

Untamed

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/4020778) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/4020778>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Teen Wolf (TV)
Relationship:	Derek Hale/Stiles Stilinski
Characters:	Stiles Stilinski , Derek Hale , Laura Hale , Cora Hale , Scott McCall , Talia Hale
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe , Alternate Universe - Harry Potter Setting , Harry Potter AU , Slytherin!Stiles , Magic!Stiles , gryffindor!derek
Language:	English
Collections:	Teen wolf RC20021997 , faei s , The Special Collection , Fics I finished reading in 2022 , TeenWolff , My Happy Place , Favorite , ☆☆ Favoritos ☆☆
Stats:	Published: 2015-05-27 Words: 28,282 Chapters: 1/1

Untamed

by [rosepetals42](#)

Summary

Of course, the transfer kid gets mentioned because transfers are rare, but the news isn't that exciting. In fact, according to Laura, no one even seems to know his first name. The only thing anyone has really figured out about him is that he's American. And that's not exactly hard because he obviously has an accent.

The only thing Derek really knows is that, despite other reports, he seems quiet enough, prefers to work alone, and has the most amazing shade of amber eyes that Derek has ever seen.

Not that he's looking. Obviously.

OR: A Harry Potter AU where Stiles is a Slytherin transfer student and Derek is the grumpy Gryffindor who falls in love with him.

There are also potions, elves, and falcons involved. Oh, and illegal use of magic. Obviously.

Notes

This was supposed to be a very sort HP Sterek AU. You can see how well that worked out.

Originally posted on tumblr*. Come say hello!

*Apparently this link isn't working. I tried to fix it, but just in case: on tumblr, I am petals42.
<http://petals42.tumblr.com/ficlist>

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Translation into Español available: [Untamed \[Traducción\]](#) by [Oh_Rosie \(orphan_account\)](#)
- Translation into Русский available: [Неукротимый](#) by [Black_Mamba](#)

It's the end of the Sorting Ceremony and Derek isn't paying attention.

In fairness to him, no one really pays attention to the last part of the Sorting Ceremony. At least, not fourth years. The second years remain excited because it's their first time being in charge of clapping loudly and the seventh years take every new member as some sort of personal victory and the people with siblings obviously stay invested but really... by the end of the alphabet, the vibe is just not the same.

Derek doesn't have anything to keep his attention. Cora had predictably joined him and Laura at the Gryffindor table a while ago and now he just wants to eat.

Still, he manages to keep his eyes pointing in the right direction, just to be polite and so when the last kid goes up (*Zelmann, Noah*), Derek claps along as he heads to the Hufflepuff table and then turns and-

"And we have one transfer student who will be joining the 4th years," Professor McGonagall announces before the chatter can start up in earnest. "Mr. Stilinski."

She doesn't offer any other information, even though transfer students are rare. Rare enough that a buzz of questions whips through the room as a boy stands up from the end of the Hufflepuff table and heads towards the stool. Derek isn't sitting close enough to really see much besides light skin and a mop of brown hair but McGonagall's face goes a bit pinched when the boy grabs the Sorting Hat almost roughly and plants it on his head.

"SLYTHERIN!" The Hat shouts the word before even finishing its downward trajectory. Stilinski rips it off, again none too gently, and heads over to the far side of the Great Hall.

He looks out of place, sitting with the eleven year old kids at the end of the table, but that's all the thought Derek really gives him. He's a Slytherin. He'll land on his feet.

Besides, one school song and then there will be food.

^^*^

Derek is not really part of the school's gossip chain. He's popular enough, being a from the well-known Hale family and playing as first-string Keeper on the Quidditch team, but generally he doesn't hang out with too many people. He has Isaac, Boyd, and Erica and that's pretty much it. And that's only because the first day of Potions, Isaac sat next to him and they've been partners ever since, Boyd is the other 4th year on the Quidditch team (he plays Beater) and Erica simply showed up in his compartment on the train to Hogwarts and decided she was sticking around. At least when she feels like it.

And he's fairly unashamed of the hours he spends alone, studying. He likes the peace and quiet and he likes most of his subjects.

But, that doesn't mean Derek isn't aware of the Hogwarts gossip.

Because *he* might not be socially connected, but his sisters are. With Laura a prefect and all but a shoe-in for Head Girl next year, she seems to make it her personal mission to know everything about everyone. And though Cora arrived *literally* a week ago, she already seems to be more in touch than Derek could ever hope of being.

In essence, their weekly Saturday Hale-Only breakfast means that Derek is alarmingly current on all the latest news. He knows that the 7th Year Hufflepuff Power Couple, Maggie and Alec, broke up over the summer. He knows that the word is Timothy Reeves from Ravenclaw apparently accepted an invitation to be an Auror after graduation. He is well aware that Gregory (who is just a year about him in Gryffindor) and Polly (a 6th year Hufflepuff) spent the entire summer sneaking back and forth to each other's houses. (Both his sisters agree it's romantic.)

Of course, the transfer kid gets mentioned because transfers are rare, but the news isn't that exciting. In fact, according to Laura, no one even seems to know his first name. The only thing anyone has really figured out about him is that he's American. And that's not exactly hard because he obviously has an accent.

Other than that, even Laura seems stumped. The only news she has from the other prefects is that he's already getting into trouble in some classes and a few of the teachers seem to dislike him (*That's probably cause he's a Slytherin*, Cora says. Laura tells her not to be ridiculous. Though that's after nodding slightly.)

Derek can only shrug when they look over at him. Sure, he has Potions, Astronomy, and Care of Magical Creatures with the kid, but it's been a week. That's only a total of six hours spent together. And it's not like Derek talks to him at all. He stays on his side of the classroom and Stilinski stays on his.

The only thing Derek really knows is that, despite other reports, he seems quiet enough, prefers to work alone, and has the most amazing shade of amber eyes that Derek has ever seen.

Not that he's looking.

^^*^

Three weeks later, he knows one more thing about Whatever-His-First-Name-Is Stilinski.

He is absolutely *awful* at Potions.

Usually, as Head of Slytherin, Slughorn seems to relish in giving Slytherins points for anything, praise for doing the bare minimum, and providing extra tips and tricks when required.

However, with Stilinski, it is clear that not even Slughorn can help him.

In almost every single class now, Stilinski's potions have ended up entirely and completely wrong. The smell is often overpowering. Explosions are no longer rare. Even Slughorn is fed

up. Snapping at Stilinski just leads to sarcastic responses that result in Slughorn having to take points from his own house.

“HALE!” Slughorn yells into the relative silence halfway through their lecture. “Go help Stilinski. He’s useless.”

Derek twists to look towards the back of the room. The transfer’s cauldron is smoking. The heat shouldn’t even be on yet. Stilinski has gone red but doesn’t seem to be in the mood to argue with Slughorn today. Maybe he realizes there’s really nothing to argue about. He is pretty useless at Potions.

“But-” he starts. Isaac has always been his partner. And he’s a Gryffindor.

“Go!” Slughorn growls and Derek sighs but moves. He knows he’s been picked so none of the other Slytherins have to waste time. As he crosses the line, there is definite snickering from the Slytherin side. And maybe a few giggles from the Gryffindors.

He tries to keep his face fairly neutral, because honestly, Stilinski gets yelled at almost every class and that has to be rough, especially as a transfer student but as he gets closer, he fails. His face falls into a scowl of part disgust and part disbelief because, *good lord*, what the hell has the kid been doing?

“Sorry, man,” Stilinski says as he sits down. He manages to sound both somewhat sincere and incredibly annoyed. His leg is jumping up and down as if he can’t help it. It’s shaking the table. It’s annoying. “I was fucking shit *atregular* Chemistry and this shit is just... dragon blood, dude, seriously? I mean, fuck, I didn’t even know dragons *existed* and now I’m supposed to just dump their blood places.”

Derek blinks. Apparently the rumors that Stilinski curses like a sailor are true. And his American accent sounds ridiculous. It takes a moment for Derek to actually process what he’s even said because he’s talking to fast and his vowels are doing strange things and by that time Stilinski is looking down and-

“Wait,” he says. “You’re Muggle-born?”

Derek didn’t even know that was possible. For a Muggle-born Wizard to be put into Slytherin. Well, no, thinking about it, obviously that would have to be *possible*, it was just-

“Yeah,” Stilinski replies, raising an eyebrow. “I thought that would be obvious.” He gestures to his ruined pile of ingredients.

And then the rest of it clicks into place.

“Where did you transfer from?” Derek asks slowly.

“Uh, Beacon Hills High?” Stilinski replies. “I mean, it’s a public school in California, so I don’t think you would have heard of it-”

“You mean you didn’t even transfer from a *magic* school?” Derek says, slightly aghast. No wonder Stilinski is a bloody disaster at Potions. It’s a surprise he hasn’t killed himself! “How

are you a 4th year? Shouldn't you be with the first years?"

He should be a first year. Okay, yes, he'd be a little old but-

"I can do all the rest of it," Stilinski says, voice going a bit hard. "And I *can* do this, I just-fuck, just forget it, alright. It's fine. I got it."

"Hey, wait, no," Derek says, feeling bad as Stiles degrades into mumbled curses. Slytherins and their pride. "Sorry, I didn't mean- I just meant that that explains a lot. About why you need some help."

Stilinski, to his credit, looks a bit contrite for immediately jumping to the wrong conclusion and Derek forgives him without thinking about it.

"Derek," he says impulsively, even though Gryffindors and Slytherins usually stick to their last names.

"Stiles," Stilinski replies. At Derek's raised eyebrow, he shakes his head. "My real first name is a mess. Not even you guys could pronounce it."

"Alright," Derek says, smiling a little bit. "Well, first, you have to cut that lengthwise, and wait, is that your eye of Newt?"

Stiles never stops restlessly moving but Derek find he doesn't mind as much as he thought he would.

^^*^

He gets Stiles through that potion and then at the start of the next class, he hovers for just a moment before sitting down next to Isaac.

The entire class, he keeps expecting to be banished to the Slytherin side once more but Stiles must be studying because he manages to make it through the class without blowing anything up.

He makes it through the next one too.

Derek tells himself he's not disappointed.

^^*^

The first time he sees Stiles on his own, it's a Thursday a week later, he's running to see Professor McGonagall about making sure his broom was officially cleared for flying and there's a string of muttered cursing coming from a corridor a few minutes from her classroom.

He doesn't even really think about it, he just turns towards the noise and finds Stiles.

His books are scattered across the ground and at first Derek thinks it's just an accident, but then as he moves forward, Stiles sort of flinches back from the sound, eyes wide and wary before landing on Derek.

"Oh," he says, his voice going carefully casual. "Hey, Derek."

There's a cut along his left cheekbone. It's bleeding.

"What happened?" Derek says, rushing forward more quickly now.

"Nothing much," Stiles says, turning away to reach for a book. "You know, the usual."

"What?" Derek says stupidly. He has no idea what Stiles is talking about. What usual?

Stiles glances back up at him and catches the confusion in his face. His face twists into a smile.

"Right," he mutters, more to himself than to Derek. "You're a Gryffindor. You guys don't get beat up. Probably too strong and brave, right?"

He's still grabbing his books and supplies and so Derek does the only thing he can think of and bends down to help. He doesn't know what to say. Because, yes, he knows that fights *happen* at Hogwarts, he's just never really seen one or been a part of one and the one time Evan Wallace, a Hufflepuff, had tried to start something with him, Professor Longbottom had seen and Wallace was stuck in detention for four nights in a row.

"You really don't have to," Stiles says as Derek starts making his own stack. "It's fine. I got it."

"It's not a problem," Derek says, frowning in Stiles' general direction. "Really."

He should say more, but he still doesn't know exactly what to say, so for a moment, they work in silence. Derek grabs a pile of notes and tries to organize them but quickly gives up. He can barely make out a few words on each page.

"Uh," he says, holding them out and feeling bad. "Sorry, I can't-"

"Oh," Stiles says, glancing over. "No, yeah, I've got the worst handwriting. ADD and all and these non-lined scrolls don't really help. Seriously, you guys should have lines. Like for the good of humanity. And spiral notebooks. Nothing is wrong with regular paper, you know? I mean- uh. Just stick 'em in a pile and I'll organize them later."

When Derek looks over, Stiles' face is tinted red and he is chewing on his bottom lip as if to physically stop himself from talking.

Derek wants to tell him not to bother. He hadn't really understood a word Stiles had said –it must be an American thing. Or a Muggle thing. Or maybe just a Stiles thing, but he hadn't minded listening.

“Okay,” Derek says, because he doesn’t know how to say any of that. They fall back into silence.

“Hey,” Stiles says suddenly, not looking up from reaching for another book. He makes a face at the torn cover before continuing. “What’s a mudblood?”

Derek freezes. He’s never even *said* that word. His mother would literally kill him. No one says that word anymore. It’s dirty and vile and-

“I mean, I know it’s an insult,” Stiles continues when Derek doesn’t answer. “I just like to know what exactly I’m being insulted about this time, you know?”

“It, uh,” Derek starts. He doesn’t know why explaining it still feels so wrong. It doesn’t actually mean *anything*. “It a nasty word for when someone is Muggle-born.”

“Oh,” Stiles replies, nodding and looking somewhat satisfied with the information. He doesn’t seem insulted. Probably because he doesn’t understand the full meaning behind the word and Derek doesn’t want to tell him but he can feel his blood start to boil. “Gotcha. Real original.”

It only gets worse when Stiles straightens with a flinch and small gasp of pain and Derek watches as he swipes a hand across his cheekbone to try to clean up the blood.

“I can’t believe your own *House* would do this to you,” Derek growls, standing as well and holding out the books for Stiles to grab. Seriously. Everyone knows Slytherins are the worst, but they usually at least are semi-decent to their own members.

Stiles laughs. It’s not a particularly pleasant sound.

“Dude, you think *Slytherins* did this to me?” He asks, raising an eyebrow and stacking his books in a precarious pile in his arms. “Pretty sure your Gryff prejudice is showing.”

“But-” Derek sputters. Everyone knows that Slytherins are the ones who still care about things like bloodlines and-

“Nope,” Stiles says, rolling his eyes. “This was all Ravenclaw. They’re a little miffed I’m kicking their asses in Transfiguration.”

Derek stares. That doesn’t make any sense. Ravenclaws don’t pull this sort of thing. Well, a few of them are prats but he still didn’t think they would do *this*.

“Well, thank you ever so much for your help,” Stiles says, interrupting his train of thought and dipping his head in an exaggerated nod. “You have truly lived up to your Good Guy Gryffindor Role. All is right with the universe.”

Derek scowls at him. Stiles gives him a cheeky grin.

“Look, we should really report this,” Derek says, as Stiles turns to leave. “I mean, I can tell McGona-”

Stiles snorts.

“Please,” he says, his voice losing some of its playfulness. “Teachers don’t do shit about this kind of thing.”

Derek opens his mouth to tell him that this isn’t America, that in Hogwarts, teachers most certainly *do* handle this sort of thing, especially if improper use of magic is involved, but Stiles is suddenly smirking at him.

“Seriously, don’t worry about it,” he tells Derek and his eyes have gone cold and his voice oddly confident and Derek is suddenly very, very aware that Stiles is a *Slytherin*. “They’ll regret it.”

^^*^

The next day, word spreads that an extremely potent Itching Hex had been placed on the couches of the Ravenclaw Common Room and that no less than *seven* students had to be admitted to Madam Pomfrey’s for severe rashes. Of course, it could only be a Ravenclaw because only they could get into their own Common Room but no one is ever punished.

^^*^

Derek does most of his studying in the Gryffindor Common Room, because he, Boyd and Isaac have basically carved out a table in the corner and not many people bother them. Except for Erica. But Derek’s gotten pretty used to tuning things out.

But, the Charms Exam tomorrow is supposed to be a tough one and Isaac is freaking out and even Erica is attempting to study, which means she’s mumbling loudly to herself and so Derek heads to the library. He needs silence. Or at least something close to it.

That may be hard to find though, because apparently, Flitwick schedules all his exams for the same day. The library is packed with people and it seems all of them are flicking their wrists and scribbling notes and Derek scowls as he pushes deeper and deeper into the stacks.

And there, sitting alone in a back crook of the library, is Stiles.

Doubtlessly, there are open tables if he keeps going because, well, it’s Hogwarts and Derek has never heard of someone being literally unable to find the exact study space they wanted but-

But he finds himself walking over and hovering until Stiles looks up. There are dark smudges under his eyes and his hair is sticking up in a thousand directions and he still somehow looks adorable.

Derek shakes himself. That’s not what he-

“Hi,” Derek says abruptly, realizing he’s been staring. “Do you mind?”

Stiles looks up, squinting one eye in confusion. He appears to be so tired that his leg isn’t even jerking up and down under the table.

Derek blinks, not sure why he remembers that fact from one shared Potions table two weeks ago.

“Um, uh, no,” Stiles says shaking his head and waving a hand at the other side of the table.
“Go for it.”

Derek puts his stuff down and Stiles throws him a half-smile before turning back to his book.

“So, you studying for the exam tomorrow?” he asks. Just to be friendly. Just because Stiles is a Slytherin doesn’t mean he should be rude. Plus Stiles looks exhausted enough to fall asleep in his book. Derek is just being a good person and keeping him awake.

“Exam?” Stiles sounds alarmed. “What exam? For what class?”

“Charms,” Derek says, concerned. This is worth something crazy like 20% of your grade. If Stiles’ performance with Potions is anything to go by-

“Oh,” Stiles says, his entire body sagging in relief. “Oh, thank god. Yeah, no, that one. I got that one.”

“You already studied?”

“Nah, Charms is easy,” Stiles replies. “That’s no problem.”

Derek frowns. For most people, Charms is one of the hardest subjects. And it’s the most important. Maybe Stiles doesn’t know how the Hogwarts grading system works...

