Clive still hesitates, unsure.

“It’s a good offer,” Adriana says. “You should take their hospitality. It’s hard to be out there alone.”

“I have family in Bromley,” he admits. “I’ll- I’ll go there.”

“Outside London?” Jackson says, surprised. “I need to be back there by next week. You can fly in with me. I’ll get you where you need to go.”

Isaac’s expression twists, and Derek can see that reality has finally come crashing into the bubble he’s been living in these past weeks. Their interest in another is surprising, but Derek remembers how they used to flirt before Jackson moved to London, so maybe there’s always been something there and he hasn’t paid enough attention.

Stiles never mentioned them either. But Isaac is going to be sad when Jackson leaves, Derek can see
Clive’s eyes are wide and astonished, as if he’d never have believed such a thing were possible. Or maybe he’s still just terrified of Jackson. “Thank you.”

“Do you trust them?” Stiles asks, gesturing at the rest of her pack.

Adriana frowns at him. “I wouldn’t have chosen them otherwise.”

“You trusted Danielle,” Cora points out, not unkindly. “You can be wrong.”

Adriana jerks at the words, but doesn’t waver. “I trust them,” she repeats. “I wouldn’t have brought them if I didn’t.”

“I hope that means you’ve left some of your trusted allies back home, too,” Parrish mutters grimly, arms crossed. “Because Randal’s insurgents would have taken advantage of your absence. If they weren’t enough to stop the mutiny rising within your pack, you’ll be returning into a war zone.”

“I left the woman who I’d have elected as my second if I’d had the option,” she says. “She’s the most respected in the pack, she’ll keep them in order.”

“What you need is a story,” Stiles interrupts, reluctantly on board with contributing advice. “A good one to explain how Randal, Danielle and Clive are dead. One that makes you look like a capable alpha. You should probably say Randal fucked up somehow and you tricked us into signing a peace treaty so we couldn’t declare war on you and wipe you out.”

“You’d let me spread such lies?” she wonders, surprised.

Stiles only shrugs.

“Most of the stuff you hear about us isn’t exactly true anyway,” Allison says, her fingers resting absently against Lydia’s side.

“Or accurate,” Boyd mutters, with his arms wrapped loosely around Malia who’s leaning into him while also holding Erica’s hand.

“Some of it is,” Jacksons says smugly, shifting pointedly as if he’s about to sprout his wings for the fun of it.

Tara, who is standing at the opposite corner of the room, the furthest possible position from Jackson, still flinches in terror at the gesture. Jackson’s true form probably messed him up a lot. Aiysha takes his hand at the first sign of distress and visibly tries to calm him.

Their reunion had been pretty heartfelt apparently which Erica thought to mention as soon as Derek and Stiles got downstairs. She insisted that they both cried too, but Derek isn’t too sure that’s entirely true.

Now that things seem reasonably cooperative between them, he decides it’s time to ask.

“Is Peter dead?”

Jessica exchanges glances with Nora-Jane then surprisingly with Laura. “We don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” Derek repeats, confused.

“He was- badly wounded after our encounter,” Nora-Jane explains. “But he escaped. We don’t
know if he managed to heal. His injuries were severe.”

Jackson snorts definitively. “You don’t come back from that,” he says. “Not even Peter. He must’ve crawled away and bled out somewhere else.”

Derek flinches and looks to Stiles for some kind of reassurance though he doesn’t know what for. He’s not happy about what happened, but he’s not sad at the prospect of Peter’s death. It feels a lot like acceptance now. He can see the sentiment mirrored in Stiles’ eyes. Somehow that helps.

“Allright,” Stiles says, changing the subject abruptly and standing up. “Come on, Clive since you’ll be heading out on your own it’s time your learned some self-defence.”

Clive goggles at him. “You want me to fight?”

Adriana laughs before she realises it’s not a joke. “You want your omega to teach him fighting skills?”

“Stiles,” Derek corrects, pointedly. “Is one of our best fighters.”

“I have to see this,” Nora-Jane says with interest. “We’re too traditional where I’m from.”

