"Stiles?" he asks, turning on the light, and Stiles looks at him- eyes wide, a flicker of utter devotion and heartbreaking joy passing his features before his whole face crumples and-

"Daddy?"

John has never seen his son like this, or maybe he has, when Claudia died, but it's different somehow, more, and terrifying because he has no idea why. He's closed half the distance between them before he even has time to think it through, but it doesn't matter because Stiles has bridged the rest and flung himself into John's arms.

He falls apart like that, holding onto John so tightly that it's hard to breathe, but he can't care about that right now because his son is sobbing and chanting "Daddy," desperately into his shoulder.

[Or, the one where Stiles goes back in time to save the world, and surprisingly, survives to tell the tale.]
Okay, so, I have *no Beta*, but I swear to all the holy fanfiction Gods and Goddesses and Godexes that I did my absolute best. Please forgive my failings, and point them out to me if you need to.

I really, really hope you like this story, thank you for deciding to try it out and thank you even more if you actually read it all the way through. Many, many soulkisses! Enjoy! :)

Stiles takes a deep breath, feels it settle the hollow in his chest somewhat, even as he feels, too, the crawling cloying claws of memories everpresent under his skin. Still, he can do this, needs to, because even after all of the enormity that he had survived. so much, so, so very much was lost to him.

And maybe it was selfish, to sacrifice an entire timeline for this, but he just didn't care anymore.

*Everyone* had died, all of them, and in so little time- everyone too fucking young.

So he walks up to the Nematon with purpose, takes another breath as he looks at the wasteland that was once a forest, beyond that a town, and beyond that a world. A whole world.

All of it dead, all of it Death, and the stench would sting his lungs, he thinks, if he weren't already used to it.

He turns back to the magical beacon, strips himself bare, and lays in the middle of wooden rings that tell of an age that may well rival time itself for all he knows, which is why the Nematon is perfect for this spell.

It's the last real reserve of magic and life, besides, it's the last thing left, as is he, and he's going to kill it- or this version of it, anyway- and ride its roots backward through the bounding threads of time.

If this doesn't work he'll die, in agony, probably, he wonders when that idea stopped phasing him- he wonders, too, what it means to be like this and only just out of childhood.

It won't matter much anyway, he's going to return himself, somewhat, to a younger form, not by much, but by enough to suit his purposes.

He takes another breath, deep, and then starts the spell.

It's so easy, really, killing Kate and Gerard. It's as easy as baiting them with impressive magic that he knows they'd want to hunt- especially when it comes from one so young- as easy as waiting for them to attack, as easy as calling on the trees and the plants, the flora and fauna, the pure majesty of unabashed *wildlife* that Stiles had missed for, god, so fucking long.

He thinks, maybe, smiling when the earth swallows them whole and irrevocably snuffs their lives out, makes him just a little bit like the monsters he's been fighting. He can't bring himself to care.
The world, his friends, it's all alive again- whole.

It feels so fucking much like a victory, he's still grinning when he closes his eyes, expecting magic, time, something to take him.

Kill him.

Fade him away, because he? Shouldn't exist.

The Magic does take him, and though it shreds him with agony that makes him scream, Death does not.

He wakes up, even though he wasn't expecting to, and it's honestly a little disorienting at first. That's his ceiling, these are his walls, a bedroom that had been ripped to shreds by some supernatural hybrid he never had the chance to name or research because he was too busy grieving the father it killed.

Stiles takes a deep breath in, smells home, and lets himself close his eyes, savor it.

Normally John's morning routine involves waking Stiles the hell up and making sure he isn't late for school while enduring a loud and involved rant about what they'll be eating for breakfast and not to cheat on whatever lunch Stiles deigns to make for him.

Only, when John looks inside the room, it's been, oddly enough, cleaned- and his son is nowhere to be seen. He resolutely decides to reserve panicking for later, and looks around the house first, just in case Stiles woke up uncharacteristically early.

He finds his son in the dining room, sitting at the table, studying his hands like he's never seen them before.

"Stiles?" he asks, turning on the light, and Stiles looks at him- eyes wide, a flicker of utter devotion and heartbreaking joy passing his features before his whole face crumples and-

"Daddy?"

John has never seen his son like this, or maybe he has, when Claudia died, but it's different somehow, more, and terrifying because he has no idea why. He's closed half the distance between them before he even has time to think it through, but it doesn't matter because Stiles has bridged the rest and flung himself into John's arms.

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John hushes him, tells him soothing nonsensical things, but nothing seems to calm him. When Stiles' knees give, he just slides them down as gently as he can to the floor.

Hours pass like this, and John thinks about calling them both in sick, knows it can't really wait but it'll have to because he's not leaving his son like this for anything short of impending death.

When Stiles finally quiets, it's well past noon, and when John goes to move him a little, finally ask what's wrong, what's happened? He finds his darling child has fallen asleep, hands fistng at John's shirt, clenching and unclenching almost unconsciously, whole body curled around him like there's nothing else for it, still hiccuping, shivering, face set in a frown even like this.
John takes a deep breath and holds it for a long moment.

The questions can wait. He still needs to call them both in, should probably wash Stiles' face clean of tears and snot, put him in bed.

He'll figure out the rest later.

Stiles stands in front of the Nematon. He's just told his father that his weird episode yesterday was due to an incredibly elaborate bad dream, and though he looked dubious at first, Stiles then began to tell him about their lives, their other lives, in a timeline that no longer exists.

He's checked, all of the Hales are alive, so is the world, so is everyone that comes with it.

After he came clean about it all, unloaded it and continued on to explain the spells, the things he'd done to turn back time, he looked at his father, who had seemed stunned and awed and horrified by it all.

It had taken hours and four cups of water.

"So, a dream?" his dad had asked him flatly.

"Would you believe me if I said it wasn't?"

"I don't know."

Well, at least he was being honest this time.

He'd never fucking lie to his dad again.

And now, here he is, it's the exact year, month, and day that Scott and he had gone to the woods in search of half a body. It's been three days since he woke up and as far as he can tell his body is as it was then, his friend is as he was then.

Making the Hales live has done little to affect his life in this timeline- it has affected his dad's job, somewhat, however.

Less missing people, less death, less supernatural oddities.

No impending war.

It should be a relief, only...

What's he meant to do now? With these memories of things that never happened, never will? He thought he'd be done after this, and, he supposes, he was grateful for that end, finally in sight.

But now, with no Pack and most of the people he'd done this to save not even knowing who he is, with his magic tingling under his skin, connected to the roots that flirt with one another beneath him, connected to the bugs and animals and wild- he just feels inexplicably lost.

So he stands before the Nematon, and it's a living breathing thing, alive with Paige's sacrifice, and maybe more that he does not know of, for it is as much of a beacon here as it was in his timeline.

He wonders if they've dealt with the Nogitsune. He wonders when Deaton is going to notice that a powerful mage-druid- whatever the fuck he is, slipped past his defenses. He wonders how long it will take for the Hales to notice.
No one should know of the Nematon, no one human anyway, and even then, most supernaturals have a hard time finding it, for the magic it holds is dear and it naturally dissuades people from perceiving it. So, Peter wonders, who and how and what has found it this time.

It's certainly been found before, but never so easily, never by someone who walked through the wards without even taking them down, as if they belonged there, like the old tree was calling to them.

And as he stalks toward the boy, slow, silent, like a predator, he takes a cautious sniff, hoping to figure out what is in front of him so as not to be heading into this foolishly blind, and freezes. He smells like the grit of sand, and fresh almonds, and bitter chocolate shavings, his natural scent, Peter thinks; there's the intense, sharp brine of despair and loneliness, a hint of an easy sun-soaked stained glass aroma that might be hope, and then-

Pack. Magic.

He smells like werewolves and full moons and electricity and sage.

Like Peter himself, like Derek, like running and fur, like spellwork and runes.

Almost like an Emissary.

He's stuck there, just breathing it in, it's the most delicious scent he's ever caught, and a voice, quiet and sure, is the only thing that breaks him out of his small reverie.

Startles him quite badly if he's being honest.

"Hi, Peter." The boy says, soft, simple, familiar, like they've known each other for years.

Peter saunters forward, as nonchalant as anything, and offers the boy a cheery smile.

He can see him better now, skin like cream peppered with cinnamon moles and freckles, too-pink lips, soft and full, an upturned nose, adorably wide whiskey hued eyes, long eyelashes. He's all lithe and wire, willowy and supple, small and gangly all at once. Considering his smell, the only unattractive thing about him Peter can find is his closely shorn hair.

"You have me at a disadvantage," Peter's smile may yet grow teeth, but his words are sharp and edged with steel, "knowing my name when I know nothing about you."

"Stiles Stilinski," the boy offers easily, "the sheriff's son. I'm not a threat to you or your Pack, but considering my dad, if you kill me please be discreet. I'd rather he not get caught up in this."

His heart-beat is frighteningly steady, and his scent remains the same- there is no fear there, despite the deeply entrenched melancholy, and perhaps that is why he speaks words of death so casually.

He's still not even looking at Peter, not even out of his peripheral, he's just staring, frowning at the Nematon.

"Pack?" Peter plays the fool. Even if he has magic, the knowing of werewolves is a better-kept secret, and besides, he wants to know what the reaction will be.

Stiles doesn't disappoint.

"Peter," he chides, "you are the most intelligent man I know. Acting like an idiot doesn't become
"And how do you know me?" Peter asks, because really, he's never met the person in front of him before in his life, but the kid is acting like they've known each other forever, and he smells like him. Peter doesn't tend to put stock in coincidences.

"There was a woman," Stiles starts, as he walks over to the tree and sits down on it, finally turning dark honey eyes on him, there's bitterness and affection warring there, and something like loyalty which Peter doesn't remember ever earning, "named Kate Argent. In my timeline, she seduced Derek, and used information he gave her unwittingly to burn your house down with your family inside."

Peter frowns, because that... makes very little sense. Timeline? And so far as he knows, Kate and Gerard Argent went missing six years ago. It was big news, and Talia was evading and negotiating their position with Hunters for weeks. Stiles just stares at him for a moment, his elbows on his knees, hands hanging lazily away from him, he takes a deep breath, looks down at his feet, continues explaining in a raw, terrible sort of carved out way:

"That action, as far as I was ever able to tell, led to a course of events that outed werewolves and hunters entirely. And there was a war. Humans, supernaturals, hunters, refugees. There was strife and pain and chaos and, well, nuclear weapons. Then there was radiation and the loss of magic entirely. The world began to die, and so I came back, I went as far as what was left of the world would let me go and I killed Kate and her father.

"I really, fully expected to die," he says, his hands end up steepling together as he curves in on himself, like he's trying to keep from shaking, "to fade or destroy myself or something in the process. Instead? Instead, I woke up in my own bed, in a home that, for me, was long since destroyed, with a father who I had already mourned. With Kate dead, your Pack remained safe, protecting Beacon Hills like you were supposed to. And everyone, so many of my ghosts, they're all alive now.

"Including you," he sighs, finally looking back up, and Peter only realizes when those beautiful whiskey eyes start drowning him, that the smell was so strong it was suffocating, that he's shaking and he wants to stop listening, he never wanted to hear that, never wanted to feel the truth of it in the magic circling them, in the steady heart; "I know you, and before you died, we were almost friends, and now here you are, and, Jesus, you look so young."

Peter has to blink, force himself to remember how lungs work, swallow against the lump in his throat. Young. Says the teenager with no lines on his face.

