We Will Get There

by Zeath

Summary

You probably already know what happened. Then again, you might not. You might not even give a shit. But I’m going to tell you about it anyway. We went about our daily lives, oblivious to how bad things were getting in the world. And then they hit the reset button, erasing all of their problems along with hundreds of millions of lives.

No one saw it coming, the end.

The lucky ones were killed in seconds. As for the rest of us, immune to the black poison, we had to decide; hang on to the civility of the past, or become savages in a new dark future.

The Domestics AU

Notes
It's been such a long ass time since I posted anything here so I'm sorry for that!

I wanted to have this AU for a little while but I wanted to keep it as close to the movie as possible, so it's got actual sentences from the movie's script along with the plot from the movie. I don't own any of that obviously.

Please enjoy!!

See the end of the work for more notes
Chapter 1

You probably already know what happened. Then again, you might not. You might not even give a shit. But I’m going to tell you about it anyway. We went about our daily lives, oblivious to how bad things were getting in the world. And then they hit the reset button, erasing all of their problems along with hundreds of millions of lives.

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Derek turned the radio on, going through the waves in hopes someone out there would have made a message. There was none. Just the static mocking him. With a sigh of defeat, Derek went to the only station that was on the air, got out his notebook, red pen, and expanded his map on the table. The map was his only resource for safety. He’d gotten the idea a few months ago when one of his neighbours had come running back hollering about Nailers in their supermarket, which brought an uproar about how they were going to get food if a gang had taken the only store that supplied it.

It was a useful tool, and Derek wouldn’t go anywhere without it. He needed to know what their territories were, where they were going, how big were they getting. This was survival, and he couldn’t just stay in his home and hope for the best. Looking down at his map, Derek uncapped his red pen and started planning out his next route. It was difficult to get around nowadays with people giving up on trying to get by on their own and joining an expanding gang, or just eating a bullet. Derek had marked whole cities off as gang land as he tried to figure out a route to Milwaukee, where Stiles’ father was holding down the fort and keeping them informed on their portable radio.

“Hey kids! This is 99.2 KILU, and you’re listening to Crazy Al’s radio party, The Last Radio Show. Here’s another safety update for all you domestics out there, just trying to stay alive. If you’re new to the area, listen up and I’ll fill you in on all the shit we’ve been dealing with here in the once beautiful Midwest.” Crazy Al’s voice was an annoying but comforting background noise, it gave him hope that there was someone out there who actually wanted to help people that weren’t involved in the gangs. It also helped that he played really great music – it was rare that anyone got to listen to music since no one could keep electricity going.

He did go on a tirade though which Derek found really fucking annoying, sometimes it went on for hours, but who could stop him? No one, he was alone in the studio, the only radio station left as he likes to often remind his listeners of whenever he goes on the air. At least the crazy man could give him proper information about where was safe. “This once great nation on God’s green earth no longer belongs to God. It belongs to the gangs. That’s right daddy-oh, the Midwest may have been the land of macaroni casserole, fresh cut lawns, and Schlitz beer, but we’ve got some of the worst gangs in the country. Nailers, Plowboys, Gamblers, Cherries, Sheets, just to name a few.”

As if trying to live in this desolate wasteland wasn’t bad enough, there were gangs actively trying to kill you. Nailers; they were expanding every day. They were sadistic people who used anything as a weapon but they were mostly known for wielding axes. They wouldn’t take survivors, instead whenever they met people who weren’t in their gang, they would slaughter them and take their possessions. Plowboys, in Derek’s opinion were a collection of the worst people. Looking for any woman they could find to kidnap and then enslave them to be raped until they died. They
thought of women as breeding stock to be handed out as prizes or would give another gang a lady if they’d let them go. They were disgusting cowards who bargained other people’s lives to save their own neck. Cherries, the complete opposite of Plowboys. It was a gang of women who severely hated men, and who could blame them in this world? They would go about America trying to save as many women as they could while killing men without remorse.

Gamblers, descriptions with the title. They spend all their days gambling what they had on anything. While that sounds harmless, they are one of the deadliest gangs out there. They wear animal heads as helmets, and carry around a wheel that decides whether someone lives and walks away, dies, or lives and becomes a bet at their base. Derek doesn’t know what happens once they take you but no one’s lived to talk about it, and he isn’t planning on finding out. Sheets. There wasn’t much to say about the Sheets, they were kind of a mystery but people have had their ideas. Most people think they’re made up of white men who go looking for non-white people to murder. Some think that they’re only hellbent on stealing cars and weapons, while attempting to decimate the Nailers. Who knows, but it’s the Sheets that have made it unsafe for people to go on the road at night.

By the end of the fourth record playing, Derek had found a plan to get down to Milwaukee. It may be the longest route taking all the backroads but everyone knew that the highways were blocked and even trying to cross it on foot would make you a dead man. He had a car, he had gas and extra to spare, he had plenty of weapons should he have to use them, and he had enough food and water to last a couple of days.

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“So you’re really doing this huh?” Boyd stood by the car watching Derek haul all the luggage into the back of Stiles’ jeep. It was a miracle this car had survived so much, but it was running on empty by the time Derek had gotten round to fixing the disaster as much as he could.

He sighed and pushed the backseats down while stacking the box of food on top of them, shaking his head. “Stiles wants to get his father, what can I say?”

“Well, you could always say no. You’ve got everything you need right here.” Boyd was one of the good ones, he had come to the neighbourhood a year ago with his wife begging them to help. He’s been loyal ever since, assisting anyone with the heavy lifting or going on supply runs while Erica could fix a gun faster than anyone in their small town.

Placing everything inside the trunk, Derek shut it and turned to his friend. “You think I don’t know that? This is the stupidest thing I’ve ever done, but if this saves our relationship then I’m going to risk it.”

They were all safe here. It was barricades up to the nines, with a multiple people doing perimeter checks, and enough guns and ammo to knock out anyone who tried to fight them. They had shelter, and food, and Kira had actually made something that connected to the electricity so they had power to warm showers. It was his slice of heaven, but he knew that Stiles would never be happy here without his father, who lived right in the middle of a warzone. He had also barricaded his neighbourhood but they still had gang members coming up and down their street. It wasn’t safe, and Stiles knew that. He needed to protect his family.

Boyd leaned against the jeep, crossing his arms and watching the way Derek rubbed his face with frustration. He loved Stiles with every fibre of his being, it crushes him every day knowing that
Stiles is pulling away. He pat Derek on the shoulder, letting out a chuckle. “If you feel this is the best option, for the love of God, take a different car.”

“I fixed it.” Derek grinned and brought his friend into an embrace, patting Boyd’s firm back before going around to where Stiles was waiting on the doorstep with his arms crossed. He had already said his goodbyes to everyone last night; they had a small party. No one said anything but it was clear that they thought this would be the last time they would see the disjointed couple and they were going to make the most of it. Boyd didn’t say anything, just waved as they got into the jeep and pulled out the driveway down the road and to the gates, slowing down and waving at Jackson who had the roster this morning. The man sniped a hello and manually pulled the gates apart enough to Derek to get through and they were off. This was it. They could turn back now if they wanted to but by the determination in Stiles’ eyes, Derek would never be able to forgive himself if he didn’t take this.

With a full tank of gas, and a spare in the back, they had enough to get most of the way to Milwaukee without any stopping. Derek didn’t know what they were going to do about nights just yet but it was likely they were going to be breaking in to other houses to sleep and get supplies. This was all so they could get to Milwaukee, how they were going to get back Derek had no idea, and that’s even if they get there under the radar of the gangs and other survivors who weren’t above killing someone for food or shelter.

Stiles leaned forward, turning the radio on and fiddling with it until it came onto Crazy Al’s station. The soft tunes were a relief from the awkward silence that had built up. He doesn’t know what went wrong with their relationship, why Stiles was so distant. Maybe it was because he was more focused on staying alive rather than being in the moment and enjoying the time they had, maybe it was because he wanted to give back to their small town by being out most of the night doing perimeter checks and fixing small problems. It was going to be a long and dangerous journey, and he hopes that they could make it. He hopes that the Sheriff appreciated breaking their backs to get down there, hell, he hopes Noah is still alive by the time they get to Milwaukee.

With Roosevelt Nettles playing softly in the background, Derek turned the corner until their safe town was out of view, pulled out of the cul-de-sac and onto the open road. They drove.
Chapter 2

So, it didn’t take long until the jeep overheated from the continuous driving that it hadn’t been used to for the better part of a year, and they had to pull into a garage to cool it down. Derek was pissed. If this was going to happen every twenty miles then they’d never make it to Milwaukee. He had the hood up and luckily the garage had some tools that weren’t stolen because while he was tinkering, he’d found that one of the headlights had gone flat and needed a new bulb. At least it got him away from Stiles at the moment, who wasn’t even talking to him. Like the jeep overheating was his fault. Stiles was in the passenger seat holding the only photo he had left of his family; it was when they were in hospital and his mother was still alive. One of the nurses had politely accepted to take a picture of them, it was one of the better days. The next day she had broken down completely. Stiles stroked his thumb over his mother’s face and sighed a shaky breath, leaning forward to tuck the corner of the photograph into the glove compartment door. Looking at it every day would keep him going, it was like a mantra that he needed to have his family with him once more.

The garage door in the other car department swung open with a loud rattling that startled the couple from their thoughts. Shit, had they been found? There was only a window between them, Derek ducking down and crawling over to it to have better look. There were three men. They swaggered into the garage with enough confidence to know that they were a part of a gang. One of them shut the garage door again and started talking about the fucking Sheets.

Ah, they were Nailers.

It seems that they hadn’t been noticed, the men sitting down in the other room and cracking open a can of beans while one spotted a tag of Sheets. He sneered in disgust and uncapped one of his spray paints, giving it a shake and heading over to it before throwing his middle fingers up at the picture. They were tired and hungry after dealing with a group of them only minutes before, this would be a secure place to just lay low for a little while and get their energy back and check how much ammo they have left in case they needed restocking.

Even unnoticed, they needed to get out of there. Derek turned to the car, mouthing to open the driver’s door then crept round to the front of the jeep and ever so carefully unhooked the hood, gently bringing it down until it clicked closed. He grabbed the toolbox and his gun, making his way back to the driver’s door while Stiles leaned over and slowly popped it open with a soft clack, pushing it open until it squeaked. They both froze in place, hearts beating wildly and praying to whoever was out there that the Nailers didn’t notice them.

Unfortunately, one of them did. He turned to the window, standing up from his chair and reaching for his gun. Derek had to hurry, but he had no idea if the jeep had cooled down enough to start again. Setting the toolbox down as gently as he could, he cocked his gun ready to fire if need be.

The Nailer was getting closer to the window, there was something there. Could be an animal, could be a fucking Sheet thinking they could sneak up and take them out. It was better to be safe than sorry. He was just about to open the side door when one of his mates asked if he wanted salt or pepper.

It happened so fast. The garage door breaking open and a massive truck flew in, guns blazing and taking out two Nailers without pause. This was Derek’s chance, flinging himself into the driver’s seat and starting the engine. It stuttered to nothing. Fuck, he didn’t have time for this! He tried again, Stiles’ breath panting with panic as he kept an eye on the window while grabbing the abandoned gun and aiming it, someone needed to keep them protected while Derek tried for the
third time to start the fucking car. “Come on, come on!”

The Sheets took out the last Nailer, keeping their guns up when they heard the whining of a car in the other room, turning their heads and cocking their guns. Fuck, they’d been spotted. Derek shouted as he tried one more time, Stiles getting ready to fire when the jeep roared to life. He didn’t waste anymore time, stamping on the gas and flooring it through the garage door, speeding out of there like a bat out of hell while the Sheets ran out and started firing their guns in hopes they hit their target.

They rounded the corner of the mechanic’s in seconds, Stiles looking over his shoulder at the back to check they were being followed while Derek focused on getting the fuck out of there and onto the road to find safety. After a few minutes of driving erratically, Stiles turned around and relaxed into his seat once more to breathe and set the gun on his lap, turning the safety on. “We’re clear.”

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“Here’s another safety update for all you domestics out there braving the barren countryside. It’s official that Sheets and Nailers are in a turf war. I know you fuckers can hear me out there so do us all a favour and just kill each other, so we can get on with our lives. With all that said, it’s time to get safe. Pull off the roads, find some shelter, because the sun is going down.” They drove all day, not stopping until the sky had just started to dim and they had just under two hundred miles until they were in Milwaukee. Derek had pulled into a run down suburban neighbourhood that didn’t look like anyone lived there for months. He found the most hidden one at the end of the road and pulled in, parking and turning off the jeep.

“Do you think it’s safe?” This was the most that Stiles had spoken to Derek in hours, keeping his eyes to the windows of the house searching for anyone walking around in there. He had grown quiet since the beginning, gone still when before he would fiddle with anything and chatter everyone’s ears off. It’s what Derek fell in love with. Even now without the Adderall keeping him in check, it was the fear alone that if he kept making noise he would be discovered and they would die that kept him from making any unnecessary movement. It didn’t appear to have any life inside so they stepped out the car, stretching a little after their long journey in one position. They took what they needed for the night; some food, some matches and lanterns, the map, and of course weapons. Anything else was hidden away in the car in hopes it just looks abandoned and no one would have an interest in it to look for their supplies.

Derek went first; going to the front door with his gun up in case someone was just biding their time. He opened the door and waited a couple of seconds before hurrying in, Stiles quick to follow behind him and shut the door. He stayed in the entrance of the house while Derek did a sweep, his eyes wandering as he took in the place. It was dusty from no one tending to it, but it wasn’t dirty, so someone must have taken good care of the place which meant people must have been here recently. Maybe a couple of weeks ago at most. Once he got the all clear from Derek on the first floor and heard footsteps of him going up the stairs, Stiles picked up his bag and starting hunting for anything that could be useful to them.

Going into the bathroom, he found a couple medications which could come in handy to them, along with a woman’s perfume. Unable to help himself, he spritzed some onto his wrists and took a whiff of the lavender fragrance, humming in pleasure. A nice smelling man was rare these days, so Stiles slipped it into his bag and left the bathroom to go find anything else. Everything was messy, like people had been looking for anything that could possibly be useful so he doubted that there would be anything left for him and Derek. Stiles did find a record box, flicking through it for
anything that would interest him. As if he had power to actually play anything.