“It’s just on size manipulation, right?” Stiles says. “Or is it heat transference too?”

Derek blinks. “No, no, that’s the next unit I think,” he says.

“Gotcha,” Stiles replies. He seems unconcerned with the answer.

“Do you already know heat transference?” Derek asks. That doesn’t make any sense either.

“Dude,” Stiles says, yawning and then covering it. “Heat transference is the reason I’m stuck here.”

Derek doesn’t bother saying ‘what’ out loud but his eyebrows draw into a thin line and Stiles must read the question in them. He looks up and snaps and-

There is a flame of fire above his fingers.

He snaps again and it’s gone.

Derek stares.

That is... that should be *impossible*. Wandless magic is *insanely* difficult and Stiles had admitted that he just started learning magic a little over a *month* ago and... what?

“You can...” He stops. Doesn’t quite know what to say. “You can control *fire*?”

“No,” Stiles grumbles and Derek watches as his face falls. “I mean, I sort of can now but that’s why I had to come here. I’ve always been able to do little tricks with stuff but then I started losing control and you let one little fireball loose in Chemistry class and suddenly there’s an owl at your door and you’re being shipped off to boarding school.”

His voice has gone low and *sad* during his speech and his grip around his quill has tightened and-

“That’s amazing,” Derek says, partly because he’s honestly impressed and partly because he doesn’t quite understand Stiles’ shift in tone.

“Sure,” Stiles’ face flicks into a smile that doesn’t reach his eyes.

“Wandless magic is *rare*, Stiles,” Derek says. Stiles hadn’t even had to say *words* to create that flame. In fact, he’s never heard of someone who can do magic without a wand when they were only fifteen. And exactly how many tricks does Stiles know how to do? Derek’s mom can only do a few and-

“Yeah, yeah,” Stiles mutters. “Wandless magic is a gift. It’s special. I should be grateful to be here.”

Derek freezes and frowns. It sounds like...

“You didn’t want to come here?” It doesn’t make sense. Most Muggles are fascinated by the Wizarding World. Isaac knew more about Hogwarts than even Derek did and was still constantly asking questions and had already declared that he would be a teacher here one day and, yes, Derek knows it is also in part because Hogwarts had saved Isaac from a life with his father but...

But still. It’s magic. That Stiles can do without even a wand. He should be-

“Of course not,” Stiles says, rubbing one hand across his face. He says it like it’s obvious. “But I also don’t want to fail Potions, so...” He lifts his book slightly and Derek takes the hint. Time for silence.

He still doesn’t get much studying done.

^^*^

The next time Derek sees Stiles, he hears him long before he sees him.

He’s walking up to the Owlery, having been given the job of actually mailing their sort-of-weekly letters home by his sisters. He doesn’t mind doing it. He usually heads up once a week to visit Twinkles anyway. (He would love to say that Cora named the family owl, but really, it had been him and no matter how many times he tries to explain that her name just *was* Twinkles, everyone laughs at him.)

It’s a peaceful Saturday afternoon, cool without being actually cold and Derek is enjoying his hike up to the highest point of Hogwarts when-

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. You fucking piece of shit. Fuck.”

The voice sounds half-angry, half-desperate and it probably shouldn't be so easy for Derek to pick out exactly who it is before he even sees him.

But then again, Stiles is the only American currently enrolled in Hogwarts so maybe Derek can't be considered a total stalker.

He takes the turn up the last flight of stairs slowly, a part of him fully expecting to see Stiles, lying on the ground, injured somehow.

(Derek had only found him like that once, but it still seemed a valid fear. Stiles' sarcasm is quickly becoming somewhat legendary.)

But, when he turns, the litany of curses is still somehow coming from above him and he cranes his neck upward to see that Stiles is stretched out on the roof.

The roof of the *Owlery*. The highest point of Hogwarts. Where there are *holes* for the owls to fly *in and out of*. This is where Stiles has decided to spend his time, staring at a small black device and stabbing at it in frustration.

“Stiles?” he calls. And then flinches because Stiles *leaps* in surprise and almost falls into one of the aforementioned holes (which would at least be better than falling *off the roof*) but-

“Shit on my-” Stiles gasps. Then, “I'm getting down, don't worry.”

A moment later, Stiles is dangling over the edge of the roof and dropping down. He looks... defeated, giving Derek nothing more than a slight nod in recognition as he keeps staring at the black thing in his hand.

“What were you *doing* up there?” Derek asks. “That can't be allowed.”

“Don't worry, Gryff,” Stiles says, rolling his eyes. “I'm not going to make a habit of it. Just trying something.”

“Trying *what*?”

“Trying to get some freaking cell service,” Stiles admits, holding up the black thing. “I dunno, I just figured if I could get high enough then maybe...” he cuts off, scowling.

“Electronics don't work in Hogwarts,” Derek offers, shrugging.

Stiles glares at him.

“Yeah,” he says, throwing Derek an exaggerated thumbs-up. “Thank you. I got that.”

Derek frowns. For all he's heard of Stiles' sarcasm, it's never been directed at him before. He doesn't like it.

“Whatever,” Stiles mutters. “I just- I’m just trying to get word out to my dad. In the real world, communication is so *easy* and free and here it just... it just sucks. Fucking shitty-”

“Why don’t you use the School owls?” Derek suggests, cutting him off. His voice comes out a little bit less than friendly. Just because Stiles doesn’t want to be here doesn’t mean he should go around calling *Hogwarts* a fucking shitty place. It’s *Hogwarts*. “They’re free to students and-

“They’re retired post owls,” Stiles interrupts, his voice matching Derek’s tone. Clipped and more than a little angry. “None of them are cleared to fly internationally. And do you have *any* idea how much it costs to send an owl to California? In *dollars*? Or even in freaking British pounds? Which you then have to practically double to get it in dollars!”

Just like that, Derek feels his anger leave him. Because he’s... he has no idea how much that would cost. He’s never tried to send a package internationally and even if he had to, he’s a Hale. Money is not an issue. And why would he ever need to know the conversion rates?

“Erm... No. I- I-,” Derek offers, feeling stupid.

“Of course you don’t,” Stiles snaps. “No one here knows *anything*.”

Derek opens his mouth to say something, to maybe try to apologize again, but Stiles barrels on. As if he can’t stop now that he’s started.

“And it’s not just you, you know... it’s- it’s this entire fucking *school*. With its fucking ridiculous dress code and stupid classes with weird shit I’m never going to need to know again in my *life* and then- then to top it all off, I’m sorted into some weird team thing that seems to make everyone hate me or some shit. Fuck, I didn’t even get a *say* in it!”

Stiles has picked up speed now, waving his arms around enough that Derek is concerned the device is going to just fly out of his hand. But it’s not that that makes Derek flinch. It’s because his family has always been strict on the rhetoric of kindness to all Houses but he has to admit that sometimes he slips. Sometimes they all slip.

“And, yeah, the people in my House hate me but that’s because I lose us like... a fucking billion points a day and no one else seems to realize that the House Cup is literally just some wack system that has no bearing on real life, but at least they hate me for a *reason*. Everyone else just hates me for being a Slytherin. Or a mudblood. Or because I can transform a rat into a teacup without a wand. Which, for the record, *I don’t even want to be able to do!*”

Stiles stops to take a breath and Derek is horrified to hear that it hitches and suddenly Stiles doesn’t sound angry but sad and maybe hopeless and-

“So now I’m stuck here. And I just want to talk to my dad. Or S-Scott,” he stops, mouth twisting, for a heartbeat. “A-and I can’t even do that because the stupid, fucking magic means that there’s no... fucking electricity. Or-or internet. Or-”

Stiles stops and heaves in a breath and his eyes are filled with tears and then seems to realize that Derek is still standing there. Because he looks upwards and blinks furiously and sucks in

another shuddering breath and forces himself to hold it and he turns away from a moment, running a hand across his eyes and-

"Sorry," he says, angling towards Derek but not quite looking at him. He pulls his face into a smile that looks more like a grimace of pain. "Sorry about... about that. You can go. It's just... I'm just having a bad day. It's fine. Just, uh, I'll see you."

"Wait," Derek says, because there's no way he can just let Stiles leave like this. Not when he is still sniffing and his face is still red and he still looks somehow *smaller* than Derek has ever seen him. "Wait, here, stop. Use my family's owl."

Hurriedly, he sticks up an arm and in a moment Twinkles is there. He basically shoves her in Stiles' face. He'd do pretty much anything to get Stiles to stop almost-crying.

Just the sight of it feels so wrong it's almost like a physical pain. And *he* was the one to suggest something so stupid like *Use a school owl* and so this is partly his fault and-

"No, that's, really," Stiles says, shaking his head. "That's okay. I'm fine."

"She's authorized to fly internationally," Derek says. "It will take a week or so, but she can make it to California."

"No, I can't," Stiles replies. "Really, you don't have to-"

"Please," Derek says. "You're right. It's a shit system. You deserve- your dad will want to hear from you. She can bring a letter back too."

Stiles stops taking steps away. Derek sees the desperation in his eyes before he even says the next words,

"A-are you sure?"

"Yeah," Derek says. "Of course, here, you're just gonna attach the letter right there and then give her a name. She'll find them."

"I- I still have to write it," Stiles replies, looking down. "Should I-"

"Here, I've got parchment," Derek replies. He turns to his bird. "Twinkles, stay with Stiles and then pick up some return paper, in case they don't have any, and then deliver his message, okay?"

Twinkles hoots seriously as if she knows this is important. Stiles stills looks a bit overwhelmed. Derek walks over to the small table that's kept in the corner for writing down addresses and then pulls out the stool. Then he dumps all the paper out of his pocket onto the table and set Twinkles down.

"There," he says satisfied that Stiles can take it from here. "Just, uh,"

"Are you sure this is okay?" Stiles asks even as he moves towards the desk. "I mean, you really don't-"

“It’s fine,” Derek interrupts, wondering if it would be weird to conjure up a few tissues.
“Really, don’t even worry about it.”

“O-okay,” Stiles says, his voice small. “Thank you.”

“No problem,” Derek says. “Take your time.”

And then, because Stiles is still standing and fidgeting as if he doesn’t quite know what to do with the turn of events, Derek leaves.

He’ll use the school owls to mail his letters tomorrow.

^^*^

Derek doesn’t quite know what he expected to happen after such an awkward meeting. It seems like he and Stiles should be closer now that he’s seen Stiles have a sort of mini-meltdown and offered his family owl to fly thousands of miles but he doesn’t want Stiles to think that he *owes* Derek anything so he keeps his same routine. Which means not sitting next to Stiles in Potions or any of their other classes and not seeking Stiles out in the library (well, he only tries that twice before giving up).

A few things change, though.

They start doing a small awkward wave at the beginning of Potions and Derek keeps telling himself he should go over and say hi but by the time he works up the courage, Stiles is already looking at his book again.

In Astronomy, most of Derek’s time is spent trying not to fall asleep and subtly copying from Boyd, who is a whiz at Astronomy, but every once in a while he catches himself staring over at Stiles. And Stiles seems to constantly forget that you are supposed to be using the telescope and spends most of the class staring up at the stars without taking notes.

Derek starts trying to inch whatever animal he’s working with that day closer to Stiles. Or at least the Slytherin side. Because no matter what the creature, Stiles seems to handle them all the same: He gives them a name that makes absolutely no sense, talks at them constantly, and then politely asks them to do random tasks. There is also crooning, baby-talk, and singing involved.

It’s the happiest Derek ever gets to hear him. It’s possible Derek is addicted to it.

And he doesn’t exactly *see* Stiles any more often than before, but he does find himself glancing over more. Just to make sure he’s okay. And it’s amazing what you can pick up about a person, just by watching them.

He knows that Stiles always brings a book to breakfast and often gets so engrossed that he seems to forget to eat. He knows that sometimes, Stiles will casually stir his food by waving one hand around his spoon without touching it and doesn’t seem to notice the amazed stares he gets before people become used to this.

He knows that for some reason Stiles isn’t usually at lunch or dinner.

So, he only gets breakfast and three precious classes to watch him. And breakfast is the easiest option, so he has to do it now, has to try to focus his eyes from across the room and make sure that no new bruises have appeared or he's forgetting to eat again and-

"Derek! Derek!" The tone of Cora's voice means that she's definitely tried to get his attention more than once.

He blinks and then scowls and swipes the hand away from his face.

"What?" he growls. "What is it?"

Saturday morning is probably not the best time to space out while staring across the room at the Slytherin table. Both of his sisters raise matching eyebrows at him.

Luckily, he has a reputation for ignoring them when they start talking too much about the weird political schemes of Hogwarts students so they don't push too much.

"I was *asking*," Cora says in between bites of waffles. "Where you sent Twinkles off to. I was going to send a letter to Grandma but when I went up, she wasn't there."

"Oh," Derek says and then hesitates because, well, Twinkles won't be back for at least another week, maybe more and-

"Did you forget to send the letters home from last week?" Laura asks, sighing. "This is why Mom always yells at us for not writing often enough."

"I'm telling Dad to point his disappointed sighs only at you," Cora grumbles. "I swear, my letter was actually pretty long this time too!"

"I sent them!" He protests, flicking his eyes to Stiles. "I just lent Twinkles to someone. It's not a big deal."

It's the wrong thing to say. Telling his sisters that something isn't a big deal is basically informing them that there is a huge secret they must uncover.

"Why would you lend Twinkle-toes to someone?" Cora asks. "There are like a hundred school owls people can use."

"They don't fly internationally," Derek says and considers it a win when Laura blinks in surprise.

"Why would someone need to send something *internationally*?" Cora demands. Derek flushes.

"Because they live overseas," he says, hoping maybe that's the end of it.

He should know better. It's his sisters. That's never going to be the end of it.

It takes Laura all of two seconds to put two and two together.

“You gave our owl to *Stilinski*?” she says, disbelief clear in her voice. “I heard he yelled at McGonagall for taking points off just because his transformed ashtray was shaped like a *penis*!”

“And Hannah told me that her brother said he keeps interrupting in History of Magic and demanding to know why wizards don’t intervene in Muggle stuff,” Cora says.

“He loses at *least* fifty points a day,” Laura says, her voice entirely judgmental. “Even the Slytherin prefects think he should be expelled!”

“Yeah,” Cora replies. “He’s a *Slytherin*. He’s a git!”

“Look,” Derek says, his voice rising in anger. “Just because he’s a Slytherin doesn’t mean he’s a bad person and neither of you know *anything* about him and he hasn’t gotten to talk to his family since he *got* here so, yes, I told him he could use Twinkles. It was the right thing to do so *back off*.”

He’s standing as he speaks, pushing his side of the bench back angrily and he’s glad that Stiles is on the other side of the room and can’t hear him or his sisters. He’s glad that when he looks over, Stiles seems to have fallen asleep, one hand propping up his head, mouth slightly open, and so there’s no way that Stiles can even see him as he ignores his sisters’ shocked faces and storms away.

He doesn’t know what he’s so mad about. That everyone in the school seems to hate Stiles or that his own sisters are being so close-minded or that, a week ago, he thought pretty much the same way.

^^*^

Both his sisters eventually offer up apologies, in their own way.

Cora swings by to his back corner, puts down a pile of three chocolate frogs (his favorite) on his table, loudly claims she got them for him only because he’s fat and she’s the best sister ever and then walks away before he can say anything.

Laura is a bit more direct. Derek finds her inexplicably outside the door to his Divination class, not so subtly giving two Slytherins ten points each for “looking engaged in learning” before swinging an arm over Derek and walking him down the hall.

She talks about nothing for a while, asking him questions about the upcoming kick-off Quidditch match and how he plans on beating Ravenclaw and if he is excited for practice to start up. Derek is about to tell her that he gets it, that she can stop trying so hard, when they arrive at her classroom and she slaps him on the shoulder.

“Sorry I was being a jerk before,” she says, meeting his eyes seriously.

Then, she turns and heads into her classroom without another word.

Maybe they aren’t the best apologies, but Derek forgives them because they’re his sisters and he loves them and he knows they didn’t really mean anything by it.

Still, he can't help but feeling that it shouldn't be him they are apologizing to.

^^*^

The only good thing about Stiles being a Slytherin is that Derek is pretty sure if it were any other boy that he had become so oddly protective of, his sisters would be on him and teasing him about his crush in an instant. Not that it was actually a *crush* because he doesn't know Stiles and he's pretty sure you have to know someone before you can have a crush on them. Still, he's grateful that the next Family Breakfast passes without issue. The closest they come to discussing Stiles is when Laura asks if Twinkles is back yet.

Derek tells her he'll let them know as soon as he knows.

Turns out, that wouldn't be necessary.

On Tuesday morning, the owls rush in with their usual hoots of welcome and Derek is scanning them idly when-

"HOWLER!" Someone yells from the Hufflepuff table and there's a small cheer from the room. Howler's are always fun to watch. Even the teachers sitting at the Head Table look up with varying degrees of disguised interest.

Derek squints up into the rush of bird and has just spotted the telltale red envelope when he realizes he *knows* the owl to which it is attached and for a brief second he thinks that Twinkles must have stopped home to check if they had mail and his mother is annoyed at him for lending her for a transatlantic journey without asking her first. Which sucks. Howlers are always embarrassing.

But Twinkles is heading to the far side of the Great Hall.

She's heading for Stiles.

And the nervous feeling in his gut sinks into something more dismayed. Because Stiles' father must not *know* that it wasn't Stiles' fault that he couldn't write for almost a month and he must be furious. Worse, Stiles seems completely unaware of the whispers that have broken out and opens reaches for the red letter to open it without even trying to make a run for it and-

"OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH MY GOD!! DUUUDE!!!" The American voice that bursts from the red card doesn't sound angry. It sounds... well, happy isn't a strong enough word. It's more like elated. The Great Hall goes silent anyway. "YOU SENT US A LETTER! A REAL LETTER! WITH AN OWL! WE WERE LIKE FREAKING GOING NUTS NOT HAVING HEARD FROM YOU AND THEN THIS OWL TOTALLY FOUND ME AT *WORK*, DUDE! LIKE IT FLEW IN WHILE I WAS GIVING MR. HARRIS' CAT A FLEABATH- OH MY GOD, THAT'S RIGHT. HIS CAT HAS THE *WORST* CASE OF FLEAS EVER. YOU WOULD LOVE IT.