"But you don't know me," Stiles finishes, voice wavering past whatever hollow it was before, and it sounds desperate, like a plea.

Peter swallows again, has no idea what makes him say: "I could."

Stiles flinches, and looks up at him like he's just been struck, eyes wide and achingly hopeful.

"Yeah," he breathes, and then, within one blink and the next, he's wrapped his arms around Peter in the practiced way of someone who has hugged you many times might, and he holds on tight, fingertips pressing and tracing his shoulders, his arms, like maybe Peter will dissipate or float away if he doesn't make sure, "you could."

It's been two days since Peter met Stiles, and it's a little infuriating how much space the boy occupies in his mind. It's hard to work, think, breathe, because, however impossible it seems, he
knows Stiles was telling him the truth, and the absolute devotion in the smile the boy tossed him before he left was so beautiful and blinding and bright that Peter is pretty sure he'd do anything to see it again.

Not to mention his smell. As soon as Peter hugged him back all of the sour acridity melted away to freshly stained glass leaking glittering rays of smokey sunlight along dusty pews made of almond wood with the distant aroma of chocolate and heat lingering in every aisle. He smelled like church and prayer and research and myth, like something old and precious, a lost relic. Peter would have bathed in that smell, if he could.

Which is why he has no real idea how he feels when the boy is in his apartment before he is, curled up in a ball on his couch, dozing. The bitterness to his scent has returned but it's a little more muted than before. And he's just, just curled in on himself, breathing shallow, there.

Peter doesn't even know how Stiles knew where he lived. Most people assume he lives with his family.

He closes the door to his apartment, relocks the doors, looks around, wondering how the hell he got in. When he sees it he doesn't know whether to be furious or proud. The sliding glass door out to the porch, which he left unlocked and cracked to keep his apartment from smelling too much like dust and chemicals (he really isn't here often enough, in retrospect), is now open all the way, the mild wind gusting the curtains playfully.

Thing is, Peter's apartment is on the fifth fucking floor.

With a sigh Peter goes to close that door too, locking it and deciding that his place smelling stale and muddy with disuse after spending most of the week at the Pack house would probably be better than random visits from an underaged- what? Acrobat? Or did he use his magic to get up here?

"Peter," he hears Stiles murmur blurrily. He turns to see the boy has his chin on the armrest and is blinking at him like it's a struggle to remain cognizant at all.

"You," Peter says with a glare, trying to ignore how adorable the idiot before him is, "broke into my home without my permission."

Stiles hums in response, getting up and padding over, and then just walking straight into him, forehead resting on Peter's shoulder as the rest of his body releases a tension Peter hadn't even noticed until it was gone.

"Nightmare," Stiles mumbles as his arms come up to wrap around Peter's back like this is a perfectly normal thing to do, "but you're alive, and we're friends and it'll be okay."

Stiles presses against him flush, then, and sighs soft, content, nuzzles his face into the side of Peter's neck like he's scenting him. What he said was quiet and half to himself but it still hangs heavy in the air, and Peter really doesn't have any idea what to do with it.

He allows himself to return the hug though, and inhales deep when the act makes Stiles smell some kind of worshipful again.

"You looked to be sleeping fine to me," Peter snarks lightly into the boy's hair, which has gotten far longer than it should have been able to in the span of two days.

Stiles sighs again, going pliable and vulnerable in his arms, like he trusts Peter with his whole body like this, doesn't even have to think about it.
"Smelled like you." He says, like that explains everything.

Peter snorts, "How did you get up here, anyway?"

"Fire escape, window sills, easier than running away from a wendigo when your clothes are coated in supernatural venom acid gunk... Never did figure out what that stuff was."

"Huh."

"My life's been weird."

"I hadn't noticed."

"Mmm."

So. Teenaged acrobat, then. Somehow, knowing that doesn't make him feel any better, and the idea of leaving Stiles alone with his nightmares when it seems obvious that the only person who makes him feel safe right now is Peter? Yeah, that doesn't sit right either.

Peter tightens his grip almost unconsciously, protectively, Stiles just makes a low contented noise, one Peter likes more than he'd be willing to admit. He rubs his cheek against the top of the boy's head, scenting him, smiling when Stiles leans into it with a happy hum.

"I'll make you a key," Peter decides.

Stiles starts smelling like chocolate being cooked, melted down and gooey, mixed with honey roasted almonds and heated glass, it's beyond fucking mouth watering and Peter has to bite back a moan, responsibly ignoring his nether regions as Stiles presses them impossibly closer.

"Thank you," Stiles breathes, awe and fondness and gratitude as clear in his voice as it is in his scent.

Peter licks his lips, clears his throat.

"Would you like something to eat?" He asks as he untangles them, Stiles lets go easily despite his reluctance, and smiles shyly up at Peter, whiskey eyes bright with a desperate kind of joy.

"You cook?" Stiles asks, teasing despite the fact that he's grinning wider than anything, blinding and beautiful, gorgeous.

"Of course I cook," Peter responds in mock offense as he strides over to the kitchen in an attempt to hide his obvious interest, he's a lawyer for fuck's sake, talk about knowing better, "what do you think I am?"

"Big Bad Wolf." Stiles answers promptly.

Peter gapes at him for all of two seconds before he bursts out laughing, because, hey, would you look at that? Stiles is just as fucking snarky as he is, isn't he? And, look, he's wearing a pale red hoodie, unzipped over his flannel and his comic book inspired t-shirt, like some perfectly adorable and disturbed metaphor.

"Little Red," he wheezes, pointing.

Stiles rolls his eyes, dramatically, beaming.

"Oh, hush. Make it something spicy and I'm in."
Months pass and several things become normal, insane things he never thought could become normal. He spends more time at his apartment than he does with the Pack, work is less tiring than it has been in awhile, and his apartment constantly smells of fresh air, cooked chocolate, sun-soaked almond wood and stained glass. All three things due almost entirely to Stiles.

Incredible, clever, brave, sarcastic, loyal Stiles who, surprised as he was that Peter was a lawyer, began spending his spare time hyper-focused on all of Peter's college books- and his cases (“Stiles, those are, really you shouldn't be looking at them it's a-" "I know, attorney-client privileges, but look, here, see? He isn't guilty, and we can prove it! C'mon, c'mon, here, it wasn't him at all.”) which, despite the fact that Peter really shouldn't have allowed, was extremely helpful in the long run.

He's annoying, sometimes, and fidgety, always in motion, always worried, always talking. Fiercely protective of those he deems his, whether it be through loyalty, friendship, family, or proximity.

To Peter's knowledge, he has put enough runes around the McCall, Martin, and Hale (including his apartment) households to stave off the fucking apocalypse. Peter suspects he's killed an abusive father and previous tryst of his, though the reasons for those particular actions were never explained, and it's only speculation, anyway.

He's saved Talia on two different occasions from two very different rare, extremely terrifying supernatural baddies that the Pack wouldn't have had any idea how to beat if Stiles hadn't intervened.

After the first time Talia had been both indignant and stubborn, had asked why a local mage wouldn't introduce himself to the local Alpha, why he wasn't respecting Pack laws or territory laws, etcetera. He had looked her dead on, covered in the viscera of the thing that he'd just kept from killing her, and said that the only reason he even cared that she lived was because she was Peter's sister. It began and ended there.

He continued to say that he'd protect her and Peter's Pack on that basis alone, but he didn't really give a shit about them otherwise. They knew he existed, and he wasn't going anywhere, they could kill him or deal. She'd flashed red eyes at him and he'd just shaken his head saying, yes, it may be in the genes, but she wasn't even throwing him up against walls or threatening teeth-induced trauma, and besides, he's been through hell, she'd have to do better if she ever wanted to intimidate him.

Then, whether it was meant to be emasculating or comforting fuck all knows, he'd patted her cheek, told her she'd be fine, said they all needed a shower, no one more than him, and left.

The second time Deaton had been there, and though Talia managed with a modicum more grace (despite the several vicious tongue-thrashings she'd tried to give Peter about his mage and his secrets and him generally being a disappointing little brother and an untrustworthy Pack-mate), their Emissary had said that Stiles' Spark was too powerful and untamed, was waxing enigmatic poetic about it for all of three minutes (in which time he'd made everyone sufficiently worried and wary, like Stiles' power wasn't the thing that'd just saved them all from Fey-cannibals) before Stiles (who'd been uncharacteristically silent during the spiel) just huffed and decked him.

He then turned toward the Pack and shrugged, saying his magic was fine, Deaton was just being territorial because Stiles is more powerful, and he gets it, but the bastard was being annoying. ("I mean, he's always annoying, but... It's just, he knows, he fucking knows how to deal with Fey, I know he knows. But he didn't say shit to you guys, he spun riddles and left you flailing and if I hadn't figured out what was going on with Peter, that Sprite, little as it was, would'a eaten you
alive. I'm as pissed about that as I am the posturing, honestly, if he weren't your fucking Emissary..."

Talia had, after that, in no uncertain terms, told Peter to keep Stiles away from Deaton, from Pack business, and from whatever research Pack business always required. But Stiles, who is belligerent and stubborn and beyond clever and just a bit of a mother hen concerning those who he cares for (and by extension, whoever they care for), would never have it even if Peter did give him such a decree, besides, the boy has more knowledge of supernatural creatures in his little finger than the whole Pack combined.

Not to mention how he looks after a fight, exhausted but deeply content, and, whenever he sees Peter, after, there's an inexplicable pride and deep-seated affection in his eyes. Like he's glad Peter is alive and that he might've contributed to that somehow, like he was worried but it's over now and he doesn't have to be anymore.

Another thing becoming routine, cooking for two, learning how to make the spiciest dishes known to man, watching the shittiest movies in existence and learning more about cinematography than he'd ever needed to know. Being called the Big Bad Wolf, and being touched, scented, constantly.

Werewolves are tactile creatures, scenting and touching often is the norm, but Peter has always been on the fringes of the Pack, it happens between him and the other members, but not enough, never enough. He hadn't even noticed he was missing it until Stiles, it was like as soon as that biological need was seen to properly, he could breathe easier, think clearer, just be, contentedly.

There was so much less agitation building, burning under his skin.

John is... confused, by his son's recent behavior. And worried. The thing that scares him the most, honestly? Not even Scott knows what's going on.

And it's not like a dramatic change or anything. It's just, after that night, that nightmare he woke up from that left him staring at his hands, that nightmare he explained in gruesome daunting detail, that nightmare John really, really doesn't want to think about (even though it makes so many cases make more sense, even though it's probably the very real reason behind this change, even though it may well be nothing like a nightmare at all)-

He's much more touchy-feely now, unabashedly rubbing up against people, holding hands, hugging, always seeking contact. He does it with him, Scott, from what Scott's said he does it to a few very dubious peers as well. And despite having new tics, despite eyes that are a little less filled with laughter and life and a lot more filled with ghosts and a harrowed sense of self, he carries himself with so much more confidence.

He's still the same, twitchy, babbly Stiles, just more cuddly, comfortable in his own skin, quieter on the bad days.

Because he does have bad days, now. Days where the bruises underneath his eyes are more pronounced, where he stares at nothing, goes still and completely silent for hours, days where touching him would be the cruelest thing to do.

On those days? The niggling part of John's brain that says his son's nightmare wasn't a nightmare at all gets impossibly louder.

The first time it happens, Scott almost screams. He knows Stiles has been more tactile lately, and that's been fine, they're best friends, if Stiles all of a sudden needs to hug and touch about as much
as everyone else needs to breathe? That's okay, he'll provide, especially if it makes that depressed frown he sometimes has nowadays go away, if only just for a little while.