Stiles shrugs. “I’m not complaining, unless Clive’s got a problem with it.”

Clive looks like he’s still processing the idea of fighting. “I- no. It’s fine.”

“Actually,” Stiles says. “While you’re at it you should say that Randal was killed by an omega.”

The Silva pack exchanges disbelieving looks.

“What?” Adriana asks, as if she’s unsure she heard him right. “Why?”

“You’re a ridiculously traditional pack,” Stiles explains. “Look how you laughed just then, before you realised I was serious. Think how easily I tricked you into barely paying any attention to me when you first arrived. If you say Randal was killed by an omega, any of those following his cause will get caught up in the supposed shame of such a story. They won’t want to be associated with him anymore because they share the same prejudices against omegas like you do.”

“It- makes sense, Alpha,” Tara admits. “They would no longer respect him as a warrior of the Silvas. He would not be a martyr used against you to bolster support.”

Adriana can see the truth of it. Stiles can talk a good game. And strategy is one of his talents. He knows what he’s talking about. It’s a sound plan. Stiles glances over at Derek, already changing tactics. Derek can see what he’s about to suggest.

“We could eat outside?” he offers in response to his expression. “Have a few drinks, use the barbeque? We’ve got the food.”

“Sounds great, I’m starved,” Hayden decides, patting her stomach fondly while Liam grins at her.

The pack heads outside through the kitchen and Derek makes an effort to sidle up behind Stiles, wrapping his arms around him and walking like they’re fused together. Stiles snorts a little as if he thinks it’s idiotic, but his heart beat betrays him.

Derek grins into his neck. “Go easy on him. I don’t think he knows anything about fighting.”

Stiles elbows him to get free, but spins around to drag Derek into a kiss, fast and hot and full of
promises of later. “I got this. Get cooking. You know how I feel about you in an apron.”

Derek smirks and disappears back inside to get the meat out of the fridge.

Erica and Malia are already digging into the walk-in food cupboard, dragging out a few six packs of beer, Captain Morgan rum, Canadian Club whisky, and a bottle of Jose Cuervo which Derek forgot about. Some of those drinks have wolfsbane, but Derek always makes sure to get enough for everyone, not just the werewolves in the house.

“We’re gonna need some ice,” Erica mutters, laughing when Malia crowds her up against the wall and kisses her.

“The cooler is in the garage,” Derek says, piling his arms full of packaged meat.

“We’ll get the ice,” Mason says, coming through the kitchen door again and tossing Liam a pair of keys.

“Thanks,” Derek replies, pushing the refrigerator door shut with his foot. “You’re probably going to get a dozen calls from the rest of the pack asking for last minute things so keep your cell phones on.”

“Sure man,” Liam says and they’re already heading out the door.

When Derek heads back outside towards the barbeque, Stiles is already demonstrating to Clive how to throw a punch, adjusting and explaining he needs to keep his thumb outside of his fist or he’ll break it. Clive is looking at his clenched fist like it’s going to explode and the twins who are standing nearby keep looking like they’re trying to hold in their laughter at his expression.

Considering their history with the Silvas, they’re probably jumping at the chance to watch Stiles kick their asses. Derek can’t help but notice that the rest of the Silva pack is watching Stiles keenly as well. He hopes it’s because they’re interested to see what he can do. Not so they have the opportunity to attempt to ridicule him.

“Alpha Hale,” Aiysha says, and Derek actually didn’t see her approach because he was watching Stiles so closely.

“We’re allies now,” he says. “Derek is fine.”

“I’d like permission to fight your omega.”

Derek sets the meat down by the table, shaking the condensation from his hands leftover from being frozen as he glances over at Stiles, who’s close enough to hear the conversation, even with his human ears.

“Why are you asking me?”

She seems to realise what she’s said because she glances back at Stiles, who has obviously overheard them.

“Would you like to spar, ome- Stiles?”

Well at least they’re trying.

Stiles shrugs. “A demonstration might be helpful for Clive.”

