**The Reason Why: Punishment**

by Tarton

**Summary**

“You know why he does it right?” Stiles had long become used to not understanding what Scott was talking about sometimes. The pause lengthened.”I mean, I don’t blame you or anything. Nobody does. But as much as I have to overlook Derek’s stupidity, I can’t abide by yours.”

**Notes**

Of course he couldn’t say anything. Derek had reamed him out the last time one of his judgments had been questioned. A text would have to suffice.

*I am fine, and he didn’t mean anything by it, don’t do this.*

An angry flash of red eyes was his sole response.

“I told you that this would happen the next time, didn’t I?” Derek growled.

The answering whimper was just as pitiful as the site that Stiles saw in front of him. A strong young man, neck scruff (what little there was of it) being clamped in strong fingers. Eyes that were beautiful and very scared; too scared. “[I didn’t mean it. I won’t do it again. Please…”

Derek let out a snarl, it was completely human, a terrifying sound for any human to make. “[I heard that last time too, it didn’t stop you from doing it today!”
I started it, ok? Let him be. If anything I should be getting punished.

Another flash of red eyes. “Stand up!” The beta obeyed. “If you move, I will make this worse!” it wasn’t a threat, it was a promise. The silver chain was thick, it had to have been custom made, but what strange person would even think of making such a thing. Stiles eyes noted the design, a device of torture, it made his stomach turn. Of course the Alpha was going to use it. It was the only way to actually hurt people, to control them, to punish them. “If you try and take it off, it gets tighter, and I wouldn’t touch the chain much if I were you. If you touch the metal, you get burned.”

The red welts on the Alpha’s hands were disappearing faster than the beta could heal, but they were still there. His eyes got bigger still. “I won’t do it, I promise, ever. I never will again… please.”

Don’t do this, for me?

The device was placed carefully around his neck. His terror had escalated. “Now,” Derek said, pulling the chain, the beta was told to stay, but clearly the Alpha either forgot his last command or completely ignored it as the beta struggled against his will to preserve his own neck and his need to obey. He looked like the decision was causing him almost as much pain as the collar around his neck. “Come,” was the next monosyllabic sentence. The beta walked out of the room. Stiles wondered where they were going. “You too,” was the gravely response.

Silence and whimpering. More silence. No one in the house seemed to want to say anything to Derek, his face was human, and his eyes were their hazel color, no red, no wolf, no mercy. This was a premeditated action. That’s what frightened Stiles more.

Where are you taking him? What are you doing?

When they reached the back door, but cut left, down to the basement, Stiles almost sighed. Almost, because sighing was a sign of insubordination. And that would cause the Alpha to go a bit more off the deep end.

The basement was still a variable minefield of messes. The basement that Isaac’s dad had tortured his son was repurposed into a storage unit, a gym, a cage and now, a startling full circle that Stiles gut couldn’t help him feel any more acutely, it was a torture chamber. The look on Isaac’s face showed Stiles that he was thinking the same thing as his friend stood up and walked out, his face was betraying him, as Isaac’s face always did. Derek stopped in front of the treadmill, a look of pure angry aimed at the metal and rubber that was his morning routine. Stiles shuddered.

“Sit on the floor,” Derek said, pointing. “Don’t move an inch.” Eyes widened, and Stiles understood now, the chain was strung up over the ceiling, around a sturdy looking pipe. Sturdy by Stiles’ standards wasn’t sturdy by a wolf’s. The chain was pulled taught and connected to another pipe, taking up all the slack on the chain until there was a small trickling of blood off of the beta’s neck. “Stand up. Get on.”

Stiles thought it was a joke. Of course a werewolf could run on a treadmill, no matter how fast, there had to be a twist. He text Derek another plea, hoping that all his quick glances at his phone were taking effect. “What are you going to do to him Derek?” the voice belonging not to Stiles’ asked.

“He is going to run, and if he falls, then he will be hurt, and if he stays down, then he will continue to be hurt. It’s his choice. He has to learn that if you don’t listen to your Alpha, you face the consequences. Let’s just be grateful that I am much more lenient than our enemies,” Stiles’ wanted to contest that, but the beta behind him sounded so sad already.
Jackson hadn’t talked this entire time. His eyes were beautiful, Stiles admitted, even if they are tainted by fear. He always thought that the Alpha was there to lead and protect, but this seemed, to all of them, a much more common occurrence than before, even before Scott joined, again.

Punishment. There was no other way of looking at it. Every minor infraction seemed to be met by a punishment that far outweighed the crime. Derik had since given up on bothering with reason. Stiles saw that. It just got him frustrated, and teenagers, well they were frustrating. Stiles had tried to be less frustrating, had really tried, but sometimes, well he knew he was the cause of it today.

“Nobody touches him, or the chain until I get back, I think I will go watch a movie. Anyone want to come?” everyone looked at their feet. “No? too bad, I was going to pay. Bye.” And Derek Hale, the Alpha, was gone.

*You can’t be serious, get back here right now and get him out of this!*

Stiles wasn’t used to raising his voice, he knew from experience that if he had said that to Derek exactly how he wanted to, well there would be blood, and a wall would leave bruises, and well he didn’t want any more bruises, not because of his friends, not anymore. He shuddered.

Scott was listening, waiting. “Ok he is gone. What happened Stiles?”

Jackson spoke up, he was running faster than Stiles could have, and he didn’t sound winded yet. “I shifted when Mr. Smartass decided that the best way to get me all caught up was to start with anger management.” Stiles head lowered, his feet shuffled. “I guess I failed.”

Scott’s mouth must have dropped, because when he finally talked, his voice was much more reserved than Stiles’ would have been. “This is insane, how could Derek expect you to last even 5 minutes against the terror that is Stiles’ werewolf training! I mean, I had Allison, and I know you have Lydia, but even then I was struggling with it.” This was news to Stiles. The Stillinski method of werewolf training had flaws, he knew, but it worked on Isaac, and it had worked on Scott. Didn’t it? “How did he try and make you angry?”

Jackson didn’t respond right away, which was not what Stiles expected, “He hit me with a baseball bat, but then he made fun of my mother…”

Stiles cussed himself out. Wasn’t it just his luck that the one time that he had to insult Jackson he conveniently forgot all about Jackson’s family. Or maybe Jackson thought it was malicious. “Sorry.”

“I know you didn’t mean it, you jack ass, but still, you can’t expect me not to wolf out.” Jackson still hadn’t gotten winded yet. “I think Derek is going light, I mean how long can a movie last?”

Stiles thought about it for a second, “It’s a double feature, he wanted to see the Hobbit and Django Unchained. Combined those two movies are, well you are going to be down here for a while… I am so sorry Jackson. I didn’t mean any of this, I didn’t mean for this to happen. I am so sorry.”

Was there a smile on Jackson’s face? Stiles never found out, for at that second Jackson’s treadmill program stopped, and he tripped a bit at the pause in motion. He fell down and barely caught himself. “Looks like he added a bit of a challenge to this, the dick.” Jackson had a fresh rivulet of blood flowing down his neck, a second more and the machine started up. He scrambled to his feet.

Scott pulled Stiles away, “come on, Jackson, howl if you need help, I don’t care what Derek said, I will break that damned chain with my teeth before I let him go crazy with power.” Scott was still the only one who could stand up to Derek, besides Stiles. “Damned Alpha, he is crazy!” Stiles wondered again if it was because he was bitten by Peter that he had any sense of courage in the face of Derek’s rage, or if it was just that he was one of those naturally stubborn people who disliked all authority.
When they got outside, the nice suburban area that Isaac lived looked empty, Scott make a straight line to the one vehicle to rule them all and make a grabbing gesture towards Stiles. He wanted to drive, but Stiles was fairly protective of his baby. She was old, and she was good at what she did, and Scott was grounded for a week because his mom’s car had come home with a human sized dent on the hood. “Do you promise to take care of her Scott? Do you promise not to drive like a crazy man? And to caress her wheel every time you take a corner? Do you promise?” The nod was Stiles only response. It would have to do because Scott just looked pissed. Stiles threw the keys.