Next was the kitchen. He had little hope for what was left in the pantry by now, and sure enough when he opened the doors there was nothing there that would be substantial. There were no cans, no food that didn’t have an expiry date, the food that was available was green and furry. They weren’t meant to be green and furry. Digging around a little more, Stiles searched the top of the pantry and actually found some honey that didn’t look like it’s gone off. He doesn’t remember the last time he had honey, they didn’t have any in their town. Stuffing it in his bag and calling it quits on the rest, Stiles continued upstairs to see if there were extra clothes for them or something similar.

The house definitely didn’t have anyone in it which relaxed Derek, rounding the corner upstairs and finishing the last of his sweep. They were bedrooms, one was dusty but clean enough that the two of them could sleep in it, but they other just made his heart sink into this stomach. There was blood on the walls, blood on the doorway and the door, blood on the floor. Just a lot of blood everywhere in the room. There was the Nailers tag spray painted on the wall, as if they were proud of their work. The two people in the stained bed were obviously dead, hacked up beyond any recognition. At least they died together.

He heard footsteps behind him and before Derek could warn him, Stiles had already taken in the scene before him with shock in his eyes. He hadn’t seen anything like this. He never went on supply runs and he hadn’t witnessed the horrors that the gangs do. Stiles couldn’t stop staring at the butchery in front of him, so Derek stepped forward and pulled the bloody sheets up to cover their bodies. “This will never be us, I promise.”

When he turned back to the doorway, Stiles had already left down the hallway to vomit into the bathrooms toilet. He needed to get rid of the bodies, so Stiles didn’t have to see them again, so the dead couple could have some kind of peace. He didn’t really have anything that could help though, and so he dug through the laundry pile for two bedcovers. Derek hauled the man in first, making sure to tie it up properly so he wouldn’t break the bag and make more of a mess, then set the woman in the other bag and doing the same. He dragged them out one at a time to a time to the garage and left them there together, shutting the door.

Stiles was in the car again, he didn’t want to accidently walk in on Derek doing whatever he was doing. He needed to talk to his dad. Picking up the radio and finding their wavelength, Stiles listened for a moment to see if anything was on the air before speaking. “Sheriff Stilinski this is Jedi Starfighter, over.”

He waited for a couple of minutes for his father to pick up. There was nothing but static laughing back at him so he tried again, maybe his father didn’t hear him. “Sheriff Stilinski this is Jedi Starfighter, over.”

Again, nothing. He hadn’t been getting through to his dad for a couple of weeks now, and it was really worrying him. Anything could have happened. He could have run out of battery, or kidnapped, or worse. He wasn’t going to think about that right now. His bottom lip trembled the more the static continued with nothing replying back to him. Pressing the button again, he took a breath. “Dad?”

Another range of silence from his father’s end and it took the wind out of Stiles’ sails, slumping his shoulders and pressing the button once more. “Okay, just letting you know that we’re on our way. I miss you.”

With that, he got out the car and entered the house once more, going up the stairs and noticing that the bedroom door had been cleaned and closed. At least he felt a little better before going past it to enter the other room and getting to work on getting all the dust off the bedsheets. By the time they
were both finished with fixing the house to their liking, it was dark outside and they had lit a couple of candles to get some light on the situation. They were in the cleaner bedroom, Derek at the desk with his map and his notebook updating it with another Sheet and Nailer tag before planning another route on where they were. Stiles had relaxed as much as he could in the bed, watching the way the fire flickers on the candle.

There was silence, the type that showed there was obvious problems between the two of them that they didn’t know how to solve, and so they ignored it for more pressing matters. Derek focused on his work, while Stiles zoned out and tried to get some sleep. Derek finished his map, noticing where he had gone through and smiled softly at the memory. “Remember when we used to complain about the Milwaukee drive?”

Stiles thought back to when they used to be happier, before the arguments and avoidance. They would go down the state with a full tank of gas and an extra in the trunk singing songs with the windows down and holding hands over the gearstick, their rings shining in the sunlight. He hugged his pillow and tried to remember why it had to change. “Five hours… Seems like nothing now.”

“You think I’d be able to get your dad to give me his gun this time?” Derek stretched in the chair, feeling his back crack and relaxed back down, turning his head to the bed.

Stiles was turned away from him, watching the candle drip wax down the side of its body before slowly drying out and becoming stiff. “The Wildy Magnum in his safe? I doubt it. He doesn’t like you.”

Sheriff Noah Stilinski has never liked Derek, he thought he was too old for Stiles since they were nearly seven years apart from each other which doesn’t sound like a lot. But because Stiles was sixteen when they started dating, it would have qualified as statutory and as the Sheriff, his dad never approved of it. He always thought Derek was taking advantage of Stiles even though it was always the teenager that made the first move. Even now that Stiles is well past being an adult, twenty-three, and Derek was nearing thirty, his father still doesn’t like him. When Stiles moved out and headed to his father’s place for a little while, it was difficult for Derek to even get a word in before Noah had intervened. “I think the last thing he said to me was ‘get your shit together, you clown’, it was very tasteful.”

“Sounds like something he’d say.” Stiles hummed softly at the memory of when his dad would sit in front of the television watching the Mets and having a very colourful vocabulary whenever something happened that he didn’t agree with.

Derek took the moment to enjoy the longest conversation they’ve had in months, placing his glasses on the desk and rubbing his eyes before blowing out his candle and climbing into the bed. He laid there silently, turning his head to watch Stiles’ back unmoving from his position. He remembers when they would take every opportunity to roll around in the sheets together, any time of the day they were free. The both of them would have condoms on their person just for moments when they had a few spare minutes to get off. He hasn’t touched Stiles in almost a year. A part of him was almost glad that the government covered the world with chemical gas if it meant Stiles came home to him, that he could get this chance to show Stiles that he never stopped loving him.

Stiles didn’t look at him, simply leaned over and blew out the candle before resuming the same position facing away from his ex. “Goodnight Derek.”

They lay there in the darkness listening to each other breathe but not doing anything, Derek couldn’t sleep without knowing he was safe. It was often to the point of exhaustion that he would just pass out. Stiles zonked out after a good quarter of an hour; he had a tiring day more than he was used to, he’d probably get nightmares from what he’s been through today. Derek just counted
sheep until his eyelids got too heavy for him to keep open.

They should have been more careful when it came to the light. It should have been the first thing to know when squatting in a house that wasn’t theirs. Any kind of light from a house that isn’t meant to have life in it was an easy sign for people outside to come in and take what they want. They were obviously too tired, or were too used to living in their relaxed little town where they didn’t have to worry about that sort of thing.

It was their downfall; outside on the road stood a figure, staring up at the window that once held candlelight.
Chapter 3

The night was uneventful and the light poured into the room, waking both of them up from their sleep. Derek was the first to get up though because while Stiles was awake, he wasn’t exactly kind in the morning and would often try many times to go back to sleep. Derek made sure to pack everything up apart from their supply bag and weapon and stuff it into the car before anything else so they could get going faster, making his way inside once more and digging through the bag for his toothbrush and paste.

Standing in the kitchen brushing his teeth, he heard Stiles get out of bed from the footstep and soft grumbling. He could always count on Stiles being the same day-hater as he was before the apocalypse. The day was sunny and warm but the chilled night left the floor cold on his feet, at least it wasn’t frosty, they didn’t bring any winter gear and it would be a pain to keep chiselling ice from the windshield.

That’s when he heard it.

It was just a small revving noise off in the distance but Derek knew what that fucking meant. He wasn’t safe, and they were coming for them. He opened the curtain and peered out the window, sure enough he could see a motorbike coming down the road with a passenger seat extended on them. That was two guys, and he had no time to get in the car and go without being noticed. They would have to hide or fight. Spitting in the sink, Derek bolted up the stairs and grabbed Stiles from where the man was blurrily getting changed. “We’ve got to hide, now.”

The bike’s engine was much closer now, enough that Stiles could hear it. His face drained of color as he yanked his trousers up and ran out the bedroom trying to find somewhere that would hold them both undetected. Then, he looked up. There was a latched door on the ceiling that led to the attic, it would be perfect. Derek reached his hand up to press on the door, hearing it click and open before swinging down. Stiles was smart enough to grab the chair from the bedroom as leverage to get up into the attic with Derek quick behind him. He needed to move the chair and found an old broomstick from the dusty pile of old tools from the corner, putting it down and moving the chair across to the wall so it looked inconspicuous.

They were right on time, as soon as Derek pulled the broomstick up they both heard the front door slam open as if someone has kicked it down. Stiles jolted and covered his face in pure panic. He curled his body up as tight as he could by bringing his knees to his chest as spoke in the tiniest voice he could muster. “I don’t want to die here, I want to go home.”

“They’re going to be fine. Say it for me.”

Stiles just stared at him with a crestfallen expression on his face, as if Derek needed him to say it so he could believe it. He took a deep breath and let it out gently, blinking and letting a tear spill down his cheek. “Be careful.”

It wasn’t what he wanted to hear, but he’ll take it. Rising slowly to his feet with his small but deadly weapon in hand, he tip-toed to the door and carefully lowered himself down until the pads
of his feet touched the floor in the hallway. He had about ten seconds before he heard the thudding of a heavy-footed boot make its way upstairs, peering around the corner to take him in before turning back and silently running back to the bedroom.

The man was wearing multiple sized spikes on one side of the shoulder of his leather jacket, and steampunk glasses on his face, he was taller than average and has thick arms which meant he did a lot of swinging, he must be part of the Nailers or something that involved a large weapon. Derek wasn’t going to be able to win in a fair fight, especially if he only had a screwdriver and barely any clothes on. The thug stopped in the hallway, listening to any noise from someone in the other rooms while swinging his axe painted with the American flag. It was a little rusty, probably from the amount of fluid it’s been drowned in throughout its life.

He started moving again, and Stiles could hear each weighted footstep on the wood just below the latched door of the attic. He couldn’t stand waiting but he knew he would be useless in a fight. His eyes caught a glimpse of a radio and tattered headphones, picking them up slowly as to not make any noise before putting them over his head. They were noise silencers, and once they were placed securely over his ears, he barely heard a thing. With that, Stiles closed his eyes and hugged his legs tight to his body, praying to anyone still out there in this Godforsaken world that Derek would get out of this alive.

The Nailer was peering into every room he came across, chuckling when he opened the door to where the butchered couple once laid before turning around and poking his head into another room. Derek was in the last room at the end of the hall and it would only be a matter of time until he would be found if he stayed there and did nothing. There was a small tinkering up in the attic that made Derek’s heart stop. The guy must have heard it too because his footfalls had stopped. This was his only chance or Stiles would be found out.

Derek peeked out of the room just enough to notice the Nailer turn around and creep towards where the butchered couple once laid before turning around and poking his head into another room. Derek was in the last room at the end of the hall and it would only be a matter of time until he would be found if he stayed there and did nothing. There was a small tinkering up in the attic that made Derek’s heart stop. The guy must have heard it too because his footfalls had stopped. This was his only chance or Stiles would be found out.

Derek ran into the living room behind the Nailer, practically jumping on top of the older man and bringing his screwdriver down hard into his shoulder. The force bringing them both rolling over the sofa and down onto the carpet, struggling to get control. Derek was quick to kick the gun out of the guy’s reach before bowling over to straddle the man’s waist and start stabbing anywhere he could get.

He was screaming in pain with his arms up trying to protect his face and chest from the penetrating stabs, while also trying to find his gun to shoot this son of a bitch. But Derek was too fast, too headstrong on getting this done and hurrying out of the house onto the road and the fuck out of this town. He brought the screwdriver down hard at the old man’s face, and even with the man holding his hand up it was too late. The tool stabbed straight through his hand and out the
other side, right into his eye. The shrill shriek of agony coming from the man was enough for Derek to scramble off of him and fall back against the sofa, watching in horror as the Nailer slumped and went limp on the carpet.

Panting heavily, Derek thought about pulling the screwdriver out but then he saw the man wasn’t dead. He wasn’t fucking dead, and with the one eye he had left, he was looking right at Derek. He needed to get the fuck out of here. He got up and ran out the room, swallowing the bile rising in his throat to unlatch the attic door, haul the chair over and climbing up into the attic to get Stiles who had headphones on and picking at his nails anxiously.

He grabbed the gun first, Stiles startling out of his mind but understanding to hurry the fuck up. He threw the headphones off and followed Derek down out the attic and to the bedroom trying to ignore the fact that there was a fucking dead body right in the middle of the hallway, grabbing the bag and heading down the stairs not looking at anything but the front door. He didn’t need to see it, he couldn’t change anything even if he had the chance to. Derek wasn’t far behind him, making sure he had everything before slamming the door behind him and unlocking the car, swinging the boot open and throwing everything in the back haphazardly before slamming it closed once more and getting into the driver’s side. He didn’t even have fucking trousers or shoes on but he started the car and reversed out the driveway, speeding off down the road and not looking back.

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They had gotten another thirty or so miles before they had to restock their food supply, they had half a bottle of water and a packet of crackers to spare. Stiles had tried to get in touch with his father again but no one was replying and hadn’t been active for days now. Derek wasn’t going to say anything but he knew something had happened to Noah and Stiles was just too stubborn to admit it. They couldn’t turn back now anyway, so it was no use fighting about it. “Here’s another safety update for all you domestics out there. Word on the street is there’s a new renegade Cherry, saving women and killing anyone in her way. Look out boys, she’s a fucking psycho! There’s also a lone wolf roaming the countryside who likes to get kinky with a straight razor. I mean, come on! Who comes up with this shit? Is the world really this crazy? Of course it is, or my name isn’t Crazy Al!”

They were a hundred and thirty four miles to Milwaukee when they found a store that wasn’t around any known gang territory, and looked abandoned enough to park up and restock. Inside wasn’t much to take in, it looked pretty barren actually. Most of the aisles had been wiped clean of any kind of edible resources but Stiles was determined. He picked up a basket from the front door and headed down each aisle picking things up to see if they were useable. There were cans that looked alright but when he picked them up, found that they had already been opened and the contents eaten already. Rotting fruit wasn’t even attempted. They did manage to salvage a couple packets of biscuits and a jar of jam for the road, which Stiles called a win.

Derek was far too concerned with the man sneaking up behind him, before he could turn around and cock his gun at the man, there was a gun already pointed at him. “Hold it! Drop the basket and put the gun on the ground. Slowly.”

The man had a black woollen mask over his face but his body language had a look of total zen, like he could fire the gun and go on about his day without a single piece of regret, like holding a gun was completely natural to him. Stiles dropped the basket and let it hit the floor with a loud
clank, hoping that the jam jar survived the fall. Derek was more stubborn, he didn’t want to be left vulnerable to this stranger without his gun and even thought about firing it when the man spoke again knowing exactly what he was thinking. “Don’t even try anything, I’m not alone.”