"ANYWAY, OH MY GOD. I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS. THIS IS THE BEST. I'M WRITING ON THIS RED PIECE OF PAPER BECAUSE I THINK IT MEANS LIKE...

EMERGENCY DELIVERY? I DON'T REALLY KNOW. THE OWL IS POKING AT IT SO I GUESS THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS. CAN YOU TALK TO OWLS YET? OR IS IT STILL ONLY SNAKES? BRO, I TOTALLY HOPE YOU CAN TALK TO OWLS. THIS ONE SEEMS AWESOME. OR DRAGONS! DID I READ THAT RIGHT? DRAGONS ARE REAL?!"

The voice coming through the Howler is amazed and young somehow and also the most American thing that Derek has ever heard and he doesn't understand why most people look a little annoyed that Stiles didn't run for it. Maybe without the juiciness of someone being yelled at, it becomes just a loud breakfast annoyance but Derek thinks it's... *wonderful*.

"OKAY, FOCUSING, HOME IS GOOD, MAN. TOTALLY GOOD. I MEAN, IT'S NOT *TOTALLY* GOOD SINCE YOU'RE NOT HERE AND DUDE, BRO, GEOMETRY IS LITERALLY KICKING MY ASS BUT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! WE'VE BEEN FEEDING YOUR DAD PLENTY- NO MEAT, DON'T WORRY - AND I THINK- WAIT, FUCK, I'M RUNNING OUT OF ROOM. I CAN PROBABLY WRITE SMALLER. I THINK YOUR DAD JUST ABOUT HAD A HEART ATTACK WHEN HE GOT YOUR LETTER, THOUGH. DEATON LET ME LEAVE EARLY TO RUN THEM OVER AND HE WAS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF ARRESTING SOMEONE AND DUDE, THE GUY TOTALLY COULD HAVE ESCAPED RIGHT THEN.

"FUCK, THIS PAPER IS NOT BIG ENOUGH- BUT, STILES, MY MOM LITERALLY *BURST* INTO TEARS. LIKE IT WAS HILARIOUS. WAIT, I GOTTA SWITCH-"

The Howler cuts off abruptly and then, as usual, bursts into flames. Dimly Derek hears a few people sneer about Muggles not knowing what a Howler is supposed to be used for but his eyes don't leave Stiles.

Stiles is staring at the pile of ash on the table and, again, happy isn't a strong enough word. His hand is clutching the remaining pile of letters and his face is pulled into a smile of part disbelief, part ecstasy, and as Derek watches, he blinks hard and then leans over and taps his forehead against Twinkle's head gently.

It's as Twinkles flies off that he seems to realize he has a bit of an audience. He flushes and then frowns down at the pile of ash, mutters something, smirks a little when the pile of ash is suddenly a red piece of paper again, and leaves the Great Hall.

Meanwhile, Derek is resisting every urge in his body that wants to follow him, just so he can catch another glimpse of that smile, when Twinkles suddenly lands on his shoulder, her feathers ruffling to reveal another letter.

Derek does half rise then, grabbing it and assuming that Stiles has missed one but then he catches sight of the envelope:

TO THE GUY WHO LENT STILES HIS OWL

He sinks back down and opens it slowly. It's a short message, hastily scrawled on a torn piece of thin paper:

THANK YOU SO MUCH! THAT WAS TOTALLY AWESOME OF YOU! – SCOTT

^^*^

“Hey.”

Derek jumps as Stiles slides up next to him as he leaves Transfiguration. As usual, he’s the last one out the door because if there’s one teacher truly obsessed with Quidditch, it’s McGonagall and the game against Ravenclaw is only two weeks away. Which means she’s taken to holding him back and “casually reminding” him of the shooting styles of the three Chasers.

“Bloody- Stiles!” Derek says, heart still hammering. People should not move so silently. Or jump out at people right as they left classrooms. Stiles is supposed to be practically on the other side of the school in Charms class anyway. “Stop being such a-”

“Sneaky Slytherin?” Stiles suggests, raising one eyebrow. Derek scowls.

“I was going to say freaking stalker,” he says.

“You’re the one who keeps showing up wherever I am,” Stiles points out and Derek fights to keep his face from blushing because that is 100% true. “Usually when I’m in some form of distress.”

“Well maybe you should stop being in distress then,” Derek mumbles.

“And deny you the chance to save the day?” Stiles asks, grinning. “I wouldn’t dream of it.”

Derek scowls, but it’s more so that he doesn’t grin. He can’t remember ever seeing Stiles look so... balanced. And happy. For once, his banter doesn’t seem to be barbed or ironic or masking some sort of pain.

“Anyway,” Stiles says, his playful grin sliding from his face. “I just wanted to say thanks for, uh, letting me use your owl. It, well, it was really nice. And Scott works for a vet and he looked her over and said she was fine. And my dad apparently bought her a bunch of mice to eat, so... um, yeah she should be good.”

“Oh,” Derek says, shaking his head. “Oh, he didn’t need to do that. She can totally hunt for herself. But, I mean, that’s really nice of them.”

“Yeah, well, my dad literally dedicated a whole paragraph to telling me about the mice and worrying about whether that was the right thing to do so, I...” Stiles shifts, his right hand fluttering towards his pocket. “Thank you.”

“Seriously,” Derek says and he has no idea why it was so much easier to talk to Stiles a moment ago. “Don’t-”

“Mr. Stilinski.”

Professor McGonagall's voice cuts through their awkward attempts at conversation like a whip. Derek sort of freezes for some reason and Stiles practically flinches away from him and-

"I need to see you in my classroom, please," McGonagall finishes.

"I wasn't even doing anything!" Stiles protests immediately. "I haven't done anything all day!"

"Which seems to imply that you did do something less than honorable *yesterday*, Mr. Stilinski," McGonagall says and, as usual, it's a little hard to tell whether or not she's joking. Derek suspects she is, but Stiles scowls at her and he vaguely recalls stories about how the two don't get along and suddenly that's unacceptable. He loves McGonagall but it seems to him that the entire school is against Stiles for some reason and he has his mouth open to say something when-

"My classroom, Mr. Stilinski," McGonagall says, holding the door open a bit more. "Mr. Hale, I suggest you get to class."

Stiles walks in with a defeated slump to his shoulders and Derek turns as if he's heading to class, but then-

He turns and casts a small listening spell before he really thinks about it.

"I honestly don't see how I could have pissed you off," Stiles is saying. "I don't even have your class till tomorrow! And I did the reading! I could duplicate that stool six times right now! I even know where my wand is! And I-"

"Mr. Stilinski!" McGonagall interrupts. *"You are not in trouble."*

"I- I'm not?" Stiles says. "Because I may have lied before... I actually have no idea where my wand is."

Derek can help it. He snorts a laugh.

"I called you in to apologize," McGonagall says. And Derek guesses from Stiles' silence that he's stunned. "On behalf of the staff. I'm afraid that we were... unaware of the current issues regarding your ability to communicate with your family and have resolved to fix this immediately."

Another moment of confused silence.

“What?”

“Here,” McGonagall says. “A list of all the faculty who have personal owls cleared to fly internationally. You are free to use any of them at any time. It was... I cannot tell you how unacceptable it is that this aspect of your learning was overlooked.”

“... really?” Stiles sounds amazed. Maybe a little suspicious, but more amazed. “Any- any time I want?”

“Yes,” McGonagall sounds firm but her voice has softened. “And is there anything else you need as an international student that we are not currently providing?”

“N-No,” Stiles says. He still sounds a bit shaky. “No, that’s it.”

“Well, I expect you to inform either myself or Professor Slughorn if that changes,” McGonagall says, her voice firm but a clear dismissal. “And, you had best go find your wand, Mr. Stilinski. I’ve told you time and time again that just because you can do magic without it-”

“Doesn’t mean I should leave it lying around,” Stiles finishes and Derek doesn’t need to see him to know that his cocky grin is back.

McGonagall probably says something back but Derek breaks his charm and then all but flees the scene. He’s in no mood to get stuck with Detention for eavesdropping.

And he doesn’t need Stiles knowing just how creepy he really is.

^^*^

He ends up in Detention anyway.

They’re walking back from Care of Magical Creatures and Jason Collins, a Gryffindor who Derek has never really liked all that much as he seems more than a bit conceited, hangs back, pretending to help clean up and then-

“I’m thinking of writing my mother later today,” he says, loudly and Derek is already tensing. He’s going for a joke, Derek knows and Jason’s jokes are almost always shit. Especially when he sets himself up like this. And Stiles is the only Slytherin still in earshot. “Maybe I’ll send her a friendly little Howler. Apparently that’s the thing to do these days!”

To the other Gryffindors' credit, no one laughs.

But no one tells him off either.

Derek feels his temper rising and he's known as a quiet kid but he opens his mouth to say something when-

Bang!

The books Jason was carrying are suddenly five times larger. He drops them in surprise, yelping a bit, and then it becomes obvious that they are not stopping in their expansion. Instead, they are getting bigger and bigger and Jason is forced to leap backwards and Derek hadn't noticed it before but the quill he was holding is doing the same thing, now almost the size of a small tree sticking up out of the ground and-

"Fucking hell, Stilinski!" Jason says, spinning to glare at Stiles. Almost everyone else has stopped walking too. "Change them back!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Stiles says, his voice a sarcastic drawl. "I don't even have my wand out." He earns himself a few chuckles from the crowd.

"Shut up!" Jason says. "Everyone knows you bloody well don't need it. Now fix it!"

"Sorry," Stiles says, sounding anything but. He has to talk a full five steps to the right to get around the still-growing school supplies. "Can't help you." More than a few people giggle this time.

That's what does it.

"You fucking-!" Jason snarls. "Just because your fucking idiot of a friend is too bloody stupid-"

Maybe everyone else is watching the books, or even watching Jason as his face goes red in rage, but Derek is watching Stiles.

So he sees when the insult to Scott lands and Stiles' eyes suddenly lose all of their playfulness and his mouth twists, but behind all that anger there is a flash – just a flash – of *hurt* and how *dare* Jason ruin this day for him and-

Derek lunges forward and punches Jason across the mouth before he really thinks about it. Before Stiles can do something to get himself expelled.

Jason goes down easily and there's a gasp from the crowd and a few people to step forward to stop him but Derek is already stepping away, breathing hard, and it's no surprise when Professor Kettleburn is suddenly *there*.

(At this point, the books are almost twenty feet across. They aren't exactly hard to miss.)

“Mr. Hale!” Kettleburn snaps. “What are you doing?” With a wave of his wand, the books return to their natural size. Jason is still on the ground next to him.

“Nothing,” Derek grunts, still glaring at Jason.

“That did not look like *nothing*,” Kettleburn says. “Follow me. We’re going to see Professor McGonagall *immediately*.”

Derek doesn’t argue. Can’t really. Jason is still pouting on the ground and Derek’s hand is stinging (and maybe bleeding) and he’s still having difficulty hearing over the rush of blood in his ears and when Kettleburn starts walking, Derek goes to follow.

“He’s a fucking *Slytherin*,” Jason says furiously at his back.

“Yeah, well, you’re a fucking piece of shite,” Derek calls over his shoulder. He only manages to catch a few of the stunned looks from his classmates, before flicking his eyes over to Stiles.

Even when he’s stuck cleaning the dungeons for three hours that night, Stiles’ look of complete shock is worth it.

^^*^

Derek doesn’t hesitate this time. He walks into Potions class, throws Isaac a nod that he hopes conveys some sort of apology, and throws his stuff down next to Stiles.

There’s a burst of mutters throughout the classroom, from both sides, but Derek purposefully timed this so that there wouldn’t be much time for conversation or complaint.

“What are you-” Stiles doesn’t even get a chance to finish the question before Slughorn sweeps into the room and starts going over the procedure for today’s potion.

Which works out. Because Derek doesn’t really have an answer.

Well, he knows the basics: he’s sitting with Stiles. But beyond that, he has nothing. He’s sitting with Stiles because he wants to and because Stiles needs someone and because, honestly, fuck Gryffindors right now and if the Slytherins say anything, fuck them too.

He’s still oddly angry too. Punching Jason didn’t calm him down as much as it should have. He’s annoyed that he’s become the center of gossip, that when he returned from his detention, it was only to have the Common Room break out in whispers. He hadn’t stuck around to hear what those whispers were *saying*, had swung up to the bedroom and drawn the curtains around his bed in a clear *Don’t talk to me* message.

And he’s avoided his sisters so far, but he knows that Saturday morning is going to be a string of questions and complaints and Laura’s going to worry that he’s ruined her chances at Head Girl and, really, when did Hogwarts get so bloody *annoying*?

He keep his eyes firmly on Slughorn and the chalkboard and then when Slughorn releases them to try making the potion, he keeps them firmly on his desk.

At first, he and Stiles work in a sort of tense silence though everyone else has started chatting. Derek doesn't doubt at least some of it is about them.

"You shouldn't have done that," Stiles mutters finally. He sounds annoyed. Derek finally risks looking over to find that, unlike him, Stiles is glancing around the room rapidly, as if to catalogue everyone's reactions.

"Done what?" Derek grunts, looking back towards his bat spleen. Stiles snorts. Derek can practically *hear* his eye roll.

"You know what."

"Collins deserved it."

"Not that," Stiles says and Derek looks up to see that he's *still* glaring around the room. "Enough people saw him being a dick. You could have gotten away with that. But this-" he waves a hand between them. "Sitting with me... it's going to cause problems."

Derek blinks. He didn't even think about his actions making Stiles' life *evenmore* difficult. He has his mouth open to apologize when Stiles sighs.

"Look, Collins is already muttering to Lovatt," Stiles says. "And everyone knows Lovatt's older brother is best friends with Bedi."

"What?" Derek asks, eyebrow climbing to the top of his head. That was-

"Aarav Bedi," Stiles says, finally looking over to give Derek a judgmental look. "*Your* Quidditch captain."

That's when it finally clicks.

Stiles isn't worried about *himself*. He's worried about Derek.

For some reason, that makes Derek furious.

"Stiles," he growls only for Stiles to ignore him completely. Stiles' leg is bouncing up and down even faster now, eyes flicking around the room as he chews on his bottom lip.

Derek knocks his elbow into Stiles'.

"Stop it," Derek says. "I don't care."

"But-"

"Do you want help with this potion or not?" Derek snaps, scowling.

Stiles blinks at him. Frowns.

"No, I don't," he says, glaring just as hard as Derek. Derek is unsure when this became a fight but that's fine. He's in the right mood for it anyway.

“Too bad,” Derek says. “You’re cutting your caterpillars wrong.”

“I am *not*.”

“Yes, you are,” Derek says, snatching the knife out of Stiles’ hands. “Watch.”

“I do not need-”

“You do,” Derek says. “You missed three *years* of basics. We’re meeting up on Tuesday nights to go over this.”

Stiles gapes at him for a moment. Then,

“*Fine*,” he says. A beat. “Where?”

“The library,” Derek offers. “Where we studied that one time.” He realizes it a beat after he says it that Stiles might not have that exact location of their study session almost three weeks ago memorized like Derek because he might not be a *crazy person*.

“6 o’clock,” Stiles says.

“That’s *dinner time*,” Derek says, exasperated. As if he needed another reminder Stiles skips dinner almost every night.

“Alright, 8 o’clock,” Stiles grumbles. As if *he’s* the one doing the favor.

“Great,” Derek replies. “Now watch me chop these caterpillars.”

Stiles huffs and manages to be silent for all of three seconds. Then,

“You know this is disgusting, right?”

Derek sighs. He’s not sure what he’s just gotten himself into.

But for some reason, he is in a better mood.

^^*^

Stiles isn’t quite right.

Derek’s new seat in Potions causes some whispers and more than a few looks and, for a few days, that knowledge paired with the now rather epic tale that is circulating about him punching Collins, creates what Laura calls “a bit of a stir.”

But, it doesn’t cause “problems.” In fact, all things considered, it dies down pretty quickly. The rumor adjusts itself and within a week, people seem convinced that Slughorn *made* Derek switch seats, and more importantly, Stiles and Derek do nothing but argue so there’s nothing to worry about. The rift between Gryffindor and Slytherin remains intact. The social order lives on.

It annoys Derek. Because generally he doesn't have very many friends *anyway* and he doesn't really want that many friends and so maybe he's just never noticed how deep the Gryffindor/Slytherin divide goes.

Most people are best friends with people from their own House. That's just how it is. Students share some classes with the other Houses, but you are together in *every* class with your Housemates and you sleep with them and eat with them but... friendships between the Houses *happen*. As do relationships.

And, okay, yes, he's aware that the bias against Slytherin hasn't completely gone away yet. The fact remains that most of them have family who fought on the wrong side of the War and their House is still literally known for cunning and pride and many of the oldest Wizarding families run through Slytherin and, so, yes, maybe Slytherins are a little less likely to form friendships outside of their House.

He just never assumed that he wouldn't be *allowed* to befriend a Slytherin. That there was some weird stigma against it. He thought that the reason there were less friendships between Slytherins and the others (and virtually none between Slytherins and Gryffindors) was because Slytherins didn't *want* to be friends with anyone else. Or- or something like that.

And now he's realizing that that might not be true. That it was a bloody stupid thing to think in the first place.

Because suddenly he's noticing every little barb made against the Slytherin House. The most frequent insult around the Common Room is to call someone a "Slyth." Green is *never* worn by anyone from the other houses, even though trading ties and trying to sneak into other classes is something of a Hogwarts tradition.

