

Tell Me I'm Alive

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Tell Me I'm Alive

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Summary

You stayed for me?" Stiles frowned, his panic fogged brain struggling to comprehend.

"You would have stayed for me." Derek replied seriously, as if it were solid fact. As if Stiles was a constant he didn't have to question, a law of nature.

(Or: Post 5A, Stiles and Derek captured by the Dread Doctors and experimented on.)

Notes

Hi friends. If you've been around for a bit you might have read my fic Gravity. It's this fic but was not as good, so I did a re-write! NotenuffCaffiene and Ashby helped me a bunch on here. It's literally been like a four month long project but I didn't feel like I did the idea justice the first time around. Hopefully y'all like it!

Stiles' head throbbed as he opened his eyes, quickly trying to orient himself. The last thing he remembered was the waiting room of the hospital.

It was dim, and smelled of damp where he was. The only light source he could see came from a nearby tube where a man was floating suspended in greenish liquid, a mask covering part of his face. Stiles had no idea if the man was alive but he honestly hoped not at this point. He tried to sit up and then shuddered hard against his panic when he was stopped short by a strap across his chest over his t-shirt.

Deep breaths. He couldn't afford to panic right now.

He turned his head and looked around the other side of the room. There was a set of stairs, concrete and stained with what he hoped wasn't blood. It was probably was blood. There was also a set of shelves with jars holding different liquids in them. One of them looked disturbingly like a human fetus and he felt himself gag as he quickly looked away.

Clicking started, whirring and sinister, coming closer to him.

One of the Doctors phased into being next to him, causing Stiles to jolt hard against the cold metal of the table. This Doctor had four large black circles for eyes and a mask with brass rivets and a tube covering half his face. His hands were covered in metal gloves that were cold against Stiles' skin as the Doctor tugged up his shirt.

"Hey, hey, what--?" he started but before he could get much further than that, a syringe was stabbed into his stomach. He jolted and then it was compressed, shooting a burning liquid into him. He couldn't help the screams as it happened again. And again.

Darkness swallowed him up.

Stiles came to slowly. This time he wasn't strapped to the table by his chest, just his wrists. His shirt was still rucked up over the straps and they had moved to inject more substances into his torso. He kept losing time. His stomach was tender and sore where they had stabbed large syringes into him.

"His condition improves," The one with yellow lenses over his eyes intoned through the vertical slits of his mask.

"My condition was fine before you started stabbing me," he croaked at him. The Doctor ignored him, turning around to press the needle of a syringe into a tube attached to the floating man and sucking up some of the liquid. Stiles tried very hard not to make any sounds as he worked his wrist, trying to free it from the cuff. He craned his neck hard, trying to see where there might be a second entrance or exit.

“He is prepared.” The first Doctor with the four empty holes for eyes told the one with a solid face. They phased out quickly, leaving Stiles to rapidly tug at his wrists, trying to free them. He had no idea how much time had passed and the idea of it gave him a sense of nervous urgency. His dad was out there hurt and alone.

He also knew with a leaden certainty that no one else was coming for him.

Stiles managed to get his right wrist free with a ragged scrape over his thumb and a rush of heat that he was pretty sure was blood. Yep, blood and god it why does it always have to sting worse once you look at it? He gasped and quickly moved to free his left wrist and then pushed himself up on his shaking elbows. His stomach muscles quivered pathetically and refused to pull him up, dropping him back flat on his shoulders.

“Fuck.” He sighed and tried again until he could finally fold up enough to free his ankles. He pressed his palms over his stomach as he sat up, the areas that were given shots hot under his palms. Stiles dropped his legs off the table and plonked down to land on his feet, immediately woozy. He clawed his way across the floor, clinging to tables and shelves towards the stairs to stay upright.

He made it to the gate barring the exit and held his breath, trying to listen over the pounding of his heart. The telltale buzz of electricity was faint but just strong enough that Stiles could hear it. Swearing under his breath again, he looked around, trying to measure each breath for the right number of counts, staving off the panic. He had to think rationally and he couldn’t do that if he panicked. First thing, he needed somewhere to hide, and some sort of weapon.

Stiles scuttled behind the creepy dude in a tube and took slow, deep breaths so that if the Dread Doctors returned, they wouldn’t hear him. He scanned the area, looking for anything he could possibly defend himself with. There was a pole nearby, attached to one of the railings around but loose enough he thought he could pull it free.

The clicking began again, sending his pulse skyrocketing into his throat and throbbing around his vision. It was too soon, he wasn’t ready yet. He pressed his back hard against the wall behind the tube and tried not to be seen.

“Who are you?” Stiles heard a familiar, groggy voice and craned his head out around the side carefully, trying not to expose himself. His stomach sunk in despair as his fears were confirmed.

The Doctors were dragging Derek Hale in.

He was held up between their bodies, his feet limp and dragging uselessly on the floor. Derek’s face was wet with sweat and his eyes were unfocused as he looked around. Stiles took a fortifying breath and wrenched hard on the pole, tugging it free from the railing before scrambling his feet under him and launching himself, swinging, at the Doctors. He slammed the pole into one of their masks like a bat, succeeding in cracking a lense and pissing the Doctor off royally. The metal glove snatched hard at Stiles’ neck and shoulder and he was slammed bodily onto the table again.

“His condition improves,” The Doctor intoned, grabbing the straps and securing them around his wrists and ankles. Another syringe pressed to his thigh and his world went dark again.

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Stiles regained consciousness to the sounds of Derek’s screams reverberating off the walls. The warehouse was shrouded in gloom, lit only by the sickly green light coming from the man in the tube. Stiles had no idea if he’d been out for five minutes or five hours.

He tried to move and found the chest strap barring his way again. He craned his neck to look and caught a glimpse of Derek strapped up, tubes shoved into the meat of his arms pumping mercury and black fluids. He had small dots of blood where he had been pricked with needles but they were already healed. His clothes were in shreds, bits hanging off of his shoulders or on the floor surrounding him. Derek had his fangs dropped, wolf brow, and he snarled viciously at them.

“La bete.” One of the Doctors intoned before he moved in front of Derek. He blocked Stiles’ view and whatever he did made Derek roar at him like Stiles had never heard before.

The Doctors came from Derek with the same syringe, this one the largest so far, and then sank it into Stiles and deposited... whatever was in it. Stiles tried not to scream but a strangled yell came from him anyway. The Doctor’s discussed something in odd, hushed tones before they faded again along the telluric currents. Stiles waits until he’s sure they are gone before craning his head again.

“Derek? Hey...” He called softly, until Derek’s head lifted enough for his eyes to barely focus on Stiles’ face. “Hey, big guy.” Stiles gave a relieved huff and tried to smile. The muscles in his face twitched. “Glad you’re still kicking.”

“Kicking is a relative term.” Derek replied, tone dry as a bone and rough from his sore throat.

“Sarcasm is a good measure of health?” He tried, shrugging as much as he could while strapped to a table. “Could be worse?”

“Speak for yourself.” Derek groaned, stretching his neck back and trying to shift his arms, tugging the cords in them. His skin pulled in a way that made Stiles’ stomach roil unhappily. “What are those things?”

“They’re called the Dread Doctors. There’s this book written about them that Lydia found in a girl’s room and from this Dr. Valack dude.” Stiles dropped his head back down to the table, unable to hold it up anymore. “They create chimeras.”

“Is that what they’re trying to do to you?” Derek sounded sharper, concerned.

“I have no idea. They’re really focused on my stomach and I wanna puke. I don’t know how long I’ve been here.”

“I don’t know either. I wasn’t even in this country.” Derek sighed, and the sound seemed to come straight from his soul. Stiles could relate.

“Sorry, man. I wish you didn’t keep getting dragged into this stuff either.” He replied, groaning a little as his stomach started to burn again. It turned into a full spasm and roiled before he pulled his straps enough to roll just a little and managed to throw up off the side of the table. “Oh gross.” Stiles shuddered and then stared. “It’s black. That’s not good. That’s really not good. Oh god.”

“Stiles. What does that mean?” Derek sounded serious, implacable, but Stiles couldn’t seem to focus on him, his lungs struggling to pull in air around his panic.

“I don’t know. I just know it’s bad. I think it’s failing? I think I’m dying. I think I’m gonna die.”

“What can I do? How do we fix it?” Derek asked, struggling harder against the tubes in his arms.

“I don’t know. I don’t think we can... My dad, Derek, I have to take care of him. What if he dies? What if I die? He can’t lose me. I can’t.. I can’t...” he broke off, gasping hard and shaking, his battle against the panic finally lost. It dragged him under, fogging the edges of his vision.

“Calm down. You’re not dying, okay? You’re not.” Derek replied. “I won’t let you.”

“How are you going to stop it? I don’t even know why this is hap-happening... you can’t even move.” He shook against the table, trying hard to slow his breathing. He tilted his head up to see Derek again.

“I think I know a way I can. But I couldn’t try it while you were passed out. I don’t know if I’ll be able to carry you.” Derek replied quickly, struggling against the tubes again.

“You stayed for me?” Stiles frowned, his panic fogged brain struggling to comprehend.

“You would have stayed for me.” Derek replied seriously, as if it were solid fact. As if Stiles was a constant he didn’t have to question, a law of nature.

They stared at each other for a moment, Derek’s pale eyes wide and intense. Stiles shuddered again, breaking the eye contact when his stomach cramped hard again, forcing more black bile out of him.

Derek nodded as if it were decision made, a strangled noise forcing it’s way out of him before he howled, the sound one of pain that then morphed into an exact wolf noise. He shifted, the hoses in his arms getting pushed loose and free of his body, leaking the black goop and mercury on the ground. His claws clicked on the floor as he squirmed away from the restraints.

“Oh god I forgot you could do that.” Stiles gasped raggedly, rolling his head to look at the wolf padding his way over to the table. He stood on his back paws and tilted his head to gnaw at the straps on Stiles’ wrist. Stiles tugged his hand away to give him a better reach and then quickly moved to unstrap his other hand while Derek went to gnaw at the straps on Stiles ankles.

Once he was free, Stiles stood too fast, trying to get away from the black goop and the table quickly. He skidded into the creepy dude in the tube, barely missing Derek. He yelped as an idea popped into his head.

“The pole, the pole, where is the pole...GOTCHA!” Stiles stumbled around drunkenly before he grabbed the pole up from where it had fallen after he royally pissed off the doctors.

“Back up, I don’t know what this stuff will do to you.” He pressed a hand out at Derek to keep him back before he swung hard and cracked the glass. A few more good swings and the tube shattered, the creepy dude and all the fluid around him draining out to spill on the floor.

It splashed along the walls, the electronics sparking and shorting out as Stiles backed up quickly, avoiding touching any of the liquid.

Derek grabbed his sleeve in his teeth and tugged to help lope Stiles out towards the now shorted out gate.

“Nopenopenope...” Stiles chanted as they skittered away from creepy, smelly, tube dude as fast as possible. “They used the stuff on me. I think they need it for something else but fuck them.” At Derek’s questioning look, complete with canine head tilt and ear perking, he continued. “I saw that gate was electrified before they brought you in.”

He gestured to where the liquid had shorted out the electricity and then looked back at Derek’s wolf face. He imagined the wolf’s expression was impressed. He stumbled up a few of the stairs while clinging to the railing with a white knuckled death grip.

“I think I need Deaton. This hurts, man.”

Derek tugged harder, trying to pull him along. Stiles was barely walking and couldn’t keep his feet under him, his stomach shaking with the effort of holding himself upright. Derek paused and sighed through his nose, nostrils flaring.

“How can you sass as a wolf, that’s totally unfair.” Stiles griped, clutching his stomach harder with the arm not currently clutching the railing. Derek stepped in front of him quickly, which was a good job because Stiles couldn’t hold himself up any longer. He half climbed and half fell onto Derek’s back, draped sideways with his chest against the wolf’s shoulders. Derek made little whuffing sounds as he shifted and bucked until Stiles was laying more than sitting, draped face first in his fur straight along Derek’s back. His stomach was fucking agony but Stiles wrapped his legs as much around the wolf’s stomach as he could and looped his arms around Derek’s neck. Derek took off running as soon as Stiles was clinging solidly enough, heading for deaton as fast as four legs could carry him. Stiles tried to hold on as best he could and not puke all over.

“You’re my new favorite wolf,” he muttered into Derek’s fur. He thought it was an exaggeration for a moment before he remembered that he didn’t have Scott anymore and choked on his own grief. Derek made a weird, questioning yip and Stiles just shook his head.

“I’m good.” he muttered, rubbing at his eyes with his wrist. He startled when he heard a clicking sound start, clutching at Derek harder. Derek put on a burst of speed, dashing around a tree until the clicking started to fade off again.

Stiles felt exhaustion creeping in under the stress, the panic sapping him of all his energy until the rhythmic rush of Derek’s breath and the patter of his paws hitting the ground faded out into darkness and the rush of being free.

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Freedom turned out to feel like a very short lived concept.

They made it to Deaton’s right as Stiles felt himself waking up, the smell of the clinic oddly familiar and comforting.

Deaton had Stiles get up on the table to do a cursory examination while Derek shifted back to human in another room.

“Do you know what it was they did?” He asked, eyes concerned on Stiles’ face.

“There were injections. Stuff from the man in the tube. They had something from Derek? They injected me with it too.” he shifted, wringing his fingers together nervously. Derek came back into the room, dressed in spare clothing of Deaton’s. He paled almost milkwhite as Stiles spoke and refused to meet Stiles’ gaze. Stiles didn’t know what to make of that.

“Well, you don’t have any of the marks of the chimeras, nothing appears to have been added or removed. Or at least there are no incisions to indicate it.” Deaton mused. He handed Stiles a jar and then nodded when Stiles held it. “Mountain ash doesn’t affect you. They may have been attempting to harvest something from you, tap into your spark? Just keep an eye on it. Make sure you come see me if you start puking black blood again.”

“No problem there, I’ll come running, and probably screaming, if anything like that happens again.” He joked nervously. Deaton then quickly cleaned all the stomach wounds and pressed on a few bandages. Derek nodded as soon as he heard Stiles was alright.

“I’m going to go check on the loft and call Cora. She’s got to be worried.” Derek waved as he left. Stiles gave a half hearted wave in return, too scared to ask all the questions bubbling up in his throat. Deaton was kind enough to drive him home because his stomach felt like it might just fall right out of his body if he tried to stand or walk for any period of time. His arms and legs still felt more like noodles than anything functional and he had bruises from

where they had strapped him down. Even his back felt bruised. Walking anywhere was a non option unless he could roll.

His house was still empty and quiet, the doors locked and lights out. His dad's car wasn't in the driveway. He somehow managed to find the spare key still buried in the overgrown and forgotten backyard planters and opened the house. Deaton waited until he stepped in the door before he drove off, which Stiles honestly appreciated.

He immediately went to the nearest charger and plugged in his cellphone. It started beeping and vibrating with messages as soon as he got enough juice for it to turn back on.

His dad was still in the hospital recovering after the surgery to repair his lacerated liver and perforated intestine but he had called and texted and left several messages in his voice mailbox. Stiles sagged in relief that his dad was well enough to talk but it was too late at night to call him back yet. Just hearing his voice, a little groggy and rough but otherwise fine, loosed a knot inside his chest a little so it didn't feel like it was strangling him anymore.

While it had felt like ages, the Dread Doctors had only had him for about three days. He made up his mind to try and visit the hospital tomorrow in the morning, but he hoped his dad would be released soon. The house felt too empty here alone.

He showered, too long, too hot, and then stood for a long time in the doorway of his bedroom with his fingers on his light switch, unable to shut it off. He sighed as he gave up and crawled into bed with it still on.

Sleep didn't come easily. His stomach hurt so bad he was shaking and ended up sobbing in agony until he finally passed out, face against his pillow to muffle the sound.

When he woke up the next morning, Stiles stretched carefully and went to brush his teeth and wash his face. He scratched thoughtlessly at the patchy stubble that had grown while he was with the Doctors and decided to shave before he headed downstairs.

It was nice to feel more like himself, to see the sunlight pouring through the windows and walk around the house wearing soft sleep pants and a large shirt. He still felt weak, a bit shaky and his abdomen was covered in bruises and scabs of varying ages where they jabbed the needles into him. He couldn't help picking off the bandages where they itched against his skin.

He worried about Derek back in the loft. Stiles was almost jealous of how Derek seemed totally fine after he healed until he remembered that Derek was better at dealing trauma because he'd had the shittiest life possible until that point. It took the wind out of his sails and he hesitantly texted Derek.

Still alive? He wasn't particularly surprised when there was no reply. He didn't even know if Derek still had the same phone, or if he even had had it when he was taken.

Stiles spent a lot of time curled up on his side in bed before he reminded himself that he could go see his dad today. He groaned when he changed into his shirt with the batman wings across the chest and a baggy, comforting hoodie. He left the sweats because no way in Hell was he going to button jeans over his sore lower abdomen.

He caught the bus to the hospital since his jeep was still in the shop after it had been flipped with him and Theo inside. It took a lot more of a pep talk than he was expecting to convince himself to walk into the hospital. Once inside, he had to stand in the lobby taking slow, deep breaths as the memories of the last few days washed over him like the antiseptic odor that seeps into every corner of a hospital.

"Ok, Stiles, this is ok," he whispered to himself. "No needles are here for you. And it's all clean, and white, and definitely doesn't smell like tube man. Dad is here, gotta see dad," he pep talked at himself, looking around and re-orienting himself. The brightness of it all did help, calming his racing pulse slowly. He still wished he didn't have to do this alone.

He hadn't even bothered to text Scott, still remembering the resolve on his friend's face after Stiles had lost his temper in the rain. The betrayal had sunk deep into the marrow of Stiles' bones, the lack of trust on Scott's face seared it's way into his brain. He shook his head, dismissing that train of thought entirely, and stuffing his hands in his hoodie pocket he made his way to his father's room. The sheriff had had two emergency surgeries and a day in ICU before they moved him to the private room. Stiles had been there but his dad had been knocked out from the leftover anesthesia and the pain killers and slept the whole time. He hated that his dad woke up alone.

He poked his head around the door to and couldn't help the smile that spread across his face, seeing his dad sitting upright in bed.

"Stiles!" His dad gasped, a hand going out to him. "There you are, kid, I was worried sick!" Stiles scuttled up to the bed as fast as he could, leaning in to give his dad a gentle hug.

"Sorry. Some... some stuff happened. I wanted to be here when you woke up. I stayed the whole time you were in surgery though." He sat on the edge of the bed. His dad's eyes narrowed, taking in the hoodie in summertime and the general ragged look on Stiles' face.

"Kid, I hate to say it, but you look like hell." He reached up to pat him on the cheek.

"Kinda feel like hell," Stiles sighed, scrubbing a hand over his face. His dad's face crinkled in worry and concern.

"What's going on? I haven't heard anything from Scott either. Did something happen while I was out?"

Stiles fidgeted with his fingers, unsure how to answer. Telling his dad that Scott wasn't talking to him would also be telling his dad that he'd accidentally murdered Donovan...and then covered it up. That was without even bringing up the fact that he'd been kidnapped and

tortured for almost a week. He clammed up, unsure what to say or do or how to say it if he did say anything.

“So forthcoming.” His dad sighed, scrubbing a hand over his face. “I couldn’t get ahold of you for three days. I know something happened, just not what. C’mon, son.”

“I...” Stiles looked at him and took a deep breath. His resolve crumbled, eroded by the lines on his father’s face and the almost resigned look in his eyes. How was he supposed to add more stress and weight on him? His dad just sat there, expectant at first and then just gradually sinking further into disappointment. Stiles felt like there wasn’t any winning here. He remembered the last surgery, to get the bullet out of his dad’s shoulder and their argument when Stiles was going through his dad’s things. *Dad, son. I take care of you.*

“I... the Dread Doctors got me. I was in a warehouse, I think.” He admitted quietly, clutching his fingers together. His dad’s face drained of all color, brows pulling up in the middle. “They did experiments and shi--stuff to me. I don’t know what the hell... don’t really want to talk about it. Maybe sometime, but not now. They got Derek, too. They brought him in when I was trying to escape. I don’t know how they found him.”

“Where the hell was Scott during all this? I’ve seen his mom this week, too. Nobody thought I needed to know my son was missing?” His dad snapped, looking pissed and face getting red. “And I don’t want to hear that it’s because of the surgery either. You’re my kid, I deserved to know!”

“I don’t think Scott even knew.” Stiles shook his head. “I haven’t talked to him since before I found you. Scott didn’t come for me. I don’t even know if he knew I was gone or if he would have come even if he did know.”

“Why the Hell wouldn’t he have come if he did know? That doesn’t sound like you two. He’s your best friend,” His dad protested, shifting in the bed a little.

“Not anymore. He uh.... He kicked me out of the pack because I... because of the thing with...” Feeling panic tugging at him, Stiles took a breath to refocus. He glanced quickly at the slightly open door and lowered his voice, “Because. I killed Donovan.”

“Back it up. You did what? That’s not what they told me.” His dad narrowed his eyes at him, face getting angrier by the second. It was a look Stiles was unfortunately very familiar with. Stiles took a deep gulp around the terror building in his throat.

“It was an accident, I swear, I--”

His dad cut him off with a hand held up.

“Theo told me you helped him cover it up, not that you killed anybody.” His dad’s mouth thinned, in that way Stiles now knew came from disbelief and anger. “I wasn’t exactly thrilled about the cover up and now you’re adding to it? Did you do it or did Theo do it? What the hell actually happened? Did you cover up an accident or actually kill somebody? I don’t think I know what the hell is going on anymore. Who am I supposed to believe now?”

“Dad, it’s the truth. Wh-why would I lie? I--It was an accident, I didn’t mean it, I just had to stop him, but Scott said--”

“I don’t know why you’d lie, Stiles. But I don’t know what- I mean, if you’re covering for Theo or yourself, either way... I don’t even know if I can believe you about the damn doctors.” He slammed a wide palm against the bed frame, his heart monitor speeding up.

Stiles stared for a minute, feeling his lips quiver with shame and guilt and overwhelming hurt. He didn’t know what he could possibly say to that.

Normally, he’d look to Scott, who would nod, or add in an agreement or another explanation. Stiles was alone this time. Of course his dad wouldn’t believe him.

His brain, being a giant dick, kicked him while he was down and flashed back to the station the night of his dad’s date with Lydia’s mom. Stiles inwardly cringed at the memory of his dad smiling and saying Scott was the son he should have had.