The drive was slow, not at all what Stiles expected. After Scott rolled his window down and asked Stiles to do the same, they just started driving down whatever street Scott felt like. Or so it seemed; every once in a while Scott’s nose twitched, sniffing the outside air. Sometimes he noticed Isaac’s nose doing the same thing, or Derek’s. “So, where are we going Scott?”

“Don’t know.” And so they drove on. Silence.

***

“You know why he does it right?” Stiles had long become used to not understanding what Scott was talking about sometimes. The pause lengthened. “I mean, I don’t blame you or anything. Nobody does. But as much as I have to overlook Derek’s stupidity, I can’t abide by yours.”

Stiles eyebrows shot up. “I’m being stupid! Me? Stupid?”

“Yeah. Sometimes.”

“I’m not the one who thought a potato could solve the world’s energy problems.” And sure, Stiles researched it later, but it wasn’t like he was the one who brought it up. “Besides, why would you classify me with Derek? I am not stupid like him at all! I’m not the one who gave Jackson the bite and didn’t watch over him, I am not the one who blundered everything up so bad that I had to ask my undead uncle to help me out. I am definitely not the one who bled all over my car and didn’t clean it up, even though he promised to!”

“I didn’t say it would solve the world’s energy problems, I just said that it would be fun to run my computer off of it, and then I said that if everyone did that, the world would have less energy problems. You missed the causality there.”

“Since when do you use words like causality and abide?”

Scott shrugged his shoulders, they had slowed down a bit, “Allison got me a word a day calendar, I just started reading the definitions lately. But no changing the subject. Do you know why he does it?”

Stiles had to think past his annoyance for a second. “No.” it was the only answer. He didn’t know why Derek did any of the things that he did.

Scott let the silence fall. “Isaac, come here, now. Please?”

Oh. Stiles hadn’t noticed where they were. It was outside of a park, right on the edge of the smallest and saddest part of the woods he had ever seen. Isaac must have come here a lot when he was little. How did Stiles know this? because Isaac was coming out of the little tunnel made of old PVC plastic, his face looking like a kid who just got caught playing hide and seek. He had a smile that said, “you found me,” but the rest of his face was anything but happy. He had puffy eyes, red just a bit. As he approached the car, Stiles saw the tear trail from under his left eye.
When Isaac got in the backseat, Stiles said they only thing he could think of, “Is this all my fault?”

Scott looked at his best friend with confusion, and Isaac looked at Stiles like he had grown an extra limb, or had wolfed out. Either one would have been enough to cause confusion.

“Is this all my fault, Scott? Everything. If I didn’t invite you out to search for the dead body, if I had let you sleep in, we wouldn’t be here now, Jackson wouldn’t have been turned, Derek wouldn’t have changed Isaac or even Erica and Boyd.” The mental stream was something that he had gone through for days since getting thrashed by Gerald. “We could have been at school, enjoying a nice game of lacrosse on the bench, not worrying about full moons and hunters with or without codes, and we definitely wouldn’t have to worry about getting blood on the inside of our vehicles, or worrying about claws when we made out with chicks, or anything really. We could be normal teenagers, with normal hormonal problems and normal non-wolf solutions. Is it all my fault?”

The pause afterwards was thick. Too thick. They were almost back at Isaac’s place. How long had they been gone? It suddenly felt like hours. But the lack of a Camero in the drive told Stiles that it wasn’t too long. “I am going to let Jackson out of the basement, I will take the blame on this one guys,” Stiles said.

He walked dejectedly to the basement, it was all his fault, they couldn’t deny it. They hadn’t been able to. The front door was looming in front of him, and they hadn’t even gotten out of the car. The knob turned easily enough, and the hallway was familiar enough, but everything had changed. He walked into the kitchen, the basement, the steps creaking under his feet as he forced himself to walk down to his punishment. Well, his future punishment.

“Hey, you guys find Isaac already? That’s good, wouldn’t want him being able to mope too much,” Jackson said, “Stiles? Is that you? I can’t turn my head too much with this thing on.”

“Yeah, it’s me.” Stiles voice was heavy, his arms were heavy, and his feet were heavy. It was all his fault. “I am going to get you off of the chain, ok?”

“You don’t need to, I’m fine. I can go for hours,” but Stiles didn’t listen. He grabbed a chair from in front of the tiny TV that Scott had found in front of Mr. Harris’ house, and stood it up under the pipe system. He undid the knot easily enough and unwrapped it from around the second pipe. Then, while Jackson was still running, he took the chain and loosened the choker, lifting it carefully from around the other teen’s face. “I told you, you didn’t need to do it!”

Stiles just shrugged, and his shoulders felt heavy. The hauled the chain up the stairs, putting it back in the chest that Derek had put all of his pack training tools he had brought to Isaac’s from the subway station. He could see out the front window at Scott and Isaac standing outside of his Jeep, their voices low, their shoulders hunched, their eyes drifting towards the house in what Stiles thought was a wary way. He knew they could hear him. And then Stiles knew he wasn’t alone in the room. Spinning around he saw Jackson, his face slightly angry, not the most annoyed face he had ever seen from the co-captain of the lacrosse team.

“What the hell Stalinski!” Jackson growled. “I didn’t need any help! And now Derek is just going to be just as annoying if not more so when he gets home! You dick!” Stiles didn’t bother trying to protect himself; it was his fault, and Jackson deserved to take the swing at his head. It connected, and Stiles felt the blood trickle down his face a bit where Jackson’s claw had hit his cheek. As soon as the floor connected with the rest of his body, Stiles felt the calm take his body, the instant calm where everything goes black, it wouldn’t be the first time that Stiles was sarcastically grateful for his ability to pass out, he had used it to his advantage whenever he could, it was like his body knew that he needed rest, and that the only way to really get it would be to go out completely. He was only marginally aware that there was growling going on outside of his dark world, and then, as if it had never happened, all was dark. And he was finally and blissfully out of the world,
out of the universe, and for the first time in a long time, he didn’t even dream.

***

It was dark, and his head hurt, but his eyes were barely focused on anything as he realized that he was in his house, in his bed. He reached up to his face, but there was a band-aid over his cheek, the pain of a fresh bruise. He had had enough bruises. For a life time, but he would be happy to take a billion more if he could turn back time and make everyone happy again. That familiar heaviness tugged at his limbs, like a cold and dark blanket, stretching tightly over every inch of muscles and skin. Holding him down tighter than the day that Matt died, or the day that he found Derek in the woods, a gunshot wound bleeding out slowly as Isaac thanked him for coming, even though it was 2 in the morning. It held him down colder than the day after Gerald’s death, when Lydia had definitively chosen Jackson in front of multiple witnesses, and his bruises seemed to be pointless. Utterly held by all of the pain and the confusion and the desperation for change, that’s the new normal for Stiles.

“You are up, good. I was hoping I could talk to you tonight.” The voice should have lifted the heavy and the cold. It usually did. Best friends were supposed to have that effect on each other. So why did it feel like the blanket was seeping into his lungs, trying to make it more difficult for him to respond, to breath? “Listen, I am sorry if I upset you earlier, but I didn’t mean to call you stupid. Not about that.” About what? Stiles didn’t know. He was just a silent cold man, with no more life in him, no more life to give to his friends, to his family. There was nothing. No more. “I should have been inside with you when you got Jackson out of there. I should have explained it better. I know I am not as good with my words as you, but you were always the smarter one, the one who explained everything for me in math, I just couldn’t get that you didn’t know. I mean, everyone knows. Why don’t you?”