But it's well known that Scott is Stiles' only friend, and while that's a little sad, for both of them, it's nice, they've accepted it.

Or, at least, he'd thought they'd accepted it.

Except now he talks to Isaac Boyd and Erica, hugs them, shares casual touches like they've been friends for years. Boyd is stoic, bemused, and Stiles just smiles at him sharply, does it anyway. Isaac is flinchy, half terrified, half storming off and snapping all the time, Stiles holds him closest, longest, out of all of them, and sometimes their eyes look really really similar, and sometimes Stiles gets so quiet it's terrifying and Isaac is the one hugging him instead. With Erica he just smiles like it aches, compliments the hell out of her, calls her catwoman, slings an arm around her shoulder and tells her she's the bravest person he knows, no pity, then glares defiantly at anyone who might not be looking upon her kindly.

Then there's the golden trio, Jackson Lydia and Danny, three people they've studiously avoided and pranked, hated and loved for several reasons. Danny is a sweetheart, but he's Jackson's best friend and Jackson is a bully, and there's a kind of mindset you have to have, to get along with someone like that. Stiles has been infatuated with and ignored by Lydia for years, and for all that Stiles has said she is smart and beautiful, her exterior is airy and vapid and mercury iced over. And Jackson? Well, Jackson is just an ass.

But Stiles just doesn't seem to care anymore, or at least, even if he does, he's got this new, like, aura, that Scott really doesn't understand. Like he's completely detached from most things going on around him, especially school- he's equal parts bored and amused, haunted and hunted, apathetic and fierce, blatantly nonchalant about things that aren't death-dire. Scott doesn't know where it came from, but all of a sudden Stiles just is, and Stiles seems perfectly okay with that. It's a confidence he's never had before, and it's practically overwhelming.

So Scott might not be entirely surprised, but he still barely manages to keep himself from screaming like a little girl when Stiles, like it's normal, perfectly and totally sane, not an actual death sentence, puts one of his hands on Jackson's shoulder, the other on Danny’s, interrupting whatever conversation the three most popular kids in school were having, inserting himself like he belongs there without a flail in sight.

"Yes, Lyds, a Cougar is a mountain lion, you clever, clever girl. C'mon Jax, do better, she's gonna have a Fields Medal one day, you know?" He smirks at the three of them, pats the two shoulders under his hands, and then walks off to his next class completely comfortable, like it was nothing.

Lydia blinks after him with wide eyes, seemingly trying to hide a confused smirk of her own. Danny looks surprised, bemused, a little bit like he just witnessed a whirlwind. Jackson, after taking the second he needs to let his brain catch up just looks pissed.

"What. The. Fuck." He's growling as Scott slips past them, making himself as small as possible whilst also breaking into a jog to catch up.

"What the fuck, Stiles!" Scott hisses, a much more worried echo of Jackson's sentiment, Stiles just looks at him with mischief like fireworks sparking in his eyes, chuckles softly and says:

"Mountain lions, man, always blaming the mountain lions."

As if that explains anything.
And, just like Scott knew there would be, the inevitable fallout for Stiles' social faux pas comes during lacrosse practice that afternoon. Or, tries to come, anyway. See, the past three to four months that Stiles has been acting so weird? Part of that had to do with his attitude toward the game, he seems to enjoy it well enough, but he doesn't really care about it anymore.

He's been pushing Scott to be first-line, proud of his best friends accomplishments, and giving pep-talks after the failures, but he's been perfectly content to ride the bench. Snarks with Coach occasionally, cheers for Scott and Isaac, watches. It's not easy to define, but the difference is almost palpable.

So when Jackson calls him out on it, says he should at least try, to "Get your head in the game Stilinski! Someone could get injured, that bench can't be your safe-haven forever!"

Scott's appalled, he knows this is it, he knows from the squared shoulders and malicious eyes and vicious sort of smile that this is Jackson going after Stiles for whatever perceived threat or insult that happened earlier today.

So Scott is understandably horrified when, after Coach agrees with Jackson's assessment, Stiles smiles sweet and nods, allowing himself to be switched in for Greenburg. Scott is sure it's gonna be a shit-show.

And it is... For Jackson.

Scott thinks no one is more surprised than he when the first round of low cajoling starts and Stiles doesn't even blink, sweet smile never fading. Jackson even impresses upon him what a pussy Scott is, and that's a low blow, because Stiles can handle any sort of slander being thrown at him if he has to, but whenever it comes to his friends being insulted? He normally turns into a snarky, pranking berserker, all teeth and claws and silver tongue clever.

Not now, though, now he just stands loose, keeping that softly happy face on, takes it with the grace of someone genuinely unbothered. It's just pissing Jackson off more, so he starts, in between sneering jeers, getting really physical, trying to take out his rage in bruises and blood, only... it doesn't work.

Stiles dodges, smooth, lands goals without even seeming to think about it, doesn't break a sweat, doesn't even start breathing harder. By the end of it Stiles has won them their mock-game almost entirely on his own and Jackson is sweaty, frustrated, growling. The Coach, on the other hand, is whooping excitedly.

"Stilinski! You been holdin' out on me!" And then Stiles is being offered first-line, and, standing with his ankles crossed, arms resting on his lacrosse stick, chin resting on his arms, eyes locked on a soaked, dirty, panting Jackson, he grins and says: "No thanks, man, lacrosse is fun, but I'm really not interested in seriously playing a game that employs manipulative, gaslighting bullies. Oh, and, Jackson? Your family loves you, get over your shit, get therapy."

Jackson looks like someone just punched him in the fucking gut, Stiles, finally looking solemn instead of playful, looks him over carefully, assessing, nods once and heads to the locker room.

Scott is... so confused, but he follows after, mouth opening and closing with questions he doesn't even know how to string together.

Stiles takes one look at him, laughs, pats his head, calls him a puppy, and changes, the act showing lithe muscles that have steadily been growing under baggy clothes. Scars, too, that Scott doesn't know what to make of.
A body as changed as the mind.

It happens again, a few times, Stiles greeting them, touching them like he has a right to. Jackson hates him for it, probably, has tried to punch him a few times- Stiles always dodges, laughing brightly like it's a game. A day comes, though, when Stiles does that thing he's been doing lately. That thing where he just slumps in on himself like the whole world is weighing him down, gets quiet and hazy, like he's somewhere else, some sort of hellish place that no one else can see. Isaac's hugged him twice, now, and Scott's tried to talk, to touch, to no avail.

So when Scott sees the golden trio coming closer, not on purpose necessarily, just passing them by, because Stiles changed his route in between classes so they'd meet more often, and Stiles is on autopilot right now. Well, Scott gets a little stupid, because he's not sure Stiles could dodge a punch right now, even if Jackson's punches might be, for fuck all knows what reason, getting more playful and less serious with every passing day.

"Hello, Stiles," Lydia is already saying, curtly. She's got a private little joy in her eyes, and a small well-hidden smile, an expression she's started directing at Stiles lately, however she might balk at him always calling her a genius, she seems to have been more taken by him after he promised that he was very, very much over her, and that he's totally in love with her platonically, and that he has some tomes in archaic latin he'd like her to translate just so can bask in her awesomeness. She'd actually laughed when he'd said that, not pretty and tittering, but startled and honest.

Stiles, the way he is right now, nods dazedly as he stops to stand stock-still in the middle of the hallway, no fidgeting, no words bubbling up from his heart to spill haphazardly off of his tongue, smoked-honey eyes, dead-buried amber watching them all, unseeing.

Even Jackson, insensitive ass he is, notices, and frowns. "What the hell's wrong with him?"

"Look, lay off, alright?" Scott finds himself saying with much more bravado than he actually feels, he pulls himself up, no slumping, gotta protect Stiles, puffs out his chest and clenches his teeth around the next words: "He's not in the mood for physical violence or any of your other bullshit today, so just lay off."

"Well, look at that, guess McCall really does have balls."

"You know what, mo-" Scott starts, wanting to say something appropriately scathing, but Stiles interrupts him.

"Stop fighting," he breathes, quietly, not forceful at all, but there's something about it, about the way he says it, that makes them still, because he sounds kinda like he's still on autopilot, like he's used to telling them that.

"Stop fighting," he repeats, slow, a little resigned, and he flashes them a tired smile that looks like it cut him bone deep to spare at all, that looks like it aches, that doesn't match empty eyes, "you're both alive, safe. We're all okay now, so, please? Just stop fighting?"

Scott's mouth shuts with an audible snap. Stiles looks vulnerable, hallowed out and kinda raw, a slump to his shoulders, and Scott swallows, not really knowing what to do. Hating that smile with fervor.

It's so fucking unexpected, Scott thinks the only one who isn't completely shocked is Stiles, but two seconds after he's said that, Jackson is hugging him. His facial expression is begrudging, but he did it all on his own, there's an audible gasp that could've come from Lydia or Danny or maybe
even Scott himself, but there Jackson is, of his own volition.

Stiles, of course, without any hesitation, hugs right back.

"We won't fight," Jackson grumbles, "God, you're such a fuckin' chick Stilinski."

"You're a good friend," Stiles sighs, smile a little less ache and a little more hope. Jackson freezes, closes his eyes for a minute, and then, inexplicably, says:

"Shut up Stiles."

Stiles giggles.

After that? Jackson stops trying to punch him, still seems uncomfortable about the touching, but he becomes one of the ones who offers hugs on Stiles' bad days, no questions asked. Somehow, something about it all brings Jackson and Isaac closer too, like some weird magnetic camaraderie that comes with the understanding that allows for all of this, any of it, to make some kind of sense to them.

Scott still doesn't really get it, but all these people Stiles is somehow managing to bring together out of sheer force of will, they're kind of amazing, when they want to be, and Scott maybe thinks he could get used to this.

Peter waits for Stiles, leaning against the hood of his horrendous jeep, not bothering to keep himself unseen. Normally he would lurk somewhere dark, try to surprise he supposes, but Stiles always knows he's there, always says his name like a sigh, smiling, asking what he needs. He might also be playing with fire a little right now, because despite the fact that Stiles' father is the sheriff and it's a small town, and rumor of Peter Hale picking up a minor at school will probably spread like wildfire, he's-

Well, part of it is that he's just bored, wants people to see him and startle, frown in curiosity, wants them to see him with Stiles, know that they have a connection. Another part of it is the Pixies, damnable magic cockroaches, and he knows Stiles has ways of getting rid of them, remembers him talking about it before. The last part, the reason he'll never admit to out loud, is Cora.

Because Cora came home (not his apartment, the Pack House, Talia has been wanting to keep a closer eye on him) after school yesterday and said that 'his idiot mage' looked like the walking dead and he should take better care of his 'resources' because the kid was stinking up the whole school with something like 'lonely'.

So, the truth is, he doesn't care about the rumors this will start, doesn't understand why he needs to see the boy so badly, make sure he's alright. But he does.

So he's waiting against an old jeep held together with duct-tape and rust and love-magic.

When his eyes light on the boy he can't really help the sharp intake of breath, because fuck if Cora wasn't right. Pale, pale skin, hollow eyes with deep sleepless bruises under them, hair a little greasy, hands twitching, the rest of him too still, too quiet, except for his jack-rabbit heart. Too fucking skinny. He's walking unseeing next to another boy, one who's breathing a little awkwardly, but is otherwise obviously healthy, especially compared to Stiles, currently, and is trying to keep up an awkward one-sided conversation.