Ethan’s smile widens at the words as Aiden starts to smirk. They were clearly hoping for this outcome but Stiles isn’t going to humiliate anyone, so much as make them re-evaluate their
understanding of the world. That doesn't mean they won't still be entertained.

“Don’t hurt her,” Derek calls and the rest of the Silva pack, bar Clive laughs good-naturedly before they grasp that Derek isn't joking.

They realise just how serious he is when Stiles puts Aiysha on her back in under a minute. Aiden and Cora cheer at Aiysha’s wide eyed expression while Stiles helps her to her feet and explains what she did wrong.

“Wow,” Tara exclaims, excited by the demonstration. “Can I try?”

Soon enough Stiles is sparring with all the betas, and Derek nearly burns the meat he’s trying to cook because he’s constantly checking over his shoulder to see that Stiles hasn’t hurt anyone. And that nobody has hurt him, which is less likely.

They’re not bad fighters. But they’re limited by the expectations they have when they stand opposite an omega, even after Stiles has bested their packmates in front of them. Their style is more vicious, definitely, but there’s less control in that as well. They still have a lot to learn.

Derek actually hears Adriana when she approaches his back. “It’s clear that you have a surplus of wisdom when it comes to running a loyal and successful pack,” she admits, quietly. “I would be honoured to learn from you.”

Derek raises an eyebrow at her. “Learn from me or learn from my pack?”

“Learn from your pack, from Stiles- it is clear that you are better equipped to deal with problems together than I or my pack am.”

“We’ve allied ourselves with you,” he says. “You’re welcome to visit here once you’ve gotten your pack in order. We can learn from each other.”

She inclines her head politely. “We accept your offer, Alpha Hale.”

“Derek,” he repeats. “We don’t bother with formalities here.”

Adriana glances over to where Stiles has Nora-Jane pinned in the grass and a small smile lifts up her mouth. “Yes. I’m beginning to understand that.”

Jackson wants a go with the betas next, and Stiles returns to teaching Clive while the two packs start messing about. Tara's already edging away from Jackson when he approaches.

Erica and Malia come back with Mason and Liam, carrying out the esky filled with different drinks and cooking food and sparring are forgotten in the rush for alcohol. Corey appears out of thin air to help them carry things over to the table, smiling at Mason who grins back, unsurprised at his sudden arrival. Kira’s threatening to zap people if they keep pushing and Scott’s trying to fend off Aiden from taking the last Canadian Club while Lydia hands her mate a drink, unimpressed by the spectacle.

Derek turns back to the barbecue, rolling his eyes. He scents Stiles in the air before he reaches his side. His skin is warm, he’s sweating from rolling around with so many betas and to Derek he’s never smelt better.

“Hey,” he says sidling up to him and waggling his eyebrows. “Can I kiss the cook?”

Derek smiles, heart full as he leans over to kiss him hello. “You did well,” he says.
Stiles smirks. “Don’t I always?”

But then his smirk becomes softer, a little more teasing. Derek has to say something. “Look, about everything-“

“How can we not?” Stiles asks. “Not today at least. Let’s just enjoy this. Then we can talk about how to help you get rid of all that guilt you’re currently feeling about us.”

As long as Stiles is willing to talk. That’s all that Derek could hope for.

“Okay,” he agrees, wrapping an arm around him to pull him in close. “Later. Let’s eat.”

The Silva pack leaves the next day. They agree to keep in touch, despite the many deaths that happened during their visit and how easily it could have had been more.

Stiles thinks they part on reasonably good terms considering.

They don’t find hide or hair of Peter. Even when half of the pack goes searching for his remains. The trail is cold now but they never found the body. Chris is confident that he’s dead, Allison a little less so, but Stiles has to admit the absence of a corpse is worrying.

Clive stays behind, after they’ve helped Adriana concoct a believable story about what happened here and he’s increasingly nervous during those three days, even as he grows a little more confident in defending himself until he and Jackson are scheduled to fly back to England. Jackson actually refers him to an omega self defence class that operates a little outside Bromley.