It took the fight of his body, and knew he couldn’t win this battle. He knelt down, putting his gun on the floor and swore softly as the man stepped closer now that he wasn’t in danger of being shot at. Derek stepped closer to Stiles, trying to protect him with his body if that’s all he could do. “Just take whatever you want, okay? Just let us go.”

“All I’m looking for is a handshake, friend.” The man switched the safety on his gun and aimed it away from the disjointed couple to hike the strap up through his arm and onto his shoulder, pulling off the woollen mask and pocketing it in his thick camouflage coat before holding out his hand. Derek couldn’t trust him, and with the way Stiles was looking at the guy’s hand like it was some kind of serpent, neither did he. The man seemed to notice the obvious discomfort and knelt down, picking up Derek’s gun before handing it back. “Here, take it.”

Derek was confused as fuck. Why was this man being so nice to them? If he wasn’t alone he could be part of a gang but he’s never known any gang members to be kind to anyone outside of their group. Hell, he’s seen other domestics become savage to other people without any excuses. The man stuck his hand out again once Derek took his gun back and secured it on his shoulder. “Alan Deaton.”

“Derek Hale.” They shook hands, and Alan turned to shake Stiles’ as he introduced himself as well. It was still awkward, they didn’t know what to make of it. Alan seemed content though and that was always a positive thing, they never wanted to upset someone who had the upper hand.

“Sorry for the theatrics but you know how it is, it’s been a while since we’ve seen people like you.” Alan chuckled and bent down to pick up their basket as well, handing it back to Stiles who thanked him and checked on the jam jar – still intact thank fuck.

Derek raised an eyebrow, he wasn’t going to say anything to give it away but he needed to know every possible outcome of this meeting. He could still be part of a gang for all he knew. “We?”

“I’ve been watching you.” Alan didn’t seem to mind about the questions though, happy to talk to people. Stiles tensed up and glanced at Derek who tried to keep a stoic face but Alan could tell he had said the wrong thing and held up hands up peacefully. “That came out wrong. Listen, we’re the same. We want the same things. As a matter of fact, well, it sounds crazy but I was wondering –.”

Before Alan could finish his sentence, he heard a talking outside and went on high alert, moving them down to the back of the store and hid behind an aisle. It was a small space so Stiles practically sat on top of Derek to keep himself hidden, keeping his eyes on Alan as he heard the store’s doors open with the cheery bell ringing to alert the store of new arrivals. There were four people who entered, the leader of the group had his face covered as well with more steampunk glasses on. The rest all wielded heavy guns made to intimidate. Derek heard one of them – most likely the leader – speak to the others. “If you find the one with the moles, don’t mess up his face.”

He tightened his grip on Stiles, tucking him tighter into his body. These people were looking for Stiles, they must have known about him from one of their kills. It could be the Nailers since he offed one of their men and severely injured and possibly killed another. Shit, they must have been tracking them for miles, how did he not see that?

Alan leaned over to the pair, whispering while the gang members started searching. “Listen, my sister and I would like to invite you both over for dinner.”
Wait. What the fuck?

“What?” Derek frowned deeply at the other man. He must have a fucking screw loose if he was talking about dinner, while gang members were going up and down the aisles searching to kill them.

Alan didn’t even seem fazed at the scene going on around them, further giving evidence to Derek’s ideals about him not being all there in the head. “Oh sorry, late lunch. You don’t have to dress up, my sister will open up a bottle of wine, and you can meet my niece and nephew.”

Gunshots fired in the shop causing the three of them to flinch and tuck themselves tight into each other, Stiles clinging to Derek’s arms as he wrapped them around the man’s smaller frame. It finished in a matter of seconds, with the silence deafening. Was it another gang outside? Was it the people Alan said he was with? Derek spoke up after a few moments of ongoing silence. “What the fuck was that?”

“Oh, my nephew, Steven. All clear?” Alan had turned his head to look up, Derek following his gaze to where a small lump under a blanket was laid down across the top of the cabinets, a machine gun on a tripod smoking next to him. The boy pulled the camouflage blanket back and kneeled as he sorted out his gun, getting rid of the shells, then gave the thumbs up. What the fuck was going on?

Alan was hellbent on them going to their house for dinner, following them around the store as they collected a couple other pieces of food for supplies. They left the store and Alan spotted their jeep hiding around the corner of the store, whistling and checking it out. Stiles had preened at how Alan was looking at it with interest; he takes very good care of his baby and to have someone appreciate that gives him a sense of pride. It’s been through thick and thin with him; with it first being his mother’s car and sitting in the back in the kid’s seat watching her flick through the radio and sing along to the tunes, to getting the keys on his sixteenth birthday. His father had told him to take extra care with it considering how old it was and Stiles had followed that rule ever since, he researched how to take proper care of the engine, how to clean everything to make the car drive to its maximum potential.

It had started to wither in its old age, the parts harder to come by once it stops working. Coughing whenever Stiles started the engine, and he had almost run out of duct tape from the amount of times he had to bandage a pipe up. He wasn’t going to give up on it though, no matter how many times it has broken down or overheated and other people – Derek – may get frustrated all they want but he wasn’t going to quit on his baby. Alan walked around the car and gave it a full sweep before turning to the couple. “This is a real beauty, done in the eighties correct?”

“Right, nineteen eighty exactly. One of their better makes, it used to be my mum’s precious before it was bequeathed to me.” Stiles was delighted to discuss about his car for hours on end, especially with someone so full of knowledge about the subject as well. He could see Derek rolling his eyes but frankly he didn’t give a fuck, stepping forward and giving him a full tour of the jeep. “I’ve just been messing with the radiator, it’s been overheating a lot recently.”

Alan nodded along and smiled warmly at the affectionate way Stiles was speaking about his baby, running his hand over the hood of the jeep. “Well, my offer still stands. You can talk it over if you’d like, but if you did happen to come, I might just happen to have an original service manual for a CJ-5 jeep.”

Stiles mouth gaped open, this had to be a fucking joke. His mother had lost the manual a decade ago and since then Stiles had been thanking the internet ever since, but now that there was no electricity he had to say goodbye to google and hello to guessing. “Bullshit,”
But Alan just shook his head, his grin turning more smug than kind. “It was my old man’s. You’re welcome to have it.”

They continued obsessing over the jeep while Derek kept his eye out for snipers and any other gangs that may come by. He saw Alan’s nephew coming out of the store’s side door with a machine almost half his size being carried on his shoulder, holding the tripod in his other hand. He turned to the kid – he now remembers Alan calling him Steven in the heat of gunfire – not even in his teenage years yet, probably wasn’t even into double digits. “You into cars?”

The kid, Steven, watched his uncle talking animatingly with Stiles before shaking his head and giving a shrug. “Nah. I like guns.”

Well, fair enough then.

With that, Steven walked away to where their car was and opened the door to the backseat, placing the gun and tripod into the back before getting in. Derek shook the small encounter off; the kid probably wasn’t old enough to remember what it was like before the world went to shit. This was his life from the start, being brought up knowing fear in this kill or be killed environment, he probably never got to finish his primary school years before picking up a gun.

“You know, it would mean the world to me and my sister if you would join us.” Alan’s voice cut Derek out of his thoughts, turning away from where he was watching Steven in the back of the car fiddling around with his ammo.

No matter how kind Alan was being, he couldn’t trust anyone but Stiles. No one in this world was this nice unless they wanted people to join their cause or they wanted something from him and thought they could try talking it out first before resorting to violence. Derek shook his head, looking over Alan’s shoulder to where Stiles was standing with his arms crossed. “Oh, we really should go.”

He knew Stiles had wanted to go, if not for anything but that service manual, but they needed to get back on the road and to Milwaukee, or at least somewhere safe to lay low for the night and start again in the morning. Alan wasn’t going to give up though, his shoulders slumping in disappointment. “I understand. I just can’t help but think that we met for a reason. People like us don’t just cross paths, not out here. And seeing you two… It gave me hope.”

He didn’t know what to say to that, trying not to make eye contact with either Stiles or Alan, looking down at his shoes before the man spoke up again. “And might I add. Marin makes the best green bean casserole you’ll ever have.”

Derek wasn’t going to win this, letting out a soft sigh and rocking himself back and forth on his feet as he turned to Alan’s car again where his nephew had stopped playing with his bullets and was staring longingly out the window at them. Well, alright. His options; he could refuse again and the guy might not want to hear that and actually force them to his house. He could refuse and Alan just lets him go – preferable. Or, they could go and possibly stay there for the night with full stomachs and make new friends, and Stiles could be content with getting that damn service manual. He wasn’t happy about it, but Derek knew where the most logic was. “I guess, if it’s on the way.”

Alan was delighted by the news, perking right back up and laughing as he waved at Steven to get out the car. “Now that’s the spirit! Steven! Let’s get this beautiful car hooked up to the rig. It’ll be safer for us to ride in the truck. Pull around back and I’ll get the truck ready.”

With that, he ran off to get his own car set up, leaving Derek to glare at Stiles who honestly didn’t give a fuck right now because it was hope that he could fix everything wrong with his baby. He
just shrugged and took the keys from Derek’s pocket without so much as a care for what the other man wanted, getting into the jeep and starting it up before driving it around the back of the truck, getting it as close as he could while Alan gave the thumbs up for him to turn the engine off and get out to let him sort it out.

He hooked the front and started pulling the chains until it started lifting, making sure that it was secure and wouldn’t fall off while Steven was standing on the back of the truck making sure that the excess chain wouldn’t get tangled or drag across the road and potentially scrape Stiles’ jeep. Once they locked it in place they climbed into their truck with Derek and Stiles sharing the passenger seat, started the engine and made their way to the main road with Alan tapping his thumbs against the steering wheel cheerily. “I can’t wait for you to meet Marin, I think you two would really hit it off –.”

Before Alan could get another word out, there was a huge fog horn breaking the peaceful silence of the neighbourhood. The rumbling of a heavy vehicle and police sirens following shortly after, with two utes and a massive plow-truck blocked their path in the junction, Alan slamming the emergency break on. Oh fuck. They were Plowboys.
Plowboys were disgusting creatures, known for stealing women and forcing them into sexual slavery. They were raped daily, multiple times and made to bear children to the fuckers who ruined their lives. Plowboys thought that they were the more superior sex and could do whatever they wanted without any kind of repercussions, but if they were being threatened they would be quick to use a girl as a bargaining tool to get out of the situation. Even though they came across heavy handed with their plow being upgraded to have a tower with a gun installed so they could destroy anything in their path as well as a lot of firepower, in all truth they were cowards and known for running away from a fight if there didn’t need to be one.

Alan shut off the engine as the Plowboys exited their vehicles, murmuring to them as he opened his own door. “Just sit tight.”

He stepped out the truck and came to meet with the group that were waiting for him, the leader looking smug but absolutely filthy, like he’d never even seen a shower in weeks. The man held his gun and drummed his fingers over the barrel, nodding his head. “Alan, how’s the family?”

“Safe. And yours, Theo?” Alan didn’t particularly enjoy his conversations with Theo Raeken, but he knew that if they got off on the wrong foot then he would have some serious problems with keeping his sister and niece out of their clutches.

Theo grinned and bounced on his feet, his eyes darting to the new folks in Alan’s car. “Steadfast.”

They needed to get to the point, Alan didn’t like niceties and he had an itch to get home and see to it that his family were safe. Seems Theo wasn’t going to talk first though, so he had to take the first initiative. “So, what are you doing out here?”

“Just patrolling the neighbourhood, hunting for Gamblers. You know they stole nine of my girls? Fucking freaks. Probably using them to make babies.” Some of the Plowboys chuckled as if Theo had said a joke, the dirty man turning to look at them before shrugging and bouncing on his feet once more. He moved so his finger was on the trigger of his gun, tapping it mindlessly and tilting his body so Alan could tell he was obviously looking past him and to the new couple in the truck. “You have some fresh faces with you.”

Alan wasn’t going to let them see that he was concerned, keeping his tone light hearted as always while Stiles could hear their conversation and unconsciously moved his hand to grab hold of Derek’s. “They’re friends.”

Theo nodded his head in understanding before taking another gander at the two in the truck, noticing how one of them had a very fine and feminine face. He was obviously male but some men loved a bit of flavour, some fight with their pleasure. He could rack a pretty penny, especially with those lips. “Couldn’t help but notice the merchandise.”

“K-98. Where’d you get it?” The easiest way to stop that direction was to change the conversation entirely. Theo loved to brag about new things he’d collected along his travels, either it be women,
or guns, or new plows. As he suspected, Theo broke out into a grin and held his gun out to inspect it proudly.

Once again some of the Plowboys broke out into laughter, but Theo spoke over them to nod at the plowtruck behind him. “You see the cooch in the truck? I call her Betsy.”

There was indeed a woman in the passenger side of the truck, Alan could see that she had blood covering the lower part of her face, and a thick collar around her neck connecting to a chain. She looked pissed. Alan couldn’t blame her though he was surprised; usually the women that Plowboys find are terrified and begging someone to save them, to help them. She had that expression on her face that once she was freed she would destroy everyone who did this to her. “Is she a Cherry? What’s she doing down here?”

“I don’t know, deserter maybe. Didn’t see any more of those man-hating bitches, so.” He shrugged again, looking back at the truck where the girl – Betsy, as he has eloquently named her – was pulling against the chain she was connected to in frustration while the driver was grinning at her and telling her to relax while rubbing her leg. “I assumed she was alone. She will turn a pretty penny.”

Theo almost forgot, letting his gun drop down to his side while he fumbled around in his coat pockets. Finding what he was looking for, he pulled out a square with a blinker on it. He’d written her name on it to keep it from being confused as anything else than what it was. He’d done it before with a couple of the runners, and it didn’t take long for them to lose hope of ever escaping. “I even injected her with one of those animal tracking devices. Just like old Ginger.”

He remembers old Ginger. She was a fighter for sure. Beautiful red hair, extremely smart with great tits and good child bearing hips. It didn’t matter how intelligent she was, but boy did it give him satisfaction to foil her plans whenever she had that look in her eye about getting out. She’d broke his lock plenty of times, even ran away in the middle of the night after electrocuting the man she was meant to be with. He had no choice but to inject her. She’d lost hope after that, sitting in the corner of the lady’s room and ignoring everyone for days, only showing emotion when she was with a man. She’d given birth to two wonderful little girls after that, fuck knows who the father is.