Stiles gulped for air and decided that the physical proof would have to do. He pushed up the sleeves of his hoodie, presenting his wrists to his father, showing the scrapes and bruises from where he’d fought against the cuffs. His father’s heart monitor spiked again before Stiles lifted his shirt and showed the varying puncture wounds that were already turning to bruises smattered around his stomach. He felt scraped raw, broken, and, even though he didn’t really know why, ashamed.

“...Sorry. Just-- I don’t-- Sorry.” Stiles shook his head and backed up before he turned and practically dove out of the room.

“Stiles!” His dad hollered after him. “Son, wait! Come back!”

Stiles swiped the tears from his eyes as he left the hospital. He couldn’t make himself go back.

After four days of missing classes, Stiles figured he might as well try to catch up on Friday and head to school. He still couldn’t sleep without the light on. He saw Scott from across the hallway and took a deep breath, prepared to try and talk to him. Scott frowned and turned around to face Liam.

Stiles hated it. He almost hated Scott in that moment. He hated being in the dark, hated not knowing what was going on, not being included in the Pack. Everything felt tilted, off kilter, like the earth shifted and he had to learn how to fight gravity again.

Lydia was still in Eichen House and he felt the loss like a limb. Hayden was back at school, which Stiles was intensely confused about. Liam orbited around her as Stiles watched from his enforced exile. Malia was with them, and while she looked at him, she also kept her distance. That stung almost as much as Scott.

Stiles kept a watch but Theo seemed to have disappeared after what he did to Stiles' dad. There was no hint of them but he wasn't sure if they'd been seen earlier in the week or not.

Stiles felt like a tube of toothpaste someone kept rolling up. He had tossed and turned through nightmares the night before, dreams of his dad's disappointed face, the Doctors, being strapped down to a table. His stomach was uneasy and he felt like he might be sick again so he slept through lunch. His class work notes were a scrambled mess. It felt like a failure that he'd bothered to go to school at all.

When he got home, he crawled directly into bed, checking his phone again. One missed call from dad. He hit the power button and rolled over to stare at his ceiling.

The weekend passed by in a sleepy blur. On top of everything else, Stiles had started vomiting again. He woke up Saturday barely able to roll over to his trashcan before getting sick again. He briefly panicked, checking immediately for anything out of the ordinary, any black blood or mercury, but it was normal. Gross, but normal.

He stumbled around, half awake and shaky, and cleaned up. He went downstairs and made a cup of chicken broth and slowly sipped it before retreating to bed.

He turned his phone on, listening to messages from his father asking him to call him back, and then shut it off again. No one else had texted him.

Monday arrived, and with it so did Kira. She flailed around the corner at Stiles in a quick, breathless rush.

"Stiles!" She shouted and ran to tug him into a hug. Stiles felt almost overwhelmed by it. He hadn't realized how isolated and hopeless he felt until someone was excited to see him. He hugged her back, probably a little too tightly. "Hey oh my god! I just got in last night, I didn't even get to see Scott yet! Are you ok, you don't look so good?"

"Ah, stomach bug..." He evaded and opened his mouth to ask what had happened with the Skinwalkers when the bell rang and students began bustling past them for class.

"I'll catch you again later!" Kira grinned and then bounced off towards her first class. Stiles stood watching her go, still as a statue till the late bell rang jogging him out of his thoughts and sending him scurrying to his next class. He was already late.

The next time he saw her she was staring at him with wide eyes and no small amount of fear on her face, looking at him over Scott's shoulder as he talked to her. It hurt more than he thought it should have.

He spent the rest of the day trying hard to focus on his work. He'd slept so much during the weekend but the exhaustion had seeped deep in his bones. When the day was finally,

blissfully, over, Stiles let himself into the house fully intending on collapsing into his bed and not moving for a solid 16 hours but he was stopped short when he saw his dad sitting on the couch expectantly. The desperate lizard part of Stiles' brain clamored immediately for him to turn around and walk back out of the house but the stressed, exhausted part of his brain wanted to run right to his father for an old fashioned Stilinski hug. Caught between the two emotions, he just froze and stared at his dad like a deer in headlights, entirely unsure what to do.

"Come on now, son. Come here." His dad sounded so exhausted and sore, even a little lost, that Stiles felt his shoulders slump without his permission. He headed back to the sofa and sat down gingerly, a seat away from his dad. Stiles couldn't meet his gaze, staring down at his knees.

"I missed you, kiddo."

"Why?" Stiles rasped before he could help himself.

"What do you mean, ' *Why?* ' You're my kid."

"I stress you out. It's hard not knowing what to believe, right? You even said 'To be honest, I haven't believed a word Stiles has said since he learned how to speak.' That night at the station with Scott's dad."

"Aw Hell, kid." He sighed, long and low. "You know that wasn't meant to be... I didn't mean it like that. It was a joke!"

"You say stuff like that all the time, though. Or when I said trust me, back when the stuff with Jackson was going down. You just made this face and said 'Trust you?' like it was totally impossible...but Scott... you always trust Scott."

"You make it sound like you're so easy to read, like you don't deliberately manipulate and mislead people all the time. So yeah, I do trust Scott to tell the truth more because, unlike you, he is absolute crap at telling lies. That doesn't mean I don't trust you where it counts, just means I have to... work harder at figuring out when you're bullshitting or when you mean it." His dad scrubbed a hand down his face, puffing out a deep sigh.

"you don't trust me where it counts though. And what you just said is that you still don't believe me and that I'm manipulative on top of being a liar."

"I don't know what to believe anymore, kid. Werewolves and now chimeras, whatever the hell those are, and you're in the middle of it like it's band practice or something. Then this... this stuff with Theo and I get two stories that don't match up at all..."

"ME! Your son! That's who you should believe!" Stiles exploded off the couch in exasperation, scrubbing his shaking hands through his hair "Why would I lie about it, dad?"

"I'm not trying to say you're lying! You just... have to be confused about all this crap that's happened! You wouldn't do that! You're not a killer, Stiles. You're not!" His dad sounded so earnest, reaching out to Stiles almost plaintively.

“Sorry to disappoint you again, but it was definitely me. He said you paralyzed his dad and he wanted to make you suffer before he killed you. The doctors made him some weird wendigo chimera. He had mouths on his *hands* .” He shifted to tug his shirt up his back, over his shoulder to show his dad. “He bit me here with all those damn teeth. And then said he was going to eat my legs. See the proof? You don’t have to take your manipulative, lying kid’s word for it.”

He felt almost a bit vindictive as he looked at his father, sitting silent, pale and quiet.

“You were defending yourself. That’s not murder. That’s... that’s goddamned natural, son. That I believe. I know you protect yourself, and you’ll protect your friends. I know you know the difference... Why didn’t you just come to me? You didn’t think I’d protect you?” His dad asked after a few moments of silence, his face creased and worn as if he had aged 10 years in front of Stiles’ face.

“...I didn’t think you’d believe me.” Stiles admitted, shoulders sinking under the weight of his confession. He couldn’t bring himself to look his dad in the face. “Scott didn’t even believe me either. Why would you? ”

“For God’s sake, Stiles! I think I have been pretty damn understanding about this whole mess!” His dad snapped, clenching his fists on his knees. “My son spends two years getting in the middle of every dangerous crime scene I had and his explanation is Werewolves and Kanimas? You were literally crying wolf. At crime scenes! What the hell was I supposed to do? None of this is a logical conclusion! I can’t prove anything when I get half-truths and fairytales.”

“That doesn’t change the fact that you didn’t believe me!” Stiles shouted, clenching his fists. “Even after you had proof, you still didn’t believe *me* ! You believed Scott! I don’t know what to tell you anymore. I don’t know what I *can* tell you anymore!”

“The truth, goddammit!” His dad shouted back, face flushing red. “In words that make sense and aren’t trying to be funny.”

“The truth? You want the *truth* ?! I *told* you the truth!” Stiles paced and then scrubbed an angry hand over his forehead. “I got kidnapped and they stabbed me full of god knows what! I murdered another teenager! Accidentally or not, self defense or not, doesn’t matter, right?” he flailed a bit, ignoring the twinge of pain in his stomach.

“It does matter,” his dad argued. “Because someone else did wrong, not you! You don’t hurt people, they do! That’s not your fault!”

“Yes it is! My best friend, my brother! He won’t talk to me over it and kicked me out of my Pack! My other best friend is catatonic! And everyone else thinks I AM A LIAR!” He fought the urge to throw something across the room. His dad’s face was stony and flushed high on his cheekbones.

“There’s a difference between what you are and what you do. Remember the actual story about the kid who cried wolf, Stiles? Where the made up stories one day turned out to be real,

but nobody knew the difference because they'd already heard it all before? How did you define lying again? Reclining in a horizontal position?"

And God, that truth hurt. It was said with a tinge of sarcasm but it still hit Stiles right in the solar plexus and stopped his pacing. He stood frozen, staring at his father. Something small and fragile inside Stiles, something that had cracked the night at the station when his father had blown up at him, when he didn't believe him after everything, finally snapped. Stiles eyes welled up with tears and he fought hard not to let them fall.

"I can't always tell the difference anymore, Stiles." His dad continued, shaking his head imperceptibly. "Not when I don't know the truth when I need to know it. I always find out about this crap *after* it's tried to take your head off, or mine, or somebody else..." He trailed off but it already felt like nails in the coffin. Scott was the pillar of truth to the shadow of Stiles' lies. Just the boy who cried wolf.

"Well. You did say Scott was the son you should have had. I guess you were right." Stiles replied, gulping around the lump in his throat. The tears he had tried to fight off finally slid down his face. He quickly rubbed them along the arm of his flannel.

His dad deflated like a popped balloon, sagging back against the couch. His face melted into hurt and disappointment. Stiles knees went watery underneath him, wishing he could just take it all back and go back to pretending it didn't bother him.

"Stiles... you know I didn't mean it like that."

"It feels like you do. Like you'll make a joke about it even though it's the truth." Stiles admitted, his throat still tight.

"Son." His dad's voice cracked a bit. He hefted himself up slowly from the sofa and tugged Stiles into a hug, carefully, avoiding where they were both sore. "I'm sorry, kid. I am. I was just joking about that, I didn't mean it. I guess this is my point, huh? Everybody's making jokes and we can't tell what's real anymore. But that... You can't think I meant it, Stiles. Never that. I don't want anyone else as my son." His dad cupped the back of his head like he used to when Stiles was a little boy when his dad's whole palm could cover from crown to neck. Stiles grabbed him, probably too hard, considering the wince his father emitted. Stiles clung to him anyway and sniffled pathetically into the crook of his shoulder.

"Yeah." He muttered a bit, nodding and hiccuping a little. His dad pulled back from the hug to grip Stiles' shoulder and look him in the face.

"We have rough spots, alright? I know we do. But I have never wanted anyone else to be my son." He promised. Stiles couldn't reply around how thick his throat felt and just nodded, two more silent tears dripping down his cheeks. "I'm sorry you felt like you couldn't trust me with this. More than that, I'm sorry you were *right* not to trust me with it."

"Sorry too, Dad." Stiles muttered as he hugged him again, taking a few deep breaths.

"I'll be better. No more jokes that aren't funny." His dad promised, rubbing a big palm between Stiles' shoulder blades.

“You’ll never be able to make a joke again then.” Stiles mumbled, trying to lighten the mood even as he still clung to his father. His dad let out a soft chuckle, shaking his head.

“You love my dad jokes, don’t pretend.” He replied, letting Stiles cling to him as long as he needed. They stayed like that for a while before Stiles could bring himself to let go.

While the next week didn’t magically get any better, it didn’t seem to get too terribly worse. Stiles still had an unhealthy dose of nausea every morning but he assumed it was from the lack of sleep. The nightmares, while terrible, weren’t really anything new for him to be dealing with. The subject matter had changed pretty drastically, but even that was almost a relief.

School was still a struggle. He kept watching the pack from afar, their heads leaning together as they talked, and felt a pitiful, empty ache just below his ribs.

He’d thought going to see Lydia might help to reassure himself and alleviate some of the loneliness but when he arrived he found that her mother had it set to no visitors and they wouldn’t even let him in past the door

Wednesday, he startled at the sound of a text going off. He blinked down at his phone and couldn’t help but grin when he saw it was Derek.

Had to get a new phone. Still alive. Was the reply.

Glad to hear it. You back home?

Waiting on Cora. My car was still in Peru.

Stiles stared at the phone for a moment, debating before texting him again.

Glad she’s got your back. He held his breath for a moment, wincing at the phone, before he hit send.

Thanks. Talk to you later. Derek sent back a moment later.

Stiles felt an odd sense of accomplishment, having a normal conversation with Derek. They’d talked a lot, that was never an issue, but typically only about strategy or snarking at each other. Honestly, Stiles enjoyed the banter. Derek didn’t have any problem keeping up with him but when it really counted he tended to be pretty patient with Stiles. His gut twisted a bit in guilt as he remembered getting in Derek’s face in the hospital, and then moments later Derek patiently telling him to put down the paddles.

Stiles actually managed to sleep without dreams that night, only to be rudely awakened by his stomach rebelling. He barely made it to the toilet before he spilled his guts, and then spent the next hour retching and clutching to the cold porcelain. He was just glad he and his dad

were living off clear soups and applesauce for the moment while his dad's stomach learned how to use food again.

"Hey, heard you get up." his dad knocked gently on the door frame, holding a glass of water. Stiles took it and swished his mouth out and gargled before spitting.

"Barely made it." He shook his head. His dad pressed a palm against his forehead.

"No fever, you're a little clammy though."

"Probably all that broth getting to me." He joked, closing his eyes as his dad patted his shoulder.

"Gonna stay in here the rest of the night?"

"Maybe." Stiles debated for a moment. "I actually feel a lot better. I might give the whole bed thing a shot again. I think I have an hour before I have to get up."

"Sounds like a plan. If you still feel bad in the morning we can take you to see Dr. Gardener or something." He dad clapped his arm again and then moved out of the bathroom to give him space to leave. Stiles crawled back into bed and managed to doze a bit more.

This time his nightmares returned. He was surrounded by the pack, laying flat on his back on the broad expanse of the nemeton. He was cold, staring up at the sky as they passively watched him. He lifted his head and saw that he had been bisected. Scott was holding the sword.

Stiles screamed himself awake.

Stiles still managed to finish out the week at school, despite his stomach's vicious protestations in the wee hours of the morning. He figured he was catching some sort of terrible stomach bug, but as long as he didn't have a fever he was still relatively ok to go to school.

The afternoon found him unchaining his bike, his poor jeep still DOA at the shop. He didn't know if it would ever be okay again, but he tried not to think about it too hard.

His peripheral vision caught the edge a familiar leather jacket and he jerked his head up in surprise to see Derek there, talking to Scott. Scott was gesturing a bit, Kira nodding along. Stiles felt his heart skip a beat and then pound. Derek looked up at him and stared for a moment, gave the most imperceptible of nods, and then looked back to Scott, turning more fully away from Stiles.

The moment sunk in his chest like a stone, dropping to his now numb and cold feet. He clumsily put on his helmet and pedaled for home. He wasn't sure exactly what Scott had said but he was sure that it would be the last time he had any sort of positive interaction with Derek.

He'd left a note on the fridge saying he was at physical therapy that was accompanied by a stick figure sheriff with a big frowny face doing crunches. It actually made Stiles smile for a moment.

He rubbed his stomach as he opened the fridge, staring at its contents and trying to figure out if he could keep down food or not. His stomach still felt weirdly tight, even though the scabs were gone and the bruises were all a faded yellow green.

He shut the fridge, then checked the cabinet quickly before sighing. No more anti-nausea medicine, just his father's steroids and anti-inflammatory pills. He knew he'd wake up puking again if he didn't have anything tonight, so he locked the house back up and climbed back on his bike to pedal to the corner store.

Stiles was standing in the medicine aisle at the closest Walgreens trying to decide between pepto -but ugh just the *smell* of it was killing him- and some kind of anti-nausea pill that warned about more drowsiness when someone walked up and stood next to him. Stiles glanced up at him to apologize for hogging the aisle when he saw that it was Derek.

"Stiles." Derek stated, his nostrils flaring.

"Oh, hey. Uh... How's it going?" Stiles gave an awkward half-wave.

"You're sick?" Derek eyed the pepto and pills in Stiles' hands curiously and then leaned forward, nostrils flaring in that way they did when he was scenting something. Stiles felt a sort of resigned irritation at it before Derek's brows drew down into a sharper frown.

"You could have asked. Like, hey, Stiles, can I creep on your bodily functions?" Stiles joked as he tried to paw Derek out of his personal space. He hoped the man couldn't hear how his heart rate spiked at just that little touch or holy hell why do chemo signals have to be a thing. Especially while Derek was *sniffing* him. He was going to be smelling some pretty blatant things that had nothing to do with his ongoing nausea. *Ugh, don't think about the nausea either*, Stiles told himself but a glance at a Derek (who had not moved an inch, by the way, pawing or no) revealed a curious and slightly constipated crinkle in his brow... and that was just not something Stiles wanted to deal with right now.

Leaning back from his sniffing... friend? Was Derek his friend now? *Do we just randomly run into each other at the drugstore and, I dunno, sniff each other's butts? Is that what Werewolves do?* Stiles shook himself out of his thoughts and went for his tried and true distraction technique: Sarcasm. "So, what's the super sniffer sniffing out?"

Derek didn't take the bait, his frown getting harder and his brow crinkling up as he sniffed again, leaning in to reclaim the distance Stiles created when he leaned back. "What's with the face? Also personal space is a thing."

“....I’m taking you to Deaton. Now.”

“Why? Why do I need Deaton?” Stiles felt his fingers go slack and numb around the packages. Ice slithered down his spine.

“You smell like...” Derek broke off, face going stoney and walled off in that way that said more clearly than anything else that Derek was afraid.

“Smell like what?”

“Like you need to see Deaton.” Derek replied, his voice soft, like he was trying to be gentle. Stiles stared for a moment, panic seeping in and freezing his legs. Derek hooked a hand around Stiles’ elbow to gently drag him out to the parking lot. “Where’s the jeep?”

“Shop. It uh.. There was a fire and it got flipped. Rode my bike here. Gotta have stomach meds to sleep or I throw up.” He babbled breathlessly, feeling oddly detached from himself as if he existed but slightly to the left.

“Ok. It’s ok.” Derek’s expression blanked out into something carefully emotionless and he headed for his nondescript rental car with Stiles in tow. Stiles mechanically got in the car when it was unlocked. Stiles stared out the windshield. Derek kept looking over and he could feel Derek’s gaze on him every time. Stiles words all dried up in his throat.

“Why didn’t you ask Scott for a ride here?” Derek asked finally, expression settling on confused.

“...He. Uh. No. We’re not talking. It’s... I’ll explain later. I really thought he told you earlier today.” He shrugged helplessly before Derek frowned and then nodded in return.

“I did wonder why you didn’t come over to us after school.” Derek mused. Stiles chewed on his thumb nail to ease his anxiety, ruminating on Derek’s voice. He felt reassured by the idea that Derek just hadn’t said anything to Stiles or called him over because he assumed he was already on his way.

His thoughts were interrupted as Derek pulled up in front of the clinic. He parked quickly and Stiles basically fell out of the car to throw up behind a bush. Derek’s face pinched again, looking stern, worried, and slightly pissed off.

“Sorry.” he gasped when he was done. “Car rides and anxiety don’t sit well.” He rubbed his stomach nervously, trying to calm it down.

“Don’t be sorry. Come on.” Derek put a hand between his shoulderblades and herded him through the door. Deaton looked up from behind the counter. Stiles was pretty sure this was the most Derek had ever touched him without life saving being on the table. At least he hoped it wasn’t on the table.

“Derek, Stiles. What do I owe the pleasure?” Deaton asked, looking up from where he was sorting out medicine into different containers with a mild expression.

“He smells wrong. He’s sick to his stomach.”

“Wrong how?” Deaton’s face went serious, a small line appearing between his brows. Stiles looked back and forth between them, gnawing his thumb again.

“Like...cancer. Too much estrogen.” he murmured, glancing to Stiles. Stiles felt his stomach sink even more, lingering somewhere near his toes like a heavy block of ice.

“Alright. I can run some quick tests from here.” Deaton herded Stiles back. “Derek, if you would please call nurse McCall for me?”

“No. I don’t want... I don’t want Melissa here.” Stiles shakes his head. Deaton frowned at him in confusion. “There’s a lot going on. I don’t want to tell anyone yet. She doesn’t know about the Doctors taking me either. Just my dad, and you guys.”

“I see.” Deaton’s face was infuriatingly inscrutable, telling Stiles nothing. “Would you like your father here?”

“He’s at physical therapy. That’s why I was at the store alone.” Stiles shook his head. “I can... I can talk to him later.”

Deaton nodded in understanding and then got a syringe out after gesturing for Stiles to sit on the table.

Stiles launched up and back, crashing into Derek and nearly sending them both to the floor. Deaton froze and stared at him.

Derek’s grip on his arms were the only thing that held him up until Stiles could get seated on the table again. He shivered a bit and tried to breathe through the sudden, crippling fear.

“I have to draw blood to run these tests.” Deaton said, for once sounding apologetic.

“I’m aware of that , but I don’t know if I can let you stick me with that, I don’t think I can do that,” Stiles gasped out, clenching his teeth and gripping the edge of the table hard.

“You can.” Derek nodded, like the order would magically make Stiles ok. Stiles shook his head but Derek stepped around to be in front of him where he sat on the table. “You have to. But don’t look. Talk to me.” He stood close to Stiles’ knees at the table edge, the stance improbably intimate for the pair of them.

“About.. about what?” Stiles eyed Deaton nervously before Derek cleared his throat.

Derek looked concerned and slightly aggrieved as Stiles’ pulse shot higher. “You never had a problem talking before.” He let the silence go on for a moment longer, where Stiles was ready to leap over his shoulders to get out of the door, before Derek started speaking softly.

“I never told you where I was before the Dread Doctors, did I?” He asked and Stiles mutely shook his head. Stiles felt like his eyes were in danger of popping out of his head. “I was with Cora. She’s in college right now and working as a bartender part time. We were in Peru.”

