

Tethered (by the thinnest thread)

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Tethered (by the thinnest thread)

by [dreamerjules \(jelaine3\)](#).

Summary

“You'll find Stiles on the north border of the preserve. Hurry if you want to find him alive.”

Notes

Written for the 2013 Teen Wolf Reverse Big Bang. Inspired by [artwork](#) by the lovely Surranndie. Hope you enjoy.

“You'll find Stiles on the north border of the preserve. Hurry if you want to find him alive.”

Derek hadn't heard from Deucalion since that day in the distillery. Honestly, he'd hoped to never hear from him again. There was a lot about that time he'd hoped to never face again.

He was forever grateful to have Cora back and to no longer be Alpha. He was never meant to be Alpha and he'd been even worse at it than he'd feared. But leaving Beacon Hills with Cora had given him a chance to heal that he hadn't been ready for the first time.

He'd stayed in touch with Scott and Deaton, mostly to keep an eye on Peter. They'd been getting Cora settled into a new job and pack in Kentucky when the Peter situation exploded. Derek had gotten in touch with Chris to let him know there were no hard feelings.

Derek kept moving around after Kentucky. Granted, he'd kept moving west, but returning to Beacon Hills hadn't been the plan. Not that he'd had a plan beyond constant motion. In fact, he was closer to Beacon Hills right now than he had been in years and had been thinking about stopping by to say hi to everyone.

Scott answered on the third ring.

“Derek, I don't have time to talk....”

“Stiles is missing.”

There was a long pause before Scott said, “What? How do you know that?”

“Deucalion called me. He said Stiles is on the north border of the preserve. He also said to hurry if we want to find him alive. I'm actually just outside of town. I can be there in fifteen. I'll call if I find him.”

“I'll do the same. Thanks.”

Derek gunned the Camaro and made it in just under five. It had been six years since the last time he'd seen Stiles at the hospital, but he knew Stiles' scent. Even with six years of changes, the basic scent remains consistent.

Cora would have a lot to say about that if she knew.

Which she wouldn't. Ever.

Sisters didn't need to know everything, despite what they think.

He shifted, wishing for the first time since he was a child that he could fully shift into a wolf the way his mother and Laura had been able. His sense of smell was strong even without shifting, but grew the closer he was to canine form.

Since he'd parked close to the west boundary line of the preserve, he headed east when he couldn't even get a hint of Stiles. He ran a zig zag pattern over the border, going fifty yards in

either direction, hoping to catch some sign of Stiles. He knew there was no reason to trust Deucalion and there was every chance that it was a trap, but trap or not, he couldn't ignore a chance to save Stiles if he was in danger.

The ringing of his phone did not in any way make him jump.

“Isaac found a piece of Stiles' shirt near the creek north of your old house. We're heading straight for the border. Where are you?”

“I'll meet you when you get to there.”

Derek hung up, not bothering to wait for Scott's reply, if there was one. Heedless of the vines and branches in his way, he ran flat out no longer bothering with the search pattern. To be on the safe side though, he paid closer attention to the scents he caught as he ran. As he got closer, he thought he caught a whiff of Stiles, but it could also have been wishful thinking.

He arrived at the clearing slightly ahead of Scott. The smell of Stiles was stronger here, yet he couldn't pull a clear direction off it.

“Find anything?” asked Scott as he slowed to a walk.

“No. I can smell him, but I can't tell where he is exactly.”

They started walking in opposite directions along the tree line surrounding the clearing. Derek was finding Stiles' scent intoxicating. It had been so long and his scent was so pervasive.

As the smell of blood was starting to be.

“Scott!”

Derek was tearing up the underbrush when Scott reached him.

“Stiles' blood. It's close. He's here somewhere. He's here.”

Scott threw himself into the search, but there was nothing to be found.

“Dammit! Where is he?” Scott's voice carried all the frustration they both felt.

Derek stood, hands on his hips, fear turning into anger because he knew how to deal with anger. It was an old companion and he looked up hoping for something, anything, that would let him not renew that acquaintance.

And found himself looking at the bottom of a very dirty pair of sneakers.

“Scott, help me cut him down. He's still alive.”