And, often, far too often, it's just as Cora said: "He's a Slytherin. He's a git." As if that is the only explanation necessary.

So, it's stupid and he's stupid for not realizing it sooner and he's even more stupid because he should have squashed the rumors that Slughorn *made* him sit with Stilinski sooner. But he didn't. Because he's not sure where that one even came from and the second half of it- that he and Stiles do nothing but fight – is fairly accurate.

They do fight. Stiles is constantly trying to find shortcuts and is completely unwilling to listen to Derek when he explains over and over that *there are no shortcuts in Potions, Stiles*. Half the time, Stiles is playing with the ingredients rather than chopping them and the other half of the time, he asks random questions that don't make any sense and he and Derek end up basically yelling at each other almost every class.

That doesn't mean he doesn't enjoy it.

In fact, Tuesday nights have become his favorite night of the week. Even over Quidditch practice.

Stiles is *smart* for one. He doesn't know any of the basics, the things that Derek takes completely for granted because he had grown up knowing that you can never use heating

spells on potions, that you always have to use a real fire or else the magical components break down. Stiles doesn't already know why using different knives is be important "if it's all going in the same pot anyway" (and he refuses to call it a caldron, not matter how many times Derek corrects him). He doesn't understand the most simple of steps and he is constantly rushing things and-

And he's still smart as a whip.

He doesn't know anything but once you tell him something, he remembers it. And Derek is horrified to find out that he's been limping by these past few weeks without Derek by going back and trying to read up on all the ingredients he's going to need before even using it. He blushes when he admits that he often gets too distracted to get through all of them but he has an entire *scroll* of notes on Scarab beetles.

He's freaking creative for another thing. Derek mentions that his handwriting has gotten better, and Stiles smirks and tells him that actually he created a spell that automatically fixes up the lettering after he finishes writing. Derek stumbles on a whole scrolls that's filled with what looks like spell design and he can't even begin to figure out what they would be used for. He doesn't get the chance to ask because Stiles is saying something ridiculous like "Could you brew some kind of Polyjuice potion and change just your bottom half into an animal or something?" Which, again, is ridiculous but it's also something *new*. Something that Derek doubts anyone else has ever asked before.

And... the magic. Derek has known for a while that Stiles can do wandless magic and the rest of the school is now aware, but Derek doesn't think anyone (except maybe the teachers) realizes the full *extent* to which Stiles doesn't need his wand. Or words. Working with Stiles is endlessly distracting because not only is *Stiles* constantly in motion, but everything around him is too. Books are constantly opening to new pages and he's worked out how to have ink fly itself onto his quill when he taps it and Stiles blinks in confusion when Derek asks him how he already knows the *Accio* spell but things fly towards them as needed all the same.

It's not peaceful, exactly, not unless he catches Stiles on a day when Stiles looks like he hasn't slept the night before and everything moves a bit more sluggishly, but Derek loves it all the same.

He just doesn't know how to extent their contact any further. And he wants to.

But Stiles still carefully keeps to himself in their other two classes and he sometimes nods if they pass each other in the hallway, but sometimes he doesn't (Derek hasn't been able to work out what decides the change). And so maybe Stiles doesn't enjoy working with Derek as much as he seems to. Maybe their mostly-playful fights and Stiles' always playfully smug smirks are just for show.

Derek is getting desperate. There has to be a way-

"Are you going to Hogsmeade this weekend?" he blurts one Tuesday in November as they are packing up.

“Uh, yeah,” Stiles says, not quite looking up from shoving things into his bag. His face is almost entirely hidden by the hood of one his many Muggle sweatshirts. The second the weather went below 20 degrees, he started wearing them whenever he’s not in class (aka he’s worn them all year). Despite this, Stiles is constantly doing warming spells on himself. Stiles claims that humans are not meant to withstand such temperatures. “Yeah, I am. You?”

“Yeah,” Derek says, shifting. “Totally. Maybe we can meet up or something?”

He doesn’t quite know what’s happening. It appears his mouth is moving without his permission.

And what has come out sounds a weird attempt at asking Stiles on a... date? Which wasn’t he meant to do. Obviously. He just wants to be friends or- well, at least friends for right now because Stiles clearly needs a friend but he is also, like, attractive so maybe one day, if Stiles wants, but not-

God, even in his head, this is a disaster.

“I mean, maybe I’ll see you there,” he clarifies, praying to God that Stiles doesn’t see how red he is.

“Yeah,” Stiles’ face flicks into a smile that doesn’t seem quite natural. “Maybe.”

It’s a decided non-answer and Derek tries to tell himself that Stiles didn’t say *no*, so that has to mean something but-

“Later, Derek!” Stiles says and then leaves.

At least maybe he didn’t notice anything.

^^*^

Derek doesn’t see Stiles in Hogsmeade.

He heads first The Three Broomsticks and grabs a pint of Butterbeer with Boyd, Isaac, and Erica and stays for a while, hoping Stiles will come in from the cold eventually.

He goes to Zonko’s next because that seems like the kind of store Stiles would like. Stiles isn’t there either.

And then he just keeps wandering. He goes past Honeydukes and Spintwishes (where he gets mildly distracted by the new Nimbus 3X) and ends up getting his hair trimmed because he can’t think of a good excuse for walking into the salon.

It’s disappointing and when he gets back to Hogwarts with the others, he finds he doesn’t really feel like watching everyone examine and exchange whatever trinkets they picked up from the stores.

So he politely thanks the people who compliment his new haircut, delivers Cora the supplies from Zonko’s, and then leaves.

It turns out that it's the moment he gives up looking for Stiles that he finds him.

He's meandering through the lower levels of the school not really paying attention to where he's going when he sees a flash of red turn around a corner and then-

"Mister Stilinski!" it's not one voice but dozens that cry out in welcome. Derek lengthens his stride and then slows and peeks into the kitchen.

Stiles is standing there with a bag from Honeydukes, elves crowded around him, all talking over each other in their haste to welcome him.

"Hi, everyone!" Stiles says, laughing as a few of them literally jump up and grab his arms in greeting. "I bring gifts!" He manages to make his way to one of the huge islands and spills the bag over the surface. "I couldn't get too much," he says, frowning a little. "But I think if people split them, then maybe everyone can have at least a piece."

There's a round of Thank You's and Derek can no longer make out what Stiles is saying because he's bending down to talk to a few elves in turn, grinning and shaking his head when he's repeatedly offered a piece. Derek finds himself leaning closer to try to somehow catch what Stiles is saying even though his back is now towards the door.

"Excuse me."

Derek jumps at the very serious voice that suddenly booms across the kitchen. Silence falls instantly as one elf straightens and walks towards Derek as the crowd parts for him.

"There are no students allowed in the kitchens." The elf tells him and Derek sees Stiles sort of flinch. Suddenly there are at least twenty sets of eyes glaring at him. A few go so far as to step in front of Stiles as if they will protect him if Derek tries to enter.

He's not going to try to enter. Elf power is practically legendary at this point and he is well aware that even if he *had* his wand out and ready, they could easily take him.

"Oh," he says, his voice at a higher decibel than usual. "Oh, no, I was just-"

"Derek?" Stiles says, voice slightly confused. At least he turns and sees Derek there. That's good. Maybe he can convince his friends not to kill him.

"You know this student?" the elf who seems to be in charge says.

"Yes, Harley, wait up," Stiles says, carefully stepping around elves. "That's Derek. Derek Hale."

"You like him?" the elf says, glancing back at Stiles for just a moment. Derek holds his breath. Stiles laughs.

"Yes, Harley, jeez," Stiles replies. "Don't kill him! He's the one teaching me potions!"

It's as if a spell is broken. In an instant, the leader, Harley, is beaming at him and suddenly at least three different elves are grabbing his hands and pulling him into the kitchen and-

“Are you here to help with Thanksgiving?” one asks him, nodding furiously as if to encourage him to say yes.

“Uh-”

“We’re going to make Brussel sprouts with *bacon*,” another tells him. “*American* bacon.”

“We had it special ordered,” a third adds.

“Um, guys,” Stiles says. “I don’t think Derek wants to-”

“He’s not here to learn?” an elf interrupts. She’s frowning.

“Well, he-”

“I am,” Derek says quickly because that seems to be the right answer. “Of course!”

“INGREDIENTS!” Harley yells and suddenly all the elves are scattering throughout the kitchen.

“Remember it’s just a test run!” Stiles calls over the fray. “We’re not making the full meal! Small sizes, guys! Only feeding ourselves!”

He slides a few steps closer to Derek.

“Sorry,” he says. “I think you’re stuck here now.”

“That’s fine,” Derek replies quickly. Maybe too quickly. It’s more than fine, really. It’s Stiles smiling and laughing and giving fist bumps to elves as they walk by without looking and-
“But what is happening?”

“Oh,” Stiles says, blushing a little bit. “They’re teaching me to cook with magic.”

Derek raises his eyebrows. Stiles opens his mouth to answer, but-

“Stiles has been learning since September,” a passing elf tells them. She is very round and looks a little proud. “He is improving.”

She walks past quickly and when Derek looks back to Stiles again, he looks delighted.

“That’s Pauline,” he says in a whisper. “She thinks everything I make is terrible!”

“It’s cause humans can’t cook,” a much smaller elf says, looking up at Derek.

“Hey!” Stiles says. “I’m a great cook!”

“For a human,” Harley says.

Derek’s head is spinning a little bit.

“Wha- when?” he manages. “Why?”

“Oh, um, my mom used to be a cook,” Stiles says, suddenly very interested in rearranging the onions that have already been laid on the counter. “So when she- well, I took over and then, I guess I sorta missed it after coming here so...”

Stiles sort of shrugs and he’s looking down and rubbing the back of his neck, clearly embarrassed.

“Yeah,” he says. “I wandered around until I found the kitchens and I was going to just do some good old fashioned Muggle cooking in the middle of the night but-”

“No one cooks in my kitchen without me knowing,” Harley says seriously.

“Psh,” Stiles replies, perking up a little. “I made a whole omelet before you got here.” He’s grinning but Derek watches Harley and recognizes the little twitch of Harley’s lips.

He highly doubts that Harley wasn’t aware the moment Stiles stepped into his kitchen.

“You managed for ten minutes,” Harley grumbles good naturedly. “Now enough chit-chat. Let’s get to work.”

The next hour and a half is a whirl wind. The elves all work together as if it’s a coordinated dance and Stiles seems to know enough of the steps to at least bounce along and though some of the elves try to hide it, all of them clearly adore him. Stiles gets tips and tricks and is allowed to taste the food as it’s cooking and occasionally gives directions as it’s his Thanksgiving dinner they seem to be making.

Derek is used more as a human errand boy. He chops what’s put in front of him and reaches for things placed on the high shelves and the one time he pulls his wand out to make dice the garlic, he gets it literally smacked out of his hand by Pauline.

“No wands!” she snaps. “They *ruin* the food!”

Derek blushes and Stiles laughs at him and the tiny elf from before – Daisy – tells him that that’s why Stiles is the first human they’ve *ever* taught, because he’s the one only who could even begin to master elf cooking and Stiles is just starting to smirk a little, when Harley jabs him in the shin and tells him not to get cocky and-

It’s the best time Derek has had in weeks.

The kitchen is insane and Stiles is smiling the whole time and different elves keep introducing themselves to him and he’s frantic to get their names right but it’s *impossible*.

“You get them all eventually,” Stiles whispers in his ear as he leans over to grab the garlic that Derek had spent almost twenty minutes dicing. He frowns, mutters something, and suddenly the garlic is chopped even finer and Derek is positive he did that just to show off.

“Except for the triplets,” Stiles says, glancing in the direction of the three elves currently arguing about the pumpkin pie. “Just avoid direct address with them.”

A second later the three dissolve into a fist fight.

Derek doesn't really notice it happening but suddenly food is finishing and Stiles gets the first bite of everything and is then ruthlessly quizzed as to whether or not it is "proper American" food. And then Derek is being instructed to eat as well.

Refusing doesn't seem to be an option. He doesn't manage to give very good opinions, not like Stiles who is locked in a serious discussion with an elf named Tang about whether or not they should put more cream cheese in the mashed potatoes, but the elves beam at him anyway.

"Time to clean up," Harley announces eventually. Derek is pretty sure he is going to die. He's that full.

"Alright, *now*, you can use your wand," Stiles tells Derek as the elves rush to put ingredients away. "You know where the pigs are out behind the Gamekeeper's hut? Banish all the food there."

Derek still feels slightly out of place using a wand with the elves and Stiles merely muttering and snapping at plates but he notices that he *is* able to do more at once, which is nice, and he smirks just a little at Stiles.

Stiles rolls his eyes.

Leaving is another ten minute affair, with Stiles accepting a bag of something and then leaning down to hug almost every elf and promising to be back soon, and yes, Thanksgiving is definitely on Thursday. It's on Thursday every year.

It seems the only way to get away for Stiles is to keep talking and slowly back towards the door so Derek hangs back and lets him do that and then-

"Mister Hale," Harley says, snagging Derek by the wrist as he goes to follow Stiles out. "You must make sure he eats. He skips too many meals. Not good."

"Uh, okay," Derek says, feeling himself turning red. He does not see Stiles as often as Harley and the others think he does. He could try to get Stiles to eat dinner on Tuesdays. Aside from that, he's practically useless. But he has no idea how to explain that. Or if he should even try. "Okay, I will. I'll try."

"Good," Harley replies, nodding seriously as if he and Derek had just come to a formal agreement. He holds out a bag. "Now take these. They're your favorite."

Derek tries to protest, but Stiles sticks his head back in long enough to glance at him, realize the situation, and shake his head.

"Thank you," Derek says instead. "Thank you very much."

"No, thank you's," Harley says. "Just watch out for Mister Stilinski. Be a good friend."

Derek goes to nod again, open his mouth to say thank you one more time, but Harley snaps his fingers and suddenly Derek is being propelled out the door.

Stiles catches him before he can careen into the far wall.

“You tried to refuse the food, didn’t you?” he asks, holding up his own bag. It looks even bigger than Derek’s. “Rookie mistake.”

Something in Derek’s bag starts *moving* and he’s concerned at first until he opens it and finds a pile of home-made chocolate frogs.

^^*^

On Thursday, all the tables of the Great Hall are full with the dishes he’s already tried and when he looks across the room, he sees that Stiles is actually at dinner for once. He’s reading a pile of papers rather than a book but he seems to actually notice Derek’s stare this time.

At least, he looks up and they make eye contact.

“*Happy Thanksgiving,*” Derek mouths across the Great Hall.

Stiles smiles, just a little.

“*Thanks.*”

^^*^

“Sorry, I’m late,” Derek grunts a few days later, throwing his books down with a bit more force than necessary.

He’s annoyed he’s almost half an hour late because that cuts into his time with Stiles, but he’s also annoyed – no, *furious* because-

“What’s wrong?” Stiles asks, frowning at him.

Derek sucks in a breath. Opens his mouth to tell Stiles that it’s nothing, that he’s fine.

“Some asshole Slyths stole Cora’s diary,” he says instead. “Fucking twats grabbed it when she was eating lunch or something and opened it and started reading aloud before the teachers arrived. Then they Banished it somewhere and they won’t tell her where.”

Derek scowls. “They’re threatening to post the whole thing around school if she tells anyone and, obviously, she’s only eleven so it’s not like there is anything *in* there but-”

“But she’s really upset,” he finishes. “She spend the last hour crying to me and Laura and Laura *says* that she’ll talk to the Slytherin prefects but we all know they’ll just deny knowing where it is ‘cause they’re bloody Slyther-”

Abruptly, Derek remember who he’s talking to.

“Sorry,” he says, flushing. “Sorry, it’s not just ‘cause they’re Slytherins. It’s just... they’re assholes. Cora’s mortified and Laura’s pissed and-”

“It’s fine,” Stiles says shortly and Derek can’t quite tell if he’s telling the truth. “Who were they?”

“Fifth years- that Kali and Ennis couple,” Derek replies, feeling his jaw clench. “Fucking wankers.”

“Oh,” Stiles says softly. “Yeah, they are kind of jerks.”

“Yeah,” Derek takes a deep breath. There’s no use getting angry about it. At least, not now. Their Potions final is in two and a half weeks. “Let’s focus. Potions.”

“Alright,” Stiles agrees. But then falls into an uncharacteristic silence. And that gives Derek the opportunity to replay what he’s just said in his head and-

“I really am sorry,” Derek says after a few awkward minutes. Stiles looks up at him. “For what I said. About Slytherins. I didn’t really mean it, I just-”

“It’s not a big deal,” Stiles assures him, shrugging. “You grew up hating Slytherins, it’s not like you can change that.”

“What?” Derek says, blinking in surprise. “No, no, I didn’t grow up hating Slytherins. That’s not- that’s not true.”

“Ooo-kay,” Stiles says, his whole face going disbelieving.

“I didn’t!” Derek says. “I wasn’t taught to hate anyone!”

“I’m not saying you were *taught* to hate anyone,” Stiles says quickly, putting his hands up in a calming manner. “I’m just saying... well, dude, the first thing you pointed out about Kali and Ennis was that they were Slytherins. And then you implied that Slytherins would lie, like other kids in other House wouldn’t, and... look, it’s fine. I didn’t take it personally. Seriously.”

“I’m sorry,” Derek says again. His anger has almost completely shifted into guilt. It feels even worse.

“No problem,” Stiles says. “Now... potions?”

“I just... I wish you weren’t a Slytherin, sometimes,” Derek admits. It would be easier. They could just be friends openly and Derek wouldn’t have to worry about saying the wrong thing at times like this. They could eat breakfast together and Derek could make sure Stiles was eating the other two meals of the day and-

“Hey,” Stiles says, his voice a little sharp for the first time in their conversation. “That’s messed up. I *like* being a Slytherin.”