“This one ain’t getting away. She’s a wild one too. She bit Matt’s finger clean off when we caught her. Oh yeah, I’m going to test drive her tonight…” Theo laughed at the memory, pocketing the device as he spoke. He heard Betsy struggling once more in the truck but didn’t bother to turn his head, instead he focused on the pretty boy in Alan’s passenger seat. “So, who’s the cha-cha in the truck?”

Derek could feel the bile rising in his throat at how this Theo guy was staring at Stiles, squeezing his hand as Stiles resting his head on Derek’s shoulder. He was shaking in fear, trying to control his breathing. They didn’t know if Alan was just going to give Stiles up to let them pass, or if the Plowboys were just going to kill everyone and take Stiles as a consolation prize. Why were they even interested in Stiles in the first place? They went for women, and while he had some smooth edges, it was pretty clear even from far away that Stiles was a man. Steven had poked his head from the backseat, speaking up. “Don’t worry, Plowboys are pussies. Don’t tell uncle I said ‘pussies’.”

The girl in the plow leaned forward as much as she could and stared out the window at the truck, she couldn’t understand why they were acting so friendly with these evil guys. Then again, they were all fucking men. Maybe they were a part of the gang as well. Though, from the way Theo was talking it didn’t sound like it. He had his eye on the younger man in the truck and even though she was too far away to get a proper read on his face, it appeared the two men in the front seat were a couple with the way his head was on the other guy’s shoulder. A gay couple. It was
pretty rare nowadays, even with there being more men in the world. It just made them starved for women even more, like pigs.

The black man talking to Theo spoke up once more, bringing her attention back to the conversation. “I would really appreciate it if you would move your plow. I’m going to be late for dinner.”

Theo took a moment to think before bouncing on the spot and keeping his eye on Stiles, not even caring about what Alan was doing. His boys would have his back if he stepped out of line. “And what if I don’t?”

The tension was thick in the air, Stiles letting out a soft whimper because that Theo guy was fucking terrifying with the way he was just staring at him like he was a freshly cooked roast. He didn’t even notice at first when something slid out from the backseat, but when it came into full view he gasped and tried to inch away from it. Steven had pulled his machine gun out and was aiming it at Theo, flicking off the safety and waiting for his uncle to say the word.

Alan stood his ground, his face expressionless while Theo started to smile thinly. He turned his gaze away from their truck to face Alan once more. He took the man in for a moment and hummed amusingly before picking his gun back up and chuckling darkly before holding his hand out, shaking it when Alan reciprocated. “Give my best to Marin.”

“Will do.” With that, they broke apart and Theo clicked his fingers. The other Plowboys disarming the guns and plodded back to their own vehicles. Alan didn’t move until they had all gotten into their trucks and started their engines, then made his way back to his car and got in. Steven had pulled the machine gun back and was putting it away, making it all that much easier for Stiles to break away from Derek with a small cough, letting go of the other man’s hand. He didn’t even try to look at Derek’s face, he didn’t want to know what his ex was thinking right now, instead he turned to Alan and gave him a half-hearted smile when the engine roared to life. “I really appreciate you doing this.”

He then pulled out onto the main road, holding his hand up in thanks to Theo as the plow moved out the way of their path. With that they were home free, Derek finally relaxing once more now that Stiles was away from any imminent danger. Alan hummed to himself and started tapping his thumbs on the steering wheel once more, the light rhythm soothing him as they made their way to the Deaton home.

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With one hundred and sixteen miles to Milwaukee, they had finally parked up for the night with Alan letting the jeep off his truck and wheeling it into the garage for him and Stiles to have a little heart to heart. He had opened up the hood and was inspecting the radiator with frustration when Alan tapped his arm with a small booklet, he took it as light up with glee when he read the title for a CJ-5 manual. “Wow, thank you.”

“As promised.” Alan chuckled as Stiles opened it up to have a look at what could possibly help him fix his baby. He would have to go into full detail later when he had time and they were both safe in a place that they had been to before. Either their town or at his father’s. “So, where are you headed?”

He may have been stargazed about the manual because he knew better than to just give his
information outright to strangers, even if they were very nice and had given them shelter for the night along with feeding them. He kicked himself after his opened his mouth, but it was already too late to go back now. “Milwaukee.”

The man nodded his head with a thoughtful expression, rubbing his chin with his finger. “So obviously, you want to stay off I-94 and highway ten. If the snipers don’t get you, the gangs will spot you from the radio towers. You came from Two Harbors?”

Stiles jotted the information down for Derek to put on his map later, humming affirmatively. He didn’t know why Alan wanted to know all the details so badly, but if it came with useful routes then he wasn’t going to refuse. Derek would thank him later. “It’s supposed to be safe up there, why’d you leave?”

He scratched the back of his head with a soft chuckle, slotting the jeep manual into his back pocket as he tried to think wisely about what he was going to say next. “My dad. It’s not exactly safe down there for him so…”

He didn’t want to think about his dad right now, he was already filled up with worry. He hadn’t heard from him in so long, anything could have happened and while he really wanted to be with his father, he knows Derek thinks it’s not the best decision to make. Especially when there’s been no contact for this long. Alan seemed to notice the anxiety on his head, tilting his head down and murmuring softly as if talking to a scared animal. “Having second thoughts?”

“No! No, it’s uh…” Stiles didn’t know what to say. He let out a breath and shook his head. He couldn’t really talk about this with Derek, or anyone at the town. He had to bottle his feelings on the matter and while he’s headstrong about getting to his father, he’s scared about what he will find once he’s there. After today he’s probably never going to see Alan again, or he could become a great ally for the future so Stiles didn’t feel the need to lie when he’d already given so much away. “He doesn’t know that we’re coming to get him. He used to speak over the CB to me every day, but I haven’t heard from him in a couple of weeks.”

Alan crossed his arms in concern, watching Stiles’ expression go from worry to frustration then guilt. “You think something happened?”

He didn’t want to admit it. He didn’t. it was too painful to think about and if he told Derek, it would only make things worse for the both of them. Derek is risking his life – both of their lives – by making this journey just to get Stiles’ dad, with the mindset that he would get into Noah’s good books once more and they could start anew. Stiles knew what Derek’s plan was, he wasn’t blind, and while he was touched that Derek would go so far to start the flame between them again, he doesn’t know how to think about them actually getting together. “I can’t really say that to him now, can I?”

They both heard Marin in the other room call to everyone that dinner was ready. Alan pat Stiles on the arm and dropped the hood down with a soft click before they both left the garage to wash up before dinner.

It did smell amazing. They were all seated around the dining table with the kids sitting next to each other on one side while Derek and Stiles sat on the opposite. Both Marin and Alan sat at the ends of the table, handing out bowls full of fresh vegetables and steamed potatoes. They all had two slices of meat each, Derek couldn’t really put his finger on what kind of meat it was as he chewed. It was delicious though and he told Marin so, who flushed and thanked him. The lights flickered above them and Alan scoffed a little. “Sorry, generator.”

Like he had anything to be sorry for, it was a feat in itself that they had any sort of electricity. Derek doesn’t remember the last time he had a cooked meal from an electric oven. Even in the
town with Kira’s work fixing the electricity, there was really only enough to heat up water or use it on lights. Anything else they would use fire to cook, not that they had anything to complain about compared to other people who didn’t have that luxury. They ate in silence, sipping on wine and enjoying their meal listening to the soft music from the radio in the background. Marin spoke up once they were halfway through their dinner, savouring the taste of her pinot gris. “So Stiles, what did you do? Out there, before.”

“I worked behind the scenes in the police department, in downtown Minneapolis. Tech work, computers all that jazz.” Stiles smiled softly at the memory; he had always wanted to be like his father and become a cop, but when he got older and started a dislike for guns, seeing the way people were so careless with them, he swayed a little on his career choice. Being in the tech lab for the police was a safer and more appropriate job for him, he could still say he was part of the police and at the same time he didn’t have to use any guns.

Marin nodded her head and sipped some more of her wine, looking very interested in Stiles’ work before her eyes darted to Derek. “And you, Derek?”

He was put on the spot, chewing his mouthful of meat – steak? Lamb? Got to be one of those – before answering. He was kind of embarrassed about it, but it’s not like he could change how his life ended up. “Uh, I was in-between jobs. You know, did some handyman stuff, construction.”

“Derek was trying to get his contractors license.” Stiles spoke up, which flared a spark of anger through Derek. As if Stiles had to make excuses as to why he was struggling to find work back then, he didn’t have to explain himself to strangers he just met and barely knew about.

It was hard work keeping yourself afloat while also bending to fit into all the loops of what they wanted him to do to get the licence, he had to sacrifice a lot of time and effort to make it. Just because Stiles had his whole career planned out from the get-go, it felt like Derek’s life was a mess of going from work to work. He scoffed a little, shaking his head. “I wasn’t trying to get it, I was getting it.”

“That’s what I meant.” Stiles frowned at him, not understanding why his tone had suddenly changed, did he say something wrong? He didn’t think he did. Then again, Derek was always touchy when it came to talking about his job.

“… Right.” He wasn’t going to argue, seeing the way Alan glanced at his sister. He ducked his head down in embarrassment, resuming his meal. Luckily just as the silence was beginning to get awkward, Crazy Al had turned on another new song, Till by The Angels, and Alan set his fork down with a chuckle.

Marin’s face lit up as she recognised the tune, facing her brother who started to stand up. She pushed her chair back, turning to Stiles and Derek who looked at the two of them in confusion. “So sorry, this is our song since we were children.”

The two of them stood and moved behind Derek and Stiles, to a sparse enough area where they could dance. It was a slow tune and they embraced, with Alan’s hand resting on his sister’s back and Marin’s on her brother’s chest. They had their eyes closed as they swayed with the music, most likely thinking of better times. Stiles felt like an outsider in that moment, it was obviously something special between the two of them, so he moved his eyes elsewhere to observe as the little girl, who he had now known as Bella, had her chin resting on the palm of her hand while she watched her uncle and mother dance, while Steven stuck his tongue out in disgust at the two of them.

It was a little awkward to say the least, with Derek’s eyes darting to Stiles before quickly ducking down and staring at his plate. While only seconds later, Stiles did the same. It was odd, how these
two siblings could love each other so deeply after going through whatever trauma they have and survived up to this far doing God knows what. This was a time to love one another and create allies, friends, not split apart into groups and try to kill the only people left in this world. A part of Derek had wanted to join in and ask Stiles to dance, but for one he couldn’t take this moment away from Alan and Marin. He also dreaded knowing that Stiles would refuse.

Instead, they just sat there. Sipping wine and trying to avoid eye contact with each other until Marin patted her brother’s chest and chuckle before pulling away and going to the table once more. “Okay, okay. We have guests.”

Alan apologized as he sat down, Derek waving it off with a smile. It was good to see people relaxing once in a while. It was almost like old times. “Man, Crazy Al. The world may have gone to shit but damn, did the radio get better. You like this music?”

Derek nodded his head, but Stiles smiled tightly. No, he didn’t. But he wasn’t going to say that after all, it was their song and he didn’t want to ruin it. “It’s okay.”

They finished up their dinner, with no leftovers to spare and while Derek may have tried to feel guilty about it, his stomach definitely wasn’t going to apologize. It was the most he’s eaten in a while. Neither of them left the table, content to just lean back and let the food go down, Marin started the questions again. “So Stiles, you’re a tech guy. No police technician gangs for you to join?”

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“Hey, I used to work away from the action. Handling coding things. How to bug a phone, how to wire a person without it being detected, how to print fake money. I don’t think they have a gang for that.” Stiles joked, his face red as the adults chuckled along.

Steven seemed to get the idea though, frowning and scrunching up his face in thought before pointing at Stiles. “The Gamblers!”

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Alan more questions on the matter. Stiles had turned a little green around the gills; just thinking that a little kid like Bella with her afro tied into adorable pigtails, coloring in her book, could murder someone. He didn’t want to think about it. Instead, Stiles tried to change the subject again, asking Bella if she’d like to show him her room. The little girl was obviously delighted to show off all her toys and slid off her chair to show him, grabbing Stiles’ hand and giggling when he held it up for her to spin around like a ballerina. Marin stood up to get the dishes cleaned up when Alan held hid hand up. “Derek and I will wash up, you go be with your girl.”

With that, Marin left the table to follow Stiles and Bella up to her room. It felt easy, getting out a puzzle and helping Bella piece it together. They sat on the fluffy purple rug in the middle of the room, Bella on her stomach kicking her feet in the air as she hummed to herself. Stiles had always loved children, if his life had gone smoother then he could have saw a future with him and Derek adopting, but obviously none of that mattered now.

The sun was just setting, the last glimmers of natural light peeking through the blinds and making it bright enough for them to enjoy the peace and quiet. It was a lovely home; clean and well kept together, with that homely feel that nowadays was unheard of. “You guys seem really happy.”

Marin watched over the two of them working through the puzzle, thinking about how much time and effort it took for them to get to this point. Alan had to go out on supply runs every day, and Steven had often asked to accompany him with his machine gun. She wasn’t a fan of her son risking his life so easily but she trusted her brother to always bring him home safe. “We are, Alan is amazing. What about you and Derek?”

Stiles dropped the piece of a puzzle he was holding and faltered to reply, biting his lip but Marin was too quick for him, goading him to answer. “Come on. Don’t pretend I didn’t see that little thing at dinner.”

It was actually refreshing being able to talk to someone like this, without the fear that they will turn on you in a second, or just using you. Marin was a genuine good person, and she didn’t seem to care that he was gay, or that he was with – but not with – Derek. He let out a sigh and handed the puzzle piece over to Bella. “It’s complicated.”

“I used to be a psychiatrist, try me.” Marin warm and welcoming, Stiles could definitely get the therapist vibe from her. She was trained to deal with other people’s problems, and she obviously had to keep an open mind about everything, so Stiles just let go.

He spoke about everything that he had been bottling up for so long, that he could talk about with his friends, or his father. Things that he didn’t feel ready to admit until just then. “We were going through a separation when everything happened. And it feels weird that even though we shouldn’t be together, we are. He’s trying so hard to get me to see how much he loves me. In the beginning, things were different. He would pick me up from school and take me on adventures in his camaro. When I went to university he would make sure that his schedule fit mine so we could go on dates, and we could still be strong. When I was with the police he would sneak into my workplace and leave sweet notes all over the place for me to find. We were crazy about each other.”