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Scott had jumped up and cut the rope that kept Stiles dangling from the tree. That was the easy part. The knots in the rope were so intricate, so fucking frustrating, that claws and fangs weren't doing the trick and didn't that just burn. At least he could be thankful there was no wolfs bane woven into the rope.

Scott had called Chris as soon as he was back on the ground. Chris arrived with the Sheriff, who started cutting through the ropes with Chris' Bowie knife. Derek pulled the cut ropes away from Stiles' still body. Derek refused to think of how wrong that was. He focused instead on Stiles' heartbeat. Thank God it was still strong, but slow and not just slow for Stiles.

The claw marks were deep and still trickling blood. Derek pulled off his shirt, using it to put pressure on the wounds. It wasn't much, but it had to be enough.

“The ambulance is at the west entrance,” said Chris.

“I'll run him to the entrance,” said Derek. “I can run fast and keep him more stable. It's better than waiting for them to get here. I'll keep him safe, Sheriff.”

He looked the Sheriff in the eye as he spoke, willing him to believe him and saw the face of a man afraid of losing the last of good thing in this life – his family. It was a look Derek had been very familiar with for a long time. It was look he'd never wanted to see again.

“Go. Hurry.”

Derek nodded and with Scott's help, carefully picked Stiles up and ran for his – Stiles' – life.

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Stiles still hadn't woken up a day and a half later. The EMTs and ER doctors had worked miracles in getting him stabilized. At least in the Sheriff's view. And Derek's and Scott's and Melissa's and everyone's.

“What the hell happened?”

No matter how many times Derek asked the question, he hadn't gotten a good answer.

Oh, he'd gotten answers from everyone. He had facts.

Fact One: Stiles was home for a long weekend to interview for a job.

Fact Two: It had been quiet in Beacon Hills for the past year.

Fact Three: Stiles hadn't made it to his interview.

Fact Four: The interview was Thursday morning. It had been Sunday afternoon when Deucalion had called.

Fact Five: Stiles hadn't been bitten.

But there was no way to make sense of it and Derek needed to make sense of it. The others were so happy Stiles was alive and would recover that why he'd been taken was a lower priority.

Derek, however, Derek wouldn't rest, wouldn't relax, until he knew why Stiles had been taken and hurt.

Of course, there wasn't anything he could do until Stiles woke up and told him what happened.

The one consolation was the excellent care Stiles was receiving. Everyone there loved the Sheriff and Melissa was one of their own. Apparently, werewolves weren't the only ones who closed ranks when necessary. He could respect that.

He stalked the halls of the hospital while he waited. He passed Scott doing the same thing, though less often. He hadn't seen Isaac much, but Derek knew he was either at Deaton's or the Argent's. That was one development Scott hadn't told him about and he got the feeling there was more going on that Scott wasn't willing to talk about, at least to him.

Derek was sure he'd paced almost a full marathon when he heard the Sheriff.

"Derek, he's awake."

He just managed not to wolf out or flat out run.

Scott, Allison and Isaac were huddled together and he could see Melissa talking to another nurse and Deaton. Obviously, the Sheriff was in with Stiles and at that thought Derek shut down his hearing as much as he could. He really wanted to hear Stiles' voice, to know for himself the boy was alright, but he wanted to give the Sheriff and Stiles the privacy they needed.

Except he wasn't a boy anymore, was he? He was a senior in college; legally able to drink.

"Just get out! I don't want to talk about it! Go away!"

There was a crashing sound and the Sheriff backed out of Stiles' room.

"John?" Melissa was at the Sheriff's side, her hand slipping into his unnoticed.

"It's fine. He's just not ready to talk about what happened yet. Obviously. It'll be fine. I'll get Terry, the new deputy, to take his statement. That'll make it easier."

"Easier?" The word left Derek's mouth before he could think to stop it. "What happened to him? Was he...?"

And he couldn't finish that sentence. Would have preferred to have never had that thought to begin with.

Melissa looked at John and John nodded. It wasn't like there was anything to tell and even if there was, everyone here would find out eventually. Secrets were just not something they

were good at keeping.