“What?” Derek says. “No, you don’t.”

“Uh, yes, I do,” Stiles replies. “The Slytherin traits? Cunning, resourcefulness, and ambition? Yeah, sign me up. Those are awesome.”

“But, you... you hated it,” Derek replies, feeling more and more confused by the moment. “At the Owlery...”

“I said I hated that everyone *else* hated me automatically,” Stiles corrects. “That’s not a Slytherin problem. That’s a Rest-of-the-School problem.”

“You said they hated you too,” Derek mutters and he can’t help it. It comes out a tad whiney.

“I mean, most of them do,” Stiles agrees easily. “But, dude, I came in here and basically fucked up the curve in half their classes and *am* loud and obnoxious and I do lose us a *fuckton* of points. I’d hate me too.”

“It just sounds like they’re jealous,” Derek replies. “And House Points are no reason to hate anyone. You said it yourself, it doesn’t even mean anything.”

“True,” Stiles says, nodding. “But did you know that Slytherin hasn’t won the House Cup since the big war you guys always talk about? It ended like fifteen years ago and they haven’t won since. Haven’t had a Head Boy or Girl either. This is a House that literally *prides* itself on pride. And apparently the Slytherin grades are almost always as high, if not better, than the other Houses. They just don’t get as many random points throughout the day. Slughorn is the only teacher that regularly rewards Slytherin students. And it’s still not enough. They don’t win anymore. People are mad about it. And they can’t be pissed at the rest of the school since that’s what got them into trouble in the first place, so they’re pissed at me. Which is fine. I honestly don’t care.”

Derek can’t think of anything to say. He hadn’t even known that the Slytherins hadn’t won since the War. And everyone else in the school sees Slughorn as an obnoxious example of favoritism, but maybe...

“And even though they hate me,” Stiles continues, pulling out paper. “At least they’re interesting about it. All the tricks they try to pull are subtle and they almost always give me a chance to try to work my way out of it and... well, I respect them. I think most of them respect me too at this point. At least, the other day, two sixth years warned me that douchebag Grant from Hufflepuff was in the Greenhouse messing with my Mallowsweet.”

“I- I didn’t... I’ve never thought of it like that,” Derek admits softly. It still seems strange to him. To like and respect people who hated you.

“I mean, don’t get me wrong, some of us are assholes,” Stiles replies. “Like Kali and Ennis. Total fuckers. But there are assholes in every House. And most of us aren’t *that* bad.”

Derek nods mutely or at least he tries to and then Stiles is helpfully shoving a book in his face.

“Alright dude, enough weird magic politics. We need to make sure I’m not going to fail Potions.”

^^*^

It's weird that someone who spend an alarming amount of time dropping, losing, or somehow mangling his quill or generally injuring himself while sitting is still able to completely surprise Derek when he wants to.

But Derek descends the ladder from Divination, turns down one hallway and then almost doesn't notice it when Stiles slides up next to him.

"Stiles!" Derek says, trying not to show how thrilled he is. He almost never gets to see Stiles on Wednesdays. And he'd stayed up half the night thinking about what Stiles had said and realizing just how right he was. In all the other Houses, the assholes are considered the exception. But with Slytherin, the ones who manage to have friends outside of Slytherins, *they're* the exception. And that's ridiculous and he needs to know *more*. Is there documented evidence that Slytherin students don't get as many House points? Do the prefects ever talk about this? What exactly would happen if-

"It's about Potions," Stiles starts, glancing around at the other people in the area. "I need you to-"

He stops suddenly and all but shoves Derek into an empty classroom. Derek can only stare as Stiles glares around the room suspiciously.

"What are you-"

"Here," Stiles says, reaching into his bag and pulling something out. "Got it."

Derek looks down. Blinks. Feels his mouth drop open in surprise.

In Stiles' hand is Cora's *diary*.

"But- how?" he asks.

Stiles grins. "I've got my ways, Derek."

"You-" Derek keeps gaping.

"C'mon," Stiles says, still smirking. "Like those freaking losers are going to out-Slytherin me? Please. I'm the smartest of the lot."

"But, you," Derek says. "You don't even *know* Cora."

"Yeah, well," The smirk slides from Stiles' face as he lifts one shoulder. "She's your sister, right?"

Derek doesn't really know how to respond to that, but luckily Stiles is already moving away.

"Gotta get to class, dude," he says, lifting his hand in a strange wave. "Oh, and don't tell anyone I got that for you. I mean, I can outwit 'em any day, but those fifth years are *huge*. They'd find a way to kill me."

“I- I won’t,” Derek promises because Stiles voice had come out playful but his eyes are a bit serious.

“Or I’d have to kill them to *stop* them from killing me,” Stiles continues, waving a hand flippantly. “It would be a mess. Say you found it on the stairs to the Owlery or something. Blame their craptastic Banishing skills.”

“Stiles,” Derek says, wishing that he could make Stiles stop moving for just a second. Stiles glances over his shoulder. “Thank you.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Stiles says and then with a cheeky salute, he’s gone.

^^*^

Cora is ecstatic. She jumps up and down and declares him to be the best big brother in the entire *universe* and, even though he says he found it up by the Owlery per Stiles’ suggestion, by the end of the day, Cora is telling people that he used highly advanced magic to track it down himself and basically fought Kali and Ennis off with his wand hand behind his back.

Which he didn’t do.

Stiles did.

He opens his mouth maybe a thousand times to just *tell* her that it was Stiles, especially when the rhetoric around the House quickly becomes another tale of ‘Gryffindor beats Slytherin: The World Rejoices’ but Stiles had asked him not to and Stiles has to *live* with them.

So he sticks to repeating the “real” story – *I just went up to see Twinkles and found it by the Owlery* – over and over again until it dies down.

When it comes to Stiles, any attempt at thanks is waved off with a dismissive hand and so Derek does the only thing he can think of.

“Hey,” he says as they pack up their stuff. It was their last Potions study session of the semester. The exam is on Thursday and then Christmas break officially starts Friday afternoon. “Would you like to swing by the kitchens?”

He has an exam the next day, but it’s just Transfiguration and Stiles has taken to showing him a few tricks at their end of their potions sessions so Derek feels fine about it. He can wake up early and study in the morning anyway.

Stiles raises an eyebrow.

“Really?” he asks, smirking a little. “Gryffindor goody-two shoes is going to break curfew?”

Derek scowls at him. Okay, yes, usually he heads back to the common room after he and Stiles finish because, unlike Stiles, he doesn’t *enjoy* losing points and getting detentions and he can’t afford to miss Quidditch practice but that doesn’t mean he *never* breaks the rules. He just prefers not to.

“Alright, alright,” Stiles says, reading the answer on his face. “C’mon. I know all the passages the teachers don’t bother patrolling.”

It turns out that Stiles knows all the passages Derek didn’t even know *existed*. Derek spends half the journey thinking they are going in the wrong direction but they wind up at the kitchens all the same.

And Derek considers it a success because Stiles steps into the welcome and love of the elves as if he’s stepping into sunlight. His shoulders relax in a way that they don’t even do with Derek and his smile becomes a thousand times more genuine and one day Derek will figure out how to make Stiles laugh like that but for now, just listening to it is enough.

They make three different kinds of Christmas biscuits. Stiles keeps getting wacked by elves for calling them cookies, Derek gets hit more than a few times for laughing at the sound of Stiles apologizing profusely to elves a third of his size, and they *both* get hit for trying to sneak bites of the dough.

Stiles’ smile goes sad a few times for no reason and Derek frowns and sometimes goes to say something, but the elves seem to have that under control as well. Sometimes they are on him in an instant, loudly yelling in his ear about whatever they believe he has done wrong; a few times Daisy takes the opportunity of Stiles’ stillness to climb up to his shoulder and marvel at how tall he is. One time, they all seem to glance at Harley, who shakes his head minutely, and if by agreement, they all just let him be. They talk around him and don’t ask him to do anything, and when Stiles shakes himself and reanimates a few minutes later, they all accept him back as if his blank stare and sluggish movements never even happened.

At the end of it, Harley nods at Derek solemnly and his Take Away bag is even more packed with food than it was the last time.

Derek takes that to mean he was right to bring Stiles here.

“Alrighty,” Stiles says just outside the picture of the Fat Lady. He had offered to walk Derek back so that the teachers wouldn’t catch him. It’s almost midnight. Derek is just now realizing that he hadn’t had to tell Stiles where the Gryffindor dorm room was. “Back safe and sound. Your honor intact.”

“At least I have honor,” Derek mutters, but they’re both smiling.

“You wound me,” Stiles says. “I should have abandoned you in the dungeons.”

“Oh, get out of here,” Derek says. “You’re the worst.”

“Always,” Stiles grins. “Hey, if I don’t see you before break, have a nice Christmas.”

Oh. Right. Exams are separated by House so Derek won’t even be there to see if Stiles is screwing up the Potions mid-term and-

“Yeah,” he says, smile slipping. “Yeah, you too. You must be really excited to be going home.”

They wouldn't even be able to exchange owls. Not when it takes pretty much two weeks for Twinkles to fly back and forth. Still, two weeks isn't that-

"Nah," Stiles says, shrugging one shoulder in that way he has that Derek is pretty sure he hates. "I'll be here. Terrorizing the remaining staff and such. Probably try to find a few more sneaky ways to get through the school. The usual."

"You... you aren't going home?" Derek asks. There are always a few students who don't go home for the break, but he just assumed Stiles would be psyched to see his dad and Scott again.

"Dude," Stiles replies. "Plane tickets remember? Over a thousand dollars. And it's a twelve hour flight- I nearly went crazy on the way here."

"But... the Floo network?" Derek suggests. "Couldn't you-"

"Takes forever to get international clearance for that," Stiles says and his voice isn't angry but it goes a bit... forced. It's clear he doesn't want to talk about this. He takes a breath and smiles. "Besides, I live in *California*. We don't even have a fireplace to hook up."

Derek knows his face must be doing something ridiculous because Stiles looks over at him and his smile grows.

"Don't worry about me, Der," he says. "It's really not a big de-"

"You should come to my house," Derek blurts before he really thinks about it. Stiles freezes. And then Derek does think about it for a moment and he realizes it's a great idea. They have *tons* of room and Stiles wouldn't have to be alone in this big castle and- "It'll be great. You can see a full Wizard House and we can hang out and... stuff!"

He grins. This is perfect. The perfect excuse to spend a whole two weeks with Stiles away from this stupid school and all the stupid people in it.

"Really?" Stiles says and Derek's heart skips a beat when he realizes that Stiles sounds *excited*. "That would be-

"Wait," Stiles is suddenly frowning. "Wait, um, you haven't even checked with your family yet."

"Well... that doesn't matter," Derek says, his face matching Stiles'. Okay, yes, they didn't generally have other people over for Christmas and even Isaac goes to Boyd's but that's because Isaac and Boyd are really close and Boyd had asked first. He's sure that once he explains that Stiles hadn't been *invited* anywhere else, his parents will be fine with it. "I can tell them you're coming tomorrow."

Stiles is already shaking his head. "No, no, man," he says. "I think you should check first. I mean... I've never even talked to your sisters and I don't want to just crash your Christmas vacation. Christmas is an important time for family."

Derek wonders if he knows how ridiculous he sounds when he says that. Considering that a moment ago, he admitted that he didn't even get to be with his for Christmas.

"I'm sure they'll be fine with it," Derek says, sounding a bit exasperated.

Stiles glances towards the Gryffindor crest on the wall.

"Maybe," he allows. "But- but if not, don't worry about it."

"I'll ask tomorrow," Derek says. "We leave on Saturday morning."

"Okay," Stiles says but he doesn't sound sure. "I'll, uh, I'll see you tomorrow then. Let me know."

As usual, he's gone before Derek gets a chance to say anything else.

^^*^

"You invited a *Slytherin* to our house for Christmas?" Cora exclaims when Derek tells them. He understands that she's not happy with that House at the moment, but his eyes still go flat. "After what they did to me?"

"I didn't invite a Slytherin, I invited my *friend*," Derek snaps, nerves sliding into his stomach. He needs his sisters to get on board with this. So that they can get their parents on board with this. "He was going to be stuck here alone for two weeks and so, yes, I asked him."

"Cora, don't be rude," Laura says and Derek hopes for a second that she is on his side, but her face doesn't soften when it turns to him. "Derek, no one is he can't come because he's a Slytherin, but... but you can't just go inviting strangers to our house! For Christmas!"

"He's not a stranger," Derek says. "He's my friend."

"We've never ever seen you hang *out* with him," Cora mutters, a bit petulantly.

"We have Potions together," Derek replies, trying not to roll his eyes. "We're partners."

"Because Slughorn *made* you help him," Laura says. Derek blinks. He hadn't thought they had heard that rumor.

"That's not true," he says. "I *offered* to be his partner. Because I *like* him. As a friend. He's cool."

Cora scoffs. Laura rolls her eyes.

"Derek, I literally *heard* him tell Matthias Baker that Slughorn made you guys sit together," Laura says. "And he didn't sound too happy about it either so I don't know why you're trying to-"

"He said *what*?" Derek cries, something sinking in his stomach. "That's not- oh my *god*."

“Doesn’t really sound like you’re friends,” Cora says. She sounds smug. Derek is going to kill her. “Maybe *you* think you are but-”

“We *are* friends,” Derek snaps. “We study Potions together every Tuesday night and we cooked Thanksgiving dinner with the elves down in the kitchen and, you know why you haven’t met him? Because I knew you both would be freaking *rude* about it.”

“We’re not being *rude* about it,” Cora snaps back. “We’re just saying-”

“Well don’t *just say*,” Derek interrupts, his voice rising. “Because you know what? *He’s* the one who made sure you got your diary back, Cora. Gave it to me the day after I told him about it and told me to claim I found it randomly so his own *housemates* wouldn’t know that he was the one who stole it back and hate him even *more*.”

Cora’s mouth falls open but Derek doesn’t give her the chance to say anything.

“And *he’s* the one who hasn’t even *agreed to come yet* because he wanted to make sure that *my family* was okay with it. But I guess they’re not. So I’ll just go tell him, he’s uninvited, that he can just stay here, *alone*, for two weeks over the holidays because he can’t afford a ticket home and *god forbid* the Hales have a bloody *Slytherin* in their house.

“Except,” Derek continues, standing. “No. No, he won’t be alone. Tell Mom and Dad I decided to stay too. Fuck this.”

He turns to leave, perfectly content to stalk out, but-

“*Derek*,” Laura snaps. Her tone makes it clear that his little temper tantrum isn’t going to slide. “*Calm down*.”

He bristles at her tone, which seems to consist of entirely judgement and rebuke and how *dare* she be mad at him when *she’s* the one who is being a complete tosser, but- but then he eyes flick to Cora and Derek realizes abruptly that he had just yelled at his *eleven* year old sister. Cora’s face is white and her eyes are filled with tears and-

He’s still mad but he suddenly doesn’t feel very good about it.

He sits down.

“We’re sorry,” Laura starts, which is a good thing because Derek thinks if she said anything else, he might have hit her. “We *are*. It was shitty of us to try to somehow prove you two aren’t friends.”

Derek nods decisively. It was.

“But,” Laura says and Derek feels his jaw go square. “But, Derek, in the *four months* that we have been in school, you have mentioned Stilinski - Stiles – exactly once. When you told us you lent him our owl, which, I think, we both thought was just you being nice.”

Cora nods her head miserably. Derek opens his mouth to say something but Laura holds up her hand.

“So, you can’t blame us for being a bit... surprised,” she continues. “You never told us about learning Potions together – the one time I *asked* you about potions, you just said it was ‘fine.’ So, you can be mad at us all you want for being rude or judging him because he’s a Slytherin, but, Derek, you weren’t exactly announcing that you two were friends either. And you didn’t give us any chance to get to know him. And that wasn’t fair. To him or us.”

Derek opens his mouth. Closes it.

“And you can’t blow up every time someone asks you questions,” Laura finishes. “Mom and Dad are going to be curious too. Because I’m willing to bet you haven’t mentioned him to *them* either.”

“No,” Derek admits softly. He hadn’t seen it as purposefully *hiding* Stiles. More... not rushing their friendship. Of course, that doesn’t mean anything when he invites Stiles over for Christmas without even thinking about it.

“I’ll tell Mom and Dad when we talk in the fire tonight,” Laura says and he knows that’s her version of giving him a few days to prepare himself. She’ll probably even make it seem like she and Cora knew all about Stiles. It’s an apology and protection wrapped all up in one.

She makes a good buffer for the conflict that sometimes erupts in their family. Always has.

“Tell Stiles we’re leaving at 8am on Saturday,” she says, rising. “See you then.”

She leaves and Cora follows her and Derek is once again left thinking that *healways* manages to screw things up.

At least this time, he can fix it.

^^*^

Come Saturday morning, Derek finds himself feeling more confident. Confident and ready for many things.

He’s ready for his sisters to be awkward and maybe a little standoffish. He’s ready for Stiles to be nervous. He’s ready for his Mom to ask way too many invasive questions when they finally get to the house.

He is *not* ready to see Stiles in full Muggle clothes.

Stiles is near constantly getting uniform infractions for forgetting his tie or refusing to wear his vest or leaving his robes undone. Derek has actually seen his Muggle tennis shoes before (he thinks they’re called Chucks or something) because Stiles tends to wear those every day until he gets told to change.

But he is not ready to see Stiles in dark blue jeans, wearing a black shirt with some kind of bat symbol on it, a plaid shirt thrown over it and one of his famous hoodies thrown over that. He’s not ready to see Stiles somehow look more like *himself* than ever before.

And he's certainly not ready for Stiles to leap up from where he's sitting next to a ratty duffel bag with an oversized check on it and run his hands nervously through his hair.

Derek has seen the motion before but... but, god, even when Wizards dress in regular clothes it's all jumpers and tweed jackets and American shirt sizes must run small because he can practically see Stiles' chest strain against his shirt at the movement.