Peter is suddenly thankful for the Pixies, thankful he has something to slaughter later.

When they're close enough and Stiles still hasn't noticed him, but the other boy has, and is already
trying to pull Stiles to a halt, trying to protect; when they're close enough for the scent to be near
overwhelming, wood-rot and brine and acid-sweet, Peter calls softly, evenly, deadpan and a little
angry because Stiles has *not* been taking care of himself and that is *irritating*:

"Stiles."

Peter didn't know what he was expecting the reaction to be, he really didn't, but he wasn't
expecting this. He wasn't expecting Stiles to full-body flinch, for wide suddenly wild eyes to
search, and then find him. Just like that, like drinking in the sight of Peter was all he needed, Stiles'
smell eases, his heartbeat slows, calms. His whole fucking face brightens, eases, smiles small,
crinkles around the eyes as light bursts into those whiskey irises again.

If Peter hadn't seen him all of two seconds ago looking like death warmed over he wouldn't have
believed it, because now he looks like he's supposed to, a little more tired and pale and thin than
normal, but like the babbling fierce loyal intelligent teenager he's used to, the one brimming with
life and knowledge and danger. Smells like churches and chocolate.

"Big bad!" Stiles greets, sounding honestly gleeful, ignoring his friend who looks like a fish,
standing there, gaping like that. The boy is running towards him and Peter strengthens his stance
because he knows what happens next and he refuses to be surprised or winded by this move. A
little jump and then he has an armful of childish mage, arms wrapped around his neck, feet not
even bothering to touch the ground, already nuzzling and scenting and sighing, content.

"Little red," Peter returns, then, because he always asks, because it still makes no sense to him,
"what is the purpose of this?"

He punctuates the question by poking Stiles in the side, right above his hip where his shirt's riding
up. Stiles just hums and Peter, who knows he will have the boy hanging around his neck until he
does, grumblingly wraps his arms around Stiles' back, reciprocating. He tries and fails to ignore
how much *lighter* Stiles is, how his clothes have far too much give, are too loose.

When Stiles finally has his fill he sighs, a happy sound, and untangles them, looking up at Peter
through his eyelashes with a blinding grin, hands still possessively curled around Peter's forearms
like he can't even think of letting go. As if he hadn't smelled and looked like he was about to walk,
uncaring, off of a cliff barely a minute ago. As if he hadn't felt fragile and boney in Peter's arms.

Peter is suddenly filled with an inexplicable rage towards his sister, this tug to go punch her in the
gut because she's the reason he hasn't been in his apartment for so long, the reason he left Stiles
alone.

And, Peter is beginning to get the distinct impression that Stiles might not do too well on his own,
might need, more than want, to break into his apartment randomly, to see him, to talk, to watch
movies, to fucking *sleep*.

To eat.

Maybe the purpose of throwing himself at Peter is to make himself feel better, to let himself know
he's not actually alone, that nobody is actually dead.

Peter resolves to be less of an ass about the glomping, to accept it easier next time, if it is such a
balm.

"Uhh, Stiles?" The brown boy with dark floppy hair, warm, earth brown eyes and a crooked jaw
asks, "What's going on? Who the hell is that?"

Stiles, eyes all sun-soaked honey, hands squeezing once along Peter's arms as if to reassure
himself, smile brighter than anything, doesn't even turn.

"It's okay Scott," He says, still completely focused on Peter, and Peter realizes with an honest sort of surprise that this is what it always feels like, that whenever they're together Stiles is almost always centrally keyed into him, he wonders how he hasn't noticed until now.

Wonders why it doesn't feel like the power-trip it would were it anyone else. Wonders why it feels a little wistful, desperate, fond. Comforting.

"Food," Peter decides, ignoring Stiles' friend because there are more important things, and it doesn't seem any kind of useful right now, "I'm taking you home and then you're going to eat something."

Spicy-warm, melting chocolate, almonds and a soft-hidden dark-sweet lazy morning sort of smell. Eyes affectionate, smile smaller, like a secret, and a nod, all the permission Peter needs to drag his mage to his car and drive them back to the apartment where he makes four different meals almost subconsciously.

They're all so spicy he's sneezed at least twenty times by the end of it, to Stiles' apparent delight.

He doesn't realize until after they've eaten, when Stiles is curled up on the couch against his side, dozing off in the middle of the movie they're watching, that Peter called this place their home.

With Stiles soft, pliable, and sleep-warm against him like this, he finds it doesn't feel like a lie at all.

Peter's typing out some hypothesis about the case he's working on, one he doesn't really think is right, but is close enough that if he pulls that thread he might just get to the actual truth, when his phone rings. He answers unthinking.

"Hale speaking."

"Yeah, um... Hi? You might not remember me, but I was there with- the other day? With Stiles, I'm Scott. Anyway, um. I kinda, kinda got your number outta his phone 'cause I had to..."

"Does he know you got my number out of his phone?" Peter asks, leaving his typing for now, amused more than anything.

"Well. Well, no, but, look, I'm his friend, and, and you are too? Right?"

"I suppose."

Peter's wondering where the hell this is going.

"Um, so. It's just. I don't know what happened to him," Scott says, and his voice cracks, wavers with emotion, but he Braves on, "and I don't need to, or, or, he'll tell me when- when he feels comfortable. Or he won't tell me. And it's okay, I'm fine with that, but you- I don't know you, or your relationship with him, and I'm not gonna lie, it worries the hell outta me, 'cause you're so much older and, well, you kinda look like a serial killer, but I trust Stiles, and I can tell. Whatever's goin' on with him? You know."

Stiles picks friends as loyal as he is, doesn't he? Or perhaps it's just Stiles, inspiring that loyalty.

That last part wasn't a question, but Peter answers anyway, curious, now.
"Yes."

He time-traveled back from the end of the world in order to save us all, that he told me was pure circumstance, or perhaps an entirely calculated decision. He's magic, a war-veteran with no medals or paperwork to show for it, and even though his war is over he's still fighting ours because he cares about us.

Yes, he knows. He thinks he might be the only person who understands Stiles, sometimes wonders if that should be more frightening than it is, because he feels the responsibility of it, because he couldn't just abandon him or leave him for dead if it suited his own purposes.

Because Stiles is more like Pack than Talia, to him.

There's a mirthless laugh on the other end of the line, tinny, crackling like candy wrappers through the phone.

"He has... bad days, sometimes. I think it just creeps up on him, creeps up on all of us, to be honest, but it's like. He doesn't notice, then it's hit him, you know?"

No. He doesn't know. This is a part of Stiles he's only seen once, just over a week ago, and it was there and gone again so quickly he'd almost forgotten.

"And it just," Scott continues, unaware or uncaring of the whirlwind this is hurtling Peter's thoughts into, "it's like his soul walked away or something, left his body behind to work through it alone, whatever it is. And he gets quiet, like, scary quiet, really scary, whole body, not Stiles quiet. And he doesn't eat. He just. And we. We try to help him, but it's like he's not even really there to notice."

PTSD, Peter thinks, dully, trying to wrap his mind around something he's never even seen, and he knows, knows he wouldn't have missed it, if it was there in front of him, something like that would be too hard to be oblivious about.

Dissociation, a plethora of other things, all things that go against the hyper-vigilance and paranoia and neurosis Stiles normally wears like armor.

"I don't know if you've actually seen him like that though, somehow, because-- I mean normally it doesn't last that long, but it was going on day four when you showed up. None of us could get him to eat or talk or anything and it was really. He didn't even tell his dad not to eat junk food! It was just. And, like, he was dropping weight fast, faster than normal, even for not eating that long."

Might be due to the magic, he's said before that it does weird things to his system when he doesn't use it for too long, like making his metabolism faster or making him run colder or hotter than normal or making his hair grow longer quicker, just to burn itself out. Normally it makes him jittery, too, gives him away.

Peter's had to remind him to use it on something random before he vibrates out of his skin before, out of pure annoyance for how it was making him behave.

"Then you were there, and all of a sudden his soul caught on that it had a job to do or somethin'. He hugged you, and I know what he's like, well, what he's like now anyway. He likes to touch the people he cares about, like, constantly touch them. But, like I said, four days, he hadn't touched anyone, not on his own, until he saw you. And, then, you... I mean, you got him to eat, right? I know you did, and he looks so much fucking better now, like he actually slept, and I'm thinkin' you had something to do with that, too.
"And you did it easy, just by bein' there. And, and, I'm gonna ask now, because I'm pretty sure I'm right, but I just. Those four days, he didn't or couldn't see you, for awhile, right?"

"Correct."

Peter, very suddenly, has the insatiable need to claw Talia's throat out and laugh as she chokes on her own blood.

"Yeah, that's what I thought. Man," another humorless laugh, just a little lighter this time, "I don't even know you, but I know he needs you. Stiles is my best friend, my brother, and I have no idea who you are, but I can tell. You keep his soul where it's s'posed to be, keep him him, and he needs that, now. I don't know if that means anything to you, if any of this does, but just."

A pause, long enough that Peter thinks the connection might've broken, then:

"Take care of him, alright? I think you might be the only one who can."

Peter... doesn't know how he feels about that, how he feels about some stranger intruding on a relationship he doesn't even understand most of the time. Finds himself thinking fleetingly that Stiles went for endearing and vulnerable to match up to his fierce and protective. Finds himself saying, light on an exhale, reverent and honest before he can think to lie or say anything else:

"Always."

Despite his murder fantasies, Talia is still his Alpha, and she's still angry, wary, and frustrated by Stiles. Peter thinks it might have something to do with the Pack-bonds, because a Beta shouldn't be able to have one with someone who isn't accepted by their Alpha, like the one he has with Stiles.

So she calls on him for menial tasks, keeps him close, doesn't let him leave for his apartment often enough. And he worries, so he takes a cue from Stiles' brother, and calls.

"Peter?" Stiles' voice sounds sleep-rough, even though it's early in the afternoon and a whole school can be heard bustling around him.

"I'll be with the Pack for awhile," Peter tells him, "Talia. Keeping tabs."

Stiles hums, doesn't sound awake at all, doesn't sound there. Peter almost growls. Almost.

"You're at school?"

No words. Nothing. Peter is not used to nothing from Stiles.

"Stiles. Stiles, answer me."

"Mmm. When're you coming home?" Stiles asks, soft and low, a little bit wanting.

"When I can," he sighs, really, really wants to kill something, thinks he heard about a kelpie one town over, wonders if Talia would let him, "have you eaten?"

It's been two days since they last saw each other, two very long days. He's never worried like this, worried like the bite of something sharp and piercing and close to his chest.

No answer really comes, and Peter bites back another sigh, wonders if all the 'bad days' Stiles experiences are the days he hasn't been able to see him, the timing matches up so far. He wonders
how right Scott was. Wonders if you don't have to be a werewolf to need an anchor.

"When was the last time you slept?"

"Last time I saw you."

Peter lets the sigh come this time. Normally he's not the one to feel like this, normally it's drowned out by ego and rebellion and willfulness and intellect. But maybe that's because he never had someone to pull it out of him, never had someone who needed him like this.

"Little Red," he says it sweeter than he means to, like an endearment, "will you go find something to eat for me?"

"Yeah, Big Bad," Stiles says, just as sweet, hint of a smile in his voice, but it still doesn't sound like he's all the way back yet.

Peter, who is very good at being patient, waits, hears Stiles ask someone for something in the background, hears a girl sound inexplicably happy about handing off an apple, hears a shuffle, hears the girl hand him at least three other things and tell him sharply that she's proud of him, whatever he does manage to consume.