Stiles struggled to take a breath. “I don’t know Scott, every day I wake up, I don’t know if you are going to live. Every time there is some kind of threat to any of my friends, I don’t know if I will be able to keep myself or anyone else safe. I have seen more dead bodies than any seventeen year old should see in his life Scott, and that was before all this werewolf stuff. My dad is the sheriff, but now, now that I am a human in a wolf pack, because Scott that’s what I do know. I know that I am part of all of this, whether I like it or not. And Scott, I am afraid. That’s all I know.”

It took all of his energy to get out that short rant, to let it out. “Stiles.” It was a breath of air, and then a warm blanket was trying to cover the cold blanket. But it wasn’t warm enough. “Why didn’t you tell me this before man?” and Stiles was suddenly sitting not sure how he got there. His eyes were still closed, not wanting to see the pity in his friend’s eyes. Not wanting to escape the blackness that was his head, or was his head. He felt the blanket dissolve as the warm arms that were Scott wrapped around him in a hug, and Scott lifted him up so that Stiles was a ball in his arms. That’s when they started, the treacherous tears that Stiles had promised not to give him away, not when he was being attacked by Gerald, not when he finally lost Lydia forever. Not even since his dad has taken him down to the station for a surprise but not undeserved drug test and asked him for the truth, any truth that Stiles could explain anything. He hadn’t said a word that day, and very few every day since. Stiles promised he wouldn’t cry.

But this was a different feeling than all the feelings that he had been trying to dissipate. It was release, and acceptance. And suddenly he found all of his words. And Scott just added the occasional grunt. It was freedom.

***

“I know it isn’t entirely my fault. I know that. But sometimes, when I see you walking with a limp or when I see Jackson give Isaac the death glare because Isaac beat him at something or other, I just feel so weak and fragile. And then there is Derek. He is so hard on you all, and you guys
aren’t doing that bad. I know that there are bigger problems that he is worrying about but he
doesn’t need to take it out on you guys. I just don’t get it Scotty, what am I missing here?”

All the conversation had been a one way street. It occurred to Stiles at some point that Scott might
have gone to sleep, but he was finally getting it all off of his chest, sleeping best friend or not. It
felt good to have a pair of freakishly strong arms around him. It felt good that this was so familiar,
and that nothing between him and Scott had actually changed. Nothing but everything had
changed, Stiles amended in his head. “Do you mind filling me in Scott? I need to know. I am so
lost. I have been lost the minute you got the bite, but then again, after Peter died, well I thought I
was all caught up. And now, weeks after Gerard died, well, I just need to be on the same page as
the rest of my world Scott. Please?”

And then the sigh, of course he sighed. He had to sigh too, but sighing was insubordination, and
Derek… “He loves you.”

Stiles didn’t even take a second to ask who, “Derek doesn’t love me.”

Scott’s breath huffed out of him. “Why do you think that he punishes anyone but me whenever
they wolf out in your area? Why do you think that Isaac and I are the only two allowed to lose any
control around you? Have you ever thought of why he doesn’t like you being at our pack
meetings and our training sessions? He lets you, he will complain and hope you won’t show up,
but his eyes never leave you for long, just long enough to yell a few words of correction, and then
they are back to you, but you can’t see that. You are looking at all of us, and he just keeps getting
angrier.”

Stiles’ breath hitched, was he still crying? “Scott, don’t mess with me man. I can’t handle this
anymore. Derek doesn’t look at me during practices. And he doesn’t want me at meetings because
I am not part of his pack. And he always yells at everyone, always.”

Scott must have sensed that he had gone to far, just by a lot. “You want me to go?”

“No, stay, please?”

And Scott lifted Stiles up, laying their heads on a pillow, his arms still wrapped around Stiles
body, a band of warm flesh that Stiles could feel, protecting his heart from that cold blanket that he
could feel, stalking his every minute, and waiting.

***

“Stiles, when did Scott get here?”

Of course the sheriff would ask the one question Stiles couldn’t answer. He didn’t know. “We
talked earlier and well, we had a fight, and since he couldn’t sleep I guess he just used his special
Scott door and got in.”

“Oh.”

It was as simple as that. No lies, no untruth, and Stiles had actually been smiling this morning. He
could feel it on his face as well; the reality of it, the strangeness of that warm feeling at the edges
of his lips. Here was the easy banter. His mood lifted as he listened to the complaining groans
when he started to eat another waffle when the other two had had more than him, and still wanted
more. It was like he was suddenly awake. And all it had taken was all his energy, all his walls
crumbled in one night, in one hour. And now, he was able to see the world for what it was, well,
for what it could be.

“Yeah, so my mom called me this morning at about 6, she was mad at me, and then your dad
walked in on me trying to answer the phone on the desk without waking you up. You are a pretty heavy sleeper Stiles, I forgot about that,” an admission of guilt. Scott and Stiles hadn’t been hanging out as much as they used to. “Well I am just glad your dad was already up. He was at least able to calm my mother down. Mind you, Mr. Stilinski if you could have not mentioned that I was cuddled up with him, and I really hate that you took a picture.”

“You had your eyes closed for every shot though,” the sheriff retorted, “and besides, how often is it that you can take a picture of your seventeen year old son cuddled up in a ball, looking like the toddler I remember. It seems like just yesterday…”

“Dad, no! No stories about anything,” snickering from Scott made Stiles think, “Scott was there for most of it.”

Scott’s snickering became louder, and through his shaking shoulders and hitches of air he said three words, “balloon bra makeup.”

Three words that set both Scott and the Sheriff into an uncontrolled fit of giggles. And so Stiles grabbed the last waffle, just to see the look on both of their faces. Scott looked sad, the sheriff bemused, but when Stiles swipe the bacon, well, Scott growled. That set Stiles off into a giggle, and the sheriff continued to look bemused. After the dishes were taken care of (“I got this guys, go run off into the bright Saturday morning sun, leave the dishes to me,”) Scott decided that he wasn’t going to wait another minute before they finished last night’s discussion. When they decided to go to the coffee shop, a local hot spot, Stiles was severely hoping that it would be as booming as it was any other day of the week. As luck would have it, for Scott anyways, the coffee shop looked deserted. Lattes ordered, espresso added to one cup in an offensive amount, but still, it was a latte, they sat down, the only other person in the place was the barista, who was a year older than them. Stiles took a sip, ignoring the burning in acceptance of silence. He couldn’t talk if his mouth was burned right?

“You didn’t want to talk last night, but you have to talk now. Ok?”

Of course Scott had been so polite as to ask if it was ok to do exactly the opposite of what stiles wanted. “I guess I don’t have much of a chance of this never being talked about again, right?”

“I don’t know what you just said, do you?”

“My dad always said I had the most interesting way of making nothing sound like a rambling brook, but then again, I was gifted a dictionary and a thesaurus by my great aunt when I was seven, so you can’t expect me to be completely normal, not after I thanked her for it. You remember that summer, the summer of big words and confused adults?”

Scott smiled, “Yeah, I still don’t know what you said to make Ms. Meraux cry.”

“I just asked her if the pills she was always taking was for incompetence or incontinence. I didn’t really know how I knew that. I mean sure I was smart and I had the internet, but I didn’t know she was taking pills for that. I swear!”

“So she was really incontinent?”

Stiles smiled and sipped his hot latte, feeling that extra espresso shot already, “Yeah, she was. Leave it to me to make a correct assumption when I was talking out of my butt.” The silence after that phrase was pregnant for 10 months, or at least Stiles thought so. “So, I guess I should just get this over with. Why is it that you think Derek loves me, Scott?”