Stiles is surprised he decided to be so helpful.

Isaac starts moping about the house when their departure date is decided though it’s surprising that he’s taking it so hard. Stiles didn’t think that things were that serious, not enough in the short time they spent together. Jackson isn’t as obnoxious as usual either, though he keeps throwing Isaac looks when he’s not paying attention.

The expression on his face during those moments is so unusual for him that Stiles doesn’t have the heart to make fun.

Laura flies home two days before their flight, but promises to come back within the month for a weekend visit without the threat of death looming over them. This time she promises to bring Veronica as well. Derek, Malia and Cora drive her out to the airport while Stiles is over at Scott and Kira’s house, checking out the renovations.

They’re getting close too. It’s starting to resemble a place where people might actually live. Kira’s pretty confident that they won’t be staying at the house for longer than three more months if things stay on schedule. Stiles is sad at the prospect of his best friend moving out, but at least they’re only a few streets over.

It’s a good thing that their houses are within walking distance. Though Stiles will probably be too lazy to do anything else other than drive over there every time.

On the day of Clive and Jackson’s flight, Isaac is the one who drives them to the airport, though he’s
speaking in one word answers the entire morning and doesn’t even bother to hide that he’s upset. Derek takes him aside to say something, but it mustn’t do much good because he’s still frowning when he climbs into the front seat of his car and pulls out of the driveway.

After they leave Derek goes over to the precinct, because he’s feeling confident about starting his job again. The pack hadn’t exactly been surprised that his memories came back, not when he’d given out so many hints that he was remembering important details, but Stiles knows they’re glad he’s back. And they’re perfectly happy to take advantage of Derek’s new guilt complex about his previous behaviour by asking him to do all sorts of favours he wouldn’t have agreed to under normal circumstances.

Stiles tells them to knock it off, and they take the admonishment good-naturedly, even Liam who’s taken to calling himself Lee as a joke now. Derek keeps looking at everyone like he wants to apologise, but he’s not good with the words so he just ends up staring at the pack really intensely for a while. No matter how hard Stiles tries to convince him they’re okay, he’s still punishing himself.

But Stiles has noticed in the last few days that he’s starting to ease up a little, snarking back when the pack tries to make jokes about the things he said as College Derek. Stiles is pretty sure that they’re going to be fine.

When Isaac comes back, automatically coming to the main house because it’s where he’s been living for the past few weeks, he’s distracted and looking at a folded pouch of papers in his hands, no longer as upset by Jackson’s departure as Stiles anticipated.

“What’s that?” he wonders, hurrying over to peer at the contents. “Plane tickets?”

“To the UK,” Isaac says sounding a little stunned. “It’s for next month. Jackson bought them. He wants me to visit.”

Stiles’ eyebrows climb high at the gesture. Seems a lot more interested than he thought. Just how serious are they?

“Are you going to go?”

Isaac looks up like he’s forgotten Stiles is even there, so lost in his own thoughts. “Yeah,” he says, smirking a little. “Yeah, I think I am.”

He heads back to his own place after that and Stiles can’t shake the weird feeling he’s got until he realises it’s because the house is finally empty. It hasn’t been empty in a while, he’s almost not sure what to make of it. Scott and Kira are at work and it’s been a while since the place was so quiet.

Stiles heads into their office to call his work, figuring if Derek’s back to full health and about to be reinstated then it’s time he went back to DC. His boss is happy to hear from him and she calls him in for the whole week to drop off the rest of the information he’s gathered on his cases. He completed a lot of work during the time he needed to stay at home and she tells him that his superiors were impressed with him.

It’s a bit of a relief. Stiles had worried his job might be in jeopardy after so long, even if there are laws protecting him when it comes to taking time off to care for a sick mate.

They talk about it when Derek gets home, and although they’ve gotten used to spending a lot of their time together lately, they agree it’s the right time for both of them to get back into the routine of things. Thankfully Stiles will only be gone the week, because of the work he’s done, they didn’t request any additional work hours than what he usually does.
He’ll will be back in Beacon Hills by Sunday.