"Now," Peter says, when sharp clicking heels have been cut off by distance, and Stiles has found somewhere seemingly quiet, "what did you find, sweet boy? Tell me."

The term slips out, easy as breathing, feels right on his tongue, feels right for this situation, so he allows it. Stiles doesn't seem to mind, anyway.

"Lyds gave it to me," Stiles says, lilty-sleepy, mumble-hum, half lost, "an apple, and a granola bar and some pop tarts. Juice, too."

"Do you think you can rinse the apple off? Make it nice and clean?"

"Yeah," a few minutes, sounds of hallways and rushing water later, then, "Wow, shiny."

He sounds like he's stoned, it's kind of adorable. Peter's smiling before he can stop himself.

"Will you take a bite for me, baby? Do you think you can?"

Soft sounds, breathing a crunch, like a bite taken, and then a pause, uncertain.

"Chew," Peter instructs, barely a whisper, wondering what kind of state you have to be in to forget something like that, "chew until it's comfortable to swallow, alright, sweet boy?"

Sharper sounds, wet and decisive, like mouth and teeth and fruit, neater than it should be, considering. A swallow, a sigh.

"Tastes like green."

"Take another bite, baby," Peter says around a smile.

"Mmm." A bite, chewing without needing to be told this time, a swallow, another bite.

"That's it, there you are, sweet boy, just keep eating."

And he does, the sounds honestly soothing, less than a lullaby, more than words, and Peter might be savoring it, might actually be enjoying this. He doesn't let himself linger on the why, knows he could pick it apart at the seams if he wanted to, knows he already understands the barest hints of
the psychology underlying this undeniably intimate act, knows he doesn't really need anything else.

Some things are too nice, too safe and vulnerable at the same time, to be questioned, lest they break apart like freshly spun sugar, like the glass Stiles sometimes smells like.

"Peter?" Stiles asks, hesitantly, but clear and concise, after he's finished off the apple and started in on the granola bar. He sounds a little confused, like he just woke up out of a dream, Peter supposes he kind of did.

"You with me, Little red?" He asks, just to be sure.

"Um, hi? And uh, yes, yeah, all here... I, uh, wasn't... before, was I?"

"No, not really."

"Heh, okay. Um, well, yeah. Okay. Hi, hello, Peter."

"Hello, Stiles. Welcome back."

"Heh, huh, yeah. I think I just skipped a period. On accident. Oh, ugh."

"What?"

"It was chemistry, Mr. Harris is gonna kill me, I swear he has it out for me, but you know what? I don't care. Bastard spilled his guts about a water-proof accelerator in another life, deserves a pain in the ass student, who will not be showing up for detention. Fuck that jazz, I am, a yawn, "way too fucking tired. Asshole can just stew on it."

Peter laughs, shaking his head.

"I called to tell you I won't be at the apartment for a few days," he tells him again, pretty sure it wasn't heard, not really, the first time.

"Oh?" Stiles says, thinks on it for a beat, "Talia, right? Still ridin' you for having a badass mage in your back pocket without tellin' her?"

"Among other things."

"She's a good Alpha, though."

"Is that so?"

"Better than you, which, well, that might not be fair, you were a little insane at the time."

"You never told me this." Peter points out, because he hasn't, he's talked lightly about the end of days, about everyone gone, about how silly it is that killing two people and preventing the death of a little more than a dozen was all it took to stop it. But Stiles has never opened up about any of it, about his life in another timeline, the timeline he prevented. And Peter hasn't asked.

"Ah. Yeah. It's hard to talk about, and, maybe there's a part of me that thinks some of it might hurt you and I. Hurting you is. Really something I don't want to do. Like, ever."

"I am no-"

"Oh, don't go getting a bruised ego, Big Bad Wolf, I know how strong you are. I just. I care, and when I care I overthink everything. So, yeah, maybe telling you would. I mean, it might even help
me, be healthier than keeping it all in, but, Peter. Just the idea of hurting you, of anyone hurting you? You're all I have. I mean, not literally, but you're. You're just."

"I'm your anchor." Peter supplies, almost absently, loathes how overprotective Stiles is for a moment, because he wants desperately to know more. Doesn't like things being unknown to him.

"Oh... Yeah, that makes. A lot of fucking sense. Hey, I never knew, I mean, after the fire, where. Where I'm from it was revenge, and then power, I think. What's your anchor, here, though? Like, when you're sane and as happy as I've ever seen you?"

Peter takes a deep breath, decides then he won't ask, part of him blindly refusing to know any version of himself unstable enough to use revenge as an anchor.

"The people I love, and facts." His answer is simple and honest.

There's a sharp intake of breath on the other end of the line.

"That's so, so good, Peter," Stiles says, his voice is syrupy, proud and extremely fond, like Peter's answer was the best thing he's ever fucking heard. Like he couldn't have even dared hope that that would be the answer he'd receive to that question.

"I was... bad, wasn't I?"

"You tried to eat me once. In the totally unsexy, heart-stopping, I might actually die today, sort of way. But you were so far off the reservation, then, really, really crazy. You got a little better after you died, but you were still... I don't know if you could've loved anything, the way you were, not really."

"I..." he takes a moment to parse through all that, takes as deep a breath as his lungs will allow, "died?" He finishes, lamely.

"Derek killed you. You nearly drove Lyds insane to get back. I know how you did it, too, only took me a week to figure out, that's why I made sure to, well... Let's just say the Argents are dead in a way you absolutely cannot come back from. Even with the help of a banshee."

"Ah, yes, I actually do know that spell. I didn't know there was a banshee on hand, though. I promise to be gentler if I ever require it in this life."

"Just use me."

"You're not a banshee, Stiles."

"Not entirely, but a lot of my power is based in death and I have a strong connection with you, which makes it easier, and I know the spell myself, doubly easy--er? Doubly easier? That doesn't sound right. Whatever. Besides, I think I'd lose myself if you died, not in a, like, rock and roll drugs and sex, typical crazy teenager way either, I mean, you're not even dead and when you're not there I. So. Use me."

"You have my word, then, if it ever comes down to that."

"And you have mine that I'll do everything in my power to keep it from coming down to that. That I'll be there if it does."

"Are you proposing to me?"

A bark of a laugh.
"Kind of sounds like it, huh?"

They're both quiet for a moment, a thinking, comfortable and familiar sort of silence. Shared, like sharing it is better than not having it at all. Peter takes the moment to breathe through several of the emotions that come with realizing you have the capacity to be a psychopathic killer, that a time-traveling boy who he had actually tried to kill in another life not only saved him from that and expects nothing in return, but is also proud and happy when he learns Peter can love things, and probably would've accepted less, would've accepted and forgiven the psychopathic killer, already had if how Stiles acted when they first met is anything to go by.

"Next period," Stiles says, after their silence is interrupted by the distant, tinny sound of the school bell chiming, "I should probably go."

"If you can't sleep, call me."

"Uh, I um... I'll try, if I can."

"Okay. I'm calling tomorrow."

"Thank you, Peter. For this. For everything. For understanding, and listening and, just. Helping me."

"Of course, Stiles."

"When you... Tomorrow, before or after school, or at 1:30, because that's. That's lunch. I don't want any other teachers on my ass, so it'd be better to-"

"I understand. I'll call at a respectable time."

"Yeah. Thanks. And Peter?"

"Hmm."

"It was nice. Talking to you like this, and. And eating. I was pretty hungry, actually, I just couldn't..."

"Remember?"

"Something like that."

"I'll call again tomorrow. If you can't sleep and you can't call, I left my porch door open."

"Really?" He sounds hopeful, grateful, then "Wait, what about burglars? Dude! Your books!"

Peter laughs, and laughs, "Tomorrow, Little red."

"Yeah. Tomorrow."

A snick and a click and then the call disconnects.

John was happily surprised when he came home to see his son looking tired, but mostly back to normal. It was hard, as a father, to see his son go through, well, whatever it was he was going through. John was starting to question whether or not it was possible to get PTSD from freakishly vivid nightmares.

Still, that night Stiles made healthy food, kept up with the conversation like usual, well, kept
ahead of the conversation (and any reasonable train of thought) like usual. Washed dishes while ranting about one of his teachers and John's health ("I may get... weird sometimes, but that gives you no right to neglect your diet. Your heart, dad, your heart!"), watched some abstract show and forced John to sit through it, too, because between Stiles' dubious mental health and John's work they haven't been spending enough time together.

Gave him a tired smile, and a greedy hug, went to bed.

The next morning he looked like he hadn't slept at all, didn't even bother to respond to any words or touch, was back inside his shell of empty desolation. Didn't eat breakfast, went to school.

John, who was always worried about his son, managed to keep himself drinking water instead of the whiskey in the cabinet, and contemplated hard the card for his old therapist, sitting yellowed and wilted somewhere in his study. Because, hey, she helped him step out of the bottle and stop grieving long enough for him to realize that, yeah, Claudia was gone, but Stiles was still there, still needed him. And maybe she could help Stiles, too, with whatever this is.

Werewolves and kanimas and magic and the end of the world and traveling back in time to save all those people long since lost. A nightmare that makes you the type of person to wake up screaming bloody murder, the type of person who sneaks out and comes home a little more battered than normal, the type of person who touches like they're starved for it, like they've missed you for too long to keep themselves away, the type of person who has eyes like weapons, like hope, like fear, like blood on a fucking battlefield.

Therapy is just talking. John isn't sure anyone can talk about shit like that, doesn't think Stiles would've even told him, except ("I lied to you, last time, in that other place. I thought I was protecting you, but it just got you killed, it got you killed after you'd stopped trusting me, stopped looking me in the eye, probably even stopped loving me. I'm not putting you through that again.")-

Except John is Stiles' dad.

That evening Stiles seems okay again, for the most part. He looks like he ate at some point, at least, and he offers a harrowed smile and a grateful hug, which is better than this morning. He sits close at dinner, talking animatedly about this or that, keeps touching, obsessively, needing to be close. John smiles at him, listens as much as he can through dazed boredom when the topics veer into, well, boring, or disturbing.

Offers him at least ten more hugs before the night is done, doesn't even feel awkward about it anymore.

The next morning is the same as the last, and it's honestly draining, the swing back and forth, he tries to tell Stiles he won't be in 'til late, but his son barely seems able to grasp reality on days like this. At least he manages to take care of himself, for the most part. Except... eating.

Which was terrifying.

So when he comes home late one night and his son is sitting quietly at the table, staring at his hands in the dark like he had been that terrible morning five months ago, looking thin and haunted and chased? He asks, he asks the only thing he can think to ask:

"Stiles, what can I do to help?"

The answer is... unexpected.
Peter answers easily, curiously, it's the first time Stiles has called him, but he supposes that might make sense, considering he hadn't been able to call himself.

It had been a long, long day full of chimeras and bloodshed. He was going to call as soon as it was over, but what with being poisoned and bleeding out... He's glad, though, for the call, even though whatever Deaton gave him is still heavy in his system, making his mind a little fuzzier than normal.

He hopes Stiles is alright.

"Li'l red?" He asks, slurs, really.

"What? No. Look, you're Peter?" The voice is authoritative, deep, gruff.

Not Stiles, then. That boy really needs to keep better track of his possessions, this is the second time.

"Yes."

"I'm uh. I'm Stiles' father-"

"The Sheriff?"