The cadence of Derek’s voice was hypnotising and Stiles watched his mouth as he spoke, lips soft and surrounded by inky beard with slight flashes of his little bunny front teeth. “It’s been

pretty good. She's not so disappointed in me anymore." Derek's brows spasmed, as if he hadn't meant to say that. He watched Stiles face for a few moments, as if searching for a reaction. Deaton was preparing a line of different blood vials and gloving up in the edges of Stiles vision. Deaton tugged at the elbow of Stiles' plaid shirt and Stiles focused on the undone top button of Derek's henley as he shrugged the flannel off, trying to distract himself. He could see Derek's pulse thumping against his skin.

"We celebrated Boyd's birthday together," Derek picked up his train of thought again suddenly. Deaton readied Stiles' arm with a tourniquet around the upper bicep. His movements were practiced and Stiles wondered where a vet could have developed the skills to treat humans as well as he does his animals. "She's been driving up for the past week to come here. The plan was for her to just come pick me up but... we might stay for a little while." Derek gave a little shrug. "Scott seemed like he might need the help."

Stiles nodded a little and then startled like a scalded cat when he felt the pinch of the needle going into his arm. He went to dart his eyes over to what Deaton was doing but Derek snagged his jaw with firm but gently grip and stopped his movement.

"S-sorry." Stiles blurted, feeling his heart skip a beat. "I... Um. Stuff here hasn't been good. For me. I didn't want to.. I mean. Complaining is sorta lame, right? I didn't wanna just... dump feelings all over you."

"It's alright. You can talk about whatever you want." Derek looked a little confused, like Stiles was a particularly difficult puzzle.

"Uh. Malia's been spending more time with her dad. She wants to pretend that Peter isn't her dad. She uh... We broke up. I think. I'm assuming, at least." He swallowed, his throat going dry. "Lydia's... she's in Eichen right now. Theo tried to read her mind? The claws. I think he broke her. She's broken." He rambled, losing control of his thoughts and what was spilling out of his mouth. "I told dad I killed Donovan."

Deaton and Derek both froze, eyes wide. Deaton seemed to shake himself first, returning to his task. A moment later he felt the draw of the needle and almost panicked again.

"I mean, at first, he didn't believe me. And I get it, I was defending myself, I didn't mean to, but the guy's still... still dead. Because of me. He said Theo told him what happened first, and it wasn't what really happened. That's why Scott... why he kicked me out of the Pack. He didn't believe me when I said that I had to."

"What happened?" Derek asked, brows creasing in the center.

"He was going to kill my dad but he said he wanted to hurt him first. He wanted to eat my legs. The doctors made him a-- I think he was supposed to be a wendigo? He had mouths on his hands with the same teeth and he bit into my shoulder." He explained, taking a deep breath as the needle shifted while Deaton changed vials on it. "I climbed a scaffolding to get away and then pulled a pin. It impaled him when it fell. Just... clean through his chest. There was nothing I could do."

“It was an accident.” Derek immediately reassured him. “Self defense.” Stiles’ throat closed up with burning pins and needles, eyes going watery. He opened his mouth to speak but couldn’t make any words come out so he just nodded a little, taking a shuddering breath.

He didn’t know when Derek had become so integral to his emotional well being. He assumed it was somewhere between saving each other and more saving each other. Either way, he supposed that having his only remaining friend on his side was a good feeling.

“We’re finished.” Deaton announced, voice surprisingly gentle as he took the needle out and pressed a little square of gauze and a bandaid over the crook of Stiles’ arm. “Let me check on your stomach.” He gestured a bit. Stiles tried not to blush, remembering that Derek had seen him strung out and tortured with the Dread Doctors not to mention how he was post-Nogitsune. Derek had seen way worse, probably. Stiles’ pale, hairy belly was probably low on the list of Horrible Happenings to Hales.

Stiles was still bruised in several spots but Deaton pressed gentle, gloved hands to his stomach and frowned. Stiles watched, bemused, as his stomach was firm and a little bloated. It bowed out between his hips a little, visible even to the naked eye.

“It feels really tight. I think it’s a little swollen? I puke almost every day. Food sucks. I’m also tired all the time. I can sleep and not feel like I rested at all. Y’know, typical flu stuff?” He listed off. Deaton frowned a little and then went to check on the blood tests.

Derek cocked his head a bit, staring at Stiles stomach. Stiles tugged his shirt back down, consciously covering himself. He already felt too exposed. Physical nudity, however incomplete, made him feel too vulnerable.

“Why did Scott kick you out of the Pack for what happened with Donovan?” Derek asked as Deaton left the room.

“He had the wrench... I had hit Donovan with it when he bit my shoulder.” He explained. “And he said I wasn’t supposed to do this. None of us were. I tried to explain, but he said there’s always a choice, like I made the wrong one. He said there’s a point where it’s not self defense anymore?” Stiles shook his head, rubbing a hand over his forehead and licking his lips. He felt shaky just remembering it. “Then he just said we can’t kill people we’re trying to save. And he wouldn’t say he believed that I did it in self defense. I asked what he wanted but he just said not to worry about Lydia and Malia. And then he left me there. That was the last time we talked.”

Derek was silent, his jaw clenching tightly. He shook his head slowly, as if in disbelief. He opened his mouth to speak, but he was interrupted when Deaton rushed back into the room.

The veterinarian moved quickly, opening a storage area and wheeling out a large machine. “Derek, dim the lights please.” he gestured to the switch. Derek moved away to obey while Stiles stared at it in confusion for a minute. Then, Deaton pulled out the wand and he recognized what it was for.

“You’re giving me an ultrasound?” Stiles blinked in confusion and then choked on no small amount of fear. “Did I test positive for cancer?” He asked, voice tremulous, but Deaton didn’t

waste any more time. He pushed Stiles' shirt out of the way, squirting a mess of gel over his lower stomach before he pressed down with the wand, surprisingly hard.

What?" Stiles blinked at him and narrowed his eyes in a squint.

"Oh my." Deaton's face paled, his eyes going wide. Stiles felt a crushing sensation of certainty that he was about to hear the worst news of his life. "But why would they..." Deaton muttered to himself and then looked to the side, as if remembering something.

"Why would they what? What's happening?!" Stiles demanded, panicked and angry all at once, slamming the side of his fist into the table. Derek startled, staring in slight concern at his hand.

"It's a baby. You're not sick. You're pregnant." Deaton turned the ultrasound towards him, a small sac with a fast moving blip visible on the screen. He hit a switch and the sound of a fast, fluttering heartbeat came out.

That was the last thing Stiles saw before his world went black.

Stiles was still groggy when he came to. Derek was pacing and snarling while Deaton sat looking pale and more stressed than Stiles had ever seen him before. Stiles struggled to wrap his mind around what just happened. He sat up and then stared hard at Deaton.

"Can you take it out?" was the first thing that popped out of his mouth.

"I'm not certain. I don't know how it's even possible. It shouldn't be. I've never heard of such a thing. It's progressing much faster than normal as well." Deaton shook his head. Derek stared at him and paled a bit. Stiles wasn't sure what part of the world was supposed to make sense anymore.

"They didn't... There wasn't... I'm still a virgin." He gestured, practically choking on the words. "I don't know who's it is or how it is but I don't want it. I don't want this."

"There are blood tests but without something to test it against, there's no telling..."

"I think it's mine." Derek muttered. Stiles felt his stomach flip over again, throat closing up.

"What?" he croaked, feeling all the blood drain from his face.

"They..." He exhaled hard through his nose. "There was harvesting of... materials." He ground his teeth together hard. Stiles' mind flashed back to the last needle, the longest one, where they moved from Derek to Stiles.

For one heartbeat, Stiles felt irrationally safer, a little less scared, because Derek said it was his. Derek wouldn't let anything happen that was going to hurt him. But Stiles shook his head and the unjustified calm was gone, replaced with harsh reality and cold panic.

"I don't care whose it is. I want it gone." Stiles shook his head. He wasn't built for babies. He was already in a good amount of pain. Even if he were built for babies, his mind was insisting there was something sinister, that it wasn't really a baby growing inside him.

"I'm not even certain how this is physically possible. I worry anything I would do to-- terminate might be even more dangerous. I'll need to do research."

"I want to go home. I don't want to be here. I can't... I don't..." He gestured, sliding off the table and shaking his head. He tugged his flannel back on with numb fingers and then looked up at Derek. "Take me out of here."

Derek nodded, moving automatically back out to the car. Stiles felt disconnected, like he wasn't properly in control of his body anymore. He found himself shying away from his own stomach, making sure his hands didn't come anywhere near it.

"When will your dad be home?" Derek asked quietly, almost nervously. Stiles looked over at him in confusion.

"Late. He's trying to go back to work so he keeps... going." Stiles shook his head because words didn't make sense anymore.

"Are you alright to be alone?"

"I'm just going to sleep and pretend nothing's happening right now. I can't deal with this right now. Not with everything else." He shook his head and rested his forehead on one of his fists.

"Let me know if you change your mind." Derek offered, slightly hesitant, voice low. Stiles stared at him searchingly for a moment but he couldn't read anything in his expression.

"Yeah, sure, big guy." He tapped Derek lightly on the arm as they pulled into the Stilinski's driveway to drop him off. A few minutes later, when Stiles was sure Derek was gone, he fell face first into bed where his pillows were the only things that could hear his screams.

He managed to hide himself in his house for several more days without really talking to anyone. He stayed quiet around his dad and blamed it on the flu. He saw the worry and hurt on his Dad's face, so he snuck in a hug or two but he couldn't figure out how to tell his dad that his son was pregnant. That would mean it was really happening.

He felt like shit because he blatantly lied about going to school - because he didn't - and they had just gotten square on lying not being a horizontal position. Then, finally, one day it happened. He was groggy and couldn't bring himself to leave his bed, avoiding the world until his dad's work number called his phone.

"Hello?" he answered, voice slurred and nervous. He was wrapped in a blanket burrito, stewing in his own juice and pretending there wasn't anything parasitically growing inside him. He slept almost constantly when left alone.

"Well, good to know you're not dead, kid. School called." His dad's voice sounded tentative and relieved.

"Still alive." he replied, detachedly.

"Hey ca-" was all his dad got out before Stiles hung up. He didn't want to talk to anyone, least of all his dad. The only call he wanted right now was one from Deaton to magically fix this whole mess. The number called back a couple times but Stiles couldn't bring himself to answer again. His stomach turned a bit thinking about it, the anger and disappointment in his dad's face.

"Not taking calls?" Derek asked. Stiles flailed over in bed and popped his eyes wide open to find Derek with one leg through his open window.

"Not really, no." he muttered, scrubbing the back of his head and staring at the werewolf standing just inside his open window. "Really? Through the window? Are we going for the full cliché?"

"I knocked on the front door but it didn't sound like you heard it." He shrugged a bit, helping himself to Stiles' office chair.

Stiles recalled a strange moment in Mexico where he'd thought Derek surviving had been a sign. He couldn't help but think for one moment that maybe everything was going to be ok. There had been a feeling of potential, almost like anything could happen. He flashed back to that moment in the truck with Liam when they'd had an entire goddamn conversation without saying a word.

The fleeting thought had been crushed into a fine powder almost immediately when Derek had looked up and they both realized that Derek wouldn't be coming back. Even though Stiles knew that Derek would more than likely be better off away from this flipping town, Stiles still couldn't forget the look on Derek's face as he squinted in the sunlight before he nodded once at Scott and then turned away. He cocked his head in wonder just over Derek being there and talking to him in this moment.

"Why are you here?" Stiles groaned out as he sat up, pulling his legs in to sit cross-legged because it didn't hurt his stomach as much. The pain brought him back to the moment.

"I talked to Deaton..." Derek started, before trailing off. He sat in Stiles' desk chair and rested his elbows on his bent knees, lacing his fingers together, bowing his head over them.

Stiles nervously toyed with the fraying cuffs of his sleep pants. He really didn't know what to make of Derek.

"About me," said Stiles, steely disdain dripping from his words. He glared his disapproval at the entirety of this situation in Derek's general direction and tried to wrestle down the anger that was starting to simmer in the back of his brain.

Derek didn't look up from where he was intently staring resolutely at a point between his shoes. He nodded, frowning more intensely as he seemed to struggle with whatever he needed to say.

"I was right. It's me. He did the blood test." Derek admitted a moment later.

"Without my permission?" Stiles narrowed his eyes in disbelief and Derek shifted uncomfortably. "He thought he *had* my permission." Stiles dryly deducted. Derek nodded, chancing a look up at him.

"Ok... so?" Stiles frowned at him, uneasiness and stress adding to the disbelief and anger. He was a mess of emotions and he had a terrible, sinking feeling he knew where this was going to go.

"I know it's a lot to ask for but I have to... I need to..." His face lifted from where he had been looking down at his hands. "Look, I saw the ultrasound. Somehow there's this... this part of me in there. I asked Deaton and he thinks maybe it'll be possible. He thinks there's a way we could keep you safe through this, that it might be safer than trying to take it out." He took a steadying breath, leaning forward in the chair a little more, closer to Stiles. "So... Can you consider keeping it? Please?"

His expression was more open than Stiles had ever really seen it before, pale eyes wide and earnest. And again, for the space of a heartbeat, Stiles believed him, thought about it because Derek asked. Because after everything, Stiles cared about Derek, trusted him, might even have capital F Feelings for him but reality and Derek didn't seem to agree. Stiles remembered all too well being stabbed in the gut by tiny needles that felt like they were the size of pick-axes.

"No. No, I can't. You don't... How could you ask me that?" He recoiled from Derek, wincing as the motion triggered the pain in his stomach again.

"But, Stiles--"

"No. You can't just--You have no right to-- Get out. Just... get out." He pointed to the window with one hand and clutched at his aching gut. Derek just stared at him for a moment longer, his face pulled into a frown of pain and disappointment or maybe concern. Maybe Stiles was reading too much into the look but he was too distraught and honestly angry, so fucking angry, to entertain the thought for long. Stiles felt his tenuous grasp on calm snap like an overstretched rubber band, rebounding and slamming into him with an almost audible sound.

“GET OUT!” Stiles shouted and when Derek didn’t immediately flee out the window, he started throwing everything on his bedside table at him, his alarm clock followed by a bottle of lotion and his old broken watch. “Get out of my house!” He felt all the stress and rage of the past month now focused on Derek as his new outlet.

Derek growled --legitimately curled his lip and wolf growled at him, eyes flashing-- before he launched himself out the window again.

Stiles stared after him for a few moments, shocked into immobilization. In all the threats and snarking at each other, Derek had never actually growled at Stiles before. He’d flashed his eyes or slammed Stiles into stuff, but he’d never actually growled.

Stiles didn’t like the sudden shaky emptiness that had settled into the cold absence of his anger. The stress finally triggered a dangerous roiling in his stomach and he stumbled to the bathroom to throw up. He sunk to press his cheek to the cold tile, curling up into a little ball of misery. He didn’t bother to get up, laying there alone with his thoughts until the world outside went dark and he fell asleep.

** * **

The next day, Stiles called Deaton for answers and found none. Deaton confirmed what Derek had told him, and then apologized for doing the test when Stiles didn’t want it done. He was researching but he couldn’t find any other instance of a male pregnancy, outside of the transitional community and- aside from the present body horrors Stiles was living through- that did not apply here. Deaton had no idea how it was possible and worried that there was something supernatural even keeping Stiles functioning at this point.

“If I disturb the wrong thing, I have no idea what that could do to you. If I were to do something like that, I’d need you and your father’s express permission. I have nothing concrete to go on with this, Stiles. And you aren’t the family bulldog, so even the legalities of it are murky,” Deaton replied regretfully.

Stiles just hung up on him because how was he supposed to look his father in the face and tell him that he was pregnant without breaking their relationship all over again?

To make matters worse, his nightmares came back in full force, dreams where the Dread Doctors had him again and pulled the fetus from his body and jarred it right in front of him. Others where the baby was a chimera and clawed its way out from his stomach, tearing him in two halves like Laura Hale. Or dreams where the baby was an unrecognizable alien monster, rupturing its way out of him. He felt sick every time he thought about it and every time he saw the lump of his stomach under his thin night shirt, small but still there.

He felt like he was losing control over his own body and he couldn’t imagine why, out of all the eligible females in Beacon Hills, the Doctors had decided to implant HIM with some demented and possibly chimera spawn. He didn’t want this. He couldn’t *do* this.

Of course that was when Derek showed up again. Stiles was standing in the kitchen staring at the food in the fridge like it might magically hold some of the answers when he heard the knock. He opened the door and just stared at Derek for a minute. The older man was standing in a maroon sweater, hands in his pockets and shoulders up around his ears, sheepish and highly uncomfortable.

“Well. Come in then, I guess.” Stiles sighed and moved out of the way, heading back into the kitchen to stare in the fridge. Derek followed after him and loomed in the middle of the kitchen. Stiles sighed and then shut the fridge to look at him fully.

“I didn’t mean to growl at you.” Derek admitted almost immediately, then went back to being stonily silent, jaw clenched so tight Stiles thought he could hear his teeth begging for mercy.

“I *did* mean to yell at you.” Stiles shrugged, moving to lean back against the counter. Derek’s eyes widened in his ‘imminent murder’ face. “I don’t know what you expected, dude. I just found out that I’m a pregnant MAN. I know my research. Males? Not made for this.” he flailed in the direction of his stomach. “That’s not even mentioning the cancer scare or the fact that it happened because I was tortured. I’m fucking terrified and you want to keep it? We don’t even know what IT is!” he gestured down at himself, at his rapidly growing stomach and all the baggage that came with it.

“I know it’s mine.” Derek whispered, almost like his was saying it to himself, jaw set in that stubborn manner of his.

“I don’t know it’s mine! You don’t know it’s mine. If it is mine, that is just... Why would you want that?” Stiles squinted at him, shaking his head a little. “You can’t stand me. Not to mention, it could be a chimera or it could be a freaky little alien baby from Men in Black with tentacles!”

“You don’t know that it’s not perfectly normal!” Derek snapped, and then tugged a hand out of his pocket to stroke over his beard. He stepped a little closer to Stiles, dropping his arms to his sides, palms out. His sweater had thumbholes on it. It made Stiles’ chest feel oddly tight.

“Stiles, I just do. Want it, that is. It’s just... it’s mine.” Derek’s tone went softer, almost pleading and a little helpless. His expression crumpled in on itself, his eyes wide, brow tight and lips slightly parted. The years and stress and hope were written clearly across his face, his eyes solemn, so very pale and sincere. Stiles’ resolve wavered as he was allowed to see the chasm of loss inside Derek. His expression was more open than Stiles had ever seen it, his soul baring the scars carved out by his missing family clearly visible for the first time.

How could Stiles look a man who’d lost so much in the face and take away one more thing? One more family member lost to Derek Hale? Stiles felt nothing for this thing inside him, no remorse, no hope, nothing more than vague disgust and a sense of panic. He... felt a lot more than nothing for Derek. More than he wanted to admit.

“I... I don’t know, man. I really don’t.” He hedged. He looked away, unable to meet Derek’s gaze as he tried to make up his mind. Everything was too conflicting, too jumbled, and complicated. He shifted, wanting to move or pace or just flat out walk away. Derek reached

out and snagged Stiles around the wrist gently, hand barely grasping, a barest touch, but Stiles' gaze snapped back up to Derek's face.

"I'll take care of everything, I promise. I'll keep you safe. I'll... anything." Derek was practically begging, brows pulled up like the saddest puppy just waiting to be kicked in the head. And Stiles couldn't be the one to give that kick.

"Yeah. Yeah, ok." He conceded. "If it's even possible, man. I don't exactly possess birthing hips." he gestured down to himself. He felt this sinking feeling in his chest, like he was signing up for something he didn't really understand. He guessed he'd find out.

"Thank you." Derek gasped out a second later, looking like someone cut all his strings.

"Yeah." Stiles sighed a bit, looking down at his feet. He already felt something like regret curling in his chest.

** * **

The next week passed by in a fog. Stiles had stopped the adderall completely after a night of obsessive google spiralling and research. He didn't even know if any of the usual medication problems would affect what was possibly a werewolf baby, possibly Cthulhu's new form, or possibly a tiny masked monster. Cora had arrived to Beacon Hills shortly after he'd agreed to carry the baby as long as he could. Stiles still hadn't found the guts to tell his Dad and the weight and strain was starting to wear on him.

The fact that Lydia was still in Eichen House was an added kick while he was down. Her mother had stopped talking to Stiles completely after he pleaded with her at school to bring Lydia home. She simply turned her back on him and pretended not to hear him after that.

Malia... he had a sinking suspicion that she knew about the pregnancy. She had walked past him in the hall and her brows had come together sharply, her head flying up to look at him. He saw her with Scott again later but she purposefully avoided looking at him. He spent the rest of the day in a cold sweat, waiting for Scott to confront him, both dreading and hoping he would.

Every day also came with a check in from Derek. He'd bought Stiles several bottles of prenatal vitamins that now hide in the drawer with his lube so his dad wouldn't find them. Stiles stomach was still hard as a rock and seemed to grow every day. He wasn't sure if he was hallucinating it or not.

Dad is out, wanna eat curly fries with me? Stiles texted Derek after he stared into the Doctor appointed bland, boring food his dad was forced to eat for the next 8 weeks in the fridge. He needed real food or he was going to expire. Stiles' dad was at physical therapy again, leaving Stiles home alone and without a vehicle to hit a drive through.

You mean bring you curly fries. Derek replied a moment later.

Yes. But I am willing to share with you and possibly Cora. Stiles sent and attached a grinning emoji.

See you in a few. Stiles sent him back the two hands praise emoji and then slunk over to the couch to sink into it. He dozed a bit, waiting for Derek, and then woke up what felt like seconds later to knocking on the front door.

“It’s open, I’m lazy.” Stiles said to the door. He didn’t bother to raise his voice since he knew Derek would be able to hear him anyway.

“Brought the fries.” Derek gestured with the bag as he stepped into the house. He was wearing a blue henley. The stretch of the fabric across Derek’s shoulders played hell with Stiles’ blood pressure.

“No Cora?” He asked, stretching and rubbing at one eye.

“She... ah, she’s..” Derek wrinkled his nose up.

“With the Pack. Gotcha.” Stiles nodded, trying not to let his emotions show on his face. He evidently failed because Derek frowned and sighed. “It’s alright, big guy, I brought it up.” Stiles shrugged and then snagged the bag of curly fries from Derek when he got close enough to join Stiles on the couch.