He remembers that he used to keep all of the notes in a drawer at his work, and occasionally his workmates would complain about finding a love note on their desk confessing a deep and undying affection towards Stiles. He would laugh it off, but his stomach would flip with every badly drawn heart on a damn sticky note. He remembers when Derek asked him to move in with him, and how his father almost keeled over from the stress. How their apartment was small but it felt like home to them, and they could make all the noise they wanted because their only neighbour was a partially deaf old lady who had too many cats.

Then his mind starts going down the wrong road, down to memories of Derek going out late at
night to find a job. Their arguments about how Stiles was the only one keeping them afloat in the rent, how Derek was too busy finding work that he’d forgotten about their relationship. The sticky notes are disappeared, along with their flame. “But then life got hard. All we did was fight. It broke my heart.”

He took a deep breath and wondered to himself if Derek even knew where he went wrong. Stiles never gave a reason for leaving, he just had enough one day and packed himself a bag, got in his car and took the five-hour drive down to his father’s house. He should have tried more, maybe saw a couples’ therapist or something. Attempted to fix things. Guess it didn’t matter now. “And then the world changed.”

Marin was taking this all in her stride, listening to Stiles pour his heart out and knew he needed this. There were obviously some issues that they never got to discuss before the government gassed the world, but that doesn’t mean they’ve given up on each other or they wouldn’t be together now. “Happiness isn’t out there, Stiles. It’s in front of you.”

It was a simple sentence with a whole lot of meaning behind it, but Stiles understood it perfectly. He teared up and shook his head, huffing out a laugh. Marin just smiled before breaking the tension. “We need more wine.”

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Derek was in the kitchen helped clean the dishes from tonight, Alan doing most of the work by pouring the bottled water on the plates and giving them a good scrub before handing them over to Derek to be dried and stacked to be placed in the cupboard for another day. It was a good system.

Still, Derek’s mind was going off into his checks for what he needed to get by. He had plenty of fuel and was high on ammo, they found some water in the store and a couple of items of food but it wouldn’t be enough to fully sustain them. He coughed a little to get Alan’s attention before speaking, he didn’t want to come off as rude. “Those, uh. Hamburger steaks that we had tonight, do you think you’d be willing to do some trading? Dry foods been getting a little bit old, and I’ve got bullets, tools, gas.”

“How about I just give you some.” Alan didn’t take his eyes from the sink, scrubbing some grease from the plate. “If you can guess what it is.”

Derek chuckled and thought for a moment. “Uh… Beef?”

“And when was the last time you saw a cow?”

Huh, that was a good point. He’d also not seen a lamb or sheep for a while either so that wouldn’t have the same reply. Alan did say he hunts from time to time. “Venison?”

Alan just shook his head with a small smile on his face, taking his gaze away from the plate and turning to the other man. “Derek, when was the last time you saw a cow, deer, dog, bird? Hell, they died out before we started to.”

What the fuck could it have been then? Oh, they could have made veggie burgers. It wasn’t that difficult and they obviously had the time and tools to make them. “It was meat, right? It wasn’t like a veggie burger or a bean patty or, I don’t know, some vegan shit.”
Alan just stopped what he was doing and turned his whole body, causing Derek to stop drying the cutlery in his hands. He didn’t say anything, just shook his head. He couldn’t think of anything else. If it wasn’t fake meat, but it wasn’t meat from an animal, then… No. “No.”

“No.”

“Not bad, right?”

No, God. He was going to throw up.

Alan just continued like it was nothing, shrugging his shoulders. “I mean, a little gamey. But tender.”

Dropping the cutlery onto the counter when a strong wave of nausea hit, Derek covered his mouth. Fuck. He ate it. He ate it. Alan frowned in concern as Derek retched into the sink but nothing was coming up. “You alright?”

“I ate a fucking person?” He needed to fucking know. If this was some sick joke or the real deal. “We all did.”

“Jesus Christ.” Derek retched again, trying to force his body to deny the food – the person – he just ate back up. It wasn’t working. Fuck, this guy fed his family human. Did they fucking know? Did they know what they were eating, or was Alan keeping it a secret from them all? He took deep breaths trying to control the panic attack that was about to happen. This was a family of fucking cannibals and the worst part was they were so normal. He leaned against the sink trying to get his breathing back to normal, he had to get out of there, he had to get Stiles out of there, he knew this was a fucking bad idea.

Alan had seemed to have this kind of conversation before, because he had this look of determination on his face. He had probably come across many people and persuaded them into coming again for a meal, or hell, maybe they had turned full cannibal too. Jesus Christ. “Come on, Derek. The Darwin Awards, we made it. Look, we didn’t drink the government’s Kool-Aid, we escaped the race wars, toxins didn’t do jack shit to our immune systems. When they hit the reset button and we said, ‘fuck you’, now I think that allows us a little freedom.”

He probably thought everything he was saying was true. That just because he didn’t die, that somehow, he was meant to do this, that he was meant to do whatever he wanted including eating a fucking person. How many people has he come across and killed just for his family to survive. “Good people didn’t survive, Derek. We did.”

He didn’t need to hear anything else from this man, he didn’t need to be around this man. They needed to leave immediately. Derek stood up from his position leaning against the sink, pointing a finger at Alan. “If you tell Stiles what we ate, I will kill you.”

Stiles didn’t need to know about this, he could live in the bubble of ignorance and Derek can live with all the harsh realities. He wants Stiles safe, whatever the costs. Alan blinked at him, as if what Derek said was somehow absurd. His face scrunched a little, eyebrows turning down into a light frown before tilting his head ever so slightly. “Keeping secrets from your partner? Not the healthiest choice in a relationship.”

As if he was the one to talk about fucking healthy relationships.

Derek scoffed and took a step closer to Alan, noticing how the man was now seeing him as some sort of threat. His whole demeanour changed, body going from a relaxed slump leaning against
the counter to standing up to his full height on his feet. “I assume you tell your sister everything.”

“I do.”

“Then you’re a fucking liar. We’re leaving. Stiles!” Derek cried out for the other man, God knows what was going on in the other room. If the wife knew what they were eating, maybe she was trying to convince Stiles to join them, as if splitting them up and talking to them one on one was going to give them some sort of peer pressure into cannibalism.

He’d stepped to the side to get past Alan but the man followed him, holding his hands up peacefully while trying to keep his face calm. It was obvious the man didn’t want him to leave, which only made Derek want to get the fuck out of there even faster. He spoke in his usual soft voice, as if none of this phased him. Derek was ready to gear up, ready to barrel into Alan to get through him if he had to. “Whoa, whoa, wait a minute. Let me tell you what’s going to happen. You and Stiles will stay and continue to have a wonderful time.”

Derek scoffed again and stepped to the side once more, only to have Alan quick on his heels to get in front of him again. His voice suddenly had an eerie tone to it, his body suddenly too close to Derek for comfort that made him want to take a step back but knew it would show vulnerability. “And! And if you don’t, I will bleed you both out like pigs, and feed you to my sister and her children. You understand?”

Derek didn’t know what to say to that. The look in Alan’s eyes only showed pure bloodlust, with a hint of insanity that only came with a man who knew what he was doing and had done it plenty of times before. He continued though, as if the blood draining from Derek’s face wasn’t enough for him to stop, he took a step forward now Derek wasn’t so confident, those hungry eyes flickering down his body as if to see which part would be the juiciest. “Or maybe just you? Seems to me, Stiles would be better off.”

Alan’s eyes came back up to stare into Derek now frightened ones, they both didn’t move. It was a power move, whoever broke it first would be the one to die.

They both heard laughter as Stiles and Marin came down the stairs, wine glasses in their hands as they finished off their conversation with laughter. It was Marin that came into the kitchen first, taking in the scene of the two men doing a stand-off and their chuckles died down to nothing. She glanced at her brother before speaking nonchalantly, not knowing what was going on that made the room so tense. “Is everything alright here?”

"I was just about to mix up a couple of cocktails for Derek and me.” Alan reached for the knife that laid on the counter, putting his hand over it which made Derek’s eyes dart down to the utensil. Fuck. They both knew he had lost the power in that moment, the man turning as he leaned on the counter continuing to rest his hand on the knife as he faced his sister with a polite smile. “You two want one? I make a killer Old Fashioned.”

Stiles didn’t know what the fuck was going on, but Derek was white as a sheet and had his shoulders square in a way that he only did when he was about to swing a fist. He didn’t want to interfere, and shook his head before lifting his glass of wine to give an excuse. “I’m okay.”

Alan nodded his head, turning it a little when Derek replied with the same rejection. He nodded his head with a small tut and shrugged a little before breaking out into a beam. It was like his whole mood had changed from the stoic yet stormy attitude to the ray of sunshine that they had been introduced to in the store. “So! Who wants to play a board game?”

“How about Monopoly?” A tired monotone voice broke their tension, everyone’s head whipping to the corner of the dining room where a man with a dirty bandana over his head, covering his eye
and creating a bloody circle, stood holding a gun to Bella’s head. He had his other hand firmly on the little girl’s shoulder, so she wouldn’t have the chance to escape.

Bella appeared almost confused as to why this man was doing this to her, her eyes darting to her mother’s face to her uncle. Alan had dashed round the kitchen table pushing aside Derek as he went, brandishing the knife he had kept his hand on. Marin was in pieces, her wine glass falling out of her hand and smashing onto the kitchen floor as tears welled up in her eyes. This was her little girl, she didn’t know what to do.

The man has walked closer since he knew that no one was going to risk a little girl’s life over something as stupid as trying to fight him right now, but he kept the barrel on the gun pressed against the temple of her head just in case. He entered the kitchen and Derek gasped softly in recognition, his lungs tightening in his chest because this was all his fault.

He seemed to notice that Derek knew him, he didn’t smile, didn’t chortle evilly. He just simply limped closer, until he was against the counter and Alan was a mere three feet away from them. “Didn’t expect to see me again, did you? Should have finished the job.”

With that he smirked and took the safety off, excited with Marin’s whimper of fear. Bella seemed to have gone into shock, her face void of any emotion now as she stared forward almost looking through her uncle. Marin whispered gently to her daughter that everything was going to be okay, that she loved her so much, that’s everything was going to be just fine, but honestly, she didn’t know shit. She didn’t know if this man was here just for Derek and give everyone else mercy, or if he was just going to shoot everyone out of spite. He looked run down, like he had been walking for miles on a dirt road being baked in the sun for days. Before she could think about her own safety, she warbled to the man. “Who are you?”

For a moment the man just stared unnervingly at Derek before he turned his head to the voice. Ah, so this much be the mother. It must be very disturbing having her daughter so close to a loaded gun. He simply tilted his arm to show off the dirty but recognisable tag on his bicep, he was from the Nailers. “Gerard Argent.”

“Please, don’t hurt her. What do you want, Gerard? Anything.” Alan was being so calm about this, his knife up and ready to pounce but kept his head. He didn’t want his niece to be injured or killed because he was too quick to move. Gerard kept the gun against Bella’s head but let go of her shoulder to hold a finger to his lips, shushing Alan before pointing to Derek, then at Stiles. He didn’t need to be told any more, already giving them up. They were going to ruin everything anyway, since Derek refused to join them and was so adamant to leave. “They’re yours, just give me my niece.”

Stiles’ head darted over to Derek for help, his eyes wide with fear. How easy it was for this family to sell them out, and to think he was getting along with Marin so well. Though, to be fair he would kick them under the bus if it meant his father was safe.

What the adults didn’t realize was that while they were conversing, Steven had taken things into his own hands. Once he had heard the commotion, he had dropped to the floor before started to army crawl across the wood to the counter. He needed to get close enough to the man’s feet, being as quiet as he had ever been, he pulled his switchblade out and pressed the button to free the knife.

“Do what you gotta do, just give me my niece back.” Alan held his free hand up peacefully to Gerard, Stiles pressing his back to the fridge in fear as his eyes kept going back and forth from Derek to the other man.

Gerard seemed to take this into consideration. He was tired, he was hungry, he was thirsty, and he was half fucking blind. He had lost the fuel for his bike thirty miles into the chase and couldn’t
find anything to drive for the rest of the way. He’d have to struggle with the other fucking gangs, killing one of the stragglers and taking his gun. If it wasn’t for that gun, he wouldn’t have made it down here. The Nailers wouldn’t want him now because he couldn’t fucking aim properly. He was a liability, and they didn’t need liabilities.

He needed to do this, to get honour back. If not for his gang them to himself. This man killed his partner, almost killed him. He needed to pay and what better way to do that than to make him watch as he killed his partner first, then shoot him while he was devastated. He let the girl go, pushing her forward to the black man with the end of his gun, she ran to her uncle and clung on tight while he lifted his arm up and aimed it at Stiles.

That was all it took, once Steven saw that Bella was out of the danger zone he pounce, reaching out with the knife and slicing through the back of the man’s achilles tendon. It was the softest part of the ankle and it would make the target fall on their ass, his uncle had taught him to always go for the back of the foot if he were able to hit it directly. As he predicted, cutting through the tendon was easy and the man tilted back. What he didn’t realise was that the man was just about to fire his gun.

With that, all hell broke loose.

The bullet ended up getting stuck in the ceiling and Derek took it as a chance to escape, running across and grabbing Stiles’ arm. Gerard went down like a rock, the back of his head smashing into the wooden kitchen floor. Now he was just pissed and with one blurry eye he aimed the gun over to the doorway and blindly shot but didn’t hit it’s intended target. Instead, the bullet went straight through Marin’s chest, she didn’t even have time to cry out in pain before she was shot again and went down. Alan screamed in agony at the sight of his sister dying and knowing he couldn’t do anything about it. The rage built in his chest, turning to Gerard just as he saw Steven kicking the gun out of the old man’s hands.

Derek didn’t look back, he just ran. His grip was tight enough to bruise on Stiles’ wrist but he didn’t want to accidently let go of have him be torn from his grip. He ran to the garage, pulling Stiles in and slamming the door. There were screams of pain and others of anguish in the kitchen, but it was muffled now, and Derek put it out of his mind to focus on the task at hand. He grabbed the keys on the side before unlocking the jeep and pushing Stiles round to get into the passenger seat. He heard footsteps running their way and didn’t hesitate to jam the key in the ignition and start the engine. With that, he turned over his shoulder and reversed the fuck out of the garage. Luckily enough the door was open because he wouldn’t have had enough power behind the jeep to break down the door otherwise and must open it manually which would have ended them.