"Yeah, look, I asked him what I could do to help because he, well. And he asked me to call you, so. I'm gonna put you on speaker, just, talk to 'im, okay?"

"Okay."

He was going to call soon enough anyway, and if it's bad enough that Stiles' father sounds just a little desperate, pleading? Well, drugs and blood loss be damned.

A button pushed, the airy crackle of outside noise coming in clearer, yet not clear enough at all.

"Stiles?"

A hum, quiet, distant.

"Have you eaten?" Nothing, two heartbeats, one fast and light like wingbeats, one hard, pace picked up a little in anxiety, a shift and rustle as someone combs fingers through hair.

"Hey, my sweet boy-" a little gasp, probably from the Sheriff, Peter doesn't care, this is a routine that's worked for them for about two weeks intermittent, now, something they do when Peter can't meet Stiles in person for whatever the reason, and Peter is both too stoned and too focused on Stiles' needs to put any effort into lying, changing, any part of it- "can you find something to eat for me, baby?"

Creaks, a scrape of wood against wood, shuffling. Both heartbeats moving away, the distant, low, whispery sound of things moving around far away. It takes a few minutes for the heartbeats to come back, Stiles' already noticeably slowing down. Two separate scrapes this time, like the Sheriff is sitting down, too.

"What did you find, hm? Tell me."

"Daddy helped," whisper-soft, like a secret, like he's talking from underwater, "we found a salad, and chips with guacamole, and water, too."

"Take a sip of the water first," a shift, a slosh, a swallow, "that's it. Will you take a bite of the
salad for me, now, baby boy?” A clink, a crunch, a muffled teeth scraping tongue flicking sort of sound.

"Chew... Swallow, there you are, my sweet boy. Take another bite, baby. Keep going. Very good."

Like always, it went faster after the initial instruction, like he had forgotten, just needed someone to remind him. He had finished his water and his salad, started in on the bag of chips before he seemed to come back all the way, to remember not just to eat, but to breathe and to think, to be.

"Peter?” He breathed, full of clarity and confusion, as per usual. Peter chuckled softly, because really, he should be used to this by now.

"Did you come back to me, Stiles?"

"Yeah, yeah, it's me, here I am." A nervous laugh, "I ate salad without dressing, that is so gross, how did I even do that?"

"You seem to like the taste of green when you're trapped in that beautiful head of yours."

"Peter... Are you..." A choked sort of sound, "Are you stoned?"

"Enough not to feel the very deep gashes on my chest and all the broken and shattered bones that aren't healing fast enough due to the poison, yes. Why? Did you really think anything less would keep me from calling you?"

"Ye-ouch. You said chimeras, yesterday, right? I thought I helped Deaton with an antidote. Magically enhanced octospider bites are not something to trifle with."

"Talia. She doesn't trust you, remember?"

"Oh my- fuck her! I saved her from two wendigos the day before yesterday! Two! And you're like. I mean, god, she must at least know by now that I'd never hurt you, I'm barely functional without you."

"Even so. She threw it out, no chance I could even steal it now. So, Deaton, enigmatic man that he is, gave me the very, very good drugs. The best kind. It was a pseudo-apology, I think."

"Oh my god, wow. Shit, though, are you going to be okay?"

"I wouldn't leave you alone, Stiles. I'll be fine, I promise."

"Thank you," Stiles says, and it's a benediction, more than anything, "Thanks. For. For everything. Are you, I mean. You'll really be-"

"I'll be okay, Little red, I'll be perfect."

"Yeah, okay. Thanks. Um. Thank you. I'm glad."

"'Sides, Talia got it worse."

A short, sharp, vicious laugh.

"And she would be fine if she'd just used the tincture Deaton and I made, jesus, her own downfall."

"Hmm."
"Will you... Tomorrow, will-"

"Nothing less than death, Stiles. I'll be home, Talia needs to heal, she won't be able to stop me."

"Home."

"Home, Little red, and then you will sleep."

"Oh my god, sleep, it's been so long."

Peter chuckles, it sounds a little more distant than it should. He can feel his bones, his skin, knitting together.

"Tomorrow, sweet boy."

There's a little gasp, and Stiles' heart speeds up by the tiniest fraction. It occurs to Peter he's never called Stiles that outside of those intimate moments, but he can't really bring himself to care, it feels almost natural, now.

"After," he decides, just to be a little bit of an ass, and because the other man deserves a reward for his patience, "you have a long and probably embarrassing talk with your father, of course."

"Dad? What're you," a sound that Peter is going to assume is melodramatic flailing, the clatter of a chair falling, the thud of a boy not far behind, "Oh my god! Oh my god, Dad!! When- what- how long were you... Oh my god. Uhhh, hi?"

Peter laughs, hangs up, lets sleep take him with a smile still on his lips.

John does, in the end, have a very long talk with his son, not as embarrassing as either of them thought it might be. John is scared to accept that the nightmare wasn't a nightmare, but he'd known, already, even if he was in denial.

It's kind of hard to continue to avoid after your son talks to a werewolf about chimeras and poisons and antidotes. Especially if that conversation followed immediately after... Well. John isn't sure, exactly, what it was he witnessed.

It was like Peter's voice was all Stiles needed, in order to return to himself, to eat, to live, like he needed all those sugar-sweet soothing words and that reminder.

My sweet boy, Peter had called him, and then he'd goaded, pushed and commanded. Half an hour later, meal almost completely finished, and there's Stiles. Rambly, sun-soaked eyes, flailing, confident, worried, twitchy, tired, clever Stiles.

And Stiles himself had said, so keyed into talking to Peter that he hadn't noticed John at all, that he was barely functional without him.

Without Peter fucking Hale.

And John wants to be protective, he does, but he knows, now, that Stiles has endured the literal end of the world, and maybe the best he can do now is make sure Stiles is happy.

So the most embarrassing part of the conversation, wherein they went over as many supernatural complexities as John could handle and Stiles showed him actual proof (by making every piece of furniture in the house float two inches in the air for exactly four seconds) that said supernatural complexities could even exist? The most embarrassing part was at the very end when John told
him nothing below the belt was allowed until he was over eighteen.

Stiles had said they weren't actually like that, but John had stopped him, because he might not entirely understand what he saw, but he knows the way Peter talked to Stiles, knows the way Stiles came back, just for him, and had a smile full of adoration he couldn't quite keep off his face.

Knows that's nothing less than love.

So he says, no sex until it's not underaged sex, always wear a condom, always use lube, and if it's going to be-- like that phone call was, do your research and have a safeword. Make it safe and consensual, remind Peter that John is going to be stocking up on wolfsbane bullets.

Stiles had blushed, grinned like there was nothing for it, and hugged him like he used to do when he was a kid, when he still thought his father was better than even the greatest superhero.

Peter doesn't really know how this conversation started, though he knows what triggered it. He had come home early that day, having no particularly interesting cases and having become expert at avoiding Talia, to find Stiles on the couch, his knees drawn up to his chin, his toes curling against the cushions, his face drawn and pinched.

Apparently, despite the acute changes he's made to the timeline, the Argents still managed to come back to Beacon Hills. Stiles is extremely worried by this, despite the treaty the Hale Pack has with the Hunters, though he seems as glad as he is pained to be faced with Chris' daughter, Allison, again.

He'd started off by just wistfully recounting her relationship with Scott, what it had been like, in that other timeline, but then he'd delved deeper. Stiles talks, of course, all the time, he babbles and de-rails and whisks up tornadoes in your mind until you're left with nothing but frustration or fond exasperation or both, it's the best defence mechanism Peter has ever seen.

But Stiles rarely talks like this, about his past, his life, himself. He does sometimes, but not often, and despite Peter's own wariness about hearing what kind of monster he could've been, had things gone a different route, he can feel it, in the heaviness in the air, in the way the words come desolate, slow, careful. Stiles needs this, to be able to say it all out loud, to be able to share the burden.

So Peter sits next to him, and he listens with as much respect as he can, because it is an honor, however daunting, to be trusted with this.

"I never stopped blaming myself, for what happened to her. I know I was possessed, that it was the nogitsune, not really me at all, but I remember it. And things with Scott were so different after that. I tried to be strong, to deal with the nightmares and the fear that maybe I was still dreaming, maybe it was still inside. I think some part of me thought that going through that pain alone was what I deserved, my penance.

"It wasn't long after her death, and maybe in some ways her death was the beginning, that our Pack was outed for what it was, and Chris was a big part of that, because he was reckless and grieved-stricken and I think he just wanted to punish us. He wanted his daughter back and we were the ones who took her away from him.

"One Pack outed, though, in a little town like Beacon Hills, that was all it took. The military wanted supernatural weapons, the politicians wanted to corral them and tag them and keep the humans safe, the hunters wanted to kill everything and damn whatever got in their way. It was equal parts fast and slow, people were panicking, a lot of the people in the supernatural
community wanted to fight, a lot of them wanted peace. How the Hunters handled it, and the military ended up backing them, mostly, was... Disgusting.

"There were Nagas, Merfolk, all being dredged from the sea, trapped in little tanks and separated from their kin. Some 'weres were made slaves, some were led to the slaughter, some were tagged and collared and trying to live peaceably, while the rest went into hiding. Witches were being burnt at the stake, Druids drowned, Fey collared with special material that wouldn't allow them to return to their own dimension, their magic slowly eviscerated out of them.

"There were so many brands, Peter. Human, 'were, subclassification of 'were, Wendigo, Selkie, Banshees- and the cages. Cages and internment camps and so, so many soldiers. I remember, one autumn, it was just Lyds and I left, Scott was dead, Cora had been captured and tortured until she didn't even remember her own name, she ended up as some Hunters consort and we were barely surviving ourselves, we couldn't save her, you had gone, nobody knew where, and Derek had... Well, there's only so much pain you can live with at a time. I don't blame him, for what he did, he just wanted it to end, we all did.

"Anyway, it was autumn and we were hiding out in the mountains, we had been walking forever, just trying to get away from whoever might be chasing us, just trying to survive. And I had looked back, to the forest right below us, full of trees with red and browning leaves, it was 'cause of that, that I didn't notice at first. It was just... Fire. The whole beautiful thing, all that life, burning.

"We never found out why, maybe they were trying to smoke out any refugees who had hidden there, maybe someone had tossed a curse in a desperate attempt to escape, we didn't. But the smoke, it was a gagging, choking sort of thing, even as high up as we were, that fire had us surrounded. We managed to find a small alcove, and I scratched some runes into the stone, and we stayed huddled, crouched there, for days.

"We couldn't sleep, see, not really, too hard in that position, and besides, it was hot, we were both feverish and just trying our damndest to keep as quiet and still as possible, because what if they found us? Lydia was injured and I'm pretty sure that smoke-inhalation was slowly killing both of us, at that point.

"So we waited and watched for three days as everything turned to char, and a day or more after just to be safe, and then? Then we just kept walking. It was all we had, it was all we could do, we were hungry and disgusting and having a terrible time breathing, but we just kept walking. We found pockets, of resistance, of survivors we could stay with.

"Lydia caught a cold a few months later, it made her resistance to her powers impossible, and everyone was dying, you know? So she just started screaming, and screaming. I did what I could to protect her, god I even went so far as to carve a silencing array into her hand. No one found us, but, she just wouldn't stop screaming, and then she wouldn't stop coughing, she was practically a husk by the time it was over, and at that point she had experienced all those deaths by proxy.