“Where’s your dad? Work?” Derek asked, pulling out a burger of his own and sinking his teeth into it.

“Nah, he’s not cleared yet. We’re still working off the bland diet and his physical therapy. His doctor is pretty pleased with his progress though. Says his good diet before the injury helped a lot.” He puffed up with pride and ate a mouthful of delicious fried potatoes.

“How did he get hurt? Was it the Doctors too?”

“Theo.” Stiles spit out his name, fighting the anger that it brought. “And then that asshole just disappeared. Or I think he did. He’s not at school, so that’s all the information I’ve got.”

“Does Scott know?” Derek frowned, then took a bite and chewed thoughtfully.

“No. Happened after the whole Donovan thing.” He shook his head, leaning back against the cushions of the couch. “He probably wouldn’t believe me anyway. Seems like a common theme, recently.”

Derek was silent for a moment, looking surprised, and then murderous. “Scott really kicked you out? Without even checking your side of the story?” Stiles was a bit taken aback, enough that he blinked in surprise at Derek. He hadn’t thought Derek would care about that at all, let alone how bothered by it he appeared to be.

“Yeah, he really did.” Stiles sighed and ate a few more fries before looking a bit crestfallen. “Ugh. I’m full.” He mourned and then rubbed over the tight skin of his stomach.

Silence reigned for a few moments as Derek worked his way through his hamburger quietly. Stiles stomach always felt sore after he ate, stretched tight. He kept slathering lotion on his skin at night, trying to relieve the feeling of his skin pulling. He had dreams that were a slideshow of body horrors but the one where great stretch marks would rend into his sides, some deep enough to leave him bleeding out, left an impression on him that kept him obsessively attempting to remedy even the slightest possibility of it actually occurring.

“Have you told your dad yet?” Derek asked, eyes trained on Stiles’ hand on his stomach.

“No. God, I’m so aware I’m being a coward about it but we just got things patched up. How the hell do you break that kind of news?” Stiles covered his face with both hands, puffing out a long breath.

“Better sooner than later, right?”

“I guess? But I... we had a big talk, right? Cuz my dad didn’t believe me either, at first. He genuinely made a boy who cried wolf reference. What if he just decides this is it, this is the last straw?” He rubbed his nose with the back of his hand, trying not to cry. His eyes felt prickly and hot. Hormones made everything feel so much sharper, which was the absolute worst.

“Your dad loves you.” Derek insisted, sounding almost stern.

“He said Scott was the son he should have had, once. He always says this stuff that’s like, meant to be joking but still makes me feel like crap. Like, we talked about it but there’s part of me that’s still kind of scared he really believes it.”

Derek was silent for a moment and when Stiles gathered up his rather ragged courage to chance a look over at him, the man was staring at him like he’d never seen Stiles before. Derek opened and closed his mouth a couple times, clearly searching for something to say, before he scrubbed his facial hair and looked lost.

“It’s alright, Derek.” He reached out a hand and scraped his fingertips against Derek’s knee. “I’m pretty sure that this is just hormones talking. I’m gonna blame it on that for now. It also... just still doesn’t feel real yet, I guess.” Stiles shrugged a little, trying to pretend he wasn’t feeling as helpless as he currently did.

That was the bitch of it all, really. He and his dad were supposed to take care of each other, but the sheriff couldn’t exactly protect him from this. Stiles wasn’t even sure if it was the finality of telling him any more or the fact that he didn’t want his dad to feel just as lost and helpless and alone as he currently did.

Stiles turned his head and looked at Derek, who was staring down at his hands as if they held answers his mind didn’t. He had to admit he was pretty curious about why Derek was so determined to make this work. Despite everything, Derek Hale still had faith that things would be ok.

“Dude, how do you do it?” Stiles wondered.

“Do what?” Derek looked up at him, baffled.

“Like... be hopeful? Life has not exactly been kind to you but your response to finding out someone impregnated a man with some sort of spawn is to want to keep it and protect it? Like life isn’t going to completely shit all over you. Over both of us.”

“I just... I think about my family. What would they have wanted from me?” Derek replied after a moment. “What would they want *for* me? I got to talk to my mom a while back. We found her claws and I found out that I could tap into the memory of her. I know she wouldn’t want me to give up and just accept that life is terrible.” Derek nodded as if saying it out loud had made it a certainty, giving this half smile that sent Stiles’ pulse skittering around.

“That’s--man, that’s really good. I envy you a little bit. For being able to talk to your mom again and the way you--you seem to just, take all this in stride.”

“I don’t.” Derek replied flatly. “It’s not easy. It never is. But... Regression to the mean. Everything can’t always go wrong. Some things have to go right.”

Stiles shook his head, frankly a little awed and a lot humbled. He didn’t know what to say to that but the silence didn’t feel heavy or awkward, so he took a moment to cram a few more curly fries in his stomach.

Stiles ruminated on how this would go if Derek was right. Stiles was terrified right now but he didn’t know if that would be better or worse with a real baby in the situation. It was horrible thinking that he was carrying a monster but the idea of being a father already was also panic inducing. He shook his head to clear that thought away.

“Wanna watch a movie? I just... don’t really want to be alone right now.” Stiles offered, feeling awkward with the quiet. Derek looked up at him, brows pulled up and his mouth slightly parted so he could see those silly bunny front teeth before he nodded a little and settled back into the couch. “Fair warning, probably gonna fall asleep halfway through. I tend to pass out easily these days.” Stiles muttered, scooting more into the middle of his cushions and poking buttons on the remote until Netflix pulled up.

“Get some rest. I’ll stay.”

“Are you going to lurk?” Stiles asked, shifting to get comfortable.

“I’ve been told it’s what I’m good at.” Derek replied with a slightly self-deprecating tilt to his mouth. Stiles snorted a laugh and tilted his head into a comfortable position. Derek was close enough that Stiles’ head lolled against the ball of his shoulder.

“Ah, sorry, dude.” Stiles made to pull away as he realized what he was doing.

“It’s fine.” Derek replied, leaning back a little more and making a comfortable space for Stiles. Stiles felt his eyebrows raise but he tried not to look gift horses in the mouth and snuggled in a little better. His eyelids drooped and he started dozing almost immediately before he was pulled back to wakefulness at the feeling of a warm, broad palm tentatively touching his stomach. Derek seemed to freeze, like he knew he’d been caught. Stiles fought

not to respond at all in case Derek got spooked, and purposefully breathed deep and slow. Derek's palm flattened out and stayed there as Stiles' lost the battle against sleep.

** * **

As things tended to do in Stiles' life, everything came to a head one afternoon. He stumbled in, exhausted from school, and went to his room. Instead of face planting directly into his pillow, Stiles walked into his room and found his Dad sitting on his bed holding the prenatal vitamins, expression thunderous.

"Gotta say, kid, I thought I was pretty clear when I said no more secrets." He sounded furious and Stiles gulped hard around the sudden panic.

"I can explain." He croaked out.

"Oh, I am counting on that." His dad sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Am I an idiot? We had this whole conversation---what was it, three weeks ago? Then you shut me out again. I came in here looking for you and found these on your bed- Why do you even have these here? Is Malia at least taking them every day?"

"It's not... It's not that, Dad. You're not an idiot, I just--I didn't know how to tell you. Malia's not-- it's not Malia." Stiles twisted his fingers, searching for the right way to say it.

"Oh god... Lydia?" His dad's expression fell further. Stiles' stomach sank just hearing her name, he missed her so badly. "Son, they've been pumping her full of god knows what in Eichen House! You didn't think letting someone know she was pregnant was a good idea?"

"Dad! Stop!" He held both his palms up, placatingly. "Please just listen, ok?"

"I'm listening, Stiles. I've been listening!"

"I... the vitamins are for me. I... I found out what the Dread Doctors did to me. But I was... I tried to take care of it myself but.."

"You? You're trying to tell me you're pregnant?" His dad narrowed his eyes and lifted his brows in disbelief. "Yeah. Right. This is one of those good times to not joke it off, son. "

Stiles tried not to feel hurt and swallowed around a lump in his throat. He felt his bottom lip quiver and bit it to hide it. He nodded a little and then continued.

"Yeah. Deaton says it's growing fast, too. Like maybe twice as fast as a normal fetus, I guess." Stiles shrugged helplessly.

"You're really going with this? You know I can't help you if I don't know, Stiles." His dad's brow tightened, wrinkling up in concern. Stiles nodded a bit.

“Yeah. Dad, I--” Stiles tried not to choke up and failed. He made a frustrated sound and scrubbed at his eyes. “How do I explain--” He gestured helplessly for a moment before he tugged his shirt up, revealing the bloated swell of his stomach. It was small but Stiles was so thin that it appeared larger to him.

“Holy shit.” The prenatal vitamins fell from his dad’s fingers. “You’re-- you’re really...? This is--Is Deaton sure?” His face went milk white.

“Yeah. He did a blood test, and then an ultrasound.” Stiles went to cover back up and his dad frowned hard, half standing to reach out and poke a finger at Stiles’ stomach.

“God. Ah hell, kid.” his dad looked mystified and more than a little sick to his stomach as he sat back down on the bed.

“Yeah, that was my general reaction too.” He sighed, sitting on the bed next to his dad. “I don’t really have a good excuse aside from I was hoping I could just... get it out of me and then it wouldn’t be a thing anymore.”

“Son, I understand it’s a choice and all that but I gotta admit I’m not thrilled with the idea of you going through any of this. Why the hell would they even do this? And why you?”

“I have no idea why me. Plenty of eligible people with uterus in Beacon Hills.” Stiles shook his head and then winced. He didn’t honestly wish what happened to him on anyone else, even inadvertently. He took a breath because he had to slow himself down and refocus. He didn’t want to confuse his dad even more.

“Okay. So first off, Deaton’s not sure if he can get it out of me because he doesn’t know how it’s in me in the first place.” He squinted, gnawing on his bottom lip for a moment.

“And that’s first off?” His Dad looked at him, concerned and waiting.

“Yeah.. Uh. Second. I--uh.. Well. I know who the father is. The other father, I guess.”

“...Please tell me you aren’t having Scott McCall’s child.” His dad’s face squished up disgust.

“NO! No. Actually thank god no. Well. Comparatively I guess?” Stiles rambled, waving his hands around.

“Stiles. Who is it?”

“Uh. Derek Hale.” He squinted at his dad as he admitted it. His dad shook his head, resting his hand on his forehead.

“I don’t remember Derek Hale being part of this tale at the beginning.”

“They pulled him in when I tried to escape. He, uh, went full wolf and got us both out when we got the chance.”

“And this equates to you keeping a baby?”

“He... He asked me. Deaton had already said he probably couldn’t do anything about it. He said it’s risky, it’s messing with stuff nobody knows about, and taking it out might not even be an option. So... I said yes.” His dad frowned again, inhaling like he was getting ready to shout. Stiles winced a bit, clutching his fingers together. “You didn’t see his face, Dad. I just... I couldn’t tell him no. I mean. I did tell him no. Yelled at him and kicked him out of the house, actually. But I changed my mind.”

His dad narrowed his eyes searchingly and then seemed surprised by what he found there, eyebrows jolting up his forehead.

“Derek Hale. How did I miss that?” His dad muttered. Stiles jolted himself and then flailed a bit.

“Woah, woah, woah, that is a massive leap!” Stiles protested.

“You’re telling me. But is it an incorrect assumption?” His Dad shot back, no nonsense.

“I.. I mean. You... But...” Stiles whined and covered his face. “I apparently have a thing for beautiful, unobtainable people.”

“I see. I need you to let Hale know I want to talk with him.” Stiles opened his mouth to immediately protest but his father held up a quelling hand. “No arguments. I should have known about this way before there was even a decision made but he and I are damn sure going to talk it through now.”

Stiles deflated and nodded a little bit, chewing the side of his thumbnail.

“You’re not mad at me?” He asked in a small voice.

“Mad? Why the hell would I be mad at you? Hell, kid. I’m halfway to proud of you, even though I wish you’d told me sooner. You’re trying your best to do what you think is the right thing, despite the fact that you’re damn sure the wrong sex for this and too damn young for it.” His dad argued. “Now, I won’t deny I’m concerned, and I’m going to make damn well certain you didn’t get forced into anything because of a crush.”

“I didn’t!” Stiles protested. “Derek... He wouldn’t. He doesn’t force things. He... well, it’s not really my place to talk about some of the stuff he’s had to deal with but-- Anyway, no.”

“That’s not what I’m concerned about here, Stiles. You’ve got enough going on right now as it is. He needs to know there’s expectations here that need met, and it’s not on you to commit to everything coming up. I want to know he’ll step up. I’m not going to let you let him get away with slacking off. It’s my job to look out for you. Even if you don’t like it. Especially if you don’t like it.” His dad shook his head before he tugged him in for a hug, even though they were still both sitting. His hug was almost a little too tight considering how unbendy Stiles’ stomach currently was, but Stiles definitely needed it and he wasn’t about to pull back.

“Yeah, alright. Just remember that Derek’s not the one that put a baby in me. He and I are both in the same non-consensual boat here.” He muttered into his dad’s shoulder.

“I gotta ask... How?” His dad squinted at Stiles as he pulled back.

“There were needles. Lots of them. One of them had.. Stuff. From Derek. Yanno.” He gestured, too embarrassed to actually say jizz to his father.

“Oh god, I wish I didn’t know.” his dad dropped his face into his hands.

“Yeah. So. Hopefully the thing doesn’t come on Christmas. The Virgin Stiles just doesn’t have the same ring to it.”

“Does it count if you’ve been with a girl?” He dad squinted. Stiles wished for the floor to open up and swallow him.

“I... ok. We’re gonna talk about this once and then never again. Malia and I did things but not all the things.” Stiles wrinkled his nose up.

“Yikes. Ok. Uh. I guess good to know. I’m gonna... be not in here.” His dad clapped him on the shoulder and then got up to leave. “Tell Derek. Talking to him. Gonna talk to Deaton too.” His dad pointed at him as he walked out of the room.

Stiles flopped on his back in his bed, taking a fortifying breath.

So. Dad knows now. He texted to Derek. His phone rang a moment later.

“Hey.” he answered.

“How did it go? Are you ok?” Derek asked. He sounded out of breath.

“It went ok, actually? He wants to talk to you sometime though.” There was a thump.

“Sorry. Fell off the bar.” Derek muttered, breathless.

“Bar?”

“Pull up bar.” Derek shook his head, sounding winded. “Are there going to be guns in this conversation?”

“No idea. I’m not invited. But I’ll make sure he doesn’t have the wolfsbane bullets just in case.” Stiles chuckled a bit.

“Thanks.” Derek shot back, loaded with sarcasm. “Just let me know when and I’ll show up.”

“I’ll text you. Thanks for checking in though.” He replied before they said their goodbyes.

Having his dad back in the know and on his side made things just bearable enough that Stiles didn't run screaming into the sunset. He woke up to tea and crackers on his bedside table with a note to take care of himself every morning, along with the prenatal vitamins.

On Saturday, Derek brought Cora over for a 'family' dinner. It wasn't anything fancy but his dad was authorized to try rice again so they had made a risotto with some chicken. His Dad and Derek had gone out to the back porch after clearing the table. His father gave him a look that clearly said that the conversation was not for Stiles and yes he would know if he was listening in as he shut the door.

Cora kept eyeing his stomach like it was going to explode.

"I'm not a bomb, y'know." Stiles arched a brow.

"Are you sure?" She shot back. Stiles snorted a bit.

"Not entirely, but I'm hopeful. I don't think exploding would be very fun. Derek might be a little disappointed."

"That's still so weird. Just... So so weird." She leaned back with her arms crossed and shook her head as if to get the taste of the thought out of her mouth.

"You're telling me." he snorted. "So, are you guys sticking around for a while?" He asked, peeling at the label on his bottle of water.

"Maybe. We're thinking about it. I might start at the school again, finish senior year at Beacon Hills High."

"I might have to be homeschooled soon. I'm already getting kind of blimpy."

"Yeah I imagine that'd be difficult to explain." Cora snorted. They chatted about more inconsequential things for a while, the weather, memes, anything, trying to avoid any of the awkwardness until Derek and his father came back in the house.

Derek looked a little shell shocked but he gave Stiles a sort of half smile before they said goodbyes for the evening. His dad staunchly refused to divulge what he and Derek talked about.

"But dad! C'mon! Honesty!"

"Honestly not telling you. Bed! Big day for me tomorrow, starting back at work!" His dad grinned, puffing up a bit and stood up straighter in his excitement to return to active duty.

"Yeah, thanks to my tireless defense of your health before you got hurt!"

"Yeah yeah. Bed, kiddo." His dad ruffled Stiles' hair before heading up to his own bedroom.

Stiles fell asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow.

He had a nightmare that he was filled with a balloon that kept rapidly expanding inside of him. He was stretched and stretched out getting larger. He felt like when Violet turned into a blueberry in Willy Wonka until he finally exploded. He jolted awake with a gasp and pressed a hand to his stomach.

Rather than comfort him, he found his stomach had popped up, larger than when he went to bed at night. His stomach was now visible even under the covers. It was not visible like that last night. He rolled over and grabbed his phone, dialing with shaking fingers.

“What’s the matter?” Derek asked, voice slightly groggy.

“I need Deaton right now. RIGHT NOW, Derek. My stomach is visible even under a blanket. I’m freaking out!”

“Why is Stilinski yelling?” he heard Cora’s voice in the background sounding confused and sleepy. He struggled to breathe, vision blurring a bit. Derek’s voice was in his ear but he couldn’t make out the words for a few minutes as he struggled to breathe around the panic in his chest.

“Stiles!” Derek finally shouted and he jolted, sucking in a shocked breath. “Good, just keep breathing. We’ll be there soon.” He hung up the phone and Stiles laid back, counting each breath in a steady stream of one, two, three, four on repeat.

He knew it. He freaking knew this was going to be a disaster. The baby had to be something *wrong* to pop up overnight like this.

He struggled to sit up, feeling like a turtle caught on his back, when Derek and Cora burst into his room.

“Holy shit.” Cora gasped, staring at him. Stiles wheezed in a breath and propped up on his elbows. It made the bump look even bigger.

“Keep breathing. C’mon, get up.” Derek moved to help. Stiles struggled against the weight on his stomach and his shaky, panic ruined limbs.

“I can’t, I’m stuck.” he gasped. Derek frowned harder and then just scooped him up bridal style.

“Get the doors.” he ordered at Cora and she scrambled to comply. Stiles didn’t think that said good things about how he looked.

He very briefly hated Derek for this. He hated that he was in so much panic and pain over something that he didn’t want.

“My dad, someone has to call my dad, he’s at work. My phone, I need my phone-- and my wallet!” He gasped, grabbing a fist full of the front of Derek’s shirt.

“I’ll call him. And I got them!” Cora replied quickly, getting out her phone and dialing rapidly with one thumb, holding Stiles’ things up with her other hand.

“If this kills me, you gotta take care of him.” Stiles told Derek, tightening his hold on Derek’s shirt. He felt ridiculously overdramatic but it had to be said.

“You’re not dying.” Stiles could tell he was trying and failing to sound like he believed that. It was less than reassuring.

“You don’t know that! Just promise me.” Stiles glared hard at Derek’s impassive face until he looked down, brows pulled up in the middle. He nodded a little and clenched his jaw, settling into the back of the toyota with Stiles still in his arms. Cora got into the driver’s seat, still talking quietly back and forth on Stiles’ phone to his dad as she started to drive.

** * **

Things went from bad to worse when they arrived at Deaton’s office. Stiles’ dad wasn’t there yet, but Scott sure as hell was. Derek quickly turned his back to him to hide Stiles from Scott’s view but that did not in any way stop Scott from freaking out.

“What’s happening? Why are you carrying him? Stiles!” He demanded more than asked. Stiles had a brief, vindictive thought of ‘Why do you care?’ but he couldn’t find the air to voice it.

Stiles was jostled when Scott apparently tried to get around Derek and clutched harder at Derek's shirt so he didn’t fall. Cora came up and took him from Derek’s hold and rushed into the back office. Deaton blinked at them, eyes wide and face carefully blank. It wasn’t remotely close to reassuring.

“Leave it alone, Scott.” Derek replied, blocking the doorway.

“You don’t have any right to tell me that!” Scott shot back, trying to get past the solid wall of Derek in the doorway to see Stiles. Deaton wasted no time in shifting Stiles so he wasn’t facing the doorway anymore. His heart kicked into high gear again as he eyed the syringes nervously.

“No worries, Mr. Stilinski.” Deaton replied. “We shouldn’t need to give you any shots today. I will need to do another ultrasound.” He gestured to Stiles stomach but didn’t touch him, waiting for Stiles to give him the go ahead. Stiles was hesitant to pull his shirt away from the swelling beneath, scared to see what it looked unobscured by blankets and clothing. He felt as tight as a drum. What if his skin is paper thin, stretched to the point of being see through? He felt like it was possible, even though the rational part of his brain disagreed.

“His heart is going crazy. What’s wrong? Why won’t anyone tell me anything?” Scott yelled, and disappeared from view as he stepped up into Derek’s space. “Move.”

Stiles heard a growl in reply, and a slap as Derek caught Scott's wild swing of a punch in his hand. He flung him back easily, like flicking a fly.

"We won't tell you anything because you kicked him out of the Pack. You kept *yourself* out of the loop." Derek's voice was calm, low, and dangerous. Cora used Stiles' attempt to look behind himself to gently loosen the death grip of his hands away from his shirt. Once she got the grip loose she lifted them away so Deaton could pull it back. Stiles stared at his stomach for a moment, a bit startled about how normal it actually was. His skin wasn't torn or see through, just tight over a smooth, hard bump. It wasn't nearly as huge as it had seemed when he first woke up.

"I didn't... I didn't kick him out! He left! We-- I just-- He killed Donovan!" Scott protested loudly. Stiles grabbed for the edge of the table and found Cora's hand instead. She looked at him with concern, her full lips slightly parted in the same way he'd seen Derek do in the past. She grabbed his hand and held it, patting his arm with her other hand.

"It was an accident," Derek replied evenly. "Which you would have known if you talked to Stiles about it."

Scott was silent for a moment, and when he finally spoke some of the outrage was gone. "Beating someone's head in with a wrench is not an accident!"

"Where is the proof that that happened? Did you ask Stiles if that's how it happened?"