Stiles was reaching into the back and grabbing the gun in case they needed to fire it, before pausing and turning to Derek. He was obviously worried about the little girl, she was innocent in this and who knows what was going on in there. “What about Bella?”

There weren’t any words about Stiles’ stupidity when it came to saving children, so Derek didn’t bother to reply that they would fucking die if they went back int hat house again to check up on Bella. He simply kept reversing and didn’t stop until he hit the pavement before slamming the breaks and shifting the gear into drive. He floored it, and may have apologized to Stiles for hitting Alan’s truck with the corner of his jeep but right now he didn’t even care because the man was running out of the garage with his gun. Alan shot a couple of times, the bullets hitting the back of the jeep as Derek sped out the driveway and down the road. He didn’t stop. Didn’t even look back to see if Alan would chase after him.

Fuck.

How could have be had been so stupid as to leave someone alive? He could have killed Stiles.
Derek berated himself mentally as he drove down the road at a speed that would have any police officer pulling him over and taking away his license on the spot. He was still panting from the panic, his hands firmly squeezing the steering wheel. It was only when they got to a dirt road and Derek turned around to check he wasn’t being followed that he slowed down a little and checked up on Stiles. “You okay? Are you hurt?”

Stiles just stared ahead at the road before bringing his hands up to rub at his face. He scrubbed at the sweat before licking his lips, trying to control his heartbeat. “I can’t do this anymore.”

“What? Do what?” Derek didn’t fucking need this right now. He gave Stiles a once over to check for blood and didn’t find any which calmed him down for now. He kept his eyes on the road, occasionally darting down to check on the amount of fuel they had left. A little over quarter a tank, that should get them far enough to pull over and refill.

Stiles just couldn’t right now. He had seen so much in the past few days being with Derek, seeing how he changes and acts so violent. But the worst part was how he was so okay with it, and while Stiles knows he used to go on supply runs and never spoke about the horrors he may have gone through out there, he never knew Derek until now. He’d changed completely. “I can’t play this delusional game of survival with you.”

Everything was just building up for years, with Derek focusing on finding a job, then Derek focusing on getting his license, then when the world changed Derek focused on staying alive and keeping the town safe. Now, fuck, he was so different Stiles can’t even see the man who he fell in love with. It was just covered in blood and anger, and excuses.

The vein in Derek’s forehead popped. That was it. He tried to have his eyes on the road but kept turning his head to Stiles who was deflated in his seat. “Delusional? You, you wanna talk about delusional? Who are you talking to on that radio, Stiles?”

It was a low blow, but Stiles needed to hear it. He needed to fucking know that his father hadn’t contacted him for weeks, that they were going out and putting themselves in the hands of gangs, cannibals, for nothing but a small hope that Noah’s radio battery was just flat. No, fuck that. His father was most likely dead.

Stiles’ eyes welled up in tears as he tried to control his emotions. He knew he couldn’t involve everything right now, he couldn’t fight about this right now. He needed Derek to focus on the road but fuck, bringing up his dad was something else. They both knew something was up, but it wasn’t his fault for wanting to have some fucking hope that the only family he had was still alive. “I want to get home to my father.”

“You know what? That’s your problem!” Derek wasn’t quitting though. This was frustration that had built up for years, the questions that he had unanswered. Stiles left without an explanation, he left without a fucking note, left in the middle of the night with no fucking word. He had to find out in the morning that the love of his life left him for no reason he could think of, to live with his father five hours away, and wouldn’t even see him when he took the trip down there to talk it out. He had to get turned away and go home with his tail between his legs because his father would have him arrested for trespassing.

Only to have the world end, and have Stiles run back to him in tears about helping him. He was the one who had to suck it up and let Stiles into his life again, he was the one that had to plan to keep them alive away from people who would do anything to get supplies. He would do anything for Stiles, and Stiles fucking knew that. “If you would have just played along with any of this, instead of running home to daddy, you would have realised, you know what, it’s not that bad.”

“Not that bad?” Stiles’ voice rose with Derek’s talking over him, flinging his arms out to point out
where they are, on a dirt road, in the middle of nowhere, running from a guy that was trying to kill them and most likely slaughtered a family because of them. “Look around!”

It happened so fast. A bullet flew through the windshield. Derek swore loudly and noticed the blood on the dashboard, covering the single picture of Stiles’ childhood in spatters of red. Stiles gasped and ducked his head down to look as the blood seeped through his shirt, creating a steadily growing circle before his hands flew up to cover the wound and put pressure on it.

Stiles had been shot, and who knows where the snipers were, and what they were planning to do next.

“Shit, Stiles!” All the anger drained out of Derek’s system in a second, his mind whirring in the need to make things better. They had to get out here before the snipers shot again. He slammed on the breaks and turned the jeep around just as another shot came out of nowhere and hit the passenger side door. His eyes were darting everywhere for where the shooting was coming from as he swung the car back the way they came and stomped on the gas, speeding off once more.

Stiles’ breath was labouring, his body slumping against the door as he started to lose grip on the bullet wound. Derek was trying to get his attention, but Stiles has gone unconscious. “Stiles? Stay with me, Stiles!”

He couldn’t do anything while he was driving, he need to get them out of there before anything else. Derek hit the steering wheel as he drove back down the dirt road and spun round the bend that they’d missed before barrelling down the straight road like a bat out of hell.
The house was quiet. So quiet. It’s never been this quiet before.

Steven had gone to his room, snivelling softly behind the wooden door while Alan was burying half of his family. He’d dragged the dead body of Gerard out into the middle of the road, he didn’t even want to involve him with their meal. He didn’t care that someone could see and come after them. He didn’t care. He was so full of rage.

Derek. Stiles. They did this to his family. They brought a man, half dead, to finish the job. They ran, while he was dealing with the problem they gave him. They were the reason his sister and niece were dead.

They were too far away right now but he could fucking catch them, he could hunt them down for the rest of his life after what they’ve done. He just needed help. So with that in mind, Alan stumbled lifelessly to the garage where the CB radio was hanging on the wall. He made sure a few months ago to have the connection to the Plowboys, for the safety of his sister and niece, he never thought he would have to ask them for help. He turned the radio on and picked up the line, pressing the button. “Theo, you copy? Over.”

The Plowboys unit wasn’t much when you looked at it; just a couple of mechanic shops put together, a few sheds moved outside the lot for the guns and gas. There were several police cars scattered around the place, with the massive plow-trucks up in the front of the area. They were the first to leave and the last to come back.

Theo was working under the hood of a car when he heard the CB radio going off, standing up and picking up a mucky rag to clean his hands of grease and grime before going over to where the radio crackled to life again. “Theo, you copy?”

“Theo, how’s dinner?” Theo spoke into the receiver, bringing a cigarette up to his lips and lighting it with his zippo before having a take of the sweet nicotine.

He watched some of the other Plowboys going into the other shed that held the merchandise and sat back in his chair. He hoped they get their money’s worth. He was about to cross his leg when he heard Alan’s voice over the radio. “Marin and Bella are dead.”

He blinked and thought he didn’t hear it right, swearing lightly and shaking his head before tilting his head up to the ceiling and giving the two of them a small prayer up to the heavens. They were good girls, they would have been a lot of money if they came to him. Still, Marin made a great green bean casserole, what a waste of a good woman. “What happened?”

“You remember those friends of mine I introduced to you today?” His voice was like ice and it made Theo swallow, he’s glad all that anger isn’t aimed at him or he would have gone to the bunker and hid for the next forty years.

Of course he remembered the new folks in Alan’s truck, especially the one with those wonderful lips. A grin creeped on to his face at the thought of what they would look like after he was done with them. “How could I forget?”

“What if I told you, you could have the small one?” Theo blinked before his smile went predatory, pressing the receiver and letting out a chuckle before agreeing. With that, Alan told him to come by in the morning and they would go on the hunt before stopping all communication to Theo. Well, he wasn’t going to stop the man right now, he had to get his boys up and ready for a long
Theo slipped off the stool and stood, setting the radio away before skipping out of his workshop and to the other shed to get the guys geared up. He loved his job. It’s been a while since he found a man so interesting though, he wasn’t a damn faggot but that little trap in the truck was a real fine specimen. Most were dirty or had their lives changed so much that they had the aura around them that would chase other’s away, but not that little one. He had pure innocent eyes. He may have seen some shit but the lumberjack next to him did all the heavy lifting for certain.

He danced his way into the shed, throwing the butt of his cigarette onto the floor before rounding the corner and freezing as he took in the scene in front of him. Some of his men were dead on the floor, some of his most loyal clients having the same treatment, with their throats cut and left to bleed out onto the pavement. He knew what the fuck had just happened. That damn cunt Cherry did this, he knew she was bad luck, but she was a trophy so he took her anyway. “Shit on a fucking shingle –.”

Before he could call for help or sound the alarm, or make another sound, he was thwacked round the back of the head with something hard. He went down like a brick, his body unconscious before he even hit the ground.

Behind him, was the Cherry. They had forced her out of her usual attire and dressed her in some sort of dolly suit, it was a small black corset top that hugged her breasts, while she had a short white skirt with love heart pockets on the front, and to top it all off they had taken away her boots and replaced them with a pair of black strappy high heels. They had tried to do her hair up into something from the fifties, curling the front into what was supposed to look like a love heart and let the back flow down her shoulder blades. Her clothes were splattered with blood, and her nose broken from when they knocked her out and abducted her. She held her weapon just in case the guy stood up again before deeming him uselessly out cold and dropped the crowbar onto the floor as she started walking towards the weapons laid out.

There were a couple of regular pistols, but she wasn’t interested in that, she wanted her gun back that they stole from her. if she couldn’t have that, then she would have the next best thing. Her hand roamned over a couple of machine guns before landing on an MG-42. It had ropes of ammo, it had a tripod attached to it, this was the gun she was taking with her. Before anything else though, she was changing her clothes and fixing her hair, she preferred it in a ponytail.

The cage where they locked the women in was easy to find; it was the only door that had several padlocks on it. She gripped her gun and slammed the butt of it into each padlock, hearing them snap apart and fall to the floor before turning the handle and flinging the door open. The room smelled like piss; it was obvious the women couldn’t go out and do their business. They were all dressed the same as her, with tattered and dirty outfits from that looked to be something out of the fifties, their hair done up the same as hers. The women were cowering in fear at the door being opened, knowing it had only caused one or more of them to be picked and then taken to a stranger for the night. One of the women looked hopeful though, kneeling up and speaking to the other girls. “Oh my god, she's a Cherry!”

With that shred of hope, the other girls stood up on shaky legs and started to head for the door, almost admiring the Cherry. It broke her heart when one of them spoke shyly, her eyes searching her face for any kind of spite that this is all a hoax. “Can we go?”

She just nodded, but that was enough for the other girls to get out, thanking her as they passed. She led them to the cars but one of them had the idea that she had already planned out for an exit, they shouldn’t take the cars or the plows because they were too noisy, and the men would know in a heartbeat. Instead, they should head through the back of the building and run to the long grass outside. Not only would it hide their footprints, but it would also shield them from being seen once
they were in deep enough. Once they were home free, they would head to the Cherries gang just out west. They would provide food, shelter, new clothes, and they would teach them how to protect themselves from the men who wanted them dead or lock them up where they longed for death.

The Cherry just left them to it, going out to the front and hot wiring one of the police vehicles and collecting her treasures, taking all the witnesses with her by stuffing them in the trunk before pulling out the workshop and through the front. She drove slowly to not alert anyone and continued down the road without a second glance. One of the men were in the plow-trucks but he didn’t seem too concerned with anything going on, she was home free.

With ninety-eight miles to Milwaukee, Derek had found a log cabin in the middle of the woods. It was the only place house nearby for miles, away from the road enough that they wouldn’t be seen, and it was far away from the snipers. No one would suspect them here, and it was the perfect place for Derek to take care of Stiles’ wounds, give him time to heal, before they could get on the road again.

It was touch and go for a while, with Stiles’ skin turning pale from the lack of blood. His breathing had gone shallow and sweat had beaded on his forehead when a fever broke out, but Derek had cooled him down and wiped the sweat away with a wet flannel. He learned how to get bullets out of wounds and stitch them up after Boyd had been shot by a Nailer on a supply run. He made sure to never be left wondering what to do again and practised his sewing skills on anything that felt like skin. After cleaning the wound, getting the bullet and shards out, and stitching it up, he couldn’t do anything else and left Stiles to rest.

Stiles woke up in a bed, gasping suddenly before the flare of pain rang down his arm. Oh fuck that’s right, he was shot. Came outta of nowhere. He turned his head down to where there was a bandage covering the wound, and noticed he was clean. Then realised he was in a bed. So, Derek must have found a safe house, cleaned his wounds, and gone to do whatever it is he’s doing, probably mapping. He turned his head over to the bedside table, where a radio was standing, along with a tall glass of water and a pill bottle. There was also a note attached to the radio; ‘Stiles, just next door looking for food. Call me, I’ll come. – D.’

He’d never been shot before, so when he sat up he had to bite his tongue not to cry. Snatching the pill bottle from the side, he read the contents and when he deemed it acceptable for consumption, he poured three out and stuffed them in his mouth, swallowing them dry. He found some clothes in the wardrobe and put on one in his size; it was a lovely gold and blue lettermen’s jacket with the words Korea stitched over the shoulder blades and a dragon down the back. He found a radio and flicked it on, turning it to the only station available anymore and carried it around with him as
he took a tour of the house. “Hi, this is Crazy Al with another safety update for all you domestics out there. Gambler territory is now spreading like a fucking cancer, so keep your loved ones close, stay indoors, because if those horned sons-of-bitches catch you and spin that wheel of death – chances are they’re gonna send you straight to hell! Now here’s Rickie Paige and her never released 1959 track, Forever.”

The house was quite big if he does say so himself. There were two levels, with four bedrooms, two bathroom and downstairs there was a living room, a kitchen, a garage, what looks like a dining room but could just be a place to just store expensive china plates. He went to the door, only to see another note stuck to the knob; ‘don’t use this door, use the bedroom window.’ He noticed the string attached to the door then and followed it up to see what looks like a booby trap. There was a plank of wood with rusty nails sticking out of it, they had been sharpened too, for extra stabbing capacity.

Bedroom window it was, then. He grabbed the keys for the shed hanging next to the front door and went back upstairs to go through the window, grunting in pain with every movement. He swung his leg over the ledge and saw that there were blocks of wood that made half-hearted stairs to the ground. He didn’t trust them, but they were the only things he had to get down, so followed suit. Once on the ground, Stiles set off to the shed.