Derek must look like an idiot, he realizes. He's still wearing robes because... he's used to robes and it's chilly out and-

"Are you *sure* this is okay?" Stiles asks, shifting his weight as if preparing to run back into the castle. "Like, really, I don't know about this. Maybe... maybe I should just stay."

"Stiles," Derek says, hoping his voice comes out even. "It's fine. Promise."

"I dunno," Stiles mutters. "I've only ever stayed over at Scott's house and his mom is like... *used* to me and- oh my god, should I still be wearing robes? I only have school robes but I could go get them. Is this... I don't have any formal clothes, Derek!"

Derek is well aware he's grinning like an idiot. He just can't stop.

"You look fine, Stiles," he says. He's lying. Stiles doesn't look fine. He looks more than fine. He looks fantastic. "Don't worry. Christmas is casual."

"Okay," Stiles says. He takes a deep breath. "Okay. I just... I can still just stay here. Your family-"

"My family wants you to come," Derek says. It's true. At least he hopes it's true. He and his sisters hadn't exactly talked about it anymore and he hadn't talked to his parents *directly* but his mom had sent a separate owl to him asking if Stiles had any food allergies or preferences so... she's onboard. Which means everyone else will get on board. That's how their family works. "They're totally excited to meet you."

Stiles opens his mouth as if he's going to argue but then he spots something over Derek's shoulder and snaps it shut audibly.

Derek turns to see his two sisters walking down the Hogwarts steps.

They're an intimidating pair without trying to be. Laura is a good 10 cm taller than Derek, which means even *taller* than Stiles and Cora is already holding herself with all of Laura's confidence. And their dark hair and piercing green eyes don't exactly help matters.

They walk up and Stiles starts fidgeting with the string of his sweatshirt and Derek finds himself glaring at his sisters. Even though this was his fault. Even though he really should have introduced them earlier. And in a less awkward setting.

"Stiles!" the voice that comes out of Laura's mouth is warm and welcoming. She's grabbing Stiles' hand as if they are old friends. "It's great to meet you!"

“I can’t believe you got stuck being Derek’s friend,” Cora pipes up, her face the picture of younger sibling mischief. “That must suck.”

Derek stares at them. Stiles does too but then Laura is asking him if he has everything and Stiles recovers enough to thank them for letting him come and Laura waves that off and-

Derek doesn’t get a chance to say much. He had forgotten how aggressively nice his sisters can be when they feel like it.

Laura asks Stiles if he’s ever used the Floo Network before and then patiently explains how it’s done. Cora assured him that it’s best to do it on an empty stomach because the first time *Derek* had used Floo, he threw up *everywhere* and Derek grumbles a little at that story, but it makes Stiles laugh so he doesn’t really mind.

(Though, he minds a little. He still feels ridiculous standing next to Stiles when Stiles looks so bloody *good*.)

His sisters pop through the fireplace first and though Stiles has relaxed a little, he still tells Derek to go through first (*You should see your parents first, dude*).

So Derek goes through first and he can’t help but grin at the sight of the cozy room his parents have set up for Floo Network. It’s a perfect blend of his mother’s artwork and his father’s never-ending collection of books.

“Hello!” He says.

“Derek,” his mother greets him with a hug. “Laura and Cora ran up to put their things away before tea. But, where’s your friend?”

“He’s coming,” Derek replies, casting a nervous look towards the fireplace. Technically, Stiles should be coming through any moment.

They wait for a moment. Derek frowns.

“He’s Muggle-born,” he says, chewing on his bottom lip. “Maybe I should-”

The next instant, Stiles is bursting through the fireplace. He looks a little pale but otherwise fine.

“Hello,” Derek’s mother says, smiling. “For a while there, we were afraid you had gone to the wrong place!”

“First time using the Floo Network?” his father asks. “It can be a bit disorienting.”

“Um, yes,” Stiles says, blushing. “Yes, first time. Um, hello.”

“Mom and Dad,” Derek says. “This is Stiles. Stiles, my parents.”

“Hi,” Stiles says again, dropping his bag without ceremony and stepping forward to shake each of their hands. Derek swears Stiles looked less nervous when staring down hippogriffs

in Care for Magical Creatures. “Th-thanks for having me. I hope it’s not too much trouble. Seriously, you can just stick me on a couch somewhere. Or the floor. That works too.”

Derek’s mom laughs. Derek blushes. They have no less than *three* guest rooms.

“We have a guest room all set up,” she says. “Derek can show you there now.”

“Oh, that’s really- wait,” Stiles says, jumping a bit as he interrupts himself. “Wait, before I forget.”

His hands flutter for a second in the way they do when he is in a bit of a panic and he spins in place twice, apparently trying to look for his bag, then finds it.

He frowns at it and his bag opens and then he mutters something and just as suddenly a pie is in his hand. Apparently, he’s still too flustered to notice that both Derek’s parents are staring at him in awe.

Derek feels himself swell with pride for no reason. It’s not like *he* is the one who can perform wandless magic without a second thought. But the amazed look on his parents’ faces is how he thinks everyone should look at Stiles and even though he’s gotten used to it, it really is incredible and-

“Here,” Stiles says, holding out the tray to Derek’s mother. “It’s Pecan pie. Actually it’s Bacon Bourbon Pecan pie. But, uh, it should be good. I think. We made three different versions to be sure.”

“*You* made this?” Derek’s mom says. She sounds a little bit overwhelmed. Fair enough, Stiles is overwhelming. In all the best ways.

“Yes,” Stiles says and he’s turning red now. More red than Derek has ever seen him. “Well, not just me. I mean, I had help so, really, it was more like half me? Or less. A quarter? I mean, not that I didn’t help, I just-”

“Stiles is learning to cook from the elves at school,” Derek cuts in. Stiles takes a breath and shoots Derek a grateful look. Derek nods.

“That sounds wonderful,” Derek’s father says. “And was that wandless magic I just saw?”

“Oh, uh, yeah,” Stiles says. “That’s... that’s how I do magic mostly. No one really knows why.”

“Well, that’s incredibly rare,” Derek’s father says. He’s sliding into his researcher voice. Derek is suddenly positive that he and Stiles are going to get along great. “Except for among elves, which I’m sure you knew. In fact, I wonder if you harness magic the same way. That would be-”

“Dear,” Derek’s mom interrupts. “Why don’t we let Derek show our guest to his room before we start quizzing him.”

“Oh, oh, yes, of course,” Dad says. “We’ll talk later.”

“Thank you so much for the pie,” his mom says, smiling. “I put him in the guest room closest to yours, Derek.”

Derek nods and pulls Stiles along and-

“Guest room closet to yours?” Stiles asks under his breath as he grabs his bag. For all his skill with magic, sometimes it seems he forgets to use it. “You mean there’s more than one?”

Derek flushes.

And doesn’t bother responding. Instead, he just opens the door to from the Floo Room to the main entryway of their house which is...

Well, it convey more than words exactly how big their house is. He’s a Hale. It’s more like a mansion. The opening room is a full double staircase and it’s all warm woods and beams but it’s still *big* and-

“Holy *shit*,” Stiles says. He’s staring up at the ceiling. And at the back wall that’s entirely windows. Half of which are stained glass. “Derek, this is...”

Derek shifts. He sort of hates this. Hates when people get awkward or think this is what his family is really about or-

“Well,” Stiles says, clearing his throat so he doesn’t sound quite so awed. “I guess I won’t be sleeping on a couch.”

Derek relaxes. “Told you.”

“Psh,” Stiles says. “You told me nothing. Are you secretly like Lord and Ladies? This is England. That’s sort of the picture I have in my head.”

Derek groans. Stiles grins at him.

^^*^

It’s alarming how well Stiles fits into their family.

He’s a little awkward and nervous first and never quite stops rambling or tripping over his words but he still... he still *fits* somehow. He and Cora form a frankly terrifying alliance that seems to be dedicated to causing destruction and revealing Derek’s most embarrassing moments. Laura remains a little bit distant at first but then Stiles mentions over dinner that he’s teaching himself Geometry so he can help his friend, Scott, and Laura *loves* arthimancy and offers to help him and they take to spending at least an hour a day, crouched over books.

And that’s nothing compared to how much time Stiles spends talking to his parents. Derek’s mother has always been fascinated with wandless magic and though Derek knows that Stiles usually sees it as more of a burden then a gift, he makes the effort to explain how he does it. Derek doesn’t even know what Stiles and his dad end up talking about because it seems to be entirely theoretical (something about energy?) and entirely over Derek’s head.

And Derek can't get enough of living right next to him. Stiles takes ridiculously long showers and sings Muggle songs at the top of his lungs the entire time. He stays up way too late, muttering curses to himself, but Derek learns to fall asleep to the sound so it's not a big deal. (He doesn't quite manage to fall asleep to the explosions that sometimes happen, but that's okay. He likes the reminder that Stiles is there.)

On the first day, they walk into town so that Stiles can use the internet and Derek has to admit that Muggle technology really is quite astounding. Stiles takes out his laptop and shows Derek the wonder of computers and typing and then he gets a phone call from his dad and it's not quite talking through a fire, but Stiles can see his father's *face* on the screen and-

Well, Derek waves hello and then leaves to give him his privacy. Stiles takes to running over in the morning so he can talk to his father and Scott before they go to sleep.

And then he's back and helping cook breakfast, no matter how many times each of the Hales tells him he's a guest and he doesn't have to cook.

Christmas morning brings a subdued Stiles. He goes into town for a longer stretch of time than usual and comes back oddly quiet. But then he seems to realize that they've waited for him to get back before opening presents and then he sees that he *has* presents from everyone (even Cora) and he gradually comes back to himself. By midday, he's alternating between laughing and stammering and blushing and-

It's just all going by alarmingly quickly. And smoothly. Too smoothly.

He's not even surprised when he wakes up the day they are due to return to Hogwarts to find his mom in the kitchen. Stiles must be out talking to his family one last time. His mother appears to be waiting for him.

He knows what's coming, he just doesn't see a way to get out of it.

"So," she says conversationally. "An American, muggle-born, Slytherin transfer. Who uses wandless magic without thinking about it."

She pauses. Derek flushes. Then tries to hide it by turning and pretending that getting tea is a complicated process.

"You sure know how to pick 'em," she says when Derek finally turns back around.

Derek goes for arranging his face into something carefully blank. With a hint of a question.

"Okay, okay," his mother replies, standing regally. "You're too cool to talk about it with your mother. That's fine."

"*Mom.*"

"But fair warning," she continues. "Laura knows. So does Cora probably. So would half the people in your school if you let yourself hang out with him publically."

"That's not-"

"I'm just saying," she says. "Your father and I think he's *wonderful*. We totally approve."

"Mom, we're just *friends*," Derek tries. "Really."

She raises an eyebrow at him. "I thought I taught you better than to lie to your parents."

"I'm not lying," Derek says. "I just... I don't know."

"You don't know what?"

"Just... stuff," Derek says, shrugging and wondering if it's too late to just run away.

"You don't know if you like him?" his mother asks.

"No, I know- I mean," Derek takes a breath. "It's just more complicated at school. We don't... we don't get to see each other that much."

His mom goes very still. Derek hunches his shoulders. He feels bad just *forsaying* that. But it's true. He and Stiles *don't* get to see each other every day at Hogwarts. They don't get to eat all their meals at the same table or stay up chatting over desserts or spend an entire day doing all the snow-related activities that Stiles had never gotten to do before.

At Hogwarts, Stiles is still oddly careful when he says hello to Derek and starts rumors that Derek was *forced* to sit next to him in Potions and-

"Derek," his mother says, waiting until he looks up to meet his eyes. "If you want to spend time with him, then do it."

She says it like it's easy. Like he doesn't have to concern himself with what his Housemates would say or worry Stiles getting bullied even more for being seen with him or consider that Stiles may not *want* to hang out with him.

"From what I've seen," she continues. "Stiles doesn't seem to care about tradition or what people think or what people will say. But he does seem to care about you."

"Of course," she finishes, leaning forward and ruffling his hair. "I might be a bit biased."

^^^^*

He takes his mom's advice.

He makes a point to arrive early to talk with Stiles before Potions class, and stands next to him during Care of Magical Creatures and invites Stiles over to sit with him and Boyd during Astronomy. He makes a point to hang around the classrooms of Stiles' other classes as they end so he can catch Stiles in conversation. He talks loudly and laughs openly and takes to yelling at anyone who says anything remotely negative about it.

He gets two more detentions for fighting.

Stiles scowls and calls him an idiot and tries to start a rumor that he is blackmailing Derek that absolutely no one believes.

And the third time Derek winds up in Detention for punching a Ravenclaw because they imply that Stiles is cheating somehow, Stiles lights McGonagall's robes on fire and ends up cleaning bedpans with him.

^^^^

Still, Derek knows it's not really *just* for him, knows that Stiles prefer doing work outside rather than in the library, knows he shouldn't read into it too much, when Quidditch starts up again and Stiles takes to sitting on the bleachers when Gryffindor practices. He tells himself those things over and over again, but he still gets a thrill every time he looks over to see Stiles stretched out, scribbling furiously, curled in layers of clothes along the sideline.

It causes a stir at first, since practices are supposed to be closed and a *Slytherin* hanging around obviously can't be trusted. (Stiles doesn't help matters by merely shrugging and saying "I could be" when asked if he is spying.) But eventually Derek talks his team around. By which he means, he glares a lot, accuses them of cowardice, and assures them that if it looks like the other team has an advantage in the next game, he will be held personally responsible.

Stiles receives a few more threats, which just make him grin, and then it's settled. Or at least, no one tries to physically remove him from the premises.

His team really doesn't have anything to worry about though. For the most part, Stiles doesn't even seem to glance up.

At least, he's never looking when Derek risks taking his eyes off the ball and looking down. (He only manages it about three times before missing a save and earning himself a talk from his captain.)

Still, it's a good practice and when it ends, he doesn't hesitate to jump off his broom a little higher than necessary and land hard in front of Stiles.

He gets a jump and gasp of surprise and he grins.

"Holy fucking-" Stiles gasps. "Warn a guy next time!"

"C'mon," Derek says. It's almost eight but it's still light out. "It's a beautiful day. Want to take a turn?"

"Muggle, remember?" Stiles says, waving at his face.

"Muggle-born," Derek corrects, frowning. Stiles rolls his eyes.

"Still, I've nearly killed myself playing *lacrosse*," he says, shrugging one shoulder. "And that is played on the ground. In protective gear."

"Oh, c'mon," Derek says. "You've been studying all day."

With that, he reaches over and grabs Stiles' elbow, pulling him too his feet.

"Derek, no," he sputters. "Dude, I skipped first year! I didn't even get the Intro to Flying Crash Course!"

"I'll teach you," Derek says, continuing to march Stiles to the middle of the field. He doesn't feel bad about it. By this point he'd learned the difference between Stiles' fake protests and his real ones. (Hint: His real protests usually end up with the other person on the ground.)

"Alright," Derek says once they're near the middle of the field. "It's not hard. Here, take the broom. Now, put one leg on either side, that's it- two hands, Stiles. Hold on with two hands and feel that? It's technically hovering. Now you just gotta hop up a bit. It'll catch you. Ready? 1-2-"

"Wait!" Stiles yelps suddenly. He'd actually been obeying up to this point. "Wait, what the fuck? I'm supposed to do this *by myself*?"

"Well, yeah," Derek says, leaning back. "How else would you do it?"

"Uh, I don't know!" Stiles says, voice at least an octave higher than usual. "With another person! Or on some sort of safety broom! Or like a simulator of some kind. That's what I want. A broomstick simulator."

"I have no idea what that is," Derek admits.

"Of course you don't," Stiles sighs. "Still, there's no way. No way I'm doing this. Uh-uh. I'm out."

He goes so far as to start stepping out of the broom.

"Wait, wait, wait," Derek says. "Stiles, you can do this. Are you... are you afraid of heights or something?"

"No," Stiles says. "But I might be afraid of rocketing a thousand feet in the air and then falling to my *death*."

He does sound a little panicked. Derek takes pity on him.

"Okay, okay," he says. "I'll go with you."

"Is this going to be like when people claim they are holding the bike but then they let go of the bike?" Stiles asks, his eyes squinting in suspicion.

"Such a bloody Slytherin," Derek says. "Just trust me. Here, slide up so you can steer. And before you ask, yes, I can take over from back here."

It's as Derek is throwing a leg over the broom that he realizes that in order to do this, he is going to have to hold on to Stiles. And that Stiles' back is going to be pressed against his chest. And that his face is basically going to be buried against Stiles' neck.

It's okay. He can focus. He's a fucking Gryffindor. He's got this.

(He's also been spending too much time with Stiles if he's cursing this much in his head, but that's not important at the moment.)

"Okay," he says, trying to keep his grip on Stiles' hips professional. "Okay, now we jump on three, okay?"

Silently he says a prayer that the broom will hold them both.

"Fuck," Stiles breathes.

"1...2...3!"

Despite it all, he's not really surprised when Stiles actually jumps. He jumps higher than Derek even and so for a moment Derek is afraid he's going to slide off the back but he grips Stiles' hips harder and then the broom seems to realize that there are two people on there and it straightens and-

"Fucking shit, fucking shit, fucking shit," Stiles is muttering. Derek laughs.

"Stiles, we're fine," he says. "We're like six feet off the ground."

"More like twenty," Stiles mutters.

"Oh, stop being a baby," Derek says. "Now lean forward a little bit so we can move."

Stiles doesn't stop mumbling curses the whole time but he manages to listen anyway. And he's not bad. His movements are a bit spastic and a few times that means they are flying off faster than Derek would have suggested but Stiles seems to delight in going higher and higher and Derek delights in the feel of Stiles pressed against him and then has to try to *stop* delighting in it because -uh-

"Dude, we're so high," Stiles says as he pulls them to a stop high over the ground. "This is so cool."