“The exam showed no evidence of sexual assault, though he was beaten in addition to the 'mountain lion' attack. It also looks like he wasn't bitten. Obviously.”

The Sheriff went slightly paler at that thought and Derek wondered if it was the idea of Stiles being a werewolf or him being dead. Yeah, werewolf beat being dead any day. In fact, when he put it that way, Derek wasn't sure he didn't go a little pale as well.

“Can we see him? I want to see him,” said Scott.

“I don't think that's such a good idea,” said the nurse who'd been talking to Melissa and Deaton. “We've increased the sedatives to calm him down. There was some concern he'd tear his stitches. Actually, it might be a good idea if you go home. He'll be out for several hours and there really isn't anything you can do here. I'll call the second he wakes up, or if anything changes.”

“I'm on shift anyway. I'll keep a very close eye on him, John.”

“I want deputies on his door. I'm not leaving until they get here.”

“I'll stay,” Isaac said. “No offense, Sheriff, but I think I'm a better choice than a deputy right now.”

The Sheriff just stared at Isaac for a moment. Since being forced to accept the supernatural as part of his life, he hadn't liked that everyone of them was so young. He wanted Isaac to be young and innocent, but that hadn't been true even before he became a werewolf.

“Fine, Isaac. Just don't forget to call if you need to. You may be better able to handle some things, but that doesn't mean you have to handle it alone.”

“He won't. I'm staying as well,” said Derek.

“Derek, I appreciate you want to help, but you need to rest. I don't care how resilient you are. No one is at their best without rest and food. You've done less of both than I have since you found him, which I would normally think would be physically impossible. Son, right here, right now, he's safe, so I'm going home for a few hours and you're coming with me and if I have to shoot you to make any of that happen, I will.”

Derek dropped his eyes to the floor. He wanted to be angry at being called son, at being told how to take care of himself, but he couldn't find it within himself. Not for those reasons at least. There was still plenty of anger towards the animals that had hurt – such a useless word – Stiles, towards Deucalion for not putting a stop to it, but not towards the man who came so close to losing his son.

“Can I meet you at the house? There's something I need to do first. I'll be as quick as I can.”

John nodded, looking like he wanted to speak, maybe caution him about staying out of trouble, maybe thanking him again, maybe something else entirely, but Derek would never

know for certain as John turned and headed out of the hospital as if he didn't leave right that second, he wouldn't be able to.

Scott reached into his pocket, pulling out his keys and taking one off and handing it to Derek.

“I don't think the Sheriff would appreciate you breaking in.”

“Damn and I was so looking forward to getting in through Stiles' window. Thanks.”

“No problem. Let me know what you find out and don't do anything on your own.”

“Scott....”

“I'm not saying not to do anything. I'm saying you don't have to do it alone. I want to get my hands on the bastards that did this, too. Just leave something for the rest of us who care about Stiles, okay?”

“Okay. I should be able to manage that.”

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It turned out to be easy not to do something that had already been done.

“What is this?”

“The hearts of the ones who hurt your friend.”

The accent didn't make it sound any better.

“Why? If you could do this, why did you let Stiles get hurt?”

He had Deucalion pressed tight to the concrete column in the old mall where they had battled so long ago, hand gripping his throat, ready to tear it out at the first wrong syllable. Yet the threat was banked. They both knew Deucalion could break Derek's hold any time he wanted. Hell, he could probably turn the tables between one breath and the next.

He didn't though. He just answered the question.

“I didn't know who he was at first. I didn't know what they were up to when I joined them. I've been traveling since last we met. I didn't belong anywhere and I couldn't pretend that I did. Plus, the temptation to see everything I could was too great to resist. You gave me a tremendous gift. I wanted to be worthy of it. In my travels, I'd encounter different packs. I'd learn whatever I could from the good packs, packs like your family, learn what made them good packs and I would try to take those lessons to packs that weren't as evolved, I suppose would be the right word. Some of them appreciated my efforts. Others resented my meddling, as they saw it and no doubt they were right. I am not a man of the middle way I have found.”

“No shit. This wasn't a pack though, was it?”