Scott averted his gaze for a second. He was obviously severely underprepared for this
conversation, but when wasn’t he? “It’s a wolf thing, I think. I am not sure, because Isaac said that with me and Allison,” the pained look saying that they were still taking it slow, their rocky disposition continuing, “well we just smelled like that always, before they became pack. But you and Derek started smelling like that recently, like since Erica was turned, so yeah, I guess that’s how I knew. Isaac was the one who brought it up, so you can ask him about it if you don’t get it.”

Stiles’ face felt like it was struggling to hold his jaw in place, “what exactly do you and Allison have to do with me? Or Derek, for that matter.”

Scott took a sip of his coffee, he wouldn’t actually need the energy, but Stiles just knew that he loved the feeling of those micro bursts of energy from the caffeine. “Apparently me and Allison used to smell like secrets and pain, whatever that meant. It was the smell of two people in love though, well, we used to smell like that.” Of course Stiles could see that they were two people in love, everyone who knew them knew that they were like Romeo and Juliet, if Juliet was a bad ass with a crossbow. Mind you, Juliet hadn’t gotten coerced into attacking all of Romeo’s family, nor had she sent text messages to Romeo asking for him to stop coming to her window at night, but asking him to stay around. “I am just saying, the two of you need to get your relationship in order. Eventually.”

Stiles took a sip of his coffee, or pretended he did. His mouth pulled on air, Scott probably saw that. “I don’t love Derek. I like Derek, but only enough to be around him. He is annoying and he doesn’t bother telling any of us what’s happening, or what he is thinking and oh god, yes, I like him like that, but I don’t need this right now. I don’t need you telling me that he is in love with me, I don’t need this. I can’t handle much more of this.”

Scott wasn’t done with his coffee, so the sip from his cup proved to be a more fruitful venture than Stiles’ was. “You know, I don’t think you have much of a choice anymore. I mean, you can run away to college, but you will always know, you will always be my best friend. And that just means that you do need this. Maybe, and if you repeat this to anyone I will hurt you, Derek is the one that you have wanted.” Stiles’ face must have looked angry, “Don’t get me wrong, I don’t like him anymore than I used to, but he seems to be good for you, minus the bruises, and that’s only because you are just human.”

“Yeah, human, I know exactly what that means here,” Stiles sigh was a release of all the hope that had welled in his body over the last few hours. “I can’t accept the bite, you know that. I don’t want to have to worry about hunters any more than I already do, and I don’t want to tell my dad that I can’t be home during the full moon for a while, not that I am not already gone for most of them. But still, I don’t want to deal with all of this. I like him. I will admit that, but I can’t deal with all of this. I wish I liked Danny instead.”

“You know you are lying. You used to have a crush on Danny, but you never really liked him. It was because his mom always packed him candy in his lunches, and you dad never let you, ‘cause of the ADHD and all. Besides, you never would have picked Danny up in your Jeep if he was bleeding in the woods.” Scott took another sip, “well maybe you would, you are a nice guy. Which is why I think that Derek compliments you perfectly.”

“You might want to explain yourself a bit more clearly, before I storm off and leave you.”

“Well, Derek isn’t a horrible guy, he isn’t a sadistic prick like Peter was, stupid undead bastard.”

Stiles looked at his friend, “What does Peter have to do with anything?”

Scott looked at the mug in his hand, it must have been empty. “Peter told me that if you and Derek got together, you two would be happier, it was something to do with the Alpha and it’s mate. According to Peter, if an Alpha doesn’t have a mate it will eventually go crazy. Laura apparently
didn’t have one, and well, when she came back to Beacon Hill she wasn’t crazy, but Peter said that that’s because Derek made a good stand in. Plus, Derek needed the comfort from Laura. He needed his family. The pack helps, but I think he needs more. I don’t like how I can feel what he fells all the time, but I know that when he looks at you, it’s almost how I feel when I look at Allison. Even now.”

Stiles’ eyes hadn’t looked up. “Stupid wolf powers, they always mess with all of my arguments about everything. I am not afraid of being there for Derek, hell after you and Allison I am sure that sex with a werewolf isn’t dangerous, but I don’t want to deal with this. I don’t want to be Derek’s weak little mate, the one everyone has to protect, the one who couldn’t tie his own shoes for a week after an old man beat him up. I don’t want to deal with anymore of this. I’m sorry. Ok?”

Scott put his mug down. “I am too, I know you aren’t really ready for anything, but I wanted you to know why Derek acts like Derek around you. From what Isaac said, he isn’t that protective when you aren’t around. And it’s only since I joined the pack officially that you two have been seeing more of each other, and Derek just gets more and more frustrated with himself. He smells afraid too. Afraid of you. I don’t know why, but it’s there.”

Stiles stood up, not looking back for a second. Scott hadn’t moved, he knew he had pushed past the point of no return far too much this conversation to do any good, but he needed to try. “Listen, I know you are just saying this because you think I should know, and I appreciate that, but I need to think. I am going to drop you off at your house, and I expect you to leave me alone for the rest of the day, if I leave my window open, you can come and chat with me tonight. Wait, do you work at Dr. Deaton’s today? I can drop you off there if you want.”

Scott got up and followed, “Yeah, I do, but I can get my bike from the house first, because then I can deal with other stuff later.” Stiles had a pretty good idea that Scott’s other stuff involved Allison, and maybe Derek, but he didn’t comment on it as they both exited the coffee shop, the silence both comfortable and unnatural. “Thanks for listening, you know that I love you right?”

Stiles didn’t have to think a second before he replied, “Scott, that’s so gay, and yeah, I love you too.”

***

The phone rang three times. “Hello?”

Stiles took in a breath, “Hey, Allison, are you busy?”

“Well me and Lydia are planning on going to the mall later, but then Jackson wanted to do something with her, so she was trying to be nice and let me down easy, so I might actually be free.”

“Yeah, I don’t really want to run into Jackson right now,” Stiles’ hand went to his face, the band-aid. “I just wanted to talk to you, about stuff, you know?”

“If this is about Scott you can expect to get a punch before I call my dad to kick you out the house, you know that right?”

Stiles still remembered the indignity that he had suffered on his best friend’s behalf. “No, it isn’t about Scott I promise.”

There was hesitancy on the other end of the line, and when she finally answered she almost sounded sad, but Stiles couldn’t pick up on it. “Ok, you can come over now if you would like, but I swear to god, I will hurt you if you think I was joking about Scott. I am not in the mood, ok?”
Stiles wasn’t in the mood for this either, but it was necessary. “Ok, you mind if we do some archery practice? I think I need to shoot something.”

Allison hesitated again, “Ok, I guess we can. Lydia will come over in a few hours, fair warning, she just text me again.”

“I should be gone before that. See you soon.”

“Allison hesitated again, “Ok, I guess we can. Lydia will come over in a few hours, fair warning, she just text me again.”

“See you.”

***

“So, what exactly is it that you wanted to talk about Stiles?” He couldn’t blame her for her question, they had spent twenty minutes in companionable silence, shooting the target with arrows until it was too full of bull’s-eyes from Allison and there were too many crossbow bolts scattered on the lawn from Stiles’ attempts.

“Well, I promised I wouldn’t talk about him, and I won’t,” he said, but the name made the arrow just miss the bull’s-eye, Allison narrowed her eyes towards him. “But Scott mentioned something today, and I wanted to ask you a question.”

Allison pulled the bow and let her last arrow fly, the sound of broken glass alerted Stiles that she hadn’t missed her target, but that her target was just further back and much harder to hit. She put down her bow in her stand and motioned Stiles to join her, collecting arrows as she went. “So, he told you that you like Derek, did he?” Stiles’ steps faltered. “I knew he would eventually, and well, I told him that you would figure it out eventually. How are you taking it?”

Stiles’ released his breath. “Not well. How did you know?”