The ‘shed’ was a gross understatement, it was more like a barn. The ceiling was so tall and when he noticed the six-foot car lift, he understood why. He let out a whistle, whoever had this place before him was obviously loaded because there was also a camaro too. Just like the one that Derek used to drive, and Stiles lit up with glee as he hurried over to it. His jeep looked almost pathetic next to it, but he didn’t care because it felt like how it was before everything went wrong. It was like fate had told them to come here, the lift could help them fix Stiles’ poor jeep, while Derek could live out his life enjoy the perks of having a camaro again. Once he finds his dad, they had to come back to this place.

There were several gas tanks too, and Stiles filled the jeep with some before getting in and starting it, letting out a whoop before turning it off and kissing the steering wheel. They had two escape cars now, with a whole bunch of gas. They could stock up on water, possibly food too. Stiles almost thanked whoever shot him for this chance, or they wouldn’t have found this place.

For a moment he thought about just taking what he could, leaving Derek with some weapons, water, food, and just taking off. He was scared, with good reason. Derek had changed, stitching him up and keeping him safe wasn’t going to take back all the things they had been through. He’d never been so in danger than he has been while travelling with Derek. But he knows the man is only doing this because he loves him. He also knows it’s Derek’s skill, knowledge, and well thought out plans that were getting them to Milwaukee. If he was on his own, Stiles would probably be dead by now.

No, he would stay until Derek returned. He was only getting supplies from the neighboured house.

Derek was going through the brush of the overgrown grass with his gun up, wading slowly in the green in case anyone had the same idea he did and camped out in a log cabin with the intent for it to all blow over. This house wasn’t logged though, it was brick. And huge. And fancy. He entered through the side door and checked for noise before continuing, his steps cautious as he made his way to the stairs. Inside was clean, like someone had been taking care of the place, and it set Derek’s mental alarm bells ringing.

There were paintings on the walls that appeared to be something from the renaissance era. The stairs curved slightly to the left and Derek checked round the side before continuing upwards, noticing another painting hanging there. Even the wallpaper was fancy, it was cream with some
sort of white swirls and dots that looked like pearls. There was a fucking crystal **chandelier**.

In the hallway there were three doors, one which was slightly ajar at the end of the hall. It took Derek’s interest, he made sure to keep his footfalls light as he padded to the door and moved his finger to the trigger just in case. When he opened the door though, he was both confused and cautious. The bedroom was well cleaned, with the Queen-sized bed being made. There was a grey sofa opposite the bed and a glass coffee table in the middle, the room was **extravagant**, but it was the two people tied up with bags on their heads that had Derek’s full attention.

He glanced around the room to check that no one was going to pop out on him before making his way over to the bed to pull the fabric off their heads. Derek stared at Alan’s face unblinkingly before darting it to Steven’s and back to the other man. How could they have been caught way out here? Were they following him and Stiles? Shit, they must have been, they had lost half of their family and it was his mess that brought their world crashing down. “Holy fuck.”

“Now where do I get one of those? Right there!” A voice spoke behind him, Derek swinging around with his gun raised only to notice the guy already had one pointing at him. The man was dressed in a fashionable suit, slightly dusty but still giving off the effect of being wealthy, accessorized with a soft pink bow tie to finish off the look as if this world was beneath him. His hair obviously bleached blonde and his skin tanned to show that he had product which meant he must have traded up or knew how to steal. He appeared well off, but the only way someone would be in this world is if they had fought his way to get there. “It would be such a shame to splatter your brains before all the fun and games.”

Derek was at a loss; he thought about who would be the fastest in pulling the trigger, but if he got shot then Stiles wouldn’t have anyone to protect him, and there was a child in the room who could die in the cross fire. He could give up but who knows what this guy has planned for a surrendered party. “Would you kindly place that gun on the ottoman, there?”

He would have to find out apparently, the guy wasn’t going to let him win. Maybe he could fight back when the guy deemed him not a threat anymore, and so Derek obeyed the order and stepped over to the coffee table, placing his gun on top and lifted his hands over his head slowly. The man hummed in approval, giving him some praise as if he were a child who just learned how to tie his shoelaces. The condescending tone made his shoulders tense. Once the gun was down the man strode into the room with confidence, not moving his gun or gaze from Derek.

The man continued until the barrel of his pistol was poking Derek’s chest, only then did he stop. He let his gaze flick up and down Derek’s body and hummed appreciatively once again, liking what he saw apparently. Once his eyes were back up to Derek’s face, he raised his eyebrows playfully and smirked. “So handsome.”
She drove with the radio on, listening to the static and occasionally flicking the channel in hopes that there would be something else on the waves apart from that fucking pig who liked nothing that to hear himself talk. Also, the occasional good tune. But it was mostly Crazy Al that was too much for her.

There was a thud from the trunk, quickly followed by muffled yelling. It’s not like she could turn up the static, but a small part of her was glad that this fucker was with her and wasn’t dead, it wouldn’t have been fun to bring this piece of shit to the Cherries dead. She wanted to find her girls and be safe once more to heal up before going back out into the fight, and bring along her trophy; the leader of the Plowboys. It would be a revolution for them, knowing that she took out one of their biggest enemies would pave the way to giving them a name. It would make men scared of them for once, as they should be.

She chewed the gum she found in the glove compartment, trying to remember the days when she would just enjoy the road trip when the world wasn’t built to destroy everyone. She used to love going from one end of the country to the other exploring the world and the different cultures and cuisines that came with it. Now, she was at war with half of the remaining population because they couldn’t stop trying to rape the women, like fucking animals. Another thud came from the trunk along with some rude remarks and she rolled her eyes; don’t people know that no matter how many times they ask to be let out of the trunk, they’re not going to be let out the fucking trunk?

Still, it would be fun to give him something to think over, or better yet just to shut him up completely before she could get to her basecamp. She was running low on fuel anyway, so she pulled over to the side of the road and parked the stolen car before turning off the engine and getting out, taking the keys with her. She thought it was only appropriate to put her signature cherry keyring onto the set. Unlocking the trunk, she opened it up to see the pig still in his confinements. She had to make do with duct tape since she didn’t have any rope on hand, but it still works. The pig named Theo still has his gag on too, his hands and feet bound tight though it had been stretched a little from all the struggling. She stared down at him trying to talk behind the tape, chewing her gum in thought before pulling the gum out of her mouth and throwing it on his face.

She may not have heard him correctly from his head wound – that she had caused, you’re welcome – or it could have been the gag but she thinks she heard Theo asking if that was all she got. Well.

Pulling her gun out of its holster, she aimed it at his thigh and shot without blinking. His wail of agony enough to satiate her for now, shutting the lid of the trunk once more and seeing movement from the corner of her eye. She turned her head and sure enough there was someone there in the trees. Squinting, she must have been seeing things because that looked like one of the men from
the other day, the gay ones. They should be dead by now, or at least still with that black man that
had been associated with the Plowboys.

Slamming the boot of the truck, she sheathed her pistol back on her hip and reached behind her to
pull the MG-42 off her back, curiosity peaking as she crept closer to the foliage and watched the
man run. He didn’t seem to know she was out there, or simply didn’t care. It could be an ambush;
men were all the same in this world, preying on women and though they may be gay, they could
still take her hostage or sell her to the highest bidder. Or kill her.

No, she would not let that happen. Take them out before they have the chance.

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Alan and Steven were staring straight ahead, knowing from training that they shouldn’t show any
kind of emotion because that would excite the one keeping them hostage. The man was confident,
sitting on the grey sofa and his feet up on the ottoman table in, his gun pointing at Derek who had
his hands up. Alan thought about trying to free himself from the confines of the fabric tying him
up but if he got away, the guy still had a gun and looked like he was ready to use it, and he didn’t
want to have this crazy man shoot his only living family.

“You know these two poor souls?” The man gestured at the two on the bed with his pistol, his
gaze not leaving Derek.

“Yes.”

“Seems that they were following you. Why?” Derek wanted to ask Alan that too, but it was more
than that. This guy wanted to know his history, why he was here in this house alone, or why he
knew Alan and Steven. Trying to catch him out in some way. Which could spread into a whole
catastrophe, or a sick game depending on this guy’s mood, and from the look of him, he seems to
be the one that would want to play a sick game.

Though, he wondered where the fuck this guy came from too. Did he live here? He certainly
looked like he fit in with the décor of the house. Derek could ask the same question about this
guy, in fact, he will. “Why were you following me?”

The man broke out into a grin before jumping up off of the sofa and standing up straight and
proud. He stepped around the ottoman, gun never leaving its target as he spoke. “Allow me to
introduce myself. My name is Jackson Whittemore. But, you, my new friend, have the divine
pleasure of calling me Jack.”

Derek couldn’t have been more deadpan. “That’s fantastic.”

“There are two things that Jack loves…” He didn’t stop moving until he was right in Derek’s
personal space. Jackson’s eyes glided down Derek’s body slowly, taking in every inch of man
meat that he could get before looking back up at his face. His eyebrows rose with excitement of
what was to come next, he could think of so many ways to make this evening the best he’s had in
a long time. He turned his head at Alan, winking at him when he spoke. “A show, and a bit of
ultra-violence.”

Derek couldn’t help the snort, shaking his head because really? Clockwork Orange? This guy
must have been an art major before the end of the world. “That’s very original.”
“You know it?” Jackson’s face lit up, eyes brightening at the information. Almost as if he just made a new friend. Derek didn’t want to be the new friend.

“It was my favorite film when I was seventeen.” He meant it as snide remark, or to offend him for his bad taste in movies, but the guy just continued to articulate now that he had some sort of personal connection to him. He really should have seen it coming. Maybe it was something that Stiles had said to him a long time ago about being held hostage; keep the person talking, get on their good side if that gives you a chance to live.

“Not anymore? A shame.” He nodded solemnly as if it was some tragedy, glancing over at the two men still tied up on the bed. Jackson strode over to Alan with smug confidence, articulating at him like he was some sort of gum beneath his shoe. “Surprised me though. You’re the first person to ever call me out on it. These fucking simpletons out here are clueless when it comes to classic cinema! Could you believe this one, he’d never even heard of Eyes Without a Face!”

It was hitting him now that Derek shouldn’t have brought up knowing the movie, it must have been this guy’s go-to speech before murdering people. Though, he may have just continued on without a care for their tastes in genres and would decide to kill them anyway. Jackson tutted at Alan before turning and heading to the bedside cabinet, collecting one of the razors that had been placed there delicately. “But uh… I was getting ready to teach him all about it.”

The man stepped forward slowly with the cut-throat razor in hand, breathing over it to watch the stainless-steel fog. Alan started to struggle when Jackson got closer, already knowing what the pain of being cut was. Before Derek had got there, he’d had a taste of what was to come, Jackson wasn’t patient about his guests and decided to slice into his cheek. He would go through all that pain again if it meant that Steven would live unharmed. Derek let his hands drop now that he wasn’t the centre of Jackson’s attention, speaking up impatiently, this charade has been going on long enough. “What do you want?”

“Ooh! A man who likes to get right down to the nitty-gritty. I like it.” Jackson pulled the razor away with a moan of delight, pacing back and shrugging before he was back up in Derek’s face once more. He leaned into the other man, breathing in and panting softly before returning to his straighten stance.

Derek had enough, either he was going to die today or he was going to kill this fucker. “I’m pretty tired man, can you just get to the fucking point?”

Jackson shut his mouth with an audible click, blinking in surprise. He must have not expecting someone being held at gunpoint to speak to him like that, he was probably used to people begging for their lives, or them trying to slide their way out of being killed. But, if Derek wanted to get to the point, then he wasn’t going to ruin the moment. Pulling out of Derek’s personal space, Jackson strode over to where the en-suite bathroom door was and made sure that everyone was watching him before he swung the door open. “Meet Ennis.”

Ennis was apparently a fucking bodybuilder or was on some sort of steroids, because he was over six foot and he was a wall of muscle. Derek’s eye widened as Ennis huffed with each breath, like his lungs couldn’t even hold all that weight. He stomped out of the bathroom and moved to Jackson’s side and now that he was out of the darkness of the bathroom, Derek could see that he had some sort of harness on his head. It was all black, the straps keeping a strong grip on Ennis’ bald head and over the arch of his nose. His mouth was free to talk and his eyes able to see, but other than that, it was all covered with the harness. There was also a giant metal ring in the middle of his forehead, which Derek could only think of bondage. This was a fucking bondage device. “I, uh, call him ‘The Big’.”

Jackson hooked his finger through Ennis’ ring and he started to walk, Ennis hesitating a little but
was tugged so took a step forward until he was shuffling behind his master. Jackson’s voice changed in pitch when he was talking to Ennis, like he was a small child or a pet of some sort, like only baby talk would make him understand. “Now, you and The Big. Come on, Big.”

Jackson stopped in front of the bed, Ennis following suit and his eyes darting at the two men tied up. Alan’s breathing had picked up, knowing that if he was to fight The Big, he could no doubt lose, especially if he wasn’t allowed to get out of his restraints. But it looked like Jackson had another idea, pointing the razor at Alan while talking to Derek. “You two are going to get to know each other a little bit. Unless, of course, you want to finish the job that I started on these two poor bastards. With me watching, of course.”

Derek stared at Jackson like he was crazy. There was little-to-no chance of him winning against Ennis, he was almost double his size and he had probably been born to fight. But on the other hand, he would never want to hurt a child, and even though Alan and Steven probably came to kill both him and Stiles, he would never be able to live with himself if he murdered them. Jackson spoke up again, like his opinion even mattered at this moment. “That allows you to leave with your findings and your good looks. What do you say? You want to go Big, or do you want to go home.”

Stiles was digging through the pantry for any kind of supplies he may need. He wasn’t kidding about leaving Derek in the car, bullet wound be damned. Waking up this morning alone, in pain, in a strange bed, was just the last straw that broke the camel’s back. He was so sick of being left in danger for Derek because the guy wanted to go out there alone, he was sick of Derek thinking he was some defenceless little animal that he needed to protect. He was just sick of it all.

Forget his plan to stay with Derek until Milwaukee, he was being left behind without Derek even being gone yet. It was just like old times and it was breaking Stiles apart.

This is why they broke up in the first place; because Derek just couldn’t get his shit together and choose whether distractions, or Stiles, was more important to him. He was always busy, and leaving love notes every now and again is not the same as being in the arms of your boyfriend, it’s not the same as a kiss, or making love. It’s just a bandaid on a leaky pipe and soon enough all the water will just come flooding in and no one would be prepared to handle the damage.