“Not in the traditional sense, no. There was an alpha and his mate, two witches and a human with a truly extraordinary gift. I suppose psychic is the correct term for what he could do, yet it was so much more than picking up thoughts from a person or impressions from an object. He could create or manipulate thoughts and memories. I'm not sure how much he had influenced the others, though however much it was, they were no innocent victims. I had heard stories of them, but didn't even realize I'd found them. I hope it was Edmund's manipulations and not my own willful ignorance for failing to recognize them for what they were. I wanted to learn how they had come to be a pack such as they were and what they wanted. See what stories about them were true and which weren't, if there was any truth there at all. A few days ago, I heard screams. Edmund screaming at someone and a young man screaming in pain. Not long before I called you, it may have been when they were talking him to the Preserve, I heard him speak for the first time and I recognized his voice. It was Scott's friend Stiles.”

“So why call me and not Scott?” Derek stepped back, giving Deucalion a bit more room than he had before.

“I tried. I just got his voice mail and I'd picked up enough to know waiting for Scott to check his messages would not be in Stiles' favor. You answered. You saved him.”

“And the hearts?”

“My apology for not getting him out sooner. I should have put an end to it sooner, regardless of who it was. They are also evidence if you choose to turn me over to hunters. I request it not be an Argent for obvious reasons.”

“They're the only ones I know. How do I know these hearts belong to the bastards who injured Stiles?”

“I can show you their bodies if you want. What's left of them.”

Derek stepped away from Deucalion entirely. He was starting to get some serious Uncle Peter vibes off the guy and that would never be a good thing.

“I'll take your word for it. But if I find out you haven't killed them or if you had anything – anything- to do with hurting Stiles, I'll make you beg for Gerard Argent's gentle touch. Do you understand?”

“I do and I thank you for your mercy. How is the boy, if I might ask?”

“Alive. Healing physically. The information about mental manipulation will help though. It probably explains his reactions when he woke up.”

“If there is anything I can do to help.”

“You've done enough. He wouldn't be alive without your call. Thank you.”

“It was little enough.”

“But it was enough.”

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Stiles had been released from the hospital three days earlier. He was home and he was healing, but he wasn't getting better. He still wouldn't talk to anyone about what happened. The statement he'd given was the definition of useless.

“No, sir, I didn't see who attacked me. I was hit from behind and kept blindfolded. Yes, they spoke, but I don't remember any accents or anything. They all sounded pretty normal to me.”

Terry, the new deputy, was so new he never realized just how not Stiles the statement had been and no one told him. There was no point.

Stiles was still uncomfortable with his dad and Scott, though it wasn't much better with Isaac or Allison. He was just better able to control his reactions around them.

Though still not talkative, Derek was the only one Stiles was remotely Stiles with and the Sheriff gave them all the room he could. Anything to have Stiles back to normal.

Which somehow led to Stiles and Derek taking over the garage and rebuilding the Jeep. A situation made all the more strange by the fact that Stiles didn't know the first thing about mechanics.

Okay, he did know what a catalytic converter was, but that was it.

Normally, Derek liked silence. To be more accurate, he liked not having to hold up the other side of a conversation. There were some people he didn't – hadn't – minded talking to. Family members mostly, but Stiles had made that list despite what Derek wanted. He actually liked the kid's smart mouth and quick thinking and loyalty. Huh, Stiles was more like his family than he'd ever thought, but his feelings and reactions were anything but familial where Stiles was concerned.

What he didn't like though was a silent Stiles. It just didn't mesh with the Stiles Derek knew.

So Derek talked. At first it was about Cora. Getting to know each other again, her new pack in Kentucky, how it felt leaving her there, being glad she was safe, missing her and how a part of him was happy he didn't have anyone to be responsible for and how guilty he felt about that. How all he felt when he heard about Peter's death was relief and how he didn't feel guilty about that at all.

He regaled Stiles with stories about his various jobs since leaving Beacon Hills the last time with Cora. He stuck to the funny ones, mostly, like the sprites who lived in the store room of one of the bars. They didn't like anyone in their space and went to great lengths to protest, but because they were so small, no one saw much of anything, which infuriated their leader. Derek ended up helping them move to nice vacant lot not far away.