Derek takes a shift on Monday the day after Stiles flies out to DC, but they’re keeping him on desk duty for a little while to make sure his memory is fully functioning. Stiles knows Derek would prefer to get right back into it but Stiles is glad they thought to ease him back in first. He’s worrying enough about him already, the fear that Derek will lose his memories again hasn’t left him entirely and it’s starting to distract him at work.

It’s not the only distraction either. His fresh mating mark seems to be garnering a lot of attention, and not only from the alphas Stiles works with. They’d finally managed to ask Deaton what the darker colours and the extremely visible definitions of the mark actually meant once the Silvas had returned home.

Deaton had been surprised, but he’d explained that sometimes when mates endure traumatic or challenging obstacles together those obstacles might serve to strengthen the mating bond. And there’s nothing more traumatic or challenging than to have one's mate lose their memories, forget they were ever mated to begin with and have one of their bond marks disappear altogether.

Stiles had been pleased enough with a stronger mating mark, but Deaton had been confident that their bond bites were nearly unbreakable. It would take a lot to sever their connection now. And that's not exactly a common thing.

Hence all the renewed attention.

Lucky for Derek his mark is well hidden, but Stiles has to endure all of the lingering stares in the office, the easy spread of gossip about what happened to darken the mark in the first place and make it so prominent. Not the attention Stiles wanted or needed at all.

Derek at least, is keeping his complaints about the job to himself. So far. But he’s doing well, Stiles’ dad has called him a couple times to tell him so and it doesn’t seem like any of his memories are going anywhere.

Stiles is so glad.

Derek can smell the alcohol first before anything else. Mixed in with the scent of male teenagers and not enough deodorant.

He sighs as he steps into the backlot behind one of Beacon Hill’s most popular bakeries, where the owner called to complain about young hooligans on bikes twenty minutes ago.

Mr Khatri didn’t mention that they were drinking.

Derek catches sight of the familiar mop of hair first. Not this damn kid again.

“Marco Shannon,” he announces loudly, watching as the kid's two other friends catch sight of him in uniform, with a holstered gun at his waist, accompanied by the disapproving look in his eyes and promptly shit themselves.

“Don’t,” he snaps, when the boys look like they’re going to pedal off in different directions. “Even think about it. I got your scents. I can track you straight home to your parents who I’m assuming
believe you are in school right now.”

Marco Shannon, who appears to be holding the last can of beer, quickly drains it all as if that will get rid of the evidence. Derek snatches it from him and manages to step back to avoid Marco when he leans over and vomits right where his shoes had just been.

Jesus this kid is looking to be grounded by his mother until the end of time.

“Alright,” he says, sighing. “Everyone off your bikes. You’re coming with me.”

The three of them exchange glances like they’re thinking about running anyway again but Derek flashes his eyes at them, just for a warning.

They get off their bikes.

Derek tells them to pick up all their empty beer cans, which they do with only minimal complaining and another kid throwing up against the back of Mr Khatri’s building while the other two snicker at him. Derek does not remember being this idiotic when he was fourteen. But it’s absolutely certain that he was.

He gets them to toss the beers into a nearby trash bin and picks up all three of their bikes at once, hefting them over his shoulder whilst escorting the kids to his police cruiser. They’re short staffed today so his partner is actually back at the precinct, but Derek can handle three fourteen year olds and manages to get them seated into the back of the car no problem.

It helps that they already know him from last time, and they've got the idea that he won't take any shit. Derek keeps ropes in the back of the car for emergencies and manages to secure the bikes to the roof of the cruiser, avoiding the siren as he does it. When he climbs into the front seat the kids who are frantically whispering to each other, and stinking of beer and vomit, stop talking abruptly.

Stiles is going to find this hilarious.

“Let’s head back to the precinct,” he says. “Where I can call your parents to collect you.”

Marco Shannon slumps down further into his seat in dejection. This isn’t another skipping school to go camping rebellion like last time, but he knows his mother well enough to expect trouble. Emilia Shannon will not be happy about this.