"She smiled at me, right before she went to sleep. Sometimes I like to think it was her decision, and that that was her goodbye. I found you, after, you were attached to this fencing, all wolfed out. The camp was deserted, but your body was there, in the middle of nowhere, hung up like some sort of facsimile of a scarecrow. Would it weird to say that the birds that were eating your corpse were beautiful? I just. I hadn't seen anything alive in so long, and there were dozens of them, all different kinds, I don't even think any of them were scavengers.

"But they were all eating and alive, and I couldn't even bring myself to kill one, no matter how hungry I was, because they were just so goddamned beautiful. I camped out in that abandoned camp for awhile. Didn't bury you, though. Couldn't bring myself to cut you down, don't really know why."
There are tears streaming down Peter's face by now, he can't bring himself to be ashamed of them. Stiles is quiet for awhile, the only sound between them Peter's shuddering, aching breaths and the small clicking wet sounds of Stiles chewing at his fingernails. The scent wafting off of him, paired with the power and horror of all the words he just spoke, hurts. Peter thinks it might really kill him.

Stiles, who had been staring unblinking, unseeing at the wall, looks at him now. Peter looks at those beautiful, wonderful, haunted amber eyes and barely Chokes on a sob, can't contain it.

Stiles, perfect, broken, fragile Stiles, crawls across the couch to him, brushes the tears away with tender fingers, and coos; "Hush, now, hush. Don't cry, you're okay. It'll be okay. I'll keep you safe, Big Bad. Shhh..."

And Peter just pulls him into his lap, holds him as tight as he can without hurting, and nuzzles into his hair, gulping in his scent which is just like smoke now, like burning trees in autumn and running and hiding and finding wonder where there should be none left.

"Baby, sweet baby boy, my Little red." He whispers through tears, with aching lungs and burning cheeks and a breaking heart, curved in around him desperately. And that's all it takes, those words, and then Stiles is falling apart too, trembling and weeping and shattering like glass in his arms. All Peter can do is hold onto him, try to keep all the pieces together, let him know he's safe, now, everyone is alive.

He isn't alone anymore.

He never will be again.

They sleep for a long while after that, and wake up, both feeling wrung out and emptied of everything that they are. Stiles is still in his arms, straddling his lap and tucked under his chin, nose resting in the crook of his neck. Peter starts rubbing his hands up and down Stiles' back, feeling the flutter of eyelashes as Stiles blinks against his skin.

There's a small little breath, the only warning he gets before Stiles is kissing along his pulse, nosing at his jaw. Peter's hands still their movements, and he swallows, lets Stiles move against him, slow, lazy, kissing his chin, his cheeks, and then, chastely, his mouth.

"Are you sure?" Peter murmurs against soft, dry, cracked lips. Stiles shifts, slots their hips closer together, nods, presses his lips more firmly as his scent eases from smoke to musk and the meat of almonds freshly crushed.

Peter noses at Stiles' cheek, slides their lips together, separating and coming back, skin against skin, scents mingling until it becomes heady.

"Open your mouth for me, baby," Peter breathes out, more sigh than words, and Stiles obeys beautifully, accepts his tongue with a hitched little whimper that makes Peter's hands, already grasping his hips, convulse, wanting nothing more than to pull him closer, than to find friction between them.

Stiles tastes like freshwater and grass, like something airy and feather-soft, tingle-cold even though the wet of it is feverish. The contrast of earthy and light, the slide of their tongues tangling together makes him moan quietly. Stiles sighs into his mouth, lets his body move, little, minute twitches, subtle friction as Stiles wraps his arms around Peter's neck, one slung around his shoulders with his hand gripping Peter's shoulder hard enough to bruise, the other hand cupping the back of his neck, reaching up into his hair, tugging his head back to deepen the kiss further.
It's passionate, sweet, so soft and slow even though the hunger is there, burning underneath the surface. They let time wash over them, paying attention to nothing more than the hot-wet connection of their mouths, sucking at each other's lips, tongues, chasing down phantom tastes, memorizing the shape of gums and teeth and trembling words that tumble between them unbidden when they get enough space to breathe.

Stiles is still only moving his hips in tiny, small, deliciously tantalizing movements, but he's starting to moan, whimper, whine into the kisses, "Please, please, please, Peter, please."

"Shh, baby, it's okay. Whatever you need, tell me what you need?"

Stiles has both his hands fisted into Peter's collar now, his hips starting to writhe, not harder, necessarily, still just a flutter of movement, but it's more urgent, more heated. Stiles pulls back, bites at Peter's jaw, licks away the sting even as Peter groans with it, his hands twitching against Stiles' hips, his own wanting to buck up, wanting more.

"Tell-" Stiles' breathing is rushed, strangled, broken, needy, "Tell me. Peter, tell me I can, please, please, I want to, so bad. I need- Peter..."

Whatever restraint Peter had crumbles as Stiles starts panting, whining right into his ear, his breath damp and lust-addled. Peter grips Stiles' hips tight enough to bruise, crushes their hips together, grinds up hard, ruts against Stiles' over-sensitive dick.

"Come for me, baby," he growls out, nuzzling the command into a wonderfully flushed sweat-slick neck, "Come on, little one, come for me. I want to feel you come apart, baby, baby-"

"-Harder, more, Peter. Uh, uhn, mmm," A deep, guttural sort of moan shakes out of him, a harsh drag of teeth against his collarbone and then they're both gone, eclipsing the edge and tumbling over the precipice together. Slick hot come streaking out of them, dirtying the clothes they never even had to take off, both of them trembling and jerking against each other with the after-shocks.

Peter comes down first, still blinking spots of ecstasy out of his vision, still gulping in air greedily, sweating from the exertion no matter how seemingly calm that fuck had been. Stiles is still shivering against him, totally lax, now, like a puppet with all of his strings cut. He's looking at Peter dazedly from where his head is resting on Peter's shoulder, smiling timid, innocent, pretty.

"Better than birds," Stiles mutters, only a little nonsensically, but Peter thinks he kind of gets it. He wraps his arms around the boys back, squeezes, smooths sweaty hair off his forehead.

"Better than birds," he agrees, and Stiles hums a little, "let's go get clean, okay, baby?"

"Carry me?" Stiles wonders, cuddling in and curling limbs around, tangling them in an attempt to hang on.

"Monkey," Peter calls him, before getting up and holding him close, chests flush, heartbeats almost in sync.

"Wolf," Stiles responds, nuzzling in, smiling against sweat-cool skin. They both end up in the shower together, both of them naked and pliant and loose. Peter washes Stiles' back, his hair, manages to avoid the spots that make Stiles giggle, though he promises to remember them later. They trade kisses, but the shower is surprisingly unsexual. It's comfortable, easy, nothing insecure about the intimacy of it, just a contentedness to being this close.

They finish getting clean, Stiles lamenting Peter's height because it made returning the hair washing favor a little too complicated, and towel each other off, slow and explorative in a curious,
"You're gorgeous, my sweet boy," Peter tells him when Stiles has donned a soft dark t-shirt of his that slips off one of his shoulders and provides a lascivious sort of contrast against his flushed, milk-white skin, and a pair of clean boxers. Peter presses fingers against the exposed shoulder, kisses the constellation of freckles there, presses his tongue and his lips against the hollow of Stiles' throat, laves lips that part to moan appreciatively at the sensation.

"Heh, I should wear your clothes more often, I'm guessing?"

"Yes," Peter growls reveling in almonds and chocolate blending with mountains and clay, their smells braiding together and drowning him in the symphony of it, like home and claim and mate and love.

Stiles smirks at him, kisses him soundly, "Mmm, I'm hungry."

He hugs Stiles close, so happy with the touch, the smell, the feel of it all. He decides to savor it for a few moments longer before pulling away.

"I'll cook."

"Bonjour, mon loup," Stiles crows lyrically into the phone by way of greeting, and Peter is surprised at how stable he sounds.

"You know french, baby?"

"Nah, Lydia and Allison are giving me a crash course, though."

"It suits you," Peter tells him, sweet as syrup, managing to keep his phone balanced between his ear and his shoulder while he irons because he has court today. And, considering the... frankly, lovely, events that conspired last night, he'd entirely forgotten to do his usual preparations.

Stiles chuckles a little shyly, there's a shuffle and then a door, most background noise being silenced.

"We're adorable, you know that?"

"Are we?"

"Totally, we could give Allison and Scott a run for their money, and hey, all werewolf-y-ness and lost pens aside, it seems some things just cannot be changed. He's already all googly-eyed over her and I don't think it'll be long until she's reciprocating. I have plans though, because I have eyes, I've seen the way Isaac looks at Scott, and I know what Isaac and Allison had in my timeline, and polyamory? Is a beautiful, beautiful thing."

"Polyamory, huh?"

"Yep." Stiles studiously pops the p, "I, on the other hand, am strictly monogamous. I have magic, and my father has wolfsbane, and I am both very clever and very possessive. If you ever cheat on me, I will kill you."

"Oh, you needn't worry about me," Peter grins, "my sweet baby boy is the only one I have eyes for."

"Jesus..." Stiles breathes, a little raggedly.
"Hmm? What? That you're the only one for me? Or..." Peter hesitates, decides to go for it, because he can hear Stiles' heartbeat, and he wants it to go faster, and he thinks he knows what will do it.

"Mine." He rumbles.

Stiles groans, "Fuck, Peter."

"My sweet baby boy," Peter croons, because teasing Stiles is fun, and he doesn't get to have fun often.

Stiles sounds a little bit like he's been gutted.

"Ugh, mnf, yes. Yes, but, I mean. Fuck, okay, school library bathroom. Time," Stiles takes a deep breath, "and a place." He sighs.

"Yours," Peter says softly, not at all teasing this time, "I'm yours, Stiles. No one else."

Stiles swallows, "Yeah. Same... Hey, are we- are we, like, boyfriends now?"

Peter laughs, can't help himself.

"Lovers, boyfriends, partners. We're together, whatever it is, we're together, right?" Stiles asks, hopeful, pure.

"Yes, Stiles."

"Okay. Good."

"So, you didn't need the reminder, today, Little red?"

"Not... technically, no. I think yesterday, because I actually slept, you know? Combined with... Well, I'm maybe still wearing your shirt?"

"... You are?"

"It smells like you." Stiles says, voice small, "And it helped."

"Stiles. I think you're overestimating my restraint." Peter sounds strangled, even to himself. And Stiles, the tease, giggles breathlessly.

"You really have a thing for me wearing your clothes."

"Yes." Peter hisses, and then, because this is killing him, and because it's true, "It makes you smell claimed," Stiles gasps, whimpers low, "like you belong to me. It makes you smell like us."

Stiles swallows, thick, "And what do we smell like, Big Bad?"

"Indescribable," Peter breathes, "intoxicating. I could get drunk off of it, come just smelling it. Baby, my baby, smelling like that."

There's a bang, a snick, and then what sounds like a button being popped. Peter licks lips, "Sweet boy, I'm beginning to think you have a thing for it, too."

"Peter," Stiles whines over the sound of a zipper being dragged down, over the sound of his heart racing lewdly over crappy mechanical speakers, "I-"
"It's okay, baby. I'm here, I've got you, shh. My sweet, sweet boy, will you touch yourself for me? Slow, how you like it, but slow, take your time, and breathe, baby. Don't forget to breathe."

Stiles takes a few stuttering, shaky breaths, moans pornographically on an exhale. Peter thinks it says something about his control that he managed to turn off the iron at all before he was unbuttoning himself, too. He groans at the feel of cool air against him where he's already hard and throbbing, Stiles whines high and thready in response.