It was a little over a week before Derek told him about Deucalion's call, finding him and his last conversation with him. The things that Edmund could do.

He stopped talking then, except for updates from Cora when he got them.

The Jeep was returning to life a little more quickly than Stiles, but they could all see positive changes in him too. He was relaxing more around his dad and Scott. He still only talked when absolutely necessary, but he'd say a little more each time, sound a little more like he had before.

They were putting the finishing touches on the Jeep a few weeks later when Stiles started talking.

"I met Edmund at school. I really didn't recognize his voice. We only spoke a couple of times. He flirted with me, asked me out, but he gave off Peter levels of creepy, so I turned him down. I wasn't even that much of a smart ass about it. Just made it clear that while I was flattered, I wasn't interested. He didn't like it, but it seemed like he was okay with it anyway.

"I didn't give him another thought until you said his name. Hell, I'd practically forgotten his name till you said it. Honestly, I have no idea what he wanted. Did Deucalion say anything?"

"No. He said he didn't even know it was you at first."

Derek went back to work as Stiles fell silent again. It was a fine line between being there for him and giving him the room he needed to process and feel safe. Derek didn't even let himself think about what he'd never get to do to that bastard Edmund, but he did sneak a peek when Stiles didn't continue.

The tears sliding down Stiles' face broke his heart. He put away his tools, grabbed Stiles by the wrist and led him to the front porch steps.

"He showed me Dad's and Scott's bodies. He showed... he made me think I'd killed them. Lots. That they were trying to hurt me, kill me. They said the most awful things, blamed me for... everything. I've hurt them so much. Everything bad in their lives is because of me."

"What bad is in their lives? You're alive. Scott has something going on with Allison and Isaac if I'm not mistaken. He's a certified vet tech and is managing Deaton's practice. Your dad's a good sheriff and surely you've noticed there's something happening between him and Melissa. Sure, their lives aren't perfectly flawless, but no one's is and you're a big part of what makes their lives good."

"I'm the reason Scott got bit. My mom...."

"Stiles, your mom had cancer. You weren't responsible for that. No one could be responsible for that. And, yeah, okay, Scott had to deal with a lot after becoming a werewolf, but you were the reason he was about to handle it as well as he did and a lot of those things would have happened whether Scott was a werewolf or not."

"Yeah, but...."

"But nothing. Think how it would have been if Scott hadn't been a werewolf, if Allison wasn't a hunter actually in love with a werewolf and you know they probably wouldn't have hooked up if he didn't have the confidence that came from being a wolf."

“Maybe, but it felt so real. I could feel their anger and their hate as clearly as I felt their hands around my throat. Do you have any idea what it feels like to know you're dying, that it's your father and your best friend taking your life and seeing the joy in their eyes while they do it?”

“No. I don't. At least Peter was insane whenever he tried to kill me.”

Stiles laughed at that, though it was a sad laugh.

“I can't believe I'm going to say this, but....”

“I need to talk to Morrell. I know. I even kind of want to, but how do I tell Dad and Scott?”

“You could always use your words. It is what you're best at.”

“You jackass,” said Stiles as he tackled Derek the way he had a million times before with Scott.

John came home that evening to find them in the kitchen, cooking dinner, laughing and talking, trading affectionate insults, Stiles getting the better of Derek of course.

They stopped when they caught sight of John. The next instant, John was on the receiving end of a hug from Stiles.

“Dad, I don't think you're going to like what I have to tell you.”

“Are you going to tell me you're a serial killer with a fondness for stealing from little old ladies?”

“Um, no,” said a very confused Stiles.

“Then I'm fine with whatever you have to tell me.”

And though it hurt him to know what his son had gone through, he was fine with it and even better when Ms. Morrell was able to help Stiles.

When Scott found out the whole story, it was the only time he thought killing would have been an appropriate first response. The idea that he had been used to hurt Stiles did not sit well with him, but his own sessions with Deaton – there was no way he was talking to Morrell – helped with that.

Of course, Isaac's new hobby of leaving Stiles little tin hats any and everywhere he could place them, also helped bring things back to normal.

Works inspired by this one

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