"That's not---He's still dead! We're supposed to keep them from dying. Help them!" Scott argued back.

"Help them. Like you wanted to help yourself to a werewolf cure with Peter?"

"That wasn't--"

"What about all those people Jackson killed, because you wanted to help *him* instead of them?" Derek interrupted. Stiles froze, feeling his eyes go wide in his face. Holy crap.

"It wasn't his fault!"

"Gerard?" Derek pressed. "You switched his meds. Then you used me to poison him, only he didn't die like you planned? Was it not Gerard's fault?"

"I wasn't trying to-- He was going to--"

"What? Kill someone? Like, maybe you instead of Stiles. Your mom instead of the Sheriff? Is that what made it okay?"

Stiles felt his eyes pop wide in his face in shock. He looked to Cora, whose mouth was curved down and brows raised in a 'Not bad' face of approval over Derek's reply. Stiles felt shell shocked and just stared at Deaton, who looked like he was in the midst of an epiphany, frozen with the gel and wand for the ultrasound.

"Maybe I learned something from all of this! Maybe I've changed! " Scott shouted back.

“Maybe you have.” Derek’s tone read clearly that it wasn’t for the good. “What did you learn from it all, Scott? I told you once you were going to be good at this.” He sounded like it was a challenge. Like Scott hadn’t met up to the expectations Derek had set up for him.

It was silent for a few moments after that and Stiles wished he could see both of them and watch what was happening. He felt vindicated by the defense. It had been a long few years, feeling like no one trusted or believed in him.

“There’s always another way. There’s always a choice!” Scott replied, voice set in that stubborn way of his. Derek huffed a sigh and Deaton shook his head slowly, as if in realisation.

“Your choices are what led to you not being in the loop on this. You need to leave, Scott.” Derek replied, voice holding a strong finality.

“Derek. If I may.” Deaton moved over and shut and locked the door. Stiles was almost surprised when Scott didn’t start beating on it. “Mountain ash.” He offered a moment later and then came back to start the ultrasound.

Stiles felt a renewed panic and clutched at Cora’s hand a little harder. He couldn’t bring himself to look at the screen as Deaton ran the wand over his stomach. He knew, logically, that his dreams were probably unfounded, that it was probably as normal as a possible werewolf baby carried in a man could be, but his anxiety didn’t believe him. Derek came and stood nearby but his arms were folded in at his chest, looking stern.

“There it is.” Deaton murmured quietly as he pressed the wand against Stiles’ lower stomach. He double checked a book alongside the machine and then frowned a little. “It seems like the progression is extremely fast. The dimensions of the fetus seem to be about the size of one eighteen weeks along. At that point in the pregnancy, you experience what is commonly called a 'pop'. It’s where your muscles shift to accommodate the growing child. I believe in women it is less of a dramatic moment because of the way female muscles are made to accommodate the stretching.”

He might as well have been saying ‘Your parasite is growing enough that he is destroying any hope for a normal stomach you may once have had’. Stiles just fidgeted a bit, trying to look everywhere but the screen. He had an irrational aversion to it, he didn’t want to see it.

Deaton talked about measurements for a few moments while Stiles focused on Derek’s face. He seemed almost a bit in awe, but not like a chestburster from Alien was going to come erupting out of his stomach at any moment, no fear. Stiles chanced a look at the screen and saw nothing but some vague, grey shapes. Nothing that just screamed “This is an infant child and will be cute and harmless”. Certainly nothing he felt should have warranted that look on Derek’s face.

He felt almost let down. He had half expected to see some monster confirming his deepest fears. He was almost upset he didn’t.

If he had, he would have felt vindicated. He could have felt like he was justified in the nothing he felt about what he was carrying inside him. The other half of him had almost

expected some sort of hallmark moment where he saw the thing destroying his life and fell in love with it. Maybe if he had, if he'd looked at the screen and felt some sense of love, all the stress and panic would be worth it.

Instead, he felt nothing more than the looming sense of impending doom that he'd been experiencing since he'd found out what the Doctors had done to him.

** * **

With nothing but free time, after school, Stiles found himself obsessing. Obsessing over the pregnant thing was too scary so instead he obsessed on how he might break Lydia out of Eichen house. He formulated an admittedly shoddy plan, and then had his dad drop him off at Derek's house.

Cora and Derek looked up in surprise when he arrived and then Cora sagged in relief.

"Thank *God* . SHOO! Get him out of here!" Cora pushed at Derek's shoulders, moving him toward the door of the apartment. The table was covered massive stack of house listings and buyer applications. "He keeps scaring off the potential buyers for the loft with his serial killer face."

"I do not." Derek argued, face in his most murderous. His brows were dangerously close to swallowing his eyes.

"Yeah well, come with me to visit our favorite banshee." Stiles gestured over to the car. "Dad dropped me off here on his way to work and you get to be my taxi."

"I'm overjoyed." He monotoned and climbed into the driver's seat when they got to the car.

Stiles shifted to get in, huffing out a breath. His stomach didn't want to bend anymore which was so much fun. Not. The extra weight was also doing terrible, achy things to his lower back.

"Your spawn is uncomfortable." He informed Derek as he buckled up. "Also, uh. You should maybe know. I'm not *technically* allowed to see Lydia."

"What?" Derek's eyebrows did the thing that meant he was both mildly irritated and confused as he drove.

"Her mom has her on no visitors, especially me. That's where you come in! There is a female receptionist this afternoon. Do the smile thing at her and lemme sneak in. My stealth skills have gone up a lot because I keep dodging and hiding from Scott and his werewolf sniffer at school."

"That is a terrible plan." Derek shook his head.

“Thanks, I'm aware of that. It was a terrible plan at the police station too and yet...” he wiggled his fingers in Derek's general direction to imply Derek's magical skills.

“What's going to happen when it doesn't work?”

“Eh, nothing really. They tell me to leave, I argue, they threaten to call my dad, I protest, they grab the phone, I run for it.” Stiles shrugged.

“Trying to break into a mental hospital is routine for you.” Derek sighed a very resigned sigh.

“You're gonna do it aren't you?” Stiles grinned his biggest, shit eating grin at Derek. He also maybe batted his lashes at him to be a little shit.

“Yeah, I am.” Derek said with the world weary tone that could only come from someone accepting Stiles as their lot in life. As it should be.

Stiles, completely inconspicuously, had traded in his red hoodie for a black one because he looked like he was smuggling something most days. It was a size too big and he looked ridiculous when he pulled the hood up over his head. If the nurse caught one look at him, he was going to be booted right out the door.

Derek gave him a flat look, the most done look in the history of done looks, and then went to the receptionist and plastered on his widest grin.

“Hi.” He told her. She looked up and then went to look back to her paper before doing a legit double take and going red in the cheeks. Stiles could relate, but this time he made sure to avoid the full brunt of a smiling Derek, loitering out of sight of the nurse.

“H-hello. What can I do for you?” She replied, sounding breathless.

“Every time.” Stiles whispered and then sniggered a bit, waiting for another visitor to exit and then slipping through the door. It worked. It actually worked!

He did a tiny little fist pump and then stole quickly down the hallway. He turned down the hallway he knew Lydia was in based on hospital records he may or may not have had legal access to.

Lydia was actually sitting upright when he got to the door. Stiles grinned and opened the door.

“Hey, Lyds.” He whispered at her. His stomach sank a bit when he realized she was vertical but no one was home behind her eyes. She tilted her head like she was listening to something far away. She looked... frankly terrible. Her hair was a knotted mess, her fingernails cracked and broken, and she had red marks from restraints. Stiles carefully brushed her hair away from her face. “If I ever see that bastard again, I'm actually going to bust someone's head in with a wrench.” He promised her and then finger combed her hair gently. She turned again, like she was listening to something again.

“What is it? What are you hearing?” He asked, squinting a little. Her staring lasted a moment or two more before she started screaming. Stiles clapped his hands over his ears with a wince.

The sound still seemed to go straight through his brain, reverberating off the inside of his skull. The nurses swarmed in and grabbed her, restraining her as she kept screaming until she was sedated.

Stiles backed out of the room, still halfway deaf with tinnitus, when his arm was grabbed by another nurse. Oh shit. He knew this one.

“You again!” Schrader snarled at Stiles and dragged him up to the office. “Oh it’s the police for sure this time!” He threatened. He pulled Stiles through the other door to where Derek was waiting for him.

“I heard that. Are you ok?” Derek whispered, holding him in place and ignoring the nurses indignant shouting.

“Yeah, I’m ok. She’s still out of it. They’re just, just drugging her.” He shook his head. “And tying her down to the bed.”

Derek’s face contorted into an expression Stiles couldn’t place before Stiles was tugged out of Derek’s grip. Stiles turned to shout at Nurse Schrader again and found his father holding his arm. Stiles cringed at his father’s flat, no-nonsense expression.

“I... Can explain?” He tried, grinning sheepishly. His dad sighed, clearly having none of it.

“We can discuss it at home.” His dad replied, shaking his head and thanking the staff for calling him. “You too, Hale.” he told Derek, who looked half terrified and half mortified.

“Yes, sir.” Derek muttered and slunk after them. Stiles watched over his shoulder, completely flabbergasted.

The drive home would go down as the quietest drive in Stilinski history. Any time Stiles opened his mouth, his dad just shook his head. Stiles sank into the seat and tried to disappear.

Derek drove behind them, clearly not trying to tempt fate any further. He was also silent as they both got into the living room. Stiles immediately went to go speak but his dad held up a hand at him.

“Son, I get it. I do. She’s one of your best friends. But it’s against her mother’s wishes. We can’t do anything about that.”

“Dad, she doesn’t get it! This isn’t a mental problem, this is a Banshee problem! I think being in there is actually making her worse!” Stiles protested. “She looked awful, like she couldn’t hear me. But she could hear something, she kept turning her head or tilting to look at nothing and then she started screaming.” Stiles flailed a bit, his hood finally falling off his head.

His dad and Derek both went serious at the same moment. Stiles blinked at them in confusion.

“Sit. Your ears are bleeding.” Derek tugged him over to a chair carefully. His dad went to the kitchen and came back with a washcloth. Stiles reflexively touched at them, blinking at his fingertips in confusion when they did indeed come back covered in blood.

“Oh. I... I didn’t notice. They don’t hurt...” he shook his head a bit. His dad moved and wiped them down gently. “I still hear. I’m not deaf. It sounds normal.”

Derek leaned forward, cocking his head towards Stiles chest.

“What are you doing?”

“Listening. The baby’s heartbeat still seems ok. Yours, too.” Derek confirmed and looked relieved. Stiles felt a sickening swoop of hope, followed immediately by disappointment, and a heavy serving of guilt. He hadn’t thought anything would be wrong with the spawn until then, and despite the fact that he was actually disappointed, he felt guilty that he was.

“Ok. But, back to Lydia, because I’m FINE but they’re drugging her and tying her up and she’s hearing like.. Supernatural things. I think Theo messed her up by doing the thing.” He gestured towards the back of his own neck with his curled fingers in an approximation of claws.

“Alright. But we do this the right way from now on. We can’t go against Natalie’s wishes. Lydia is her child first. Let me talk to her, see what I can do.” His dad nodded. Stiles fought the urge to snatch him up into a hug.

“I can come too.” Derek offered. “If you need back up.”

“The fangs might help with the reveal, get Natalie on our side. ” His dad gave a half smile. Derek looked tentatively pleased with himself too. God help Stiles.

“It’s probably good that you’re home now anyway, I needed to talk to you.” His dad rubbed the back of his neck. “Last day of school was today. I’m gonna go with you in the morning and withdraw you.”

Stiles nodded, mulling it over. His emotions ran through a catalogue of feelings before settling on relief. School was more stress than anything else now, where he was terrified someone would bump into his belly or knock him over in the hall, or that one of the pack would get close enough to really smell him and figure it out.

“Awesome. I’m gonna sleep all afternoon in triumph.” Stiles replied.

** * **

Stiles and his dad went first thing in the morning to withdraw him from school. After that, he dropped his dad off at work and then went to get the groceries. The middle of the day was actually the best time, since it was typically empty when people weren’t on lunch break or out of work. Malia had actually texted him, worried, and he hadn’t known what to say in return.

He was hoping the cereal aisle might hold the answers in some twist of the universe. How was his supposed to react to his coyote ex-girlfriend who knew what was happening and decided it didn’t matter? That Stiles feelings didn’t matter? Also that felt it was ok to ignore

him for almost two months and then text him out of the blue. It left Stiles on shaky ground, wondering if he was just a diversion for her. She didn't seem interested in his well being at all once they stopped really dating and then to text him today just threw him off kilter even more.

Predictably, the answer was not found in the smiling cartoon faces of children's cereal. The smell of the sugar was almost overpowering now, so he wheeled his cart towards the fresh vegetables, grabbing a jar of pickles on the way to fulfill his recent odd craving. He was trying to decide between cauliflower and rhubarb, when Melissa popped up beside him.

"I thought that was you! Why aren't you in school?" She smiled at him, resting her basket on one hip. "I don't think your dad would be thrilled with you playing hooky for...cauliflower and pickles?" She teased gently. His fingers spasmed on the vegetables as he struggled to think about how to reply. He settled for basically the truth.

"Uh... yeah. My dad actually took me out of school today." He shrugged a bit, toying with the sleeves of his hoodie. If he slouched and wore a size bigger, it just looked like he'd gained weight. Stiles' stomach stayed about the same size, basically half a basketball, but pressed up, giving him pretty much constant heartburn and making it hard to breathe sometimes.

"Why did he do that? Stiles, it's your senior year!" She rested a hand on his arm and he frowned at her a bit.

"Things have... changed. A lot." Stiles shrugged, avoiding looking at her concerned face. It reminded him too much of Scott, and that made him vacillate between rage or hurt.

"I know I haven't seen you around the house very much recently. Or at all." She prompted next, face and tone both reprimanding. Stiles felt his heartbeat kick up a bit, nervous and a bit anxious.

"Yeah uh. There's... Stuff's going on, with Scott and me. It's uh... not really a grocery store conversation, y'know?" he shrugged, uncomfortable and wanting to be anywhere else at this point in time. He felt a weird thump inside his stomach, like a hunger pang but worst, a roiling and a little thud. He couldn't help but press his hand against it, freezing and staring down in surprise.

"Stiles?" Melissa gasped. "What happened to your stomach?"

"I... I uh. Oh my God." he muttered, gasping as it happened again.

"Was it like this this morning? What's happening? Do you need to go to the hospital?" She soothed and rubbed up and down his back, getting her cellphone out.

"No, no hospital, it was like this before but there's.. Something's weird. I think I might need to go to Deaton..." He groaned a bit as it came again.

"To Deaton?" She sounded puzzled, getting out her phone. "You want me to call him? I don't know if you should be driving."

"I... I don't know. I feel like something's wrong." Stiles shook his head. He gulped a bit, trying not to freak out. It wasn't a strong pain, just a jolt, but it made him worry that something worse was going to happen. His hideous nightmares kept coming to mind, especially the chest burster alien style ones.

"I would say something is significantly wrong if I can see your stomach through a hoodie, Stiles!" Melissa hissed at him, looking around.

"Not here." He begged, pleading with her silently.

"Ok. Alright," She nodded, pulling on her nurse face of compartmentalization. He felt another thud inside him and fought against the urge to rip off his shirts and stare at his stomach. "So. I'm going to drive you, and you're going to tell me what's going on."

"Yeah." Stiles gasped a bit, nodding rapidly and just abandoning his cart where it was. Melissa dropped her basket there too and tugged him out to the car. "Oh god, I need to call my dad. Fuck, I have the car."

"You have the car? Where is the jeep?" Melissa blinked as she got him and herself into the car, pulling out her phone and shooting off a quick text before reversing out of her parking space.

"Scott didn't tell you anything?" Stiles replied, flabbergasted. "It... It got flipped by Parrish. Like... Theo was in it and then there was fire. It's... I don't know if I can get it fixed or not but it's at the shop anyway."

"Holy crap." Melissa blinked, shell shocked. She drove quickly to the clinic.

Stiles fairly clawed his way out of the car, because unbending stomachs were totally useless. Deaton brought him back into the room and then had him sit up on the table.

"Hoodie off please, Mr. Stilinski." Deaton gestured. Stiles tugged it off, ignoring Melissa's shocked gasp. Deaton immediately lifted his shirt and started pressing on his stomach gently, frowning in concentration.

"What the hell is wrong with his stomach?" Melissa exclaimed, hand coming up to cover her mouth. Stiles felt his own eyes pop wide as there was a thud inside that he could see outside as well, a little blip on his stomach.

"The baby seems to be kicking." Deaton proclaimed, relaxing completely. "It does seem a little too strong for how old it is, but it's a good sign."

"Yeah sure it is." Stiles grumbled a bit under his breath. "Are you sure it's entirely normal?"

"Baby? BABY?!" Melissa yelped, leaning heavily against the counter like her legs couldn't hold her up anymore. Stiles winced a bit, nodding slowly.

"Yes, Melissa." Deaton replied with his infallible calm and tested Stiles' pulse and then his blood pressure. Stiles tried not to squirm too badly, and then his Dad burst in looking panicked, followed by Derek looking closed off and stoney in a deputy uniform.

Stiles felt all his breath whoosh out of him in one go and tried to keep his jaw from hitting the floor.

He held his hand out for his dad, trying to be reassuring, but Derek came up instead. He spread a warm palm over Stiles' stomach, frowning at Stiles' face in concern.

"Are you ok?" Derek asked quietly, his eyes flicking nervously towards Melissa. Stiles had felt perfectly ok until Derek came in in uniform with his earnest caring eyebrows and fricking touching. Touching of the Stiles. Caring eyebrows in his face. Uniform. How did Stiles word?

"Pulse is a little fast, but blood pressure is alright. It appears the baby is kicking." Deaton filled in for him.

"Really?" Derek breathed, eyes going wide with awe. Reality was a cold bitch and crashed down around him again. Right, Derek touching for the baby. The gross probably monster Cthulhu baby.

Derek rubbed his palm against Stiles' stomach gently and the spawn obligingly thumped again. Stiles stared as Derek's eyes went suspiciously shiny. "wow." he whispered.

Stiles' heart skipped a beat and he felt a flush creep up his cheeks. His dad moved to sit next to him.

"Son, let me tell you all about the ways I don't like you taking years off my life." he shook his head.

"Hey, I didn't ask to carry our tentacled overlord, ok. It thumped me, I had nightmare chestburster visions." Stiles gestured a bit.

"Stiles. We saw the ultrasound. No tentacles." Derek pointed out, taking a step back and looking oddly disappointed now.

"A likely story." Stiles muttered. His dad looked disappointed too and he tried not to squirm too hard.

"Alright, well. I'm going to go fill Melissa in before she passes out." His dad patted Stiles on the shoulder and gestured for Melissa to join him in the waiting room.

"So....Deputy Hale?" Stiles asked, arching his brows and trying not to squirm.

"Your dad encouraged me, since we're staying in town. When we talked that day." The tips of his ears flushed pink in a frankly adorable way.

"Yeah? It's a good look on you." Stiles gave him a crooked half smile. "You guys find a house yet?" The spawn squirmed a bit. Now that he knew what it was, he could go back and pinpoint a similar feeling, but not quite as pronounced, going back a couple weeks.

"We have a couple we're thinking about. Waiting for the sale to go through on the loft. Cora did find a buyer when we went to see Lydia." Derek looked rueful.

“Hah, I bet she’s been super smug about that.” He joked. “Glad you’re finding somewhere soon, wouldn’t want Cthulhu escaping through the hole in the wall.”

“Don’t want to have to go up a spiral staircase every time it cries.” Derek replied and hesitantly put his hand towards Stiles’ stomach.

“You can touch it, dude. You’re probably the only one I’m gonna let touch it, but you’re fine.” Stiles tugged his wrist up until Derek’s palm was flat against his shirt. “I think it likes you already. Hopefully not as lunch.”

“It’s just a baby, Stiles.” Derek frowned, rubbing his thumb in a slow sweep against Stiles’ shirt.

“Even so, have you seen how much I can normally eat?” Stiles joked, trying to lighten the mood. Probably shouldn’t insult the demon spawn in front of the parent that actually wanted it. “Sorry, I know I’m… negative about it. It just kind of still freaks me out. Really bad. At least I’m trying?”

“I know, I know you are.” Derek acknowledged with a small nod. This close, Stiles could see the individual hairs in his beard and the dark, sooty fans of his surprisingly long lashes over his pale eyes. He wanted so badly to touch his face. Preferably with his own face. He wanted cheesy things and Derek’s smile with all its fucking dimples and eye crinkles. His fingers ached to run through Derek’s hair and see if it was really soft.

Before any of his impulses could end up in an incredibly awkward situation, there was a bit of a commotion outside. Stiles blinked out towards the lobby in confusion, moving to stand. Derek shook his head.

“Scott’s here.” Derek muttered. Stiles shifted uncomfortably, unsure how to react to it.

“Maybe we should just tell him?”

“His mother just did.” Derek grit out, looking instantly savage.

He was cut off when Scott basically burst through the doors and rushed for Stiles. Derek shifted to block his way, arms crossed, but Scott just slumped against him and sniffled. Derek’s spine stiffened like a cat bristling and he looked over his shoulder at Stiles. He looked just as shell-shocked as Stiles felt. Stiles shrugged helplessly at him as Melissa and the Sheriff poked their heads in the door.

Melissa, instead of looking worried, looked satisfied, and his dad looked like someone hit him in the back of the head with a board, he was so surprised.

“Stiles!” Scott gasped out and then started full out crying, tears running down his face. “I’m so sorry! I should have been there for you, I should have noticed and I should have been there for you. I’m so, so sorry.”

Stiles just stared at him agog as Derek shifted out of the line of fire. Scott just stood there rubbing at his eyes and looking miserable and pathetically young.

Stiles didn't know what to say, totally at a loss for words staring at his best friend.

"I thought Theo was telling the truth because you didn't deny it but Derek was right I just assumed, I didn't even ask and you're my best friend. I should have just trusted you! I should have believed you!" He hiccuped and swiped at his tears in frustration. Stiles just sat there shell shocked.

"I'm.. I don't know what to say, dude. You should have sounds a little petty. I don't know what Theo could have even said to make you think I murdered someone in cold blood. "

"He said that you b-beat his head in with your wrench. Just kept hitting him over and over." Scott shook his head, rubbing at his eyes again. "And then when you looked at the wrench and you just knew what I was talking about, I just thought..."