Allison smiled a bit, “well when you dove into a pool to hold him up for an hour and change, I figured out that you liked him, but it wasn’t until Scott told me about how we smelled and how you two smelled that I put it together officially. You risk your life for the people you love, and well, I am sorry I put those people in danger. I don’t regret trying to protect the town from that Kanima, but seriously, I had to have been on drugs or something to get so messed up in the head. Sorry.”

Allison had apologized a lot lately, and Stiles noticed that she was talking to that guidance counselor more too, but they didn’t seem to be talking often, just informally. So when Stiles said again that she had nothing to apologize, she smiled in the same way that she always did when she knew that that wasn’t enough, that she still felt guilt, and some part of him was secretly pleased, and the part that knew that was angry that it wasn’t a bigger deal to him. “I know how hard it is to lose a parent, especially when you also just lost your aunt and now you lost your grandpa. I am here if you ever want to talk.”

“Thanks.” It was a breath, a warm blanket, a relief. “So, how are you?”

Stiles thought, “Not good. I don’t know what to do. Lydia chose Jackson, Derek likes me, and well I guess that everyone knows it. How did you handle it, dating a werewolf?”

Allison looked down, “My family moved around a lot, so when we got to Beacon Hills and my mom said we had to stay for a long time, well I was secretly happy. Especially because I liked Scott. But when I found out that he was a werewolf, and that I was being trained to be a werewolf hunter, well, I was torn. I know that I loved him, and some part of me wants to love him now, more than ever, but it’s hard. It’s like everything about him is this dangerous and enticing person, and yet that’s exactly what my aunt and my grandpa wanted me to hate, exactly what I liked about him. I don’t know that I can’t like him. I want to, but I have so much that I have to get past, I don’t
want to deal with that too.” Allison had started to pull out arrows from the target, then she looked up, eyes narrowed, she whipped him with an arrow. “You deserved that, and you know it.”

Stiles winced, holding his arm where the arrow had connected. “I did, but I need to know. I don’t know what to think anymore. How are you dealing with Lydia and Jackson?”

Allison grimaced, but her smile returned just a little bit. “I have to say, and if you repeat this to anyone, I will hurt you,” the joke in Scott’s voice was absent in Allison’s, “Lydia couldn’t be happier, and I remember when I was just like that, with Scott. Don’t worry I won’t hit you twice.” She smiled again, arrows piling up in her tiny hands. “But honestly, if it weren’t for all of this stuff that happened between me and Scott, I would be completely happy for her. I forgive Scott for technically killing my grandpa, but I can’t forgive him for siding with Derek, not after Derek bit my mom, not after Peter killed my aunt. I don’t blame him for everything, I have talked to him once about exactly what happened that night, and well, my grandpa was just as much to blame as my mom was for taking her own life, but I just feel empty some days, you know?”

Stiles knew, so he nodded his head. “Stiles, this is probably the longest conversation we have had without you interrupting every five seconds. I am glad that you are taking this so seriously. It isn’t a small decision.”

Again a nod.

Allison continued, “Do you think that you are ready for more, with Derek, with the pack?”

Stiles didn’t answer. “Do you miss it sometimes? How it used to be, just me you and Scott, fighting the pack, being secretive?”

Allison nodded, “Well, sometimes, but I don’t miss them all the time.”

Stiles nodded, “I want more sometimes, but I don’t want more all the time, and that’s the problem.”

Allison’s phone beeped, “Hey, Lydia will be here in ten, and I don’t know if you want to see her yet, but well, you have been warned.”

Stiles looked out into the wooded area of Allison’s back yard, there, hidden among the trees was a row of glass bottles from different sodas and beer companies. Allison’s arrows were lined up perfectly from left to right behind the empty spaces. “Ok, thanks for talking to me, I will see you Monday, last week of school before summer vacation, let’s hope nothing tries to kill us before then.”

Allison smiled, but her eyes still hadn’t lit up, not like they used to, not like when she smiled with Scott. “Yeah, call me if you need me to protect you from something, I don’t care if it is just a fly, I think I could shoot it down for you.”

Stiles laughed, because what else could you do when the third scariest person you knew of (who was still alive he amended) was offering her services?

***

Pizza, an entire pizza. He ate it all, and now his stomach was upset. The room was dark, but that’s what he wanted. X-men were playing with the brotherhood of new mutants on the screen. And well, the action only disturbed him a bit. There were impossibly strong and attractive people fighting other impossibly strong and attractive people. And well, there wasn’t enough hours in the day to contemplate why this was his favorite movie. There was a knock on his window, his open not locked window. “Come in, I told you to just come in, don’t worry, you haven’t missed much,
“It’s just to the part where they… Oh it’s you.”

“It’s nice that you are so happy to see me.”

“Welcome to my room Isaac, what’s up?”

“I was here before, Scott told me to come in his place, apparently Allison and him are about to have a talk. He said that he smelled you over there earlier, he wanted to say thanks.”

Stiles scoffed, “so he sent a pack-o-gram?”

Isaac did a small shuffle like dance, and ended with jazz hands. “Yep! That’ll be 7.50, not including tip thank you.”

Stiles laughed a little bit, “So what is your reason for coming here?”

Isaac looked at his feet for a second, “Derek was mad at me today; he told me that he was going away for a while, to check out the extremities of the pack’s boundaries, alone. I think he missed Boyd and Erika, and well, Jackson is busy, and Scott is gone, so that leaves you.”

Stiles tried not to think about how that meant that he was the last choice, “Well, would you like to come in? close the window would you, it is freezing out there.”

Isaac did just as he was told, like he always did. “Thanks, I didn’t want to be alone, you think it would be ok if I slept over?”

Stiles nodded, trying to remind himself to text his father later, to warn him that there would be another late night guest at the Stillinski residence. And he should probably warn Scott too that if he did show up, there would be a third to their usual mix.

“Sure man, you can spend the night, I think Scott might stop by after he and Allison are done talking.”

Isaac looked at Stiles, “how can we all forgive her? After everything she did, I can’t be mad at her. I can’t wrap my head around it.”

Stiles thought, “I don’t know. I think it’s because we have all been there, even you. You lost your parents, So did Jackson. Scott went through his parent’s divorce, so it’s almost like he lost his dad the way he is in their lives. And well, me? I just know how crazy I was with good influences around me when I lost my mom. Of course she was going to go absolutely insane with the devil being her grandfather.”

Isaac’s lip was bleeding where one of his fangs had lengthened. “Yeah, I guess.”

“Isaac, you are bleeding. What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. It’s nothing. You have any tissues?”

Did Stiles have any tissues? He snorted a bit, pulling a fresh box out from the shelf under his night stand. “Here,” he said with a toss, Isaac caught it with all the grace and dexterity of a werewolf. “Now, tell me what’s on your mind.”

“I think I like Scott.”

Stiles went blank, “Shit.”

“Yeah, I know.”

The conversation went on like that for a while: How long? A while. Why do you think that? I
The conversation went on like that for a while: How long? A while. Why do you think that? I don’t know. Does he know? No. Why? If I could explain that to myself I could try and talk myself out of it. And so, after the credits rolled, the conversation stopped.

Stiles broke the silence first, “have you always felt like that?”

Isaac shook his head, “no, I used to like Erica, and then Boyd, but now I like Scott. I don’t know what’s going on in my head.”

Stiles lowered his eyebrows, a habit that he picked up from Derek, “did you talk to Peter about it?”

Stiles had long since given up his hatred towards Derek’s uncle, the man who bit Scott, the man who offered him the bite. He was, not as crazy as he once was. He didn’t want to be the alpha anymore. He didn’t want to kill people. He only killed the people responsible for the fires. And well, even Mr. Argent couldn’t fault him for that. Of course, Derek still tried to kill him every once in a while because he murdered Laura, no matter how crazy he had been after being trapped in his head for that long. But even though he didn’t hate the man, he didn’t like him. And furthermore, he was the most knowledgeable source for werewolf mythology, except for maybe Deaton, maybe.