"Yeah," Derek agrees, blinking and dragging his eyes away from Stiles' neck. "Yeah, I'm just glad it can hold both of us."

"What?!" Stiles says. "This thing isn't meant for two people?"

"Well, I've done it before," Derek replies, shrugging.

"Oh," Stiles calms. For a moment. Then, "Wait- *when* exactly did you do this?"

"When I was learning to fly," Derek says seriously. Then laughs. "When I was three."

"Oh my *god*," Stiles says but he's grinning. Derek can tell without being able to see his face. "You're the worst."

They keep flying. Eventually Derek asks if Stiles would like to try it on his own and he senses Stiles' hesitation, feeling the muscles of his shoulders clench for just the briefest moment, and Derek doesn't really know what it means. But Stiles shakes his head a moment later, glancing back to reveal that his bottom lip is trapped between his teeth.

"Nah," he says. "That's okay. It-uh- maybe next time."

He's going for casual, Derek knows.

"Okay," Derek replies, keeping his voice equally light, even though he's sure he feels the same level of nerves. "Wanna try a barrel roll?"

Predictably, Stiles objects fervently to that idea.

They do it anyway.

^^*^

It's the elves that warn him.

It's late March and it seems that Stiles is almost always busy these days. He bursts into their Tuesday meetings late and spends large chunks of time staring into space and forcing Derek to repeat his instructions. He always looks happy to see Derek, but it's a muted happiness. A happiness tinged with exhaustion and stress and there's no real reason for it because it's not exam season.

Even his magic seems worn out. Books that once rocketed from the shelves to meet up with Stiles' hand now sluggishly make their way across the room and most of the page turning is done by hand. One day, he actually gets out his *wand* in order to enlarge a book to read it more easily.

Derek isn't too worried. Stiles has been through stretches like this before. Maybe not as long, but every once and a while, there's a project that demands all his attention. Stiles is still there eating at lunch and he's making it to a fair amount of dinners. And he doesn't seem to mind when Derek sneaks him food in Potions and Care of Magical Creatures.

Derek's going to give him a while longer before starting to freak out. Because he's also wearing himself a little thin. They'd won their match against Ravenclaw, but lost narrowly to the Slytherins (Stiles had been good enough not to rub it in too much) which means that they have to beat the Hufflepuffs by a landslide. Otherwise Ravenclaw takes the cup. It means flying practice every day for Derek and lunch meetings to go over strategy and the kind of pressure that starts messing with his sleep. And the match is still weeks away.

He'll calm down eventually, he knows, but until then, their study sessions have been a bit lackluster.

There's one Tuesday when he and Stiles both fall asleep twenty minutes in and wake up at the sound of the warning bell groggy and embarrassed.

(Derek learns that he looks ridiculous with the imprint of a book across his face and Stiles somehow still looks adorable even with one side of his hair plastered down.)

He keeps falling asleep right after practice and falling behind on school work, so he starts waking up early to do it over breakfast. Or at least attempt.

It here, early enough that he's the only Gryffindor at the table when there is suddenly a voice at his elbow.

"Mister Hale!" Derek jumps. He hadn't been sleeping. Just resting his eyes. "Derek!"

Derek looks down to see a set of very familiar eyes looking back up at him.

"Daisy!" he says and then immediately wakes up. "What wrong?"

She tilts her head at him.

"Nothing, but we were wondering what the plan was," she bounces up and down in excitement. Derek is very confused.

"Plan?"

"For Mr. Stilinski's birthday!"

"Birthday?"

Daisy no longer looks excited. Now she looks like she is concerned she has the wrong human. She looks around and then back at him.

"Mr. Stilinski," she repeats. "Stiles. Your friend. He brought you to the kitchens."

"Yes, I know who Stiles is, Daisy!" Derek says, rubbing one hand across his face. Maybe this is some weird Transfiguration dream.

"Well, it's his birthday," she says. "On the 8th of April. In a week and a half."

It should not be possible for such a tiny person to convey such a great amount of judgement.

"We were wondering if you had a plan. Unless..." Her frown shifts. "Do Americans not celebrate birthdays?" She sounds horrified by the idea.

"No, they do," Derek says, things finally clicking into place. "They do, I just... I don't have a plan yet."

He hadn't even known it was Stiles' birthday but he doesn't think admitting that is a particularly good idea.

So that's how he ends up planning a surprise party for Stiles. It shouldn't be very hard since it's decided early on that Derek will just drag Stiles to the kitchens where the elves will have laid out his favorite foods and at least three different kinds of cakes, but it is. Because despite

his repeated attempts to tell Harley that he doesn't *know* Stiles *ultimate* favorite food, the elf refuses to believe him. He is also called to consult on the exact shade of green that Stiles prefers and questioned on whether it is customary to wave an American flag at people's parties. Basically, it turns into a very extensive job.

And on top of all of that, he has to get a present. Though, actually, he has one fire-chat with his Mom and that is apparently handled.

It all goes off without a hitch.

He notices that Stiles gets what looks like three cards and a small parcel delivered at breakfast and sort of waits all day for Stiles to casually mention that it's his birthday.

But he doesn't and Derek is a little miffed at that, but in this case, it's for the best. And he manages not to give it away.

Even the story that gets them both down in the kitchen is carefully constructed. Derek tells Stiles that Daisy came up to tell him that Harley isn't feeling well and Stiles instantly agrees that they should go down and say hello.

His face when he opens the door is priceless.

All the elves are screaming in excitement and Derek had not realized the three cakes they were planning were all *tiered* cakes and Stiles nearly *kills* himself laughing at the giant flag Daisy had insisted on draping along the back wall of the kitchen.

The dinner stretches on for three hours, all the elves sitting around and talking over each other in a way that has become entirely peaceful. Stiles doesn't stop grinning and apparently the Hogwarts elf tradition of gifting socks is allowed to include Honorary Elves so he winds up with a pile of socks by his elbow.

Gradually, the elves start to wander off to clean up or get some sleep or maybe Harley gives one of his unseen signals but eventually, it's just the two of them.

"I'm sorry I've been so busy lately," Stiles says around a mouthful of cake. Derek doesn't have any idea how he's still eating. He thinks he's going to die. "I've just been trying a few things."

Derek wants to ask. Wants to, but doesn't because if Stiles wanted to tell him, he would have.

And that's okay. He still looks happier than Derek has ever seen him.

"That's alright," he says honestly. "I've been busy with Quidditch too."

He's just glad that the elves told him. That they could get together and celebrate Stiles' birthday.

"And," he says, smiling a little. "I think my present can help with that."

Stiles stares at him.

“What?” he asks. “You- you got me another present? Besides the party?”

Derek really thinks that Stiles shouldn’t be so amazed by that. Obviously he was getting Stiles a present. It’s his birthday and he’s Derek... well, he’s Derek’s best friend. Maybe more.

“Well, it’s from me and my sisters,” he allows. “And my parents.”

“Derek,” Stiles says and he sounds suspicious. “What did you do?”

“Easier to show you, I reckon,” Derek replies. The elves hadn’t exactly been happy to keep Stiles’ present in the back pantry of their kitchen but they’d agreed. “One moment.”

Derek can’t help but be excited. He grabs the present, wincing a little at the sight of the godawful bow he had planted on top of it, but-

He couldn’t even categorize what Stiles’ face does when he walks out with it.

His eyes go big and his mouth drops open and he makes a high pitched sound that Derek has never heard come out of a human body before and-

“You got me an *owl*,” Stiles squeaks. He stands and takes a cautious step forward as if afraid

“No, you idiot,” Derek says, rolling his eyes. The bird in the cage he’s carrying is clearly not an owl. “It’s a falcon. A Peregrine falcon.”

Stiles doesn’t take his eyes from the falcon. Derek isn’t sure how much he’s actually processing. He continues anyway.

“They’re one of the fastest birds in the world,” Derek says. “He’s been trained like an owl though. And the trainer assured me that he’s young enough that he’ll bond with you and they’re supposed to be super loyal and-.”

Stiles takes another small step closer.

“No,” he says firmly. “No, I can’t. Derek, this is... it’s too much. I don’t... I don’t know how much falcons cost but falcons must cost... like a billion dollars. Like a fortune. Or a sizeable chunk of a fortune.”

Technically, Stiles isn’t wrong. But Derek originally only asked for money to get Stiles his own owl and then his father had mentioned trying to get a falcon and his mother’s friend’s friend knew a guy and it was done before Derek really had a say in it.

“That’s not important,” Derek replies. “What’s important is that he’s yours. Already bought and paid for. Though, my dad did really want to meet him at some point.”

“It’s... I can’t, Derek. You have to tell them it’s too much.”

“Stiles,” Derek says. “He can get to California in almost half the time.”

Stiles goes very still. His hand sort of flutter once before clenching into fists and then he finally tears his eyes away from the bird. He reaches out very carefully to take the cage and then sets it on the counter and then-

Then, Derek's arms are suddenly full of Stiles.

It's the first time they've ever hugged and he's too stunned to really react.

"*Thank you,*" Stiles says, clinging, and eventually he pulls away but it takes a little while. He wipes at his eyes quickly and that's okay because Derek sort of has to swipe at his.

By the time he looks over again, Stiles has broken Derek's promise to the elves to keep the "bird of death" in its cage and the falcon is already perched on his wrist.

He stares at it for a solid minute in silence.

"Appa," he says finally.

It's Derek's turn to blink.

"What?"

"His name," Stiles says. "He shall be my powerful six-legged flying bison." Good lord, he's already crooning.

"What?"

"Oh my god, dude," Stiles groans. "We have to get you caught up on Muggle television. I am figuring out this electronics issue as my next project."

Derek rolls his eyes. At this point, the list of Muggle television that he is supposed to watch is entirely unmanageable.

"He can't stay in the Owlery," Derek adds. "He won't get along with the owls, but I got McGonagall to say he could sleep in your dorm."

Stiles looks delighted.

"Oh my god!" he says, pulling Appa closer and rubbing his face in the bird's chest. Derek is glad to see that the falcon looks taken with Stiles. At least he's not clawing his arm off. "We can totally snuggle all night, my beautiful air bending master of the sky."

Derek snorts. Appa twists his head to glare at him.

"Dude, McGonagall must really love you," Stiles says. "What did you do? Promise to kill if necessary win the Quidditch cup or something?"

"No," Derek says. "I just told her it was a good idea. And that it would be no different from a student having a rat or a toad."

And he'd gone on a fairly lengthy speech about how it was still ridiculous that Stiles had to wait almost two weeks before hearing back from his family and how it was *unacceptable* that Stiles was ever put in that situation in the first place and how having Appa was essential to Stiles' happiness and-

McGonagall had stopped him halfway through, right before he was going to threaten to get his parents involved (because he wasn't above playing that card if he had to) and told him that it was fine, that, as an international student, Stiles would be allowed to keep a falcon in his dorm as long as he kept it *neat* and the bird didn't distract the other students.

He and Stiles spend the next hour cooing over Appa and petting him and eventually a few of the elves are brave enough to come in and cautiously poke at him with in finger. Appa remains good natured about it even though Derek is sure that the trainer told him that falcons were notoriously temperamental.

He's also pretty sure it's supposed to take birds longer to warm up to their owners but by the end of the night Appa is unashamedly nibbling gently on Stiles' ear and snaps at Derek when he gets too close. Which is very rude because he's lived with Derek for three days now and so Derek would appreciate some loyalty.

Except not really. Because Stiles hasn't stopped grinning the whole time and he's already talking about how stoked Scott is going to be and the third time Appa snaps at Derek, Stiles pulls him up to eye level and gives him a very firm lecture on how Derek is awesome and, yes, he's a Gryffindor, but he's still cool.

"Happy Birthday, Stiles" Derek says, smiling as they go to part ways. By this point, he doesn't need Stiles to walk him all the way back to the Gryffindor common room.

"Thanks," Stiles says and then he's looking down and blushing a bit. "It really was a good one."

His voice is soft, full of wonder and just a touch of true surprise.

Derek nods and turns to leave and almost misses it the quiet continuation:

"Maybe the best."

^^^^^

Derek gets pretty used to Appa dropping notes on his head. Usually, Appa is gone, clearly making the transatlantic journey back and forth with letters from Stiles' dad and Scott. But Stiles seems overly careful to give him at least a week to recover, or maybe it's just a week that Stiles gets to spend cuddling with him.

Either way, there's usually a few days when Stiles seems to get a kick of sending Appa with letters to Derek even though, despite being busy, they manage to see each other in class three days a week and on Tuesday nights. And Appa seems to get a kick out of dropping Stiles' notes directly on Derek's face. And then refusing to move until Derek sends a return letter.

Still, Derek isn't so happy when he wakes up from a perfectly pleasant dream with a piece of paper on his forehead. He's even less happy that it's not actually the piece of paper that wakes him up. It's a sizeable falcon jumping repeatedly on his chest.

"Whaaa-?" Derek groans. Then recognizes the stupid bird. Then looks over to see that its freaking two o'clock in the morning. "Ohmygod, no."

He grabs the piece of paper and rolls over, perfectly content to leave it till morning. Just because Stiles seems unwilling to go to sleep at a reasonable hour does not mean that Derek doesn't get to sleep. He can read whatever random thought Stiles sent him in the morning. One time the message had been a tiny drawing of a stick-figure Derek.

Appa keeps jumping on him.

"Go'way," Derek mumbles, waving an arm at the stupid bird. He regrets ever getting Stiles the damned thing. "I'll write back in the' mornin'."

Appa flies up for only a second, only enough to avoid Derek's arm and then he's latched onto Derek's wrist *hard* and flapping his wings and Derek gasps in surprise and pain and-

The next second, Appa is *screeching*.

"Shut up!" Derek says, sitting up in an instant. He doesn't need the world waking up to see him getting attack by a falcon. And he and Stiles are going to have a very firm talk about appropriate times to send Appa along and maybe training Appa to not be so-

"I'm looking at it!" He waves the piece of paper in front of Appa's face for good measure.

Appa stops screeching but he doesn't let go of Derek's wrist.

"Bloody hell," Derek mutters and then he's opening the note.

And then he's flying out of bed because the note just says "Potions" in Stiles' unenhanced, awful handwriting and it looks extra shaky and there looks like there is *blood* at the corner of the page.

He throws on trousers and the first shirt he can find (which, to be honest, he's not sure is his) and then all but sprints out of the dorm.

He ignores the Fat Lady's protests at being swung open so harshly in the middle of the night and mentally shrugs at her threats to contact Professor McGonagall. And he ignores all the secret passages Stiles has shown him over the past four months and just takes the most direct route to the Potions classroom. At least it's late enough that most of the teachers who patrol the castle have given up.

"Stiles!" he all but yell as he bursts into the room. "What's wron-"

He cuts himself off because it's clear in an instant what is wrong.

Stiles is sitting on a table near the back, shirtless, and blood is running down his shoulder. No, not running. Pouring. Blood is pouring out of an open wound and it's clear he'd tried to use his shirt to stop the bleeding. He doesn't look quite scared but Derek can see the relief in his eyes as Derek enters.

"Hey," Stiles says, clearly going for casual even though his back is covered in *blood*. The bastard is even smiling a little. "You did okay on your Medical Charms exam, right?"

"That is... we are going to Madam Pomfrey!" Derek says, recovering from his shock and rushing over. Stiles is still too thin in his opinion, but for once it works out because he can just carry Stiles up to the Hospital Wing. Or Levitate him. Yeah, that could also work. Or send Appa. "C'mon. You're-"

"No!" Stiles gasps, leaning away from Derek and then groaning. "No, can't go there."

"What are you *talking* about?" Derek says. Up close, the wound looks even worse. It's like a bit of Stiles' shoulder is *missing*. "Of course, we can. We are!"

He wraps a hand around Stiles' uninjured arm and then snatches it back as if burned when Stiles *flinches* and, okay, carrying isn't going to be an option. He's sending Appa.

"Derek," Stiles says. "You need to calm down."

Derek can't really say exactly what his face does at that statement. He knows it can't be good.

"We cannot go to Madam Pomfrey," Stiles says, still talking as if *Derek* is the crazy one. "Because I know these injuries seem strange. But they are actually pretty easy to identify. If you know what to look for."

Derek flicks his eyes back to Stiles' shoulder. Maybe it's actually some type of burn? He doesn't know. He can't-

"And," Stiles continues. "If Hogwarts finds out what I'm up to, I'll definitely be expelled." He grins. "You don't want that, do you?"

"Maybe you *should* be expelled," Derek mutters but he stops trying to get Appa's attention.

Stiles laughs and then groans. "Doubtless."

"Okay," Derek says and forces himself to take a breath. To calm down. "As long as we agree on that."

"Definitely," Stiles says. "Now come here."

Derek wishes he could say that Stiles' apparent extensive knowledge of First Aid Magic makes him feel better about the situation. But it doesn't. Because it just makes it more obvious that Stiles had expected something like this to happen and, more than once, he mutters how if it wasn't his *wand* arm and he could see it properly, he could have totally handled this himself. Which is stupid. Stiles shouldn't be handling this himself.

In the end, it takes three different spells to get Stiles' shoulder to stop bleeding. And then another spell to Summon bandages (luckily Stiles is able to pull that one off because Derek still needs to be able to see things in order to Summon them). And then Stiles thinks Derek should just wrap the bandages naturally, but a lifetime of Quidditch has taught Derek the proper spell to wrap a wound and so-

All told, it's only twenty minutes before Stiles' arm is wrapped up and Derek stops worrying that Stiles is going to bleed to death. Stiles still looks pale though. And he's still breathing shallowly and sweating. And he's still sitting and Derek hasn't yet removed his hand.

"Stiles," Derek says, hand tightening on Stiles' good shoulder. "What were you *doing*?"