"I know I joke about killing people as a solution but I thought you knew me well enough to know I wouldn't just casually murder someone." Stiles threw his hands up in exasperation.

"I know. I'm so sorry. I didn't even know you were had been taken. All this is my fault." He swallowed hard and his shoulders slumped. "I thought I was supposed to save everyone, like it was my job or something. I got so wrapped up in it I forgot to take care of my actual pack. I forgot that some of the stuff I've done hasn't been so great either. You're important to me. I'm gonna make it up to you. I promise. I don't know how yet, but I will."

Stiles nodded a bit, trying to figure out how he was actually feeling and chewing the idea over in his brain. He was still frustrated, still hurt, but he also wanted to forgive Scott. Despite everything, he loved Scott like a brother. He also knew that Scott hadn't really earned forgiveness yet.

"I know I owe your dad, too. If I hadn't trusted Theo, even after you told me not to, he wouldn't have gotten hurt."

"Owning up to it is a good place to start. I want to forgive you. I do. But I'm not there yet." Stiles replied, feeling his own eyes tear up. Hormones were terrible, evil, tear making machines.

"I totally understand. I'm gonna earn it, I promise." Scott took a step closer, like he was going to try and hug Stiles. Derek growled, sharp and warning. Scott winced but nodded a bit and backed up.

"I'm... I'm going to go for now and I'll see you soon, if that's ok? And text you?"

"Yeah, man. That... that'd be nice." Stiles decided and rubbed the back of his neck, still feeling awkward around his best friend of over a decade.

"Alright, son, let's get you home and finish Derek's training for the day." His dad clapped him on the shoulder and helped him get off the table. Melissa offered to give him a ride back to the grocery store while Scott went and started cleaning in the back for his shift at Deaton's

Stiles forgoes grocery shopping for the day, content to cobble something together from the leftovers in the fridge. Since he was alone again, he decided on a shower and headed up to the bathroom. He stripped down while the shower heated up. He stared in the mirror for a long moment, taking in the upturn of his nose, the splatter of freckles across his hollowed cheeks. His skin was always flushed now, from the pregnancy. His eyes looked tired in his face. Even here, his body was changed. It was an odd cognitive dissonance, like he wasn't even himself anymore.

*** ** ***

The next week came with swollen ankles, yet more pickles, and Scott tentatively trying to squirm his way back into Stiles' life.

"Hey, I came to do homework together!" Scott announced as he came in the front door. "I brought Kira with me too, if that's ok?"

"Uh, sure." Stiles blinked a bit. She grinned and bounced up to him, giving him a hug. She went to go for the belly with both hands after that and he kinda winced.

"Ah, right, supposed to ask." She winced and then smiled sheepishly at him.

"Yeah, sorry, it's just a little weird? I don't know if I'd even be better about it if I was a normally uterus having person." He wrinkled his nose up a bit. Kira nodded, face falling a bit.

"Is it.. Like is everything ok?"

"Seems it, so far?" he shrugged. "Deaton's kind of confused. Biggest worry now is how it's going to come out." Stiles shivered a bit. "And I definitely don't want to talk about that. So, how are things?"

Scott immediately launched into talking about school, and lacrosse. Coach had him helping extra practices on tuesday and thursday mornings now and he was finally maintaining a solid B minus in english.

"My biology I'm actually doing really well at. It looks like I'll be able to get a good enough score for a decent bio scholarship for vet school." Scott grinned crookedly. "Maybe I can work with Dr. Deaton when I get it."

"It'd be so cool!" Kira enthused. "I'm still not sure what I want to do after graduation. It feels too soon." Stiles nodded along a bit.

"I had a couple plans but I'm not sure what I want to do now." He shrugged, gesturing at his stomach. "I'm still thinking about law enforcement someday. I'm not sure if I want to do forensics or try for detective. We'll see where it goes. Did you know Derek joined the force?"

“I saw him in the uniform back at Deaton’s.” Scott nodded, giving him a little smile. Kira’s face split in an excited grin.

“I bet he’s really good at it! He always had kind of a stern big brother vibe to me.” She nodded.

“He seems like he’s really happy.” Scott remarked a moment later, doodling on the corner of his homework a bit. Stiles nodded in agreement, cringing inwardly. He wished he could feel even a little bit of something for the spawn.

The topic turned back to the books for a while until Stiles leaned back, stretching as much as he could around his belly. It had gotten dark out, and his dad came in the door a few moments later.

“Hey, kids.” He waved a bit, taking off his badge and holster, putting them in their usual spot before kicking his shoes off and sinking into the armchair. “I talked to Natalie today. Derek came with. Looks like Lydia should be coming home this weekend.”

“Holy shit, you’re amazing!” Stiles gasped, sitting up straight again. “Am I allowed to go see her?”

“Yes, but only with either me or Derek, in case she starts screaming again. We gotta be able to get you out of there quickly.”

“Yeah and my current land speed is a waddle, I gotcha. Oh man, that’s so great, I’ve been so worried about her.”

“I tried to sneak in a couple times.” Scott admitted.

“I did sneak in!” Stiles laughed. “I had Derek smile at the female nurse, worked like a charm.”

“I tried electrocuting the gate. My hair wouldn’t lay flat for almost a week!” She gestured with her arms up way above her head.

“She looked like bride of frankenstein right after.” Scott cracked up at the memory.

“Bunch of delinquents, all of you.” His dad gestured around.

*** ** ***

Everything became a whirl of activity, suddenly. Derek and Cora found a house, one near but not quite in suburbia but still close to the preserve, with four bedrooms. It was honestly really nice from the pictures. Stiles helped with some of the packing up, none of the heavy lifting but he was damn good at labelling and directing a group of werewolves around.

His dad was texting him periodically with updates as he helped Ms. Martin get Lydia home from Eichen. They’d set up a safe area at her moms house. He was negotiating when he

would finally be allowed to go see her.

“Uh. Stiles?” Liam asked, grunting. He looked up to see him holding an entire bed and it’s frame.

“Yeah yeah, you can manage.” Stiles scoffed, waving him off. “That’s... Cora’s? Goes in the back left corner of the moving truck. On it’s side.” he directed and then texted his dad again.

When when when when when?

Son, if you don’t stop texting me, never.

“Ugh, everyone is so rude to me.” he sighed, and then got up to raid the fridge before packing it up. “This box has to go next!” He called out to the living room.

“I got it!” kira beamed.

“No. not you. It’s fragile.” Stiles shooed her away. She slumped out of the kitchen and traded spaced with Scott, who grinned at him and saluted.

“Stiles, you coming with the first load?” Cora asked. “Derek’s already in the car.”

“Yeah, coming.” he nodded, stuffing his snack in his face and chewing loudly as he crawled into the van. Cora actually appeared a little out of breath, and sweaty. When the arrived at the house, Derek was downing a bottle of water, actually looking a bit sweaty himself. He didn’t waste time and popped open the truck, grabbing several boxes at once. Liam and Mason arrived a moment later with the couch and headed to the living room with it. As soon as it was in place, Stiles went and flopped on it. His back protested the whole moving and standing thing pretty greatly. As usually happened these days, he dozed off after a few minutes of not moving.

He woke up fully a little while later to the pack piling on the sofa and two new arm chairs with boxes of pizza and drinks. Derek sat next to Stiles, still flushed and a little sweaty.

“Hard working today.” Liam remarked at Stiles, handing him a bottle of water.

“You try incubating a child and see how much energy you have.” Stiles shot back. Liam shook his head, and then went pale.

“That can’t happen, can it?!” He gasped, looking towards Derek and Scott. They turned their heads to each other and then just looked back to Liam and shrugged. Liam made a choking sound and Derek dug into his own slice of pizza looking a little smug.

*** ** ***

Three days after Lydia got home, Stiles was finally allowed to go visit her. Derek took the day off and came back to pick him up and bring him over. Stiles frowned in surprise at the flowers.

“Parrish sent them for Lydia.” Derek explained. Stiles chuckled a bit.

“I think he’s sweet on her.”

“She’s too young for him.” He shook his head.

“Not really. It’s not even ten years. Lydia’s almost eighteen.” He argued back, and then leaned to fiddle with the radio.

“Stop that.” Derek reprimanded, changing it back. Stiles started messing with it again just to watch him make that irritated face.

Ms. Martin didn’t look thrilled at all to let them into her house but she stepped aside and gestured them in. She led them back to the room she had set up.

“So, Derek stays with you the whole time.” Ms. Martin nodded, tapping her fingertips together and obviously attempting not to stare too hard at Stiles’ stomach.

“Yes, ma’am.” Stiles sketched a salute and nodded. Derek nodded his agreement at the same time and gestured for Stiles to go in first. Lydia was sitting up on the bed again, hands in her lap and limp as a doll, her hair washed and brushed but still damp and stringy. She stared off into space and didn’t seem to notice their arrival. Stiles sat next to her and gently took one of her hands.

“Hey, Lyds.” he greeted her. Her hands felt warm at least.

“This happened when Theo clawed her?” Derek asked, moving around in front of her to peer into her eyes.

“Yeah. Do you know anything about that kind of thing? With the claws?” Stiles asked, tentatively sweeping Lydia’s hair out of the way. There were four, pale, barely there marks along the back of her neck.

“Peter knows more than I do, but I learned a bit from Cora’s pack.” Derek admitted, moving around to look at her neck too. “I think I could maybe find her and draw her out.”

“What’s the likelihood of success or failure? I need statistical averages to base my decision because logic is pretty much gone.” Stiles gestured a bit helplessly.

“I don’t know.” Derek replied.

“You’re so helpful.” Stiles groaned and dropped his face into his hands.

“I know I can’t make it worse.” Derek offered, giving a little bit of a shrug.

“Alright. Alright. Ok. Just do it, then. Do you need anything? Like an anchor or a cheeseburger or something?” He shifted in his seat fidgeting and trying to contain his nerves.

Derek shook his head as he moved and carefully sank his claws into her neck. Both of them froze, Derek’s eyes flashing bright blue and Lydia’s eyes opened wide and slightly glazed.

Long, tense moments passed, the only sound the rushing of Stiles' heartbeat. It was terrible to just sit and watch, totally unable to do anything to help. He had no idea if it was going right or wrong. A moment later, they both jolted and gasped in unison before Derek pulled back, leaning heavily on his knees.

"Where? S-Stiles?" Lydia blinked a bit, fingers twitching in his grip.

"Oh holy shit. Derek! You did it! Holy shit! Oh my god!" He gasped and then embarrassed the shit out of himself by bursting into tears.

"What? Stiles! What's going on?" Lydia gasped, blinking rapidly. "Meredith?"

"You're back. Oh man, I missed you so much, Lyds. You missed so much. What about Meredith?" he babbled, wiping at his eyes with the back of his sleeve.

"Theo!" She gasped and then grabbed Stiles arm in a hard grip

"I know. He's gone though, MIA. We're still looking for him though." Stiles shook his head. Derek leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. Stiles looked over and frowned hard before getting up and pressing a palm to Derek's shoulder. "Are you ok, Derek?"

"Fine." Derek shook his head. "Just takes a lot out of me." He shrugged a bit. Stiles fought the urge to push Derek's hair back or press a hand to his forehead and nodded, lacing his fingers together. Lydia was watching both of them, a frown between her brows.

"We should get a nurse to check you out." he gasped and then pressed the call button for them. He felt a weird surge of energy, too much in his system and nowhere to focus it on.

"Where's... Where's..." Lydia looked frustrated for a moment before she gasped out "Scott!"

"He's gonna come see you next. You know who you probably should see?" He gave a half grin and then got up, going for the door.

"Your stomach!" Lydia yelped. Stiles winced a bit.

"Yeah.... It's a thing. I'll fill you in later." he promised and then poked his head out the door. "Ms. martin?"

"What's the matter?" She stood up, looking nervous.

"Nothing, nothing, just uh... Well." He popped the door open wider. Lydia blinked and then smiled at her mom.

"Lydia!" Ms. Martin gasped and rushed in, going to snag Lydia up in a hug. "Oh my god, lydia!" She stroked her hair and rocked her back and forth.

"I think that's a good a time as any." Stiles nodded to Derek, offering him a hand to get up.

"I got it." Derek shook his head, slowly getting to his feet.

“Let’s get you home, big guy.” Stiles replied, heading towards the exit, letting Ms. Martin fuss over her daughter. “Thank you. For Lydia.”

“She’s pack.” Derek shrugged like it was nothing, like it was something expected when it was anything but.

“Still.” Stiles shrugged and then practically shoved Derek into the passenger seat of his car and then held a hand out for the keys. Derek rolled his eyes and handed them over, buckling up and looking put upon. “Hey, magical healing werewolves who are woozy don’t get to drive home with their baby incubator in the car. Them’s the breaks.”

Derek stared at him for a long moment with an expression that Stiles couldn’t really read. Stiles tried to ignore it and just drove, pulling into the driveway outside Derek’s new house. He went around and helped Derek get out of the car and helped him get into the house, mostly just steadying him with a hand on Derek’s shoulders.

“Thanks.” Derek muttered, heading quickly for his room and flopping face first in bed.

“Dude, you didn’t even take off your shoes.” Stiles sighed. “You’re in jeans, you can’t be flopped.”

“It’s fine.” Derek said into the pillow. Stiles looked up at the ceiling and let out a long suffering sigh. He went over and bent as much as he could and then tugged off both of Derek’s shoes.

“Socks on or off?” He asked. He got a shrug from Derek’s shoulders in response. He tugged off his socks then, because he didn’t like to sleep with his own socks. He took a moment to sit on the edge of the bed, watching Derek breathe.

Stiles had a brief fantasy about crawling in next to him, trailing his fingertips softly over Derek’s back and lulling him into sleep. He wondered what it would be like to wake up comfortable and sleep warm with Derek, if he’d let Stiles cuddle up to him, if his stubble would be softer or scratchier first thing in the morning.

“What.” Derek muttered, turning his head on the pillow to pin Stiles with an accusatory look. Stiles He flushed a bit, feeling embarrassed and more than a bit pathetic. He just gave Derek a sheepish shrug and then got himself up and off the bed, heading back out to the living room.

Lydia recovered relatively quickly, just in time for Stiles to be put on rest. He was getting bigger than ever and his lungs and ankles were protesting. He wasn't at full bed rest yet but Deaton said it would be happening soon, probably after he was about as far along as a six or seven month normal pregnancy.

Lydia came over to visit as soon as she was able to, eager to be out and with her friends to catch up on everything she missed. She looked more and more disturbed as she heard about

the dread doctors, Theo and the chimera packs disappearance, and that no one knew what they wanted by making Stiles pregnant in the first place.

“I did some research but the internet is a scary place if you Google male pregnancy.” Stiles shuddered at the memory.

“Nothing in the bestiary?” Lydia had notes spread out as she sat cross legged in front of the coffee table. Scott was occupying the sheriff's usual chair, Liam and Mason were across from Lydia, and Malia and Kira stuffed on the couch with Stiles.

“Nothing. Deaton had never heard of a male pregnancy either.” Scott replied.

“We still don't know what their end goal is with the chimeras either.” Liam chimed in.

“Doesn't matter, we should just kill them before they kill us.” Malia stated matter of factly.

“I've actually been finding more people along the telluric currents, trying to figure out where the Doctors are. I also have some ideas of how to stop them, maybe.” Scott said.

“Yeah, we kill them.” Malia grumbled.

“I busted that tank with the guy in it, the glowing one. They used it for some sort of experiment. I think I even got injected with it. Hopefully it messed up some of their plans.” Stiles added, shifting to prop his swollen feet up on a pillow.

“I don't remember the tube. We were mostly worried about getting Liam and Hayden. But that's good! They'll start getting sloppy.” Scott stroked his chin like it was an invisible beard.

“Yeah but how would you get rid of them if you knew where they were? They seemed pretty impervious the last time we saw them.” Mason asked.

“Parrish. They seem scared of him! I think they're vulnerable to fire, maybe.” Scott nodded. Stiles was begrudgingly surprised with the plan until Scott admitted “Parrish helped me with it. He's really good at planning.”

“Did you figure out what he is from the book I left? I wanted to tell you but then---” Lydia gestured vaguely.

“You know what he is?!” Scott gasped. Lydia pressed a palm over her forehead.

“Of course you didn't. He's a hellhound. I found it in a book on the four horsemen of the apocalypse.”

“Another canine.” Stiles chuckled a bit and then wiggled his poor toes. “My feet are swollen again.” He complained.

“maybe ask Derek to rub them?” Kira suggested.

“So, is that a thing?” Scott asked, leaning forward a little.

“Oh god.” Stiles covered his face.

“I have to admit i'm curious myself.” Lydia tilted her head to look at him.

“He didn't actually make a baby with me on purpose.” He replied, scrubbing a hand down his face. “He's just here for the spawn as far as I can tell.”

“So explain everything before the baby, and maybe I'll believe it's just the pregnancy.” Lydia pursed her lips at him.

“Yeah he's always seemed kind of... focused on you. There's like meaningful eye contact.” Scott agreed.

“I will puke on all the things you love.” Stiles threatened. “I'm pregnant I could totally do it.”

“You're gonna puke on yourself?” Scott shot back. Stiles tilted his head back and gasped a bit.

“Bro.” He breathed, heartfelt. Lydia giggled a bit, shaking her head. Kira clapped a bit, jostling the couch as she bounced in place. His stomach roiled a bit. “You angered Cthulhu. Look what you did. Augh that makes me want to vomit.” he sighed and then threw his arm over his face. “It's a one sided thing. I... there's feelings. Been for a while. Derek hasn't reacted at all to me though, so I'm pretty sure that's not reciprocated.”

“But... you're having his baby?” Liam blinked a little. “Like... did you want to do this?”

“No. He asked me when we found out it was his.” He shrugged, a little uncomfortable with the line of questioning. “I still don't want it.” He admitted quietly. Silence reigned for a minute while everyone tried to process.

“I think it's really brave of you.” Mason announced, and the moment was broken. Stiles thanked him and relaxed again, content to let sleeping demons lie.

** * ** * **

Bed rest came way too quickly and it was hell. Pure hell.

He was losing his mind. He couldn't have his laptop because his stomach got in the way and didn't balance right on top of it. Someone from the pack came over every day after school but sometimes he didn't feel well enough to do more than sleep on them.

Lydia spent more time over than anyone else but she had so much makeup work to do that she mostly absentmindedly rubbed his stomach when he asked her to.

His stomach hurt constantly. He couldn't take a full deep breath anymore because all his organs were pressed in hard. His stomach wasn't quite the size of a normal pregnant ladies because his muscles just flat out wouldn't do that. He wasn't built for this and it was more

apparent every day. He was off kilter constantly, his center of gravity wrong for the weight he was carrying. His chest hurt. He had acne, his facial hair stopped growing in patches.

In short, he was fucking miserable. Derek came over periodically as well, staying for dinner and what Stiles eagerly called tummy time because Derek hated it being called that.

Cora took in with the pack again, joining their rotation of visiting and good naturedly teasing her brother for nesting. Derek was planning the babies room. Stiles was still hoping it was actually a baby and not one of the creatures his feverish pregnant brain cooked up at night.

He'd taken up residence on the couch downstairs because he couldn't climb them anymore without feeling like lungs were going to cave in. He'd tried to fight through it but after Derek had to swoop in and catch him before he fell, the stairs were vetoed.

The spawn also felt the need to roil and kick all the time. He felt a growing resentment towards it. Mostly because Derek would stroke Stiles' stomach as many times as he could and sometimes leaned in to murmur softly to it whenever it did that.

It made Stiles want to curl up into a ball and die because it was so cute.

His fingers itched with the urge to stroke over Derek's skin. He wanted to comb them through Derek's hair and stroke the sharp line of his jaw. He wanted to trace the lines of his tattoo. Stiles could also do none of that because Derek was only touching him for the spawn.

He was used to seeing Derek almost every day now, talking about what Derek was doing at work or tummy time. Stiles was scared he wouldn't see Derek again after the baby was born. It made him feel panicky.

Derek and Cora both came over that night, showing off some of the gender neutral clothing. Derek had adamantly decided he didn't want to know the gender.

"He's trying to name it horrible things like Ethel or Mervyn. Stiles, Talk some sense into him!"

"It doesn't matter when it's going to be a T-rex." Stiles joked, shifting and trying to get comfortable. Derek immediately looked crestfallen and folded the clothes back up. Stiles wished he could grab the words back out of the air and pretend he didn't say it. "I was... it was a joke, that's all."

"You don't want a say?" Cora asked a minute later, eyeing Derek with concern.

"I mean. It's not my choice." Stiles replied, shrugging nervously. "I... It's Derek's choice."

"It's your baby too." Cora argued, leaning forward.

"Cora, don't--" Derek shook his head and cut himself off. Stiles scrubbed over his face.

"Ok, I don't know where you've been for the past like three and a half months, but I didn't ask for this, alright!" Stiles flailed at his stomach. "I am miserable here. I am not excited

about the spawn, I have nightmares about it. I'm fucking terrified. So no, I don't want to name it. I don't want it."

Cora stared at him, looking a mixture of disbelieving and furious. She opened her mouth but Derek just put a hand on her knee.

"It's fine, Cora. Just don't."

"No, not it's not fine, I'm sorry, but you're being ridiculous, Stiles." She snapped. "We've seen the ultrasound. It's a baby. It's a tiny human, and it's Derek's tiny human. You make all these little snippets and comments like it's a monster and how it's ruining your life. Like it's Derek ruining your life!"

"That's not--"

"It is! You act like you hate him all the time even though he comes over and takes care of you!"

"Cora." Derek reprimanded quietly. Stiles gulped around the lump in his throat, shaking his head quietly.

"Yeah. Yeah it's totally great being pregnant and cared for by a man who only barely tolerates me so he can touch my stomach. It's also really wonderful wishing I wasn't horrified all the time. I'm just super ungrateful."

Derek and Cora both stared at him with matched expressions of disbelief. Stiles struggled to get up and make a dramatic exit but his body didn't move like that anymore, so he just awkwardly sunk into the couch.

Cora frowned, opening her mouth again. Derek put a hand on her arm. He shook his head slightly when she looked at him, and then got up and left without a word. She followed after, looking disappointed and angry at Stiles.

After they left, he laid down on his side and hugged a pillow. He cried for a long time, but at least there was no one there to see it.