“No, but I talked to Derek about it once, he said that I was turned under some lovers star, and that if he had known he wouldn’t have turned me that night he found me in a grave. He would have waited. But I think he might have been joking.” Isaac admitted.

“I have never heard of anything like that before. I know that if you get bitten on a full moon you won’t turn until the next full moon, usually. But that wasn’t really so much of a science as a possibility.”

Isaac’s face looked tortured. “So you never saw any research that werewolves fell in love with their pack members? Never?”

Stiles shook his head, “But I can offer you my personal theory on this.”

Isaac looked hopeful, “Ok, I’m listening, tell me.”

Deep breath, pause, exhale, deep breath again. “Werewolves are a family of sorts, they get turned with a bite, but then they are all connected by one person, the Alpha. When Scott refused to join the pack in the beginning, he said that he felt sad, but that because me and Allison were with him he felt better, that he felt not so alone. Isaac, you have been though a ton, more than anyone else has really. I mean sure, you are smiling and sunshine most of the time, but that’s because you are always with your family, always. At school you have what? One class without anyone in it? You even have a class with just Lydia, and she is as much a part of the pack now as ever right? So I think that you get attached to the pack in different ways than the rest of us, they are the only family you have left. I get it. I feel attached to each of you too. Maybe I don’t have some magical wolfy connection, but I am still there.”

Isaac thought for a few seconds. “I think you might be right, but seriously, I like Scott, and him and Allison being together again might actually break my heart. Even more so than when Boyd and Erica ran off together.”

Stiles paused, collecting his thoughts against his theory against his own muddled feelings, “I think when Erica and Boyd ran away, they severed their connection to the pack, so you didn’t feel them the same way anymore, does that make sense? You can ask Peter about it later if you want, but I think I am right. I think that you feel like you like scott just like you felt like you liked Erica or Boyd. Does any of this make sense?”
Isaac sighed, and Stiles tried to remember a recent conversation where there hadn’t been an excessive amount of sighing, or groaning, or bullet wounds being brought up. “I don’t know, ok? I just feel like he is making a mistake by being with her, she broke his heart so many times. And now, now that I like him, well, I can’t see him with her without feeling like I am better for him than her, because I am pack. You know?”

A little bulb came on, “So if Allison were pack, you would feel like she was better for him?”

“Yeah, I think so, but I can’t be sure, because I don’t know if I would be more or less jealous of her then.”

“Isaac, if I were to say that I loved you, with my whole heart, what would you say?”

Of course Isaac’s face contorted like that, “Well I would be flattered, but I don’t feel the same way about you, sorry Stiles.”

Stiles smiled, “good, so it’s because I am human that you don’t feel my emotions, that’s why you didn’t have a crush on me, but I think that’s a good thing at this point, because let’s be honest, it is bad enough having one werewolf that thinks that they have a crush on me.”

Isaac’s eyes went as wide as saucers, “He finally told you! I can’t believe it, what did you tell him?”

“I told him that it was impossible, and now I know I am right, it is just because he can’t feel me, and that he worries that I will be in the way of his pack’s training for the alpha pack. I get it now, it all makes sense. See? The same way that you feel emotionally drawn to the other members of the pack is the same reason Scott thinks Derek is in love with me. It has nothing to do with anything else, just wolf science. It makes sense no?”

Isaac was following about every other word, and his face clearly showed that, “Yeah, I guess, I mean if you think that that’s the reason, maybe it is. I can’t deny that he looks at you differently than the rest of us, but at the same time he doesn’t get as angry at us when you aren’t around.”

Stiles felt pretty confident all of a sudden, his world made sense, and in the same way that Derek felt that he was crushing on Stiles, Stiles felt that he was crushing on Derek, “Well that explains why I like him too, because even though I am not a wolf, I am part of this crazy pack, and well, it just makes sense that Derek being the leader, I would express my feelings towards all of you onto Derek. I think if Freud were here, he’d agree with me.”

“Maybe.”

The maybe wasn’t what Stiles was looking for. “Ok, well it’s 11:00 on a Saturday night, and we aren’t fighting anything, so what do you say we play video games until one of us passes out?”

“You’re on!”

***

Of course Isaac was the first to fall asleep, he was laying down on his bed, his face buried in Stiles’ pillow and his body splayed in such a way that he was covering every inch of laying down space. For the second time in a row the sheriff would walk in on two boys cuddling in bed. Stiles shook his head, smiling down at the boy. “Well at least one of us will be comfortable.” It was just past one in the morning, and Scott still hadn’t text him back, so either Allison had shot him with an arrow and his best friend was dead, or his best friend was officially spending the night with her. He was almost hoping for the second, but secretly surprised that the first option seemed the more
likely one when the window opened.

“I knew you said Isaac was sleeping over, but you didn’t mention that he was already asleep.”

The beta in question just stirred a little in his sleep, his limbs still covering the beds entirety.
“Yeah, he has been out for maybe twenty minutes, come on in. What’s up? How did it go with Allison?”

Scott smiled, “We had dinner with her dad. It wasn’t too horrible.”

Stiles nodded, “How is Mr. Argent anyways? I haven’t seen him for a while.”

“He said to say hi to the pack, so I guess he meant you too, he even took off his gun when he saw me sitting in the living room. Allison apparently already told him I would be there, and that she was making dinner for the both of us. He didn’t complain too much.”

This was better than Stiles had expected, “So why did you stay there till now?”

Scott smiled a bit wider, “She invited me to spend the night with her, and I wanted to, but I promised her dad that I wouldn’t do anything sneaky under his roof, at least for a while. I think he likes me. You know? So I offered to stay there until she fell asleep. I have to say, I am pretty excited about this, it means that maybe we can start dating again, officially. “

“That’s great, it really is. I am happy for you two, at least someone deserves some happiness.” His eyes went down to Isaac’s still form; he swore that his body, still and lifeless as it had ever been, was now tense, that his face was different than before.

“Yeah, it’s great, I am so excited,” Scott continued. “So, not to rain on my own parade, but now that you have had time to think, what do you think about our conversation this morning?”

“Yes.”

“And?”

That damned sigh, “I think I like Derek because he is the Alpha of the pack that has the people in it that I like.”

“Leave it to you to talk yourself out of liking someone.”

“I couldn’t talk myself out of liking anyone if it was really my truthful emotion. I tried that with Lydia, remember?”

“You did, and you loved the idea of Lydia so much that you let her go. And now you are feeling the loss of a girl that you thought you loved for so long, that you can’t let it go, you did this with me, right after Jackson stopped talking to us, remember?”

Stiles had tried to forget, “Yeah, I remember, but this doesn’t change anything you know? I don’t love Derek Hale, I don’t even know if I like him. Ok? Its all about my friends, and he happens to have surrounded himself with them, so I guess I can’t get away. It isn’t love, it isn’t like, it just is. Ok? So, you and Isaac and Allison can stop talking about me and my love life, or rather, my lack of a love life any time you want. No, on second thought, just stop talking about it. Ok?”

Scott’s eyebrows went up, a maneuver that shouldn’t have reminded Stiles of the Alpha, but did. That was the face that the Alpha always gave him when he was done ranting. “If you say so.”

If Stiles hadn’t learned his lesson with Jackson, or back when Scott was newer to this, or when
Isaac had once given him a big bear hug that one time, he would have to learn it soon. Punching a werewolf in the arm was always a bad idea. He felt the bruise forming on the back of his hand before he looked down and noticed the darker shade of skin. “Yeah, I do say so. So, how do you want to do this?”

Scott looked at him before he caught on to what he meant. “I can go home, it’s not that big of a deal, or I can find Derek, he shouldn’t go out patrolling by himself.”