Derek can’t deny that. He starts the car, letting those at the station know he’s bringing the kids back in his custody and drives back over to the precinct.

Just another average day in Beacon Hills.

It’s been a little over a month when Stiles flies out to spend another week in DC for work again.

Derek’s pretty much settled back into things now. He’s not on desk duty anymore which Stiles knows he’s pleased about even if he’s been mostly dealing with uncooperative teenagers.

When there aren’t rival packs invading the town, Beacon Hills can be sort of slow going. Besides the odd emergence of the supernatural. Derek doesn’t seem to mind though when they skype to talk
about how their days went. Stiles can tell he’s still enjoying himself even if he's having less fun in DC, swamped with work this week after they’ve uncovered a major drug and weapons trafficking ring along the Ontario border.

They tend to bump Stiles around divisions wherever he’s needed. He worked in the organised crime division for nearly two years before they transferred him to public corruption. Stiles likes where he is, and what he’s doing, but he’s definitely interested in counterintelligence or cybercrime.

Since he’s doing such a good job though, it’s only a matter of time before he gets transferred again. Even though he and Derek have started talking about kids, Derek’s been supportive of Stiles going back to work after he gets pregnant, vowing to take on as many child rearing duties as possible to support him. It helps that they’ve got a pack full of enthusiastic babysitters.

Although perhaps he'd hesitate to leave them under the care of Jackson. Though apparently he’s recently revealed some hidden depths. Isaac has only just left for the UK and Allison, who Isaac probably texts the most before Scott, has mentioned the hints Jackson’s already been dropping him about possibly moving over there. Or them finding a suitable compromise for the both of them long term.

Definitely some hidden romantic depths.

Stiles and two other agents work diligently all week, putting in so much overtime that Stiles has to keep rescheduling his and Derek’s nightly skype sessions until pretty late. Thursday night, he's so busy that it ends up being a midnight skype call.

Derek still waits up for him though, enough that Stiles feels terribly guilty when he finally makes it back to his hotel. They’ve made important progress though, identified two key kingpins in the operation which means when Stiles catches his flight back home on Saturday, he can leave feeling satisfied about the work he put in.

When Derek comments that Stiles is looking tired and insists they sign off to go to bed, Stiles is astonished to realise it’s nearly one thirty in the morning. Already Friday. He says goodnight, signs off, showers, rolls into bed and falls asleep so quickly it could be magic.

When he wakes up, he’s slept through two alarms and even with how speedily he can squeeze himself into a fresh suit, Stiles is twenty minutes late for work. His supervisor gives him a pointed look when he makes it into the office, stomach churning because he forgot to grab food, but she doesn’t pull him up on it because his team have been working so many late hours this week.

It’s not like Stiles went out partying after he left the Bureau last night. She knows it’s because he’s putting in the work.

Even so, he’s all jittery and nervous, as if she’d yelled at him anyway, and Stiles decides to forgo the morning coffee in favour of visiting the vending machine. He can almost feel Derek’s disapproval of his healthy breakfast choices all the way from Beacon Hills when he buys three different chip flavours to munch on.

He carries them back to his desk and then they’re right back into what they were doing less than eight hours before. Stiles very likely leaves crumbs all over his desk, but he devours the chip packets in no time, absently licking his fingers as he reads through some of the runners coded messages between those who export the packages into US soil and those that receive them.

He figures out the code before he’s finished cleaning off his fingers and Stiles is in the middle of explaining the process to Gabe Higgins, one of the betas on their team while Lara Quintana, who
looked half dead herself this morning, is using the restroom.

“And that’s how they used- shit I’m gonna hurl,” Stiles says abruptly, recognising the sensation in the back of his throat for what it really is.

Gabe’s eyes widen in surprise as Stiles darts over to the bathroom at the end of their hallway, barely making it into a stall before he’s emptying himself of the chips he just wasted precious time and coin cramming into his mouth.