** * ** * **

Derek had stepped back, after that. Stiles withdrew from basically talking to anyone, curling up cross legged so make space for his stomach and putting pillows behind his back. He was close enough to the end that Deaton didn't want him left alone for more than an hour at a time, which made it very difficult to sit alone and cry.

"Alright, son." His dad came down in the morning, sitting on the coffee table in front of Stiles' wallow corner on the couch.

"Hey, Dad."

“I got filled in a bit about what happened with Cora and Derek. After several hours of prying on a stakeout yesterday and three days of the both of you being---”His Dad gestured to Stiles and his pity corner of the couch. “This. So what’s going to happen is--”

“Dad!” Stiles interrupted with a groan, covering his face up.

“Stiles, we’re going over there. You’re gonna talk it out. You have to. So shower, shave, all that. Dressed in the new sweatpants and whatever kinda shirt.” His dad clapped him on the knees and then offered his arms to help up. Stiles took it, groaning as his spine protested the heinous effects of pregnancy versus gravity.

“Fine. But I demand curly fries and fried pickles when I inevitably break down in tears again.” Stiles demanded as he waddled his way to the shower. He did feel a lot better after he was done, even if seeing his naked body was a whole new sort of trauma.

His dad helped him get out to the car and drove.

“Now, don’t just steam roll him, either. You need to actually talk, both of you. It’s important.” He advised. Stiles nodded a bit, staring out the window. It was nice to see something that wasn’t the inside of his house.

Derek had worked on the outside of the house since he’d been there last. There were honest to god flower beds, filled with different colors. The small porch had a swing attached to it now, and a rocking chair.

“Fancy.” Stiles nodded a bit and then pulled himself out of the car using his dad’s arms.

“It’s a step up.” His dad agreed and looked so damn proud. It made something shrivel up inside Stiles’ chest.

“Definitely. No giant holes in the wall here.” He waddled his way into the house clinging to his dad’s arm still. He didn’t feel at all comfortable about walking long distances with his center of gravity so well and truly fucked.

“Quick, before the new neighbors start being nosy.” His dad rushed a little bit and then got Stiles in the house. He sighed a little bit of relief as soon as the door was shut. Cora saw him and immediately turned around, heading back up the stairs.

“Warm welcome, great.” He sighed a bit and then went for the couch.

“It’s alright, son.” His dad squeezed his shoulder, walking with him to the couch. “I’ll go find Derek and send him your way.”

“Derek’s already here.” Derek replied from down the hallway, coming in while wiping paint off his hands. He was in a black wife beater, stained with pale mint green splotches, and a pair of jeans. He moved over to sit at a chair across from Stiles.

“Working on the nursery?” his dad asked. Derek nodded at him and gave a half smile.

“Alright, I’m going to go check it out myself! Maybe I can help a bit, if you don’t mind an old man getting his hands dirty.”

“You’re not old.” Stiles grumbled a bit, snagging a couch pillow and toying with the corners.

“I don’t mind at all,” Derek replied, and then watched until his dad disappeared around the corner before he scrubbed a hand across his beard.

“I...I’m sorry,” Stiles burst out after a moment of really uncomfortable silence. Derek looked up at him, eyes wide.

“That’s isn’t what I---I didn’t tell your dad to make you apologize.”

“He didn’t tell me to either. He just said we gotta talk it out.” Stiles immediately replied, shaking his head.

“You don’t have to be sorry that you feel the way you feel.” Derek bent, resting his elbows on his knees.

“I know that. I just... I didn’t mean to make you feel like I blamed you. You’re in this boat with me. Also didn’t want to make you think that you’re a monster because you’re not, absolutely not.” Stiles tugged at his own fingers.

“I’m sorry too. You shouldn’t have had this impression that I was only there for the baby.”

“I mean, I know that. It’s just--- I mean you’re--and I’m--” Stiles deflected, waving a hand around.

“I don’t know why you have this idea that I don’t care about you.” Derek frowned hard, brows lowering together in a sharp line over his eyes and lips tight.

“You act like you can barely stand me half the time.”

“You caught me. I hang out with all the people I can’t stand. I’m having a tea party with the Calaveras next weekend.” he deadpanned, dry as a bone. “I also haven’t acted like that in a long time.”

“I--but--I mean I guess not. Ugh. Why do you have to make sense? That’s pretty unfair.” Stiles made a face at him. Derek met his look and raised his eyebrows. “It’s just... It’s like everything is about the baby, all the time. Everyone asks me about it all the time. I am pretty constantly uncomfortable. Everyone seems excited or something. I just... I wish it made me happier.”

“It’s understandable that it doesn’t.” Derek shook his head. “You shouldn’t have to be happy when you’re not. I did talk to Cora about that.”

“I’m a little jealous, honestly. I do wish it made me happy. I wish I wasn’t... like this.”

“It’s okay, Stiles.” Derek moved over to sit by him, nudging their knees together.

“Wanna know something stupid?” Stiles muttered. “I thought maybe I’d see the stuff in the ultrasound and have some hallmark moment and just fall in love with it. Like magic or some shit.” He chuckled self-deprecatingly, shaking his head.

“I don’t think that’s how it works.” Derek replied, surprisingly gentle.

“Clearly not, since I still worry about it being Cthulhu.” Stiles shrugged helplessly. “Also, jokes are my coping method.”

“I know they are, Stiles.” Derek rolled his eyes a bit. “Cora might not, but I do.” He knocked their shoulders together a little bit. Stiles gave him a tentative smile and then silence reigned for a moment.

“ You know, you should name it Ripley.” Stiles replied. Then he waited.

“Ri--From Alien?” Derek gasped out, exasperated, but his voice shook like he was trying not to laugh. Stiles chuckled helplessly and nodded. Derek just sighed again and dropped his face into his hands.

** * ** * **

Stiles had this whole conspiracy figured out. Pregnancy was obviously a punishment set up by Satan to torment people willing to procreate. Stiles was so miserable that he was about a day or two away from carving himself like a christmas ham to get the baby out of him. He was swollen and miserable and the puking was back. He had done his time! According to Lydia and her research, it was less common for people to get the nausea again late in pregnancy so he had just won the fricking pregnancy lottery.

He couldn’t decide being a woman and doing this for the whole nine months would be better or worse. It was still absolutely terrifying and weird to watch his body change. It felt like he could just sit and watch his belly grow like a timelapse video. Scott swore up and down he thought he could see it too. Stiles could barely walk so he wasn’t allowed to be home alone for more than thirty minutes at a time. His dad, Derek, and the pack had taken to making a schedule around school, work and doctor’s appointments, so he found himself at Deaton’s with Lydia.

Deaton kept looking increasingly worried. It was playing hell on Stiles’ nerves.

“Deep breath.” Deaton instructed. Melissa was there as well for her human nurse knowledge. Stiles took one as deep as he could and wheezed it out. Stiles was looking a little...peaky, around the baby belly.

“I’m wearing a corset made of belly.” He grouched.

“Yes, you are.” Deaton frowned a bit, listening to his heart. “It looks like you’re probably about seven months. According to measurements. We’re probably going to need to take the baby early if this continues. ”

“That’s super comforting. What are we going to do for a NICU?” Stiles frowned.

“I’m working on it.” Melissa nodded, rubbing his back reassuringly.

“Could we pretend it was Cora’s?” Lydia pursed her lips.

“Not unless she can give birth to the baby in the hospital.” Melissa countered. Lydia shrugged and nodded as if that was expected.

“You need to have someone with you all the time, just in case the baby decides to come out before we get a plan in place.” Deaton advised. Stiles nodded.

“Good bye to my last bit of privacy. Gotcha.” Stiles saluted and hefted himself off the table. Lydia moved to steady him.

“I got you for this afternoon. Maybe we can set up a schedule with the pack.” She offered as she headed back out for the car.

The next several days were spent doing just that, rotating out friends who could take days off school. Lydia made him paint her toenails. And then painted his a lurid shade of pink. She smirked the whole time she did it and Stiles could barely see his toes now, so he honestly didn’t mind. She trimmed the nails and filed them too. His nails looked fake when she was done, too perfect. He kept propping them up and wiggling them, which made her laugh so hard she actually snorted.

Scott came over and made an honest to god fort around the couch like they did when they were kids and they played old n64 mario kart and pokemon snap until they fell asleep against each other.

Kira’s turn came up and they were marathoning the Lord of the Rings. She snuggled with him and rubbed his stomach when he started feeling wheezy again. She was also great at popcorn refills and surprisingly adept at getting him off the couch when he had to waddle his miserable self to the bathroom. She was starting to become his new favorite.

He was in the middle of washing his hands when the lights started flickering.

“Kira, are you having feels about Smeagol again?” he called out. The lights flickered a few times before going black, plunging the house into darkness. He groped for his cellphone, clicking on the flashlight to see so he could get out of the bathroom. There was a loud thud in the living room followed by Kira squealing. He heaved a sigh.

“We talked about not walking when it was dark, Kira! Coffee tables become your natural enemies!” He called out at her. He waddled carefully. She didn’t call out any reply back and he felt his heart sink. “Kira?”

That’s when the clicking started, reverberating off the walls and directly down his spine. Stiles immediately made a run for it, as much as he could, rushing for the front door propping himself along the wall with one hand so he wouldn’t fall. He screamed as he was caught around the waist, hand on the doorknob. He managed to get the door open just in time to see Derek and his dad stepping out of the cruiser with lunch.

“Derek!” he screamed, struggling against the hold, clawing with his fingernails to try and get free. The last thing he saw as the syringe sunk into his neck was the stricken look on Derek’s face as his head snapped up.

As he came to, Stiles felt something rough under his bare shoulders. That was the first sensation. There was a moment where his brain felt reassured. He was in the forest, the same setup as his nightmare. *Oh, the Scott dream again*, he thought and opened his eyes.

The second sensation was total agony. He nearly blacked out again, in too much pain to even scream. He felt his legs squirm and roil against the rough surface he was on. Stiles rolled his head to the side, digging his nails down and sucked in a hard breath when he met the pale, dead face of Theo. It was pretty much the only part of him that was recognizable from the mess of red that made up his torso. His eyes were glazed over and a pale, unseeing blue, staring straight at him.

Stiles looked away immediately and struggled to breathe again. He looked down at his body to assess the damage and did a double blink at his shirtless, flat stomach. No bump. His stomach was almost completely flat again. Blood was steadily pumping out of a thin, wide cut right above his pubic hair, puddling around him.

He heard the shallow, weak cry of an infant and looked the other way to see the Doctors gathered in a tight group. Things went fuzzy on the edges and he clawed the bark under him again to try and ground himself. He couldn’t lose it again. He tried to take several deep breaths to make his lungs work properly again. Blood steadily pooled around him and made it hard to focus on the things around him. Stiles clenched his jaw and grappled with all his power to make his brain work, turning to focus. He needed to know what was happening, what he could do, how he was going to get out of this.

The Doctors were looking a little worse for wear when he managed to turn his head to look at them, their arms spindly and withered, their coats too big on their frames. They were holding the tiniest baby Stiles had ever seen. It was barely pink, arms and legs miniscule and head covered in downy black hair.

The realization kicked in immediately that that was his infant. That was his. They took the baby from him early. He immediately looked around for a weapon, for another person, for anything to possibly fight back. He didn’t know how he could, but he was going to try. He wasn’t going to give up. His shirts were nearby and he grabbed his t-shirt first, pressing it hard against his stomach even though it made him scream in white hot anguish.

“La Bete?” One asked.

“No. Failure.” Another answered, staring down at the baby. Stiles’ grappling hands found a glob of sap. His mind flashed quickly to the thoughts of super glue clinging wounds together. He panted raggedly as he moved, bringing the dry edge of his t-shirt to his mouth. He tore into it with his teeth and then ripped a strip with shaking hands, and then ran it into the sap. He pinched the wound together, letting out another harsh roar of pain. It stayed, holding that part of the wound shut. He puffed out quick, sharp breaths as he tore more strips and glued

them on with sap until he couldn't see the wound anymore. He managed, slowly and agonizingly, to sit up and tie his flannel shirt sleeves around the makeshift bandages, hoping the pressure would make sure his intestines didn't fall out.

The Doctors were still inspecting the infant, one of them pulling out another syringe. Stiles managed to make it to his feet with a roar, using his body's own falling momentum to swing a punch at one of the Doctors. He almost fell over with shock when it landed and the Doctor hit the ground, coat sinking in as the body inside it disintegrated.

He turned to the other two, ready to fight, but the one holding the baby just held it out at him. It was still and curled up, so small it almost fit in one of the Doctor's metal gloves.

"We have no use for it. It is inconsequential." The Doctor said as if it was a consolation prize. Stiles shakily took the baby in his bloody hands, clutching it close to his chest. He stepped away quickly, unable to turn his back to the remaining Doctors, and set off in the direction he thought that they took the last time they were at the Nemeton. He dug in his pockets, looking for his phone in vain. He clutched one arm around his stomach to try and hold the shirt into place. He felt himself getting weaker. The baby was quiet against his chest and he wasn't even sure it was still alive. The thought made him feel like he was going to be sick.

He heard a branch crack and jerked his head up in the direction of the sound. Derek crashed between the trees, face in a stern frown that spasmed into shock as he recognized him.

"Stiles!" He gasped and rushed forward, opening his arms to support Stiles. He sobbed in misery as he sagged into his arms.

"Baby, there's the baby, someone has to--" He gasped and clutched tighter at his stomach. He felt like his organs were going to fall out and more blood seeped between his fingers through his shirt.

Derek immediately scooped him up bridal style, one strong arm under his legs and the other clutched Stiles' shoulders against his chest. "Sheriff!" He called, running and trying his best not to jostle Stiles' too much.

Stiles shifted the baby on his chest, moving his arm away from the flannel to make sure it was secure. He looked at the tiny human in his arms, covered in smudges of blood and so very, very tiny. No tentacles after all.

He couldn't tell if it was even still alive, curled so small and still in his arms. The idea of it hurt something deep in his chest. Derek was running, breath coming panicked and hard around Stiles.

His own arms and legs started to feel numb and weak. He distantly heard his dad shouting but he kept looking at this tiny, strange baby on his chest. The span of his palm covered almost the entire body and he shifted a little, trying to see if he could feel a pulse or a breath or anything at all. The baby hadn't made a sound since that one weak, hiccuping cry.

He was bundled into a car quickly and the sirens came on, the car moving quickly. He looked up, reaching for Derek again. "I'm sorry. I think it's-- I tried to..." He muttered a bit.

“Stay with me, Stiles.” Derek demanded, surprising Stiles as he laced their fingers together and held tight. Stiles squeezed back before his tenuous grip on consciousness failed him moments later and everything went black.

** * ** * **

The sterile smell of the hospital was the first thing that Stiles deciphered when he woke up. His stomach was a dull pressure wrapped in the cotton wool of pain killers. He shifted a hand and his fingertips brushed into hair.

“Dad?” he muttered and then managed to unglue his eyelids long enough to see that it was actually Lydia.

“Hmm?” She muttered sleepily and then jerked upright, eyes going wide as soon as she saw Stiles’ face. “He’s up!” she jumped up and grabbed his hand. “You’re up!”

“Lyds?” He muttered a bit, mouth feeling dry and cracked. His tongue was made out of sand. His cheeks were sticky with lack of moisture. His top lip felt funny, almost like he had bitten it.

“Oh my god! I can’t believe it!” She leaned over to gently hug him, and then sniffled in his ear. “Sap? Really?” she hiccuped a laugh.

“Hey, it worked.” he coughed out a chuckle of his own. “I turned one of them into dust. They said it was a failure, whatever they wanted to do didn’t work with the... the b...” his voice faded off into a choked crackle.

“He’s ok.” Derek’s voice made Stiles’ startle a bit. He looked up and saw him in a faded grey henley with circles under his eyes like he hadn’t slept in a while. Lydia moved to sit back, wiping at her face. It took a moment for Derek’s words to sink in and Stiles sagged in relief and rubbed at his own suddenly damp eyes.

Derek stepped closer and leaned in, pressing his warm body against Stiles’ own as he hugged him, smelling of his normal detergent and deodorant mixed with something like baby powder. Stiles reflexively grabbed him, fingers digging into the hard planes of his shoulders.

The moment was interrupted by the flood of the rest of the pack, blatantly ignoring Melissa’s shouts of “One at a time!”

Malia and Liam jostled against the sides of the bed like overactive puppies to yammer at him, too quickly for him to follow along. His dad pushed through to tug him into a gentle hug as soon as Derek stepped back, and he was quickly replaced by Scott. Kira came next, a large bruise across her forehead.

“I’m glad you’re ok.” He murmured into her hair as she took her turn to hug him. “I was worried.”

“We’re even then, because I was super worried about you too. I felt like it was my fault.” She admitted and then smoothed his hair a bit. “I knew I shouldn’t have let you go potty by yourself.”

A few of them laughed, if a bit wetly and followed by sniffles, and Derek hovered for a moment before Melissa peeked her head in and gestured at him. Stiles watched in confusion as everyone looked a bit conspiratorial. Stiles took advantage of their distraction to tug his hospital shirt aside look at his stomach nervously. He was pleasantly surprised by the small size of the bandage.

“It’s actually not bad, kiddo.” His dad reassured him, rubbing a hand across Stiles shoulders. “It was apparently surgically precise. They were actually pretty impressed with your sap and t-shirt stitches idea. It saved you from bleeding out. Where did you even find that much sap?”

“I was on the Nemeton. It was just... there. I don’t even know if it’s normal for stumps to have sap.” He shrugged a bit, the memories an odd, far away sharpness in his head. Derek returned a moment later with a wheel chair.

“We’re going to smuggle you into the NICU. You’re not supposed to be up and about yet but it’s shift change.” Melissa grinned as she moved quickly. She put the sides down on his bed and helped him get quickly into the wheelchair without jostling his stomach.

“How did we explain the baby?”

“We said they kidnapped it from Derek’s baby mama. We’re saying the mother is one of the girls who got turned into a chimera. We’re pretty sure they’re gone after what happened with Theo. There were several uh... pieces found.” Scott winced a bit, shaking his head.

“You were out in the woods following a lead that you heard over the police radio at home.” His dad informed him. “You found them taking the baby from the girl and they tried to gut you like Theo to get rid of you.” Stiles nodded a bit as he listened.

“Any other details and it just happened so fast. You aren’t sure. You blacked out from pain.” Derek added from behind the wheelchair where he started wheeling Stiles.

“Gotcha.” Stiles agreed and tried not to fidget too much.

“Alright, before we go in. It’s going to look pretty scary. The baby was about 28 weeks in gestation, according to weight. He’s two pounds and five ounces.” Melissa instructed, reassuringly calm. “He’s got some respiratory issues. Pretty much all the babies born at this time do. He managed to breathe while you were both brought to the hospital but it wasn’t great.”

“Brain damage?” Stiles asked, gulping around a lump in his throat.

“Can’t tell yet.” Melissa shook her head. “He did get oxygen, his sats were low but he never turned blue or grey. It’s a good sign! But he’s getting oxygen now so his little lungs don’t have to fight so hard. He hasn’t needed a respirator yet. That might change.”

“Ok.” Stiles nodded, immediately feeling overwhelmed. Derek put a warm hand on his shoulder as they reached the door.

“I know it’s a lot.” Melissa’s face scrunched in sympathy. “It really is better if you hear it first. The tubes and the isolette can be overwhelming. He has a heart monitor on but it looks strong so far. He’s got an IV and a feeding line. He’s had one blood transfusion already, but overall, he’s doing well.” She reassured him and patted at his hand. He felt terrified as they wheeled him back through isolettes of babies, so small they didn’t even look real. He thought the room should be quiet but instead it was a lot of endless beeping noises.

Stiles felt his heart jump into his throat as they stopped outside of one. He looked at the miniscule features and was unsure how to feel. The tubes and monitors really were overwhelming and he was glad Melissa had warned him.

He’d hated this little being while he was pregnant, was terrified of it and the changes of his body. He’d been so sure that it was going to be a monster that he’d never really been able to emotionally prepare for it to be a baby.

He’d also never really understood the fuss about newborns before. He’d never seen one in person, only in pictures or on movies. They always looked red faced and angry, like miniature old men and seemed so much bigger than the baby laying in front of him in the isolette. Stiles chest felt like someone inflated a balloon inside of him, too full to be held in the cage of his ribs. He wanted immediately to touch him, maybe hold him, listen to him breathe, and he honestly didn’.

The hair tufting out from the baby’s tiny blue hat--and it was very tiny, the whole baby was so very tiny---was inky dark black. His nose already had a tiny uptilt and his mouth was set in a very Derek pout with a tiny little cleft chin. His arms and legs looked skinny and long, spindly, his fingers capped with nails the size of a sesame seed. His skin looked almost downy, covered in a fine, pale hair, and his eyes were closed. He was only wearing a diaper that looked way too big and the tiny blue hat.

“What did you end up naming him?” Stiles asked, unable to stop staring at the baby long enough to look at Derek.

“Ripley Noah.” Derek replied.

“You--really? With the Ripley?” Stiles spluttered into a laugh, managing to stare at Derek for the moment.

“It was the only thing you suggested.” Derek grinned, pulling up a chair to sit nearby. “Once you said it, it stuck in my head. I didn’t tell your dad about the middle name yet.”

“Good, he’s gonna cry and I wanna see it.” Stiles replied, eyes drifting back to Ripley.

“Here, you can put your hand in.” Derek reached around him, opening a little window on the isolette. Stiles looked at him, gnawing his bottom lip. “It’s ok. He’s stronger than he looks.”

“He doesn’t even look real.” Stiles muttered but stuck his hand in anyway, brushing one fingertip over the slope of Ripley’s nose. “Holy crap, he’s so soft.” Stiles gasped.

“He is. Smells good too, even around the hospital smell.” Derek agreed, resting a hand on Stiles’ shoulder.

Stiles moved to touch one of Ripley’s teeny, tiny fingers. He felt rush of relief flooding through his body the second one miniscule hand gripped the tip of his finger with a surprisingly strong grip.

“Holy crap.” He muttered and his voice cracked a little. Derek made a noise of agreement. Stiles eyes filled with tears and he rubbed his thumb over where Ripley was clutching his finger. “I love him.”

“I know.” Derek murmured, patting Stiles gently.