For a second Stiles wondered how he knew that, but then shook his head, of course Scott knew, Isaac told him earlier, “Yeah, maybe you should, he doesn’t take as much care of himself as he should.”

Scott beamed with smugness, “You are worried about him?”

“NO!” of course his voice cracked as it shot up an octave or two.

“You are worried, I can tell!” Scott’s smugness was equally matched by the smug look on the apparently sleeping Isaac’s face. “Don’t worry, I bet Peter found him, and if I know anything about Peter, it’s that he can take care of Derek’s back, even if Derek doesn’t trust him to.”

Stiles nodded. “Ok, I don’t care if you stay, but you will have to help me move Isaac a bit, ok? And you are going to be the little spoon tonight, just because I miss Mr. Snuggles, got it?”

Scott looked at him dopily, “Mr. Snuggles was my bear, and I left him at the park when I was 8, and when I went back with you, he was gone. What do you know about Mr. Snuggles, Genim?”

Stiles winced, “Don’t call me Genim, only my dad is allowed, and that’s only if I get a girl pregnant, or drink and drive.” Scott nodded, “As for Mr. Snuggles, well, I may have found him and hid him and went back to the park and got him…”

“YOU DIDN’T!” it was a growl, and if it wasn’t Scott, Stiles might have been scared. “You held me while I cried over him, and you had him after that?”

“Your mom paid me 5 bucks,” Stiles explained, “She said it was for your own good, and I didn’t keep it for long, the thing smelled funny, and it basically disintegrated in the laundry and well, it’s not like you missed it much, you got Mr. Snuggles II, remember?”

Scott’s eyes flashed yellow, a sure sign that he was beginning to lose control. “YOU THREW HIM OUT?”

Stiles was suddenly grateful for his younger self’s imagination, “No, I buried him in the back yard, he is under the big rock that we moved the week after you got Mr. Snuggles II, you liked sitting on it, and now you know why…”

The silence was deafening, and not even Isaac could completely fake not being ready to jump up and protect Stiles. Although, for argument’s sake, Stiles thought that he was really protecting Scott from hurting Scott’s best friend, which made the act of kindness just a bit selfish on Isaac’s part. “You know, I think it all worked out for the best, you got to say your good byes on that rock, remember?”

Scott finally blinked. “Oh yeah, I remember, we held a funeral.”

Stiles released his breath, “Yeah, I cried when you said that you would always remember him, you gave a very emotional speech for an eight year old.”

“Tomorrow, we are going out there,” was Scott’s response. He moved Isaac like a rag doll, and
Isaac for his part just shuffled and whimpered a bit, still acting like nothing was happening. Stiles had to hand it to him. And soon, Stiles was in the middle of two very warm and very content wolves, and nothing could have felt more like home.

***

The morning went a bit better than the last, because Scott’s mom didn’t call (Scott was a thoughtful son sometimes), and the sheriff didn’t take any pictures. The pancakes that Isaac whipped up more than made up for the surprise of seeing his son snuggled up between two young men. Although, there was something that the sheriff couldn’t quite understand going on when he asked the next morning why Isaac decided to sleep over.

“He just came over to play video games, and he lost track of time. That’s all,” the look that Stiles’ gave his father was pointed, and hopefully not at all too obvious.

“Yeah, sorry I didn’t ask you, sir, I didn’t think that I would be here so late.”

The sheriff smiled, “Did you use the friend door?”

Isaac smiled back, “Yeah, I did.”

The sheriff looked amused as he answered, “Well on a weird side note, I am almost happy to find my son with a few of his friends, although Stiles, if you ever have a girl in your room I will personally put bars over that thing, and I am sorry boys, but you are just going to have to use the front door.”

Stiles’ face was red, the banter had been light and breezy for two days. His dad was joking with him. He wasn’t getting sideways looks over coffee mugs to see if he was ok, and there was no question as to why Stiles was happy. His life made sense again. He had his best friend next to him (a werewolf) and his next closest friend there too (also a werewolf).

Sure life was complicated and the whole pack love thing was going to confuse him to no end, but for now, everything was good.

***

Except when everything wasn’t good. Monday morning brought on the return of school, and with it, the return of strange activities. “How is it that every time Jackson and McCall are on the field together, Isaac starts defending the other players? He is great at running interference, don’t get me wrong, but there is something strange about the way that kid puts himself in harm’s way.” Stiles just shrugged his shoulders.

Tuesday went exactly the same way, except that Isaac had accidentally spilled something on his hand during Chemistry and had to explain to the teacher that it must not have touched his hand when the table clearly had gotten damaged.

Wednesday was supposed to be a pack meeting, but Stiles decided to stay home, Scott came over about half an hour later, stating that nothing was happening and that Derek had dismissed them for the day. “He said to keep our phones on though, so I guess we are kind of on call, like my mom does on some weekends. Which is kind of nice, you know? I have time to do my homework,” He said, as he started up Stiles’ TV.

“Why aren’t you over at Allison’s? you guys seemed friendly at school today.”

“She had to do something with her dad apparently, but we decided not to push it too much right now, she said it would take time, and I am prepared to wait, within reason. Did you know that a werewolf can get blue balls? Like really, they are blue, wanna see them?”
Stiles rolled his eyes, and tried to talk about anything but.

By Friday evening, Stiles was getting fed up with not seeing Derek, and he was pretty sure that Derek was the real reason for his anger, but he was prepared to take it out on balls and pins.

“Allison, why don’t we go bowling tonight, the 6 of us? Sounds good?”

Allison looked at him like he had 2 heads and an extra arm, “Well, sure I guess. I mean, I wouldn’t be upset hanging out more with Lydia, but when you say 6, you mean you, me, Scott, Lydia, Jackson and Isaac, no?”

“Yeah, exactly.”

Allison narrowed her eyes a bit, “Invite Derek.”

“Why?” Stiles mouth must have forgotten how to close at some point during the conversation. Allison gave him a withering look, “Because if you invite all the pack, you might as well invite him, plus then I can invite my dad, and I promise, he will leave the guns in the car.”

Stiles thought about it for a second, “Fine, but I call we invite a Switzerland, what about Danny?”

Allison thought for a second, and suddenly Stiles felt strange, because he was talking for the pack. She replied with a simple, “Sounds like a plan then, 9 for bowling.”

“No, 10, we can invite my mom, she has off, and then we could always invite your dad if he isn’t busy,” Scott chimed. Stiles laughed, of course he had heard.

“We could get two lanes, right next to each other, and that would also mean that our parents have to be civil for a while,” Allison joked. “I’ll get the message to Lydia, you get the message to Derek and Isaac, but please as nicely as possible decline Uncle Undead’s invitation, I don’t think me or my dad could handle being friendly with him tonight.”

Stiles nodded, and Scott looked like he was accepting that stipulation. “Deal, so we meet at 5 for dinner at the diner, and then we bowl at 6:30.”

Stiles felt a sudden dread clench his stomach. This would be the first time in a long time that they were all together in one place, and he wasn’t sure if Mrs. McCall would be as understanding of all the werewolves being in one spot, with her son, but Stiles decided that it would just have to work.

***

Whoever thought that this would all work out was an idiot! “So, looks like Jackson and Scott and Allison all are going for a perfect game again, and Mr Argent and Derek are tied.” Isaac stated. “You would think that Lydia would stop doing her nails long enough for her to bowl, wouldn’t you?” Jackson looked over at Isaac and gave him a snarl, but it was human, so Derek allowed it. “Whatever, looks like I am up.” Isaac popped up and bowled over 7 pins, then smiled and took his seat to wait for the ball, “I haven’t been bowling since that one birthday party forever ago, I love it! I forgot how much fun this could be.” He got back up and knocked over two more pins. “YES! SPARE!”