Jesus. He shouldn’t have bothered with breakfast at all. He uses the toilet paper to wipe at his mouth, before he’s throwing up again. It takes a few minutes, and a few flushes of the toilet for him to be certain that he’s not going to throw up again. After that he washes his mouth and tries to figure out how he didn’t notice he’d eaten bad food.

It must have been the leftover Chinese take out from two nights before that Stiles pulled out of the mini fridge and scarfed down in between discussions of Derek’s day at work, before he’d ranted about his own busy day last night.

Or was the take out three nights old? Stiles can’t even remember. But he doesn’t feel too great right now. He’s all flushed and uncomfortable, wishing he wasn’t several states away from home. When he returns back to his desk, Lara is back and talking with Gabe and Stiles feels like he was hit by a bus.

“Are you alright, man?” Gabe asks, concerned. “You don’t look good.”

“No idea,” Stiles groans, feeling absolutely shitty. “I think I might have food poisoning. I ate some questionable take out last night that-“

“Head back to your hotel room, Stilinski,” his boss says, and he might be impressed by her timing if she wasn’t a werewolf who can hear conversations across the room. “You did great this week. Higgins and Quintana will send you the files at home once you’re in better shape.”

Stiles wants to thank her but he’s worried if he opens his mouth he might throw up again. What the hell kind of bacteria was in that takeout? He nods and bends down to scoop up his messenger bag up, giving his team a half-hearted wave as he heads back out.

He doesn’t get far enough to avoid overhearing Higgins’ next words though. Even if it’s a paltry attempt at whispering.

“Reckon he’s knocked up?”

“Don’t make me remind you about the sexual harassment seminar we had last month,” Quintana replies, voice layered heavy with reproach. “It’s none of your damn business.”

Stiles would have to agree but his mind is reeling too much when he climbs into the elevator to think beyond trying to stay upright. He walks back to his hotel and decides to stop and buy himself some crackers and fruit in the meantime in order to prevent throwing up again. Not like it’s going to matter if it turns out he’s actually pregnant though.

Stiles makes it back to his hotel without hurling on the sidewalk, strips out of his suit and nearly crawls into the shower. He practically drowns himself in the spray for a while until he can work up the courage to look down at his body. His stomach has a little bit of pudge to it, but that’s from all the stress eating because of work, and not having enough time to work in a routine of exercise lately.
He just lost his head a little jumping to conclusions. *Higgins* was jumping to conclusions.

Resolved on the matter, Stiles climbs out of the shower and tugs on some sweatpants, thinking he should take another nap in the meantime. He manages to fall asleep and not throw up again so maybe the food poisoning isn’t as bad as he thought it was. When he wakes up though, it’s around midday and he’s staring at his bare stomach again suspiciously.

He can’t be pregnant. Derek used a condom the whole time they were in heat and while they’re not a hundred per cent accurate, surely one of them would have noticed if a condom had broken at some point. Stiles definitely would have. That can’t be it. They were careful during his heat.

Except-

Now that he’s thinking about it, Stiles can’t remember whether they used protection the morning after the heat ended when he and Derek had joked about never having sex again. Why can’t he remember?

They’d showered straight after, but Stiles for the life of him can’t be sure if they went bare or used a condom. That’s kind of bad. Quietly, he does the math in his head. It’s been about six weeks since his heat, that’s about how long it takes usually to start getting morning sickness.

Holy shit.

Stiles has his cell phone out before he can fall deeper into pregnancy paranoia. Scott answers on the first try. He must be on his lunch break.

“Hey man,” he says. “How’s DC?”

“Scott,” he says a little urgently. “I need you to do a huge favour for me, dude. I need your werewolf hearing. Can you just listen for a sec?”

“Sure,” Scott agrees immediately, and Stiles pulls the phone away and lets it hover against his sternum, about halfway between his own heart and this potential baby that he’s imagining.

At about six weeks that’s usually when a baby’s heart starts beating. It’s the quickest pregnancy test that he knows. Scott should be able to hear it with his werewolf powers. He leaves it for about ten seconds before bringing the phone back to his ear.