** * **

The next several days were a blur of pain medicine and getting used to his old center of gravity again. He had a pretty bad cough for a while as his lungs got used to being lungs again which was extra fun when his abs were literally sliced open at the bottom. He pretty consistently felt like his stomach was going to fall out of his body. It didn’t stop him from trying to jailbreak from his room every time he was alone to go see Ripley in the NICU.

The baby was doing well but still had to be in the NICU while his body learned to regulate it’s temperature and he developed muscles to eat and breathe on his own. They wouldn’t let him go home until he could.

“Again, Stiles?” Liam snapped as he caught up to where Stiles had limped down the hallway.

“Just a little peek, just super quick, like a minute.” He protested as Liam dragged him back to bed.

“You’re gonna pull your stitches out and then Derek’s going to pull my guts out!” Liam huffed. Stiles sulked, getting comfortable against the pillow.

“I just wanna see him.”

“I thought you didn’t even want the baby?” Liam looked confused. “I figured we’d be watching movies or something, not me chasing you down a hallway.”

“I thought I didn’t either but then he was born and just... I dunno man. He’s got my nose! And these tiny little fingers! And his feet. Oh man.” Stiles flailed his arms a bit.

“I’ve heard about the feet, yeah.” Liam sighed. “I mean. I guess it’s good, right? Cuz the pregnant thing was awful?”

“It was and I would never ever go through that again, but I did, and it made a person. Like a little bitty one. With my nose, Liam.” Stiles poked the tip of his own nose in demonstration.

“Stay in the damn bed, you’ll get to see his nose all the time for like. Forever.” Liam rolled his eyes.

Liam was the worst.

*** * ***

The hospital didn’t have a special rate for trauma, so as soon as Stiles finally stopped popping stitches and could do all his basic daily functions, they gave him the boot.

Getting to leave the hospital was bittersweet, because he really did hate it, but Ripley was not ready to go home yet. The rapid growth from the pregnancy was not happening outside the womb. Stiles had called Deaton and asked, but mostly got a response of “Interesting...” and the sound of heavy books being moved as Deaton went to research more.

Stiles took his first real shower post baby and stared down at his stomach. He was surprised that it wasn’t as bad as he thought it would be. It wasn’t great, but his incision was horizontal and pretty low, below his belly button. He still felt like his organs might fall out, and he had a little pooch of fat and loose skin, but it didn’t just hang off his body like a weird skirt made of himself.

Stiles’ mind was a scary place to have to live.

Post shower, he flopped on his bed, because bathing was exhausting. He decided to air dry because toweling was hard work. He also had a medical girdle to wear since he had a propensity to make his stitches angry. Apparently something about lack of traditional response to pain stimuli. His dad said it was just because Stiles was too stubborn. Stiles couldn’t help but agree.

Derek poked his head in, eyes covered. “You decent?”

“I’m never decent, let’s get that out of the way. My nudity is wrapped in a huge fluffy towel though.” Stiles shot back. Derek snorted a bit and came in, sitting in Stiles’ computer chair.

“How’re you feeling?” He asked. Stiles lolled his head, unwilling to sit up.

“I have all the properties of cooked pasta right now, honestly. Showering is exhausting.” Stiles snorted a bit. “Did you see Ripley?”

“I did. I got pictures for you.” Derek leaned forward to give Stiles the phone. “He made a couple sounds today. I tried to get a video of them but he would stop as soon as the camera was on.” Stiles scrolled through the pictures and a couple of the little videos of Ripley in the isolette.

“Any eyeballs today?” Stiles stared at the pictures for a long time, feeling an anxious, gnawing ache in the base of his stomach.

“Nope, he doesn’t want to pop them open yet. The nurse assured me they are there. She puts some antibiotic ointments in them and lifts the lid herself.”

“That’s gotta be a comfortable sensation.” Stiles snorted and handed Derek’s phone back to him. “I wanna see him.”

“I’ll take you as soon as I can.” Derek promised. “Maybe we’ll actually get to hold him soon.”

“I held him already, you get first dibs.”

“Your traumatized clinging in a forest is not the same thing, but I’ll take it.” Derek huffed a quiet laugh. “Are you going to spend the rest of your life in a towel?”

“I might, it’s pretty comfortable.” Stiles laughed. “I might put on clothes if you bring them to me.”

“So needy.” Derek shot back and then walked over to Stiles’ dresser. He tossed a soft shirt at him and followed it with a pair of sweatpants that were pre-Ripley. Stiles managed to stand and tugged them on under the towel, trying to keep his tummy covered. Derek was unhelpful, staring at him.

“Creeper.” Stiles muttered and managed to catch Derek off guard when he threw the towel at his face.

“Stiles,” Derek huffed out in an exasperated sigh as he peeled the wet terry cloth off his face. Stiles grinned at him, unapologetic and Derek softened into fond, leaning forward into his space a little. Stiles heart thundered in his ears, his throat suddenly dry. He felt suddenly unsure if he was imagining this or not.

“Hey---” His dad’s voice snapped them out of it. Derek pulled back quickly, jerking his head to look at Stiles dad. He paused, looking at them in a calculating manner.

“Hi dad. Whatcha need?”

“I brought food, come eat.”

**** ** ****

For someone who hated hospitals, Stiles was spending way too much time in one. He had practically moved into the NICU. Derek was on paternity leave from work and picked Stiles up on the way to the hospital every morning.

The nurses had been confused the first couple days as to why Stiles was taking on the role of second parent but seemed to just accept it. Stiles figured ignoring it would be the easiest way for them to make up their own story.

It felt like it had been forever and no time at all in a weird, contradictory way. Ripley had already had a weight fluctuation, losing weight the first few days of life and then slowly gaining it back over the next week. He was still growing, sleeping most of the time, snuffling quietly.

Stiles had never understood the appeal of watching a baby sleep, but he could watch this particular baby sleep all day. He did, some days, broken only by going to get food or bathroom breaks. Liam and Mason came a couple times, Stiles dad and Cora came every day for dinner and alternated switching out with them for baby time. Lydia brought them breakfast before school every day along with coffee that wasn't sludge. Scott and Kira visited when they could, and Parrish sent along a card.

"Hi, baby." Stiles muttered and rubbed a fingertip down Ripley's soft skin. He felt awkward sometimes and unsure of how to treat him or what to do with him. What did babies even like? He startled a bit when Ripley let out a soft coo, curling and uncurling his toes and clenching his tiny fists.

"He cooed!" He gasped and patted at Derek with his other hand.

"I heard." Derek smiled. "It's a good sound."

"He's got your chin." He poked at it gently and watched as Ripley made a half hearted suckling motion on nothing. He said that probably three times a day but Derek didn't seem to get tired of it.

Stiles just sat there with his hand resting on Ripley's chest, feeling him breathe and watching his tiny movements. A nurse came up a little while later, smiling gently. "Hey. We're going to try bottle feeding today! You can hold him while you feed him." She opened the isolette and carefully disconnected cords, and then swaddled Ripley in a hospital blanket before carefully picking him up and passing him over to Derek.

Derek's face was surprisingly vulnerable, his forehead crinkled over his raised eyebrows and his pale eyes suspiciously shiny. Derek's mouth dropped open, showing a bit of his bunny teeth and he gasped a bit. Ripley looked ridiculously tiny against the bulk of Derek's arms.

The nurse gave Derek a moment before handing over the bottle, instructing him on how to hold it properly.

"I used to do this with Cora, but that was so long ago..." Derek muttered, staring at Ripley without even blinking. It took a couple minutes but Ripley finally latched and figured out how to get the food out of the bottle, making tiny little grunting noises as he ate. Derek looked up and smiled at Stiles. His heart felt like it was going to explode. God, he was so in love with him.

Oh God. He was in love with Derek.

Stiles tried very hard not to react at all. He needed time to think about this rationally before he did something stupid, like kiss Derek's face. He took a slow, deep breath, and wrestled himself back under control before he looked back up at Derek. He made the eyebrows of confusion at Stiles. Stiles shrugged helplessly and smiled back at him before staring at Ripley again.

It was a pull like gravity, pulling him back and making him orbit around this tiny life they'd managed to create. He stroked his thumb over Ripley's tiny knuckles while Derek fed him and smiled when his thumb was grabbed.

** * **

When Ripley was finally allowed to go home, three weeks after being born, Stiles was honestly a mess. He was hovering around Cora and Derek's new house and generally annoying the shit out of Cora with his pacing. It was made even more uncomfortable by the fact that while she had been to the hospital a lot, they hadn't actually spent any time together since their last argument.

"Stiles, we just bought this place. If you put a hole in the hardwood with your feet, I will rip your throat out."

"You know, Derek threatened me with that a few years back!" He gestured towards his own unharmed throat. She rolled her eyes so hard he thought he heard them squeak in her sockets.

"Pacing won't make them get home any faster."

"I'm aware of that." He replied, still pacing. "Can't help it. He's... gah. I can't believe it."

"Yeah, me either." Cora shook her head. Her expression was a bit mocking and Stiles paused his pacing.

"What's that face for?"

"Just amazed that you hated the baby the whole pregnancy and now you decided you wanted to be a part of his life." She scoffed a bit. Stiles blinked at her, feeling perversely like he might cry or throw up from how gut wrenching that was.

"Yeah. I remember, thanks. You know, you're awfully judgemental for someone who's never been pregnant before. And don't think I forgot that you fucking hated Derek and told him you were disappointed in him. But now you want to be part of his life too." He snapped. Cora opened her mouth to retort but Stiles shook his head, cutting her off.

"I got tortured, Cora. Yeah, I was strapped to a bed and had people shoving needles into me. I had terrible nightmares for the entire pregnancy that it wasn't a baby because it wasn't a person who put that in me. Like, do you even process that I don't have a uterus? I was literally not made to carry a baby. It hurt, like, not as bad as getting gutted open in the woods, but still pretty damn uncomfortable!" Her face morphed pretty quickly into shame and she

opened her mouth again. “No, I’m not done, ok. You barely tolerated me for most of this pregnancy and you’ve been seeing me in the NICU all the time, but you just don’t fucking register it!”

“I know, Stiles. I was there for it. I just--”

“You just don’t, ok, because you have no idea! I have a baby. A real baby! It’s fucking trippy. I’m a dude. A virgin dude! This could only be trippier if he’d been born on christmas! I have a baby with Derek.” It never stopped being surprising. “I’ve never even kissed Derek and we have a CHILD! Ripley is so fucking tiny and he has my NOSE. He needs me!” His breath whooshed out of his chest and took his anger with him. “I feel horrible, ok. I couldn’t even recognize him as mine when he was first born and then he grabbed my finger and just... relief and I love him and I am drowning in guilt and anxiety and you’re really not helping.”

“Stiles...I..” Cora got up and came near him. He backed up a bit, unsure, and she looked even more distressed before she quickly came in and hugged him. ‘You’re right. I’ve been terrible to you. I’m really sorry.’ He wasn’t sure how he was supposed to feel about that at all, standing with his arms limp at his sides as she hugged him. “I don’t know what I thought, honestly. Why would you pretend to hate the baby and then pretend to love it? It sounds so stupid now.”

“That’s cuz it is. God, you Hales and your constipated emotions.” Stiles sniffled a bit, caving and hugging her back.

“God, you Stilinskis and talking about things. ” She joked and pulled back, trying to sneakily wipe her eyes.

Their was disrupted by the sounds of his dad and Derek arriving, Derek holding the car seat with Ripley snuggled inside it. Stiles didn’t even last long enough for Derek to put the car seat down before he was moving and taking it from him, freeing Ripley and oh so carefully sliding his fingers under his tiny head to support him and pull him up against his chest. Ripley cooled immediately and fisted his tiny hands against Stiles’ plaid shirt.

“Look how big you are, man, growing like crazy!” he muttered to the baby. He was already over 5 pounds, cheeks chubbing up nicely even though he was still so ridiculously tiny. His dad chuckled a bit, moving over to stand by him and toy with Ripley’s tiny feet.

“The rest of the pack is coming for dinner tonight.” Derek put the car seat in an unobtrusive corner.

“Cool.” Stiles smiled at him. “Wanna go show Ripley the tour while he’s awake?” He offered, turning so Derek could see his bitty eyes open. They were still baby blue but he had a feeling they were going to be more hazel.

Derek smiled again and it was a punch to the gut how fucking beautiful he was when he was happy. His eyes crinkled up, his cheeks dimpled in, his hair was soft over his forehead, and Stiles was really grateful to have an arm full of Ripley because that meant he couldn’t kiss that smile. His heart felt like it was going to beat out of his chest when Derek leaned in and pressed a kiss to Ripley’s cheek.

“Sure, sounds good.” Derek said finally, pressing a large, warm palm to the small of Stiles’ back as they walked the baby around the house. Ripley was as suitably unimpressed as a cat with a new toy who’d rather play with the box. Stiles shifted a bit, arms feeling the strain after a while.

“Want to take him? Five pounds gets surprisingly heavy after awhile.” He smiled a bit. Derek nodded and slid his hands against Stiles’ chest to cradle Ripley close. He still looked impossibly small against Derek’s arms. If Stiles actually possessed ovaries, they’d be screaming right now. He lead the way into the nursery, taking the time to look around for the first time. The walls were a pale green with white trim, the crib white with little mobile above it that had birds. There was a rocking chair in one corner, and a dresser changing table combo against the other wall. The hardwood floor was covered in a rug that looked like leaves.

“It’s a nice room.” Stiles smiled at him, picking up a stuffed animal to show Ripley. He yawned at it, which made them both chuckle.

When they made it back out to the living room, Lydia arrived, bringing a bag full of preemie onesies and hats and the tiniest socks to ever exist.

“I brought presents! Can I hold the baby? I have to see what all the fuss is about.” She quickly moved to sit primly in the armchair and held her arms out. Stiles took the bag and sat on the couch to rifle through it all as Derek leaned over and carefully handed her Ripley.

Scott and Kira arrived a moment later, Malia, Liam, and Mason hot on their heels. Malia and Liam both immediately started play fighting with Cora over the remaining seats on the couch until Derek growled at them and they settled down to just elbowing each other and laughing. Lydia inspected the baby a bit while Stiles’ sat down on the couch near her.

“He is indeed a tiny human.” She nodded and smiled at them both. Derek chuckled a bit and then sat down on the couch next to Stiles. Cora got knocked into him by Malia but no one even apologized. In fact, they looked rather pleased with themselves when Derek didn’t move away again.

Stiles settled in to where he was squished against the arm and looked up to find Lydia entranced, holding one of Ripley’s tiny hands around her finger and rubbing it with the pad of her thumb. Stiles grinned knowingly at her as she gave him a little shrug and dimpled in return.

Stiles looked around and couldn’t really feel bad about how things were going.

** * ** * **

Watching Derek with Ripley was basically a religious experience. He laughed, he kissed tiny hands and feet when they waved, and he even sang in a soft, slightly raspy voice. He changed Ripley while Stiles watched and kissed all over his tummy.

Ripley made cooing sounds now and still cried very quietly. He was generally about as happy of a baby as Stiles thought was possible. He fussed, he puked, he screamed until his face was purple sometimes, but he was always down for cuddles. It was Stiles' favorite thing to do, so he wasn't complaining.

Ripley's eyes were definitely turning hazel and they were shaped like Stiles' own. He had the cutest little cheeks, dimpled chin, upturned nose. It killed Stiles' heart every time.

"Oh man. My heart is literally going to explode out of my chest one of these days." Stiles moaned, clutching the offending organ as it thumped over how cute Ripley was. Derek just snorted at him, shaking his head as he fastened all the little snaps on Ripley's footie pajamas.

Stiles took Ripley when he was dressed again and laid back on Derek's couch, cuddling him close and rubbing up and down his little back. Derek set about getting things cleaned up and Stiles' eyelids grew slowly heavier, weighed down by the feeling of being safe and warm baby on his chest. It was the most powerful sleep aid in the world. Between a blink and the next, he was out.

When he woke up it was dark and Ripley was nudging at his chest in a way that meant it was bottle time. Stiles groggily shifted and stood, cradling the baby with a palm on his bottom to rest against his chest as he went and got a bottle ready. Derek came into the kitchen moments later, hair sleep mussed and face sleep soft. Something in Stiles' chest clenched and he smiled at him.

"Dad go home?"

"Yeah, didn't want to wake you." He mumbled a bit, getting a burp cloth ready and draping it over Stiles' shoulder under Ripley's cheek.

"Thanks. It was a good sleep. Ripley's better than nyquil." He chuckled a bit and then tested the bottle against his wrist before shifting to let Ripley have it. Derek crowded up against his back, warm and soft in his henley and sweats. Stiles froze for a second, heart pounding, before he leaned back against him as Derek hooked his chin over Stiles' shoulder and reached an arm around to stroke the wrinkled bottom of Ripley's foot.

Stiles' heart thundered in his ears and he tried desperately to calm himself down. Super sniffer close to his pulse right now. He probably reeked of suppressed emotions. He was desperately trying to rationalize why Derek was all in his space. They were wolf buddies, right? It was just a pack thing. Cuddle for warmth? Maybe he just wanted to watch Ripley eat?

Derek didn't seem to notice, or didn't care, that Stiles heart was doing a samba and rested the crest of his cheek against the ball of Stiles' shoulder until Ripley was halfway done with the bottle and it was time for a burping. They shifted in sync, wordlessly orbiting each other's motions.

Stiles couldn't help laughing a bit when Ripley let out a surprisingly large belch. Derek shook his head slowly and stroked a hand down Stiles' back as he stepped back into his place,

holding them both close. Stiles couldn't possibly be reading this wrong, could he?

Ripley finished eating and went through another burp with only a minor spit up, all on the burp cloth. Stiles counted it as a win. Derek took the cloth and went to put it with the rest of the washing while Stiles checked his diaper. Still good there too, score!

He took Ripley over to his bassinet and swaddled him up, bending to kiss his nose and tuck his little hands and feet away.

"Sleep tight, little dude." He muttered and set the bassinet up to rock a little bit.

"His diaper alright?" Derek asked, startling Stiles a little by being back in the same room without making a sound. He blinked hard and pressed a hand to his skittering heart.

"Noises, dude, I about had a heart attack." He scolded. Derek looked completely unrepentant as he pressed his own warm palm to Stiles' chest.

"Sounds fine to me." He replied, voice low and quiet. His thumb stroked over Stiles' sternum and his own tenuous grip on self control was wavering in the face of Derek's everything.

"Can you please let me know if I'm crazy or not right now because I feel pretty crazy." Stiles babbled, feeling nervous and awkward. He didn't know what to do with his hands, grabbing awkwardly at Derek's elbows. Derek lingered for a second, searching Stiles' face before he leaned in and kissed him, a chaste brush of lips against his own. Stiles sucked in a sharp breath, stomach sparking low with surprise and pleasure just from a simple touch.

"Is this ok?" Derek asked with a soft smile and stroked his hands over the sides of Stiles' head, thumbs resting on his cheekbones. Stiles' knees felt like water.

"Kissing." Stiles blurted out, breathless and stupid with emotion.

"I thought we had a talk about me caring about you?" Derek replied. Stiles huffed a little.

"Caring can mean friend or romantic."

"I mean romantic." Derek replied right against Stiles' mouth before he kissed him again, lingering and teasing. Stiles opened his mouth to him, feeling almost embarrassed at the noise he made when Derek slid his tongue into his mouth before he stopped feeling anything but flushed and overwhelmed. Derek's beard was surprisingly soft and he slid a ticklish lick over the roof of Stiles' mouth as he pulled back, pressing their foreheads together.

Derek pressed another soft kiss to his mouth, just chaste again. Stiles made a pathetic keening sound, trying to follow his lips as they pulled back.

"Why?" He practically whined, stroking his hands up to Derek's shoulder blades and trying to tug him back into a kiss.

"I don't want to rush with you." Derek insisted and stepped back just enough that they had breathing room. He slid his hands down to hold Stiles' elbows until he let go of Derek's shoulders.

“Not rushing, this has not been rushing at all.” Stiles protested, leaning into Derek’s space again.

“We should still talk about it.” That... was a valid point. Stiles nodded a bit, gulping and stepping back. Derek led him gently over to the couch and sat down. Stiles sat on the coffee table facing him and fidgeted. Derek looked vulnerable, unsure, his brows pulled together in the center and little bunny teeth poking out between his lips.

“I’m not sure how we do this.” Stiles admitted, letting a nervous chuckle escape.

“I guess that makes both of us.” Derek replied, pulling his lips into his mouth for a moment.

“What do you want out of this?” Derek asked after a moment, stroking his beard nervously. Stiles gulped a bit, curling his toes up against the hardwood.

“I really have to go first?” Stiles winced, scrubbing the back of his neck. He stared at Derek who looked... honestly impossibly nervous and somehow that was reassuring. “I want everything.”

“Everything?” Derek asked, eyebrows pulling up in the middle.

“Yeah. I’m kinda stupid for you. Have been. There’s been terror about you smelling the feelings on me. For months.” Stiles admitted. Derek shot him an amused look and Stiles pointed a finger at him, feeling himself ramp up to full babble. “Hey, I know about the chemosignals and I have been radiating a lot of them. For months. Not to mention the heart rate.” Stiles flailed toward his chest. “I’m kinda stupid for you. I want to date you, and I want to be with you and Ripley and make bad dad jokes and watch you and my dad argue about sports every sunday. I’m long haul gone on you. I mean everything.” He burst out in a rush. He took a deep breath to keep going and was stopped short by Derek’s hands on his shoulders.

“Stiles. I love you, too.” Derek interrupted. Stiles froze and fell silent, eyes huge as he looked at Derek. “I want all of that, too.” He smiled and leaned in to kiss him again, stroking his fingers into Stiles hair. Stiles kissed him back, clutching at his shoulders and trying not to jump directly into his lap.

The moment was interrupted by Ripley starting to fuss and cry, loudly enough that Stiles heard it too. Derek pulled back and chuckled a bit as he stood up, heading for the nursery. Stiles trailed after him, brain still screaming *Derek loves me (!!!)* on repeat and totally useless.

The room was lit by a soft night light in the corner. Derek had just picked up their son and brought him up to rest Ripley’s head on his shoulder, large hand cradling the back of his head.

Stiles leaned against the doorframe and smiled as Derek turned and spotted him. He wasn’t sure what the Dread Doctor’s plans had been but right here, in this moment, he couldn’t say he was unhappy with how it all turned out.

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