Mrs. McCall gave him a nod and took up her ball, “I swear he is doing that on purpose,” she bowed a 6, then waited, “Stiles, do you mind getting me a diet cola, here is the cash.” Derek handed Stiles a wad and asked for a regular coke, and Lydia didn’t hand him any money when she asked for a sparkling water (“with lemon on the side please”). He came back with all the drinks as his lane was waiting on him to bowl, and nearly spilled Lydia’s water all over when Derek grabbed the two dark colored drinks and gave each a sniff, handing the diet cola to Mrs.
McCall and sipping on his straw.

Stiles bowled a 4. He bowled a gutter right afterward.

Mrs. McCall smiled at him, patting his hand, “It’s ok, I remember when I used to go bowling on dates, even if there was a million other people around, I always messed up.”

It should have been a reassurance; it should have been a simple ‘thank you,’ moment. But it wasn’t. It question that brought about sudden terror; his heart accelerates, “this isn’t a date.”

Mrs. McCall’s eyebrows went up, it was surprise, but it reminded Stiles of another pair of eyebrows. Sure hers were taken care of, and they didn’t remind him of little caterpillars, but they were eyebrows, and they were raised. And his heart wouldn’t stop jack-hammering. Of course four pairs of ears could hear it. Jackson was the first to make a joke, “Be calm, think happy thoughts, get your heart rate under control,” he said, Stile’s face was beet red.

Mr. Argent raised an eyebrow towards Scott and Allison sitting next to each other, a clear question. Scott simply stated, “Stillinski brand meditation techniques, supposed to help people become well rounded and in control of their animal side.” It was a reminder to everyone that Danny was sitting right next to Mrs. McCall talking animatedly to Isaac.

The rest of the night was thankfully cut short by a burst of glass on the far end, and the panicked screams of the rest of the bowling alley.

***

Mrs. McCall and Allison were in the corner, Allison’s emergency crossbow was aimed at anything that moved, and Derek was moving quite a bit. Shredding through the line of undead something or other that happened to stream into the alley as soon as the lights went out. Thankfully everyone else had the common sense to leave through the other exits, but his group just stayed put, because well, they were probably the only thing that could stop it. Stiles still remembered the click of the gun that Mr. Argent promised not to bring into the alley, and felt thankful that he was on their side at the moment. A few slow pokes, like Danny, who was probably confused as to why Jackson was telling Lydia to run, and why Scott was looking at Allison like they were communicating their love as their last thoughts towards each other probably made him stay. Stiles was just happy that Mrs. McCall was in the know, although he was also relieved that his dad had to cancel. He was so not looking forward to explaining that there were zombies coming into the room.

“I think we should call Peter,” Stiles said to Mr. Argent as he tried to fumble with the very dangerous gun that the man had asked the teen to reload for him. Mr. Argent emptied a bullet into the head of the thing closest to him, and grunted a final yes. Stiles made the call, explained in about four words and two expletives exactly where they were and what was attacking them. Peter gave himself 5 minutes, and asked Stiles to get out of there if it looked like they were losing. “Fat chance.”

***

Stiles never wanted to see another dead body again. Deaton was called by Allison after all the zombies had stopped moving. Mrs. McCall was struggling against Peter to run into the crowd and check on her son, who had been bit by a mostly down zombie, and Mr. Argent and Derek were talking about possible enemies that would have known that they were both here. Stiles wondered if the term witch was used as a metaphor or if it meant that there were really people out there like Harry and Sabrina. He gulped as one of the zombies started to crawl on one arm towards the door, just as Dr. Deaton showed up with a cat and a bag of herbs. Stiles looked away when he said that
sometimes animals were the best attack against the undead, and released the little creature, who
ran around, pawing at all the undead (re-dead) creatures.

“I think I need a drink. Does anyone over the age of twenty-one care to join me?” Mrs. McCall
asked. Peter, Mr. Argent and Deaton all agreed, and they left as soon as they were done with the
cleanse, leaving the teens to mop up. Mr. Argent had said that it was a hunter’s job to make sure
that the supernatural didn’t come to light, so they were picking up body parts and putting them
into the industrial strength garbage bags while Derek was trying to convince Sheriff Stallinski that
this was all some kind of prank done by a rival lacrosse team. When Stiles mentioned that Mrs.
McCall and Mr. Argent were at a bar, his dad couldn’t have run fast enough.

There was a lot to get done, including taking all of the bodies and burning them in a big bonfire,
and it was a long night.

***

Danny took it all relatively well, “I knew something was wrong when you were all talking about
lizard men and stuff like that.” And that was that, Jackson’s best friend was in the know. Derek
couldn’t even be angry about it, but he didn’t stick around for the burning ceremony, and the teens
were all dressed up in sweatshirts, all of them wrapped up by arms of their significant others, well
all of them except for Stiles. Danny’s voice was so low that only because Stiles was close could
he hear it, but then again, 3 supernatural teenage boys were sitting around the fire, so it wasn’t that
big of a secret. “Can you wolf out at any point? How did it happen? So do you hunt rabbits and
deer and stuff like that?”

The questions made Scott laugh, his arms holding Allison as they sat around the fire, his eyes half
closed, her smile finally reaching the depths of her eyes, and Stiles was just happy for them.
Nothing could look more perfect than Romeo and Juliet sitting happily in each other’s arms.

Even though his eyes didn’t want to look at it, Lydia and Jackson were perfect together. He was
handsome and strong, she was beautiful and smart. And from what he had learned tonight, she
was really good at bowling. Sure she didn’t actually hurt the zombies, but they had lost a few legs
to her perfect form. And they whispered, and they giggled, and Jackson looked happy. So yet
again, Stiles let the girl he loved go, and watched her from afar, heart hurting.

Suddenly, regardless of sweatshirts or of roaring fires, Stiles felt cold. That damned cold blanket
that he had gotten rid of had come back, and this was the perfect night to find it. “Hey guys, do
you mind if I take off? I will see you all tomorrow. We are still meeting at Allison’s right?”

Scott responded first, “At 9 am, which is an injustice. See you man.” And he was back in
Allison’s eyes, and not even Isaac looked bothered by it anymore, not with Danny looking at his
face.

Engine warming up for a second, he waited for the blanket to completely envelop him before he
allowed himself to drive. They had made sure that they were far enough away from the road that
the fire wasn’t immediately visible, and they had grabbed a few buckets from a creek about a mile
down the road, well the three werewolves did. And so they were safe, and they were happy, and
they were couples. And Stiles, well he was styling. But he wasn’t.
His car pulled off in front of a dilapidated house, the windows half gone, the wooden siding full of
holes and burned, but the house was the last place Derek had seen his family, and Stiles knew that
this was where he would be tonight.

As if on cue, Derek appeared on the front porch. “Why are you here?”

Stiles asked himself the same question, “I wanted to see you, see how you were doing. I know
Deaton said that you guys can heal quickly, but I was still a bit worried.”

Derek’s face was highlighted by the moon beams sneaking out from the clouds, “I am fine, you can go home.”

Stiles steeled his nerves, he wanted this, it was what he had wanted for weeks now, “You mind if I come in?”

Derek raised an eyebrow, “Never stopped you before.” He walked away from Stiles, but he left the front door open.

No, Derek’s attitude hadn't stopped him before, and tonight it wouldn't stop him. No it would never stop how he felt for this man ever again.

End Notes

This is my second ever posted work of anything ever.... I think.

That being said, this had no beta, this had a guy who read it a bit and said that my flow was good, but this had no beta.

If you see a mistake, if you notice an error, please let this guy know.

I have a fairly decent idea for a second part to this. I enjoy kudos and they make me happy, but I could really use some constructive criticism in the form of comments so I can get a feel of what I am doing well and what can suck an egg. Please and thank you.

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