He had already scavenged everything upstairs. The moment he decided on this, Stiles followed through by pulling his ring off and setting it on the bedside table. Keeping it on his finger was just giving Derek false hope, and it was just another chain that Stiles needed to break free from. He found a can of beans in the pantry and two bottles of beer alongside a whole full bottle of liquor in the fridge, it would be enough to last a few days. If he just bottled some of the tap water with something he could put a lid on, he would be fine for another week. The jeep would need to be patched up but nothing hit the hood so it would still be fine for driving, and need to cool down every now and again which he could do. Derek’s map had to be somewhere around here and once he found that he would be gone.

Stuffing the can and beer into his suitcase he had dragged out of the jeep, Stiles looked around for anything else that he could use on the way. He thought about bringing the liquor too but it would only make things worse and he would rather be sober to look out for predators out there. Derek had all the guns, and he needed to protect himself out there too. Maybe there was a knife or something. Glancing over at the small drawers at the side of the bannister, Stiles noticed a note
taped on the record player and stepped awkwardly to it as he rubbed his damaged shoulder. ‘If you want to listen’. It was Derek’s writing once more, and a little love heart as a full-stop. It pissed him off that now he chose to try and get Stiles back after he’d been shot with these stupid love letters, and pretend that nothing had happened.

Kneeling down slowly to not pull his stitches, Stiles dug through the box of records that was underneath the player, trying to find something that he knew. If he was honest, any kind of music was good music from not listening to anything but what Crazy Al has available. There was a couple of unforgettable hits that would always be in someone’s head, such as Bohemian Rhapsody, I Will Always Love You, Thriller. He kept flipping through until he saw another note attached to one; ‘Found your favorite’, with another love heart at the end. Derek was right, it was his favorite song when they were dating. He used to play it all the time in the car when they were going on road trips to his father’s, he would play it with his headphones in while cleaning the apartment or cooking their dinner for the evening. It wasn’t a love song like other people would think, the idea that people needed to listen to cushy lovey-dovey shit whenever they’re in love was completely bullshit, it was the metal band Goatsnake, with his favorite song being Slippin’ the Stealth.

Pulling it out of the box, Stiles noticed yet another one of Derek’s notes. ‘I’m sorry. Please don’t give up on us.’ It nearly broke his heart that Derek was still trying to fix everything. Maybe if Stiles was the pushover type, he would have run to Derek’s arms much earlier in hopes to continue where they left off. When they were good together, they were untouchable and while Stiles may want to have that same feeling again, he knew that it would never be the same.

Thinking back to the car ride, their final argument before he was shot. Derek wanted him to stop running to his father whenever things got scary, he wanted Stiles to play along with the world they are living in now. Derek didn’t understand how worried he was getting knowing that his only family is miles away from him, and could be dead. He would do anything to make sure that his dad was safe, even if it meant playing along to the sick rules of this new world. He could argue with Derek about this for hours but the truth was that Stiles was just terrified of losing himself. He could fight, he could gamble and steal, but he didn’t want to pick up a gun and kill someone.

Stiles let out a sigh as he stared at the Goatsnake cover, deciding that he would listen to it one more time before leaving. For once he was safe out in the middle of nowhere and he could fully enjoy himself without the tension that Derek caused in the room. He was going to party his ass off as much as he could with his shoulder. He knew it would probably hurt thought and so he would need some Dutch courage, collecting the two beers from the suitcase and opening one up, getting a good gulp in before. Collecting the liquor from the fridge as well, Stiles headed back to the living room and set the bottles down while he unsheathed the record carefully from its cover and placed it on the record player, moving the stylus to the edge of the vinyl and waiting for it to play.

The scream echoed out of the record player before the heavy drums and guitar thrashed through the speakers. Stiles picked up the beer bottle and chugged the remainder before starting on the liquor, carrying it with him while he danced around the living room. He headbanged and winced as his shoulder throbbed to caution him that he would pull stitches if he continued. Right now he didn’t give a single fuck. He was living in the moment, letting the heavy music flow through his body and let the rhythm take him wherever it needed to go.

If he paid more attention, if he cared a little bit more about where he was or who could listen in to find them, if he was a slightly more paranoid, Stiles would have noticed that he wasn’t alone. There were eyes through the window watching him bounce around the living room.

Meanwhile, Derek had chosen to go Big. The spectators staying on the bed while Jackson laid himself out on the sofa in delight as Ennis lifted his huge fists up. Derek pulled his loose jacket off
and bundled it up before throwing it onto the bed where it wouldn’t get stepped on or tripped over. He had to do this for Stiles. If he died, then who knows what Jackson would do with the information that Stiles was out there on his own injured, especially if it meant that Alan was there, and mostly definitely wanted to take revenge. “This is fucking bullshit.”

Ennis’ legs were spread in a fighting stance, and Derek took full advantage by kicking him in the crotch. He felt the huge man flinch but he barely moved. He tried again by going for the head this time, swinging his fist and connected with this bone of Big’s temple but the man responded with vigour, swatting Derek away like a fly. He fell to the ground and rolled at the force behind it, shaking his head to get his bearings but instead, Ennis followed him. He didn’t have enough time to hit him again and decided to run, flinging himself onto the bed and tried to crawl away even with the strong grip on his hips grabbing him and throwing him onto the floor.

Derek collided with the ottoman table and grunted at the pain in his ribs, Jackson breaking out in laughter and standing up on the sofa out of the way in case any of the fighters settled to involve him. Ennis kicked Derek in the stomach, causing him to groan and swallow the bile rising in his throat. The man was a force of nature and he knew that if he kept running, the Big would keep chasing him. Struggling to get on his knees, Ennis seized Derek by the neck and lifted him up all the way until his feet were no longer touching the ground.

He couldn’t breathe, the grip so tight that no matter how many times he clawed at those hands, they wouldn’t let go. Derek got some momentum before headbutting Ennis in hopes that it was the guys weak spot. Unfortunately for him, he seemed to forget that Big was wearing a harness, his forehead colliding with the metal ring resting on Ennis’ brow, luckily it was enough for Ennis to let him go. Derek tumbled to the ground and held his forehead in agony.

No matter how many times he lunged, Big was always there to throw him away.

No matter how many times he punched and kicked at Ennis, the man was strong enough to duplicate and send Derek flying into the furniture.

It almost felt futile. He wasn’t going to win against this beast of a man. His lungs were on fire, his ribs aching, his head screaming, and his arms and legs were wobbly from overuse and abuse.

It didn’t help that every time Ennis has him in his grasp, Jackson was screaming profanities at him like it was some sort of soccer game and his side was winning. His rage and frustration building up with every failed attempt, until enough was fucking enough. Derek lunged at Ennis and, yet again, he was enveloped in a headlock, but instead of struggling this time Derek held onto the man’s thick arm and bit down with all of his might.

Ennis screamed with pain before throwing Derek backward into his master. This was Derek’s chance. He twisted to grab the gun from Jackson, the other man wasn’t ready to have another man on top of him and yelped but held his own. They ended up rolling over each other on the carpet, kicking and punching at whatever they could get. Jackson pistol whipped him but Derek didn’t give a fuck right now because this was going to end right now. Blood was trickling down his forehead and he grabbed the Jackson’s wrist in order to snatch the gun away.

They tossed and turned, with Jackson on his back with Derek between his legs, the gun between them. Though Jackson didn’t have the same strength as Derek had, he’d wanted to have some blood tonight and it wasn’t going to be him, while Derek was tired from fighting Ennis but he needed to finish this and get back to Stiles.

Derek finally had a proper hold on the pistol along with Jackson’s hand, and started to bend it backwards towards the other man’s head. He could feel Jackson floundering beneath him but he didn’t let up, pushing the hand until he felt something pop under his fingers and the scream
wrenched from Jackson’s throat. His eyes were wide with terror as the barrel of the pistol pointed at his face, and Derek didn’t blink before pressing down on the trigger and firing.

Ringing in his ears was like the victory bell to Derek. Standing up over the corpse and keeping a hold on the pistol. He gave himself a moment to breathe, both fights taking its toll on his energy before he looked over his shoulder at where Ennis was holding his arm trying to slow the blood from pouring out. His eyes also finding where Alan was staring at him with this acceptance, like Derek had already killed him. Derek let out a sigh and flipped the safety on the pistol, tucking it into his jeans as he spoke. “No one else dies tonight.”

He meant it too. Derek went over to the ottoman where Jackson had left the razor, picking it up and coming across to Alan and his nephew on the bed, slicing through their restraints with ease and letting them have a moment while he picked up his jacket from the bed and pulled it on. They embraced and spoke hushed to each other but Derek was respecting their privacy and looked at Ennis once more before nodding to him and asking if he knew where the first aid kit was. He understood and trudged his way over to the bathroom with Derek following close behind.

He could tell that the other man didn’t want to hurt anyone, that Jackson had simply forced him to do it because he was huge and could withstand a lot of abuse physically. The hesitation Derek saw in their first encounter was enough to trust that he wouldn’t get his head smashed in when he focused on collecting the first aid kit, going back out to the bedroom and setting the case on the bed. He no doubt had some bruising and the cut on his temple from the pistol whipping should probably need some attention but he was alright for now, the other two were in much worse conditions. Alan has parts of the flesh on his face cut off from the razor, with Stephen only having a slight bump on his head which Derek could gather was to knock the child out. Ennis was the worse out of them, with his arm being held to stop blood. “Right, let’s do you first since you’re losing the most blood.”

He patched them up as quick as he could, going into the bathroom for some towels to clean the wounds before sticking gauze on the cuts he didn’t need to stitch up, and bandaging the ones that did. The room was silent apart from the hissing of pain whenever there was an alcohol wipe rubbed on a sensitive cut, but it was enough to relax Derek for now. Alan had seemed to lose all fight he had with Derek which he was surprised by since it was his fault that most of his whole family was slaughtered.

Climbing up onto the bed, Derek grabbed the harness clinging to Ennis’ head so he could undo it. Ennis waited with a blank face, which quickly turned into relief once the offending item was dropped onto the mattress. It seems that he had the harness on ever since he was with Jackson, which would drive anyone insane with the way it was squeezing his skull.

They all exited the house with their items intact, and Derek bringing the remainder of the first aid kit with him to use whenever they would need it. Alan paused at the end of the driveway with Derek while they watched Ennis trudge off. There was a tense moment where both of the men didn’t talk, and for a moment Derek thought that their short parlay would be broken, but the cannibal simply held out his hand to be shaken. “You’re different than the rest of us. Make sure he understands that.”

He turned to where Ennis was waving at Stephen, the boy enthusiastically reciprocating. Derek knew what he meant; he could have killed them all in there, he could have stopped anyone from knowing who he was, or where he was going. He could have used Ennis to kill Alan and Stephen, or simply kept Ennis for himself as a bodyguard. But instead, he let the man be free to live his life and do whatever he felt like, while also letting Alan decide what to do next with what’s left of his family. This wasn’t mercy, this wasn’t a power complex. This was just being a decent human being, like before, when the world wasn’t burnt to shit. Derek nodded his head.
without another word, knowing there was nothing needed to say, and headed back to their cottage for the rest of the night, leaving Alan to find his way back.

Coming into the cottage through the window, Derek set his bag down and listened for any movement. He heard nothing, but he didn’t worry yet since Stiles should be resting anyway. When he came into the living room though, his heart sank. Stiles was sleeping on the sofa, the record player had been turned on and was left to go around the finished vinyl, the two suitcases were packed and almost waiting to leave. Stiles had been ready to leave him. Though it made his throat clog up with emotions, the thought of Stiles no longer in his life enough to finish off all the energy out of his body. He doesn’t know what made Stiles stay; could have been the bullet wound in his shoulder, or the post-it notes that Derek had been laying around the cottage in hopes that Stiles would find them and fall in love all over again, or just the fact that he’d drank a whole bottle of liquor and was too drunk to move, who knows. But Derek promised himself then that he would do everything in his power to make sure that Stiles would never regret being with him, he would try every day to remind Stiles just how much he loves him.

He picked the stylus up and set it back on its holster, treading softly to the sofa where he lifted Stiles up without any effort, carrying him up the stairs to the bedroom. He laid Stiles down on the bed, gentle to slip his shoes off before tucking him under the sheets and bending down to kiss his forehead. He noticed the ring resting on the bedside table and swallowed thickly, blinking away the tears that welled up. If Stiles needed this, then he wouldn’t fight it. They had already broken up before all this began, and having Stiles come back didn’t change any of his thoughts. He needed to show Stiles that he had changed for the better, that just because the world went to shit doesn’t mean they can’t enjoy their time together and make it last.

He left the ring stay on the bedside table, not even wanting to let it be a solid fact in his head. He repeated his newly formed promise; he would do everything to remind Stiles how much he was loved. Making sure that Stiles was tucked in properly, Derek headed to the door and shut it with a soft click, letting him get some well-earned rest.

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She had seen enough to peak her curiosity. After what she just witnessed with these two men, she knew they were in love. This was something she had never seen in this new world. It was interesting and she didn’t want to stop watching them.

The injured man was the one that really got to her. All he wanted to do was be normal, she could tell the struggle in this man’s body even through the window. He hated this kind of life, and though he may have tried to leave from the way he was searching for supplies, he still stayed. A small part of her wanted to protect this man from the new world, that slither of hope that this man would be different from all the other pigs that didn’t deserve lungs. She needed to make sure that he wouldn’t become one of them. Yes, she would stay hidden, keep watch on this couple.

She could still keep to her mission or diminishing the pigs from this world, but she wouldn’t be returning to the Cherries just yet. With that, knowing that the bigger man was in the house now with the means to protect his partner, she left to where she had abandoned the car. The noise of thumping from the trunk enough to amuse her that this man still thought he would be able to get out. He had enough time to escape, she had been there for hours. No, he was just an imbecile.

Unlocking the trunk, she swung the boot open and took a look at the Plowboy. The bullet wound she made in his thigh had made a mess on the floor of the trunk, and from the looks of it, Theo
had also pissed himself. He panted in the fresh air before glaring at her and spitting. “Fucking cow!”

Not even giving a damn, she simply unsheathed her gun out of the holster once more and shot the pig four times. Just to be sure he would stay dead. Couldn’t be too careful. With that, she shut the trunk once more, locked it and pulled the key out, heading back to the cottage. She would be able to sneak in easily, and if the house was that big, she could use the attic without the couple ever finding her.

End Notes

Please tell me what you think, give kudos, and all that jazz :D

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