"Tell me-" Stiles gasps, "tell me what you'd do to me. How you'd fuck me, God, Peter, I want you to-"

"I'd open you up, baby, tell you to relax, to let me in, and you'd listen so prettily, Stiles, like you always do." Peter is saying, growls when he takes himself in hand, tugs a little harsher than he should, but the friction is delicious, and he can hear Stiles whimpering, hear the slow, melodious, skin on skin happening on the other line.

"Harder, Little red, do it harder, baby, that's it. Are you gonna come just from this, my sweet boy? From me telling you how I'd thrust so deep inside you'd forget your own name? I'd be gentle, so, so gentle, until all you can do is scream and cry and beg-"

"Please, Peter, fuck me like that, please. Inside, I want to feel you inside, please, I need you, God, I want-" Stiles is panting, gasping, making quiet wet noises and Peter can hear his throat fluttering over the phone, so close, they're both so close.

"Come apart underneath me, fuck, Stiles. I would come inside-" "Oh my god, yes." "-Do you like that, baby? Want to be warm and wet and full of my come? Is that what you want?"

"Please," Stiles whimpers, swallows with a dry little click, "more, Peter, fuck."

Peter growls, whines deep inside his throat, squeezes the base of his dick and rubs his forefinger around the foreskin, slick with precome, moans, guttural, wild, into the phone.

"Come for me, baby. I need to hear you, come on," his voice is sex rough, broken and ragged and gasping, "come for me."

"Hnn," A small bang, a groan, and louder, wetter, lewder sounds, a deep, submissive sort of whine and then Stiles is chanting his name like a prayer and that's all Peter can take before he's gone too, over the edge and... making a mess all over the clothing he'd meant to wear at court today.

He laughs, can't help himself, and it's a giddy, half-crazed, elated sort of sound, but he can't bring himself to be ashamed when Stiles is giggling in the exact same way on the other end of the line."

"That may have been the hottest thing I've ever done in my entire life," Stiles laughs, tries to breathe, swallows, hiccups little bubbles of giddiness down, "oh my god, I can't believe we just did that."

"Neither can I, really," Peter retorts dryly.

"So you don't normally have sexual liaisons with teenaged boys over the phone while they're at school?" Stiles sounds gleeful, Peter winces anyway.

"Only you, baby boy, could make me do something like that."

"Aww, you're so sweet!" Stiles crows over the sounds of paper towels being ripped and water being run, "Jesus, that was the second best orgasm I've had in my entire life and you weren't even
"I think I might actually agree with you on that."

"Wait..." All the sounds of Stiles cleaning himself up stop abruptly, "What? Seriously, because, like, I'm sure I don't need to tell you, but. You're much older than me, and all that experience and-"

"I've never been with anyone the way I've been with you. Stiles. You're the first person I've had sex with for anything other than lust."

"That's actually kind of sad."

"Really? I've always just thought I was waiting for the right person to come along."

"Oh, no. Oh my god, Peter," Stiles sounds horrified, "you're not allowed to be cheesy! Oh my god!"

Peter cackles, because this is honestly the happiest he's been in a long, long time. He feels so free in this moment, like the levee broke, like someone said 'Here, you can be yourself now, you can breathe.' The feeling sings in his bones.

"Stiles," Peter grins, "thank you."

"For what?" The boy asks dismissively.

"I couldn't put it all into words if I tried, my sweet baby boy."

Stiles hums, finishes what Peter assumes is making himself presentable, and then there's another snick and a sigh.

"Time to face the music," Stiles grumbles.

"For me as well," Peter agrees, then, "you can have as many of my clothes as you like. Not just because it's arguably the most attractive thing I've ever seen, and probably extremely dangerous for my sanity, libido, and self-control- but... If it helps. Anything you need, baby."

"Yeah, thanks. Heh, my Big Bad Wolf, always taking care of me."

"Always."

"Sap. Will you- call me later, okay?"

"Of course."

"Mmm, bye-bye Peter."

"Goodbye, sweet boy, stay safe."

"You too."

"Entendre wolves!" Stiles is sing-songing into his ear from his boneless half-assed piggyback position on Peter's back while Peter tries to focus on running away from the horde of tiny Delirium-Monsters that even Stiles hadn't recognized enough to give a proper name to, "Single or double you're all-" he snickers helplessly- "entendre wolves, oh my god."
Needless to say, Stiles got whammied when he jumped in in defense of Derek, and Peter is definitely going to kill Talia. Ripping out her heart may be a good way to go about it. Stiles had had a plan, a reasonable, these creatures cause madness and death and none of us know what they are so maybe we should research some sanity runes, possible traps, etcetera sort of plan.

Which Talia hadn't listened to because, as she posited, maybe Stiles summoned these creatures and wanted them to continue their lovely little murder spree. And, Stiles, of course, came and helped like he knew that was what she was going to do, was resigned to it, and didn't want any of them to get hurt anyway. His self-sacrificing loyalty was as dangerous as it was endearing.

Peter almost stumbles over a tree-root when Stiles takes an earlobe into his mouth and sucks, "Winter. You always taste like winter and rosewater, d'you know that? It's the best thing ever. And hey," Peter is trying, really trying to focus, to grab the goddamned runed metal stake that Stiles had brought with him and throw it at the lunging demonic shadow mass behind him without breaking stride or getting hard, really.

"I love it when you call me yours. Your baby, your sweet baby boy, hey, heyyyy, tell me I'm good Peter, please? Call me your good boy?" Stiles breathes, hot and humid and flirty with his lips against the shell of Peter's ear, his body grinding with the cadence of the words.

"Jesus, I thought you said it wasn't a succubus," Peter rumbles, swallows, wraps Stiles' legs around him more securely as he tucks and rolls out of the way of an attack. There are three frustrated howls across the preserve.

"Ouch," Stiles winces as he pulls off of Peter's back and slides to the ground, Peter, already crouched, half crawls over to him.

"Are you hurt?"

"Nah, 'm fine, and they're not umm, the sexy kind of demon thing. I think they're Maniae, with the shadows and the faces and all that- that clicking."

Peter sighs, decides he needs to thoroughly research whatever Stiles is talking about later, and stifle his worry because Stiles at least doesn't smell like blood or pain or anything too horrible, but the thing with the stature of a child, the body made of shadow, and the face made of circular stone that moves and clicks in loud, disgusting, dreadful, maddening ways is on them and they need to move.

"Your arms, around my neck, now, hold on," Peter instructs, and Stiles listens, albeit slower than normal, and then Peter has him in what is essentially a bridal hold and is running again, because Stiles had told him, when he was still sane enough, that he'd already set a trap preemptively, because he knew this was going to happen, and he had no idea if it was going to work because they were not prepared enough for this. But it was their best shot.

"Now that you know what they are do you think the array will work?" Peter grits out as he zigs when all he wants to do is zag, but there are three of them and they're fast and goddamn if they're making it fucking hard.

"They're essentially feral Muses, or, like, something like that, and that array would work on Dionysos, because I am awesome, it'll work. And I know how to kill them now! Make it super shiny!"

"You mean light? Light will kill them?"

"Big light, big bang, Scotty tried to commit suicide like that once."
"Okay, Stiles, we'll figure it out. Talia!!"

"WHAT?!!"

"We need flash grenades!"

"WE DON'T HAVE FLASH GRENADES!!!!"

"And whose fault do you think that is?!"

Stiles giggles, Peter grunts, manages to turn towards where he wants to go without getting trapped, finally.

"I love you," Stiles sighs, and nuzzles into his neck while Peter managed to choke on nothing and keep running, I have to keep running, almost there-

"Don't leave me again, Peter, okay? I'd die without you."

They manage to corral the things into the array, which is, both surprisingly and unsurprisingly, big enough for the lot of them. The clicking and chittering intensify to the point where the whole Preserve is practically shaking with it. Sheriff Stilinski helpfully provides the flash grenades which has that taken care of, and Deaton provides the cure for a Maniae sting.

The Sheriff offers him a small, slightly pained smile after he hears Stiles mumbling something about love, and stay, please stay, and tells Peter to take him home.

Peter's still cooking when Stiles wakes up and pads into the kitchen, with a yawn and a stretch the boy decidedly wraps his arms around Peter's middle and rests his forehead between his shoulder blades.

"I was high," he says, "but I meant it."

"I know," Peter tells him, and then, because he knows Stiles, and it needs to be said before he starts overthinking himself into a ridiculous downward spiral, "I love you, too, Little red. I have for awhile now."

Stiles half laughs, half sobs against his back, "Thought you were gonna pull a Solo on me."

Peter scoffs, because, really, that is beneath him, turns off the burner because he doesn't want anything to burn and the food can wait but this cannot, and turns around in Stiles' arms. Stiles stays pressed against him, head down. Peter cusps his jaw, tilts his chin up and smiles at wary amber eyes, flushed wet cheeks, a trembling bottom lip.

"Oh, baby, were you really that scared?"

"A little," Stiles sniffs, then offers a salty kiss, "sorry."

"Don't be, I am honored to be loved by you. You make me happy, Stiles. I have loved falling in love with you, and I will continue to for as long as you will let me."

"Until our dying days, then, Big Bad." Stiles snickers, cuddles into his shoulder, "God, we're so fucking cheesy."

"Maybe so. But I wouldn't have it any other way."
Stiles snorts, "'Course you wouldn't. Sap."

"Your sap." Peter croons into Stiles' hair as he cradles him close.

"Oh my god, shut up."

"And you're my good boy, aren't you, Stiles?"

Stiles makes a little choking sound, then, breathless and strangled and all of a sudden smelling more like a whore-house than a church, "Yeah."

On Stiles' eighteenth birthday, Peter has plans, good plans, he thinks, but they're all cut off when Stiles is waiting for him at home with an Alpha passed out in an unceremonious heap at his feet.

"I want to elope," Stiles tells him, then kicks the guy, who groans sleepily, "I want to keep in contact with my dad and my friends, but I can't stay in this place anymore, this town and all of its ghosts. And Talia is a bitch. And I want to elope. With you. Can we?"

Peter grins, wolfishly, already turning about new plans in his head, "There's a firm in New York," he says as he lets claws bleed out over blunt, human fingernails, and Stiles, who was blushing and maybe expecting something less, beams at him like he just hung the fucking moon.

"New York," Stiles echoes, smelling like pure, immaculate, unadulterated joy.

"My good boy, did you bring me an Alpha just so we could run away together?"

"Yes," Stiles laughs, "yep, I did."

"Very good boy," Peter purrs, right before he savagely disposes of the prey on his carpet, his eyes flashing, crystal-ice warping into blood-red as easy as anything.

He learns quite a few things, after. He learns that Stiles is very resourceful, and Skype can be a wonderful thing, and there's a boy named Danny studiously keeping Talia and Deaton at bay. Stiles endures college with poise, and is no longer allowed to cook, because he is quite frankly terrible at it, and there are only so many fire extinguishers in the world. Peter quite likes this new firm, thinks he'll be able to climb the ladder easily.

Stiles still needs to be reminded, sometimes, and they have quiet days, where Peter feeds him because he can and he wants to, and Stiles just looks at him like he's the very best thing to have ever existed.

They gather a Pack, eventually, though they take their time. The new make-shift family they make is simple, comfortable and terrifyingly domestic.

Peter has never been happier, and he wouldn't trade any of it for the world. Considering who Stiles is, what he's done? He doesn't think he'll have to.

End Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Teen Wolf or any of its' characters, even though it would be totally awesome if I did, lol
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