"I- I can't tell you," Stiles replies softly. He sounds sorry, but firm. "But don't worry. I know it doesn't look it, but this is actually the easy part."

"The *easy* part?" Derek says, his voice rising. "The *easy* part? Stiles, a chunk of your *shoulder* is just bloody gone!"

"Okay, yes," Stiles says. "From an outsider's perspective, this would appear to be the hard part. But seriously. It's not. And I figured out what I did wrong, so it's not going to happen again."

"If you knew what you were doing, it would have happened in the *first* place," Derek snaps.

"I may have been rushing just a little bit," Stiles admits. "But, Derek, I'm... I'm so *close*."

"Stiles," Derek says. "Whatever it is, it's not worth it."

Stiles doesn't bother saying anything. It doesn't matter. Derek can see the disagreement all over his face. He shakes his head but doesn't say anything more as Stiles snatches his wand and Banishes the pile of bloody clothes somewhere.

"Don't worry," Stiles says, standing with a silent gasp of pain. There is still dried blood soaking the back of his trousers. He takes a few shallow breathes and then turns to Derek. "I'm almost done."

He limps out slowly and Derek watches him.

He just wishes he knew what Stiles was talking about.

^^*^

After that, Derek vows to keep a closer eye on Stiles. He's going to bring meals to *every* Tuesday study session and sit next to him during all the classes they have together, and after Quidditch practice, he will simply wander the castle until he finds him. And make sure he's still alive.

His plan fails.

Stiles *cancels* their next Tuesday session, sending Appa with a cryptically short message. Sitting next to him in class doesn't do any good because Stiles spends the entirety of the time scribbling in his notebook. He doesn't even pretend to pay attention.

And the one time Derek wanders the castle, he ends up roaming for two *hours* muttering about stupid, sneaky, stubborn Slytherins before accepting defeat. He doesn't try again. If Stiles doesn't want to be found, he won't be.

By the time Saturday rolls around, Derek is so nervous and fed up that he can't even get excited about the Ravenclaw/Slytherin Quidditch game.

He goes, of course, because the whole team goes to see if they will even have a chance at winning the Cup, but after twenty minutes, Derek realizes that all he's doing is scanning the Slytherin side of the stadium for Stiles. And Stiles doesn't seem to be there.

He leaves. It's the first Quidditch game he's not watching in his entire Hogwarts career.

He has every intention of going to the Owlery and sending Stiles a message. He's not sure what it will say yet, but Twinkles will be able to find him and Derek just needs to at least *talk* to him.

But then on his way up to the Owlery, he hears something.

A laugh.

A loud, joyful, *incredible* laugh.

It's coming from a nearby empty classroom – McGonagall's classroom actually - and Derek frowns because he swears, it sounds similar to Stiles', but...

But Stiles has never sounded like *that* before. Not even when he's surrounded by elves all yelling at him for not visiting for three whole weeks.

Derek freezes, still struggling to imagine that Stiles could ever sound like that and half convinced it must be someone else, when-

"Dude!" Definitely Stiles. "Dude, I think someone's coming."

"Holy shit!" The voice sounds giddy rather than truly concerned. Derek doesn't recognize it.

"Hide!" Stiles whispers.

"Where?"

"I dunno! Uh-"

Derek swings the door open.

He finds Stiles standing in front of the desk, clearly trying to push another boy *behind* the desk but the other boy seems to be too busy giggling to bother bending over enough and-

“Stiles?” Derek asks, frowning. He doesn’t... what’s happening?

Stiles grabs the boy by his robes and stands him up straight.

“Hey!” Stiles says, smiling a bit too broadly. Then, “Derek!”

He sounds thrilled. Thrilled and maybe a little relieved. The boy next to him shoves his elbow into Stiles’ side.

“Derek,” Stiles says, yelping away from the elbow and taking a moment to glare at his friend. “You’ve met... Stanley, right? From Hufflepuff?”

The boy next to Stiles is indeed wearing a yellow and black tie and is nodding next to Stiles, grinning hopefully, and Derek is positive he’s never seen him before in his life.

“Uh,” he says.

“Wait,” the kid says and, just like that, he smile broadens to include Derek as well. “Hold up. This is *Derek*?”

His accent is American. *He’s* American. He’s...

“*Scott*?” Derek gasps. Stiles groans.

“Dude!” Stiles says, shoving Scott over even as he bursts into laughter. It’s the special kind of laughter again. The kind that Derek could die happy listening to. “You were supposed to be practicing your British accent.”

“Oh,” Scott says. “I forgot!”

The two dissolve into bickering that involves too many grins and playful punches to be anything other than completely ecstatic and Derek feel like his brain is melting.

It should not be possible. For Scott to be here. It is 100% *impossible* and yet here he is. Standing in McGonagall’s classroom. Wearing robes and a Hufflepuff tie. A Muggle. In Hogwarts. On a random Saturday in April.

“Stiles,” he starts when both boys stop talking to grin at each other. “Stiles, what did you do?”

“Oh,” Stiles says, shrugging. “I figured out a way to get Scott here.”

That turns out to be the greatest understatement in history.

Because, first and foremost, “getting Scott here” meant learning how to Apparate. Illegally. Over international borders. And then learning how to do it with a passenger which most people did not do until they were well into their twenties. And it turns out that that’s what Stiles had been doing when he was injured. He wasn’t injured. He was partially *splined*.

“And I threw up for like two days afterwards,” Stiles admits with a shrug. “It was fucking gross, dude.”

“Bro,” Scott says, frowning. Stiles rolls his eyes and conjures water from nowhere to pour over Scott’s head. The story is held up for a brief amount of time for an impromptu wrestling match.

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg. Because Stiles frowns and explains that not even he could figure out a way to get around Hogwarts’ anti-Apparition Security Wall, so he was forced to find secret passages out of the school. Most of which had been locked up after the War, but Stiles rolls his eyes when Derek mentions that and insists that there’s always a way.

Scott catches Derek’s eye and shrugs apologetically.

But, then, the greatest achievement of Stiles’ (and the one he downplays the most) is somehow tricking Hogwarts into thinking that Scott is a Wizard. Because Hogwarts it supposed to be *invisible* to a Muggle (or at least, entirely unremarkable) and so Scott shouldn’t be able to see anything. He should get the irresistible urge to go be with his family or check his gas meter or balance his checkbook the moment he gets too close.

“Ah, that was a bit tricky,” Stiles admits. “It’s a bit of essence trading and camouflaging and, actually, the Patronus Charm was really helpful once I tweaked it a bit.”

“Was that the puppy thing you did?” Scott asks. “I liked that puppy.”

“Of course, you liked the puppy,” Stiles says. “It was literally your aura in corporeal form!”

“My aura is very cute.”

The conversation quickly derails from there and Stiles seems completely uninterested in explained exactly how he got past Hogwarts’ *ancient* security systems. He seems even less interested in hearing Derek’s repeated assertions that the magic he’s invented is *incredible*.

Stiles seems to only be concerned with marveling with how easy it was to sneak Scott in with everyone at the Quidditch game and filling Scott in on all the crazy drama while giving him a tour of Hogwarts. In turn, Scott tells Stiles all about Beacon Hills, a girl named Allison and Stiles’ dad and his mother and-

“Dude, you’re going to have to see when you get home for the summer, but I think... I think they’re like... together.”

“My dad? Your mom?” Stiles sounds a mixture of horrified and delighted. “That’s... no way!”

“I’m just saying,” Scott says. “They sit and talk for a long time after dinner ends. Like... I have gone to bed with them still talking.”

There are a few times when Derek offers to leave but both boys glare at him and then Scott focuses and is asking him a million questions and any that Derek stumbles

over, *Stiles* somehow knows the answers. Scott gets to hear all about his sisters and Christmas and Derek's Keeper position on Quidditch and-

"Flying must be awesome!" Scott says as Derek finishes briefly explaining the rules. Derek has completely lost track of how much time has passed. All he knows is that it's dark out. They're camped out in Stiles' and his usual study spot because they know no one is going to be in the library after a Quidditch match.

"Well, you can totally try if you want to," Derek says. "It's dark enough that no one but us will see you. And even if they do, the field is too far away from the castle anyway."

"Dude," Scott says. "Really?"

He sounds amazed. Stiles looks like Derek just gave him another falcon.

Derek blushes, but he's smiling.

^^*^

Unlike Stiles, Scott shows absolutely no fear at the thought of flying by himself. He practically bursts with excitement when Stiles assures him that the spell he created to make Scott seem like a magic-user should work with broomsticks as well and the next moment is he straddling Derek's broomstick and kicking off and-

Stiles and Derek settle back on the bleachers to watch. Derek is half-afraid Scott is going to kill himself but Stiles seems all too happy to throw out ridiculous challenges and then laughs as Scott struggles to complete them. Derek is just content to sit and flick his eyes between the two of them. Because he wants to be ready if Scott falls, but he also wants to capture every moment of joy on Stiles' face.

"Thanks," Stiles says suddenly as they watch Scott slowly lift higher and higher in the air. "For this. It's probably the only sport in the world that you can do even if you have asthma."

"Sure," Derek says. It's not a problem. He just can't believe Stiles somehow managed all this.

"And," Stiles hesitates, squirming a little on the seat. "And for everything, really. Just... thank you."

Derek has never heard Stiles sound so sincere and then, his face stays pointed up towards Scott, but suddenly his hand is sitting *on top* of Derek's and it's very, very warm out even though it isn't and-

"No problem," he manages to croak.

Stiles' hand doesn't leave until Scott lands.

And it gives Derek's a little squeeze before it moves.

^^*^

Derek is pretty sure he was Sorted into the wrong house.

Because after the handholding and the smiling and Scott wrapping him in a hug before leaving and whispering “Go get him, buddy,” a brave person would make a move.

A brave person would ask Stiles on a date to Hogsmeade properly or would reach out to grab his hand again as they walk through the halls or would try just pulling Stiles in by the shoulders and kissing him and seeing what happens from there.

A brave person would at least stop *blushing* ridiculously whenever they make eye contact that goes on a beat too long.

But Derek does none of those things. No, instead he just keeps stealing glances at Stiles and jumping whenever Stiles arranges it so their legs brush underneath their study table and stammering when Laura and Cora ask him how things with him and Stiles are *going*.

He’s not a brave person. He belongs to the wrong House.

Maybe there’s a secret fifth House whose traits are nervousness, second-guessing, and cursing themselves in their heads. Maybe that’s the House he belongs too.

And, really, this should *not* be that hard. He is like... 95% certain that Stiles wants Derek to kiss him. The looks are getting longer and Stiles’ mouth keeps quirking into that little half smile that Derek has never seen him give anyone else, not even Scott, and every once and a while his eyes dance downward to Derek’s mouth. Just for a moment.

Unless it’s all in his head and Derek is just making it up and maybe friends squeeze each other’s hands all the time and-

It builds for another two weeks before Derek can’t take it anymore.

He can’t. He’s going crazy. He’d missed an *entire* Charms class because he’d been daydreaming about Stiles’ collarbones and he-

He walks out of History of Magic early. He doesn’t care if Professor Binns notices. He suspects he doesn’t.

He walks out and marches himself so he’s outside Stiles’ Herbology class. He’s a Gryffindor. He can do this.

The Ravenclaws and other Slytherins glance at him but his face must look some degree of determined because aside from a few raised eyebrows and some giggles, no one dares to say hello to him.

Stiles comes out towards the end of the pack.

“I need to talk to you,” Derek says roughly. “Right now.”

“Wha-why?” Stiles says, but he doesn’t protest as Derek wraps a hand around Stiles’ arm and starts pulling him towards the nearest empty room. “What’s wrong?”

Derek doesn't bother answering. He opens one door to find it full of 1st year Gryffindors. He thinks Cora gasps his name but he doesn't wait around to say hello.

"Seriously, dude," Stiles says and he sounds worried. "Is it something with your sisters? Or that Collins kid again? Because I swear, this time-"

Derek shakes his head and tries another door and-

Okay, it turns out the nearest empty room is a broom closet. That's fine. He yanks Stiles in and slams it shut. Luckily a torch comes on automatically. Stiles is still staring. Then he looks around, squinting in confusion.

"I am a *Gryffindor*," Derek tells him. Or maybe himself. Stiles nods. Slowly.

"Okay?" Stiles says it like a question. Like he hasn't figured out what's going on quite yet.

It makes sense. Stiles' brain is always going toward analyzing disasters. He's probably still convinced that Derek is in some sort of trouble.

"That means I'm the brave one," Derek says, and his voice is lower than usual for some reason. "I'm the brave one and I do brave things."

Derek watches as Stiles starts to get it. He blinks once and then his face slides into that small half smile and-

Derek can't wait another moment.

He grabs Stiles by the robes and pulls him in and plants his lips on Stiles'.

It's not exactly coordinated and Derek thinks that maybe he should have calmed down and done it slower because it seems a bit forceful but he can't bring himself to back off now because Stiles' lips are *on his own* and *this is happening* and *holy shit, holy shit*.

He thinks Stiles is kissing back. But he can't really tell because his grip is still too strong around Stiles robes and he's holding his breath and- crap, Stiles is pulling away and-

"Sorry," Derek says immediately. That was too rough. Too forceful. Crap, he did that all wrong and, wait, are they in a *broom closet*? "Sorry, I- uh-"

Stiles is *smirking* at him.

"You may be brave," he says and Derek is having trouble focusing because Stiles' lips look a little bit swollen. And kissable. Still so bloody kissable. "But I'm a Slytherin. That means I'm the clever one."

And then Stiles is pulling Derek in again, but this time his hands go *under* Derek's robes to slide up against his neck and his lips are capturing Derek's before prying them open and then his tongue is sliding against Derek's and his fingers are tangled in Derek's hair and-

Oh, okay.

He was wrong about everything.

Cleverness definitely trumps bravery.

^^*^

Derek somehow gets even more detentions after that.

They get detentions for snogging in various empty classrooms (some of which turn out to be not so empty) and they get detentions for being out past curfew and Derek gets another detention for punching Collins *again* and-

Well, Laura keeps trying to lecture him on *propriety* and *basic decency* and even Cora expresses her horror and finding out her brother was found practically naked in the Astronomy Tower in the middle of the day.

(For the record, they were not “practically naked.” They were just missing shirts. Totally different.)

Stiles lives up to all his Slytherin traits. He lies to teachers constantly to get Derek out of class and into shady corners. He’s exceedingly ambitious when it comes to how much snogging he assumes they can do in a day and how loud he can get Derek to moan before someone notices. And the resourcefulness... it’s frankly a little alarming how Stiles manages to make the best of out any situation.

And, for the record, Stiles’ ability to use wandless magic is just downright unfair. Derek considers himself brave just for going along with it.

They also discover that Stiles’ control sort of... *slips* when he gets too excited. The first time it happens, Derek thinks that the books just happen to slide off of the library shelf and it only takes a moment for Stiles to frown and banish them back, but then a stool in Flitwick’s classroom *explodes* and...

Well, they both end up in Madam Pomfrey’s with unexplained second degree burns the first time Derek tries to go down on Stiles.

It’s alarming how little that stops them from trying. Stiles claims that he has to learn control eventually and Derek notes that there’s no point in magical medicine if you don’t use it and-

They get a very long and awkward lecture from McGonagall the next time it happens.

In the end, the last month and a half of school go by too quickly. It’s over before he even knows to worry about it ending.

School is ending and that means Stiles is flying home for the summer and that’s almost *three months* before Derek can see him again.

“I could totally pop over and visit,” Stiles says for the thousandth time as they stand on the train station. Stiles is heading back to King’s Cross before taking the tube to Heathrow and then home. Derek is just using the Floo network. “Just send me a detailed map of where your house actually *is* and-”

“No,” Derek grumbles, also for the thousandth time. “It’s too risky. You *don’t* really know where my house is and you could end up splinched again.”

“I got splinched *once*,” Stiles mutters. “And only a little!”

“*And*,” Derek continues as if Stiles hadn’t spoken. “And you have to save your illegal Apparating for when you need to get Scott to Hogwarts.”

“I told you,” Stiles says. “I’m totally setting up a Portkey next year. I’ve already started doing the research!”

Derek rolls his eyes. Stiles may have managed to get past the international apparition borders but the security on Portkeys was ridiculous since the war. There was no way-

“Stiles, it’s three months,” he says. “That’s nothing.”

“You’re the worst,” Stiles sighs. “It’s like you hate me.” Derek laughs. Because they both know that’s not true. They haven’t quite said the “L” word yet because they’re barely fifteen and it had seemed to soon but Derek is positive they feel it. Maybe he’ll manage to make that moment more romantic then grabbing Stiles and throwing him in a broom closet.

So Derek settles for kissing him. He’s gotten better since their first kiss. Stiles practically melts into his side. Or maybe he melts into Stiles’. He can’t tell anymore.

“Alright, train,” he says, leaning back and regretting it already. The conductor already called for the students to board ten minutes ago. “Go.”

“So demanding,” Stiles mutters, but he grabs his bag (still just the one duffel that has the check-mark on the side) and Appa’s cage.

“Will you run after the train?” Stiles asks, one foot on the step.

“No,” Derek says. “Don’t be ridiculous.”

“If you were at all romantic, you’d run after the train,” Stiles tells him. Derek shoves him inside.

He doesn’t run after the train. He does stare at it for a while though before heading back though.

He stares at it for too long. It’s embarrassing.

But eventually he gets back to the Great Hall and takes the Floo Network home and when he gets there, he finds Appa waiting for him.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DIDN'T RUN AFTER THE TRAIN, the letter reads. I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THIS. I HATE YOU.

ALSO, I MISS YOU.

ALSO, COULD YOU SEND HIM BACK WITH MY WAND? I THINK I BANISHED IT TO YOUR BAG INSTEAD OF MINE.

End.

End Notes

Hope this makes it easier to bookmark/download if you would like!

Works inspired by this one

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!