“Okay, now be honest here, I can take it,” he says. “Was there anything weird about what you just heard?”

Scott takes way too long to respond. “I mean your heart was beating really fast?” he replies. “Is that what you meant?”

Okay so he just let a throwaway comment take him over and drag him into panic for a few hours. No biggie. Fucking Higgins. “So it’s just me in the room?” he checks, letting out a breath, not sure if he’s disappointed or relieved.

“Are you seeing stuff again?” Scott wonders. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” he decides eventually. “I’m okay. Just had a confusing morning.”

“Oh that sucks,” Scott agrees, tone relaxing a little once he’s sure that Stiles is alright. “Hey you’re coming home tomorrow right? We’re having a pack movie night in your honour.”
It was barely a week, but Stiles still appreciates the sentiment. “Then I get to pick the movie,” he says, knowing he sounds strange. “Look I’m not feeling too good so I’ll leave you to it. See you tomorrow.”

“Sure,” Scott says sounding confused. “What-?”

Stiles hangs up before he can finish his question. Jesus. Now is not the time to be getting worked up about bacteria filled Chinese takeout.

He throws up again before his flight the next day and Stiles can’t help but notice that it happens again in the morning.

And he threw out the left over Chinese take out. Or what remained of it. And he hadn’t eaten any more of it yesterday. Why is he still getting sick? After he’s cleaned himself up again, Stiles leaves the airport bathroom and heads towards his gate, passing by a shop that sells painkillers and other necessary items for flying.

Stiles’ eyes seem to be magnetically drawn to the shelf full of pregnancy tests as he passes by. He turns his head at the sight of them and walks faster.

It must just be a bug going around. There’s no way that Derek actually knocked him up. Not when he’s only recently stopped kicking himself over what College Derek did in his absence.

The timing is just-

Well it’s not bad actually. They’ve been talking about it. Making clear plans for their future and he has no doubt that the rest of the pack is on board. Stiles isn’t exactly protesting the idea.

His imagination gets the better of him though. When they finally let him onto the plane and he’s clipped himself into the aisle seat, he’s somehow imagining that his stomach is moving.

It’s not possible, time wise even if he was actually pregnant after all, he wouldn’t be feeling movement until months down the line. Stiles is just getting into his own head about this, letting his stress trick him into the sensation of it.

He puts on headphones and selects whatever movies look interesting and distracting enough for a five hour flight. He has to get up a lot to pee, but that’s just generally because he’s got a small bladder. He refuses coffee when the flight attendants go past even though his stomach is not at all moving. Except for indigestion. He’s probably wired enough anyway. Especially since he can’t stop jiggling his leg.

Stiles’ flight gets him into Beacon Hills right around afternoon but it was delayed an hour so nobody is actually coming to pick him up like originally planned. He takes a taxi back home, still lost on the possibility of the pregnancy thing, despite Scott hearing nothing over the phone. If he wants to put this to bed he’ll just have to take a pregnancy test.

That’s all. And then Stiles will know for certain. No problem.

Derek must have done an earlier shift because he hears Stiles in the driveway after he’s paid the driver and the taxi is reversing to head back out onto the main road. He comes out to meet him then,
still wearing his deputy uniform. Which is a blessing in and of itself.

Stiles doesn’t know if the weirdness of this week is worth mentioning, if he’s just letting his own hopes and paranoia get the better of him. The pregnancy test will set him straight about it.

But once he steps forward, walking over to greet Derek, he sees his mate’s nostrils flair, eyebrows climbing as his eyes fall pointedly towards Stiles’ stomach.

Then he breaks out into a broad grin.

Huh. So maybe Scott wasn’t 100 per cent accurate after all. Especially when Derek lets out a strangled noise of delight, rushing forward and dragging Stiles into his arms with a wild laugh, kissing him full of joy.

Yeah, Stiles definitely has his answer.

He laughs too, disbelief and amazement colouring his tone, as he pulls Derek close and kisses back.

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