

## What to expect when you aren't expecting

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# What to expect when you aren't expecting

by [MemeKon](#)

## Summary

The baby's wailing is piercing, Stiles doesn't know how Derek can stand it. He tries shushing her and cooing at her and bouncing her a little, but the crying only gets louder, and in addition to hurting his ears, it's hurting his soul.

“Stiles,” Derek interrupts him mid-croon, eyebrows meeting over the bridge of his nose, “have you fed her since you found her?”

Stiles gapes and looks down at the baby's distressed face as she bawls.

## Notes

Thanks to Barlowstreet for being a total babe and holding my hand through this :)

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

The baby is warm and small and she's all wrinkled and frowny, bow lips somewhat pursed and pouty. Stiles' palms feel cold and sweaty against the blanket enfolding her as he holds her tight to his chest.

“What do you mean she turned up out of nowhere?” Derek asks, frowning at him, hand twitching above the baby's head, as if he wasn't sure touching her wouldn't make her disintegrate into nothingness. Stiles rolls his eyes at him and bounces on the balls of his feet when the baby squirms.

“Exactly what I'm sayin', big guy. She just appeared on my bed. Onesie and diaper and all. Like this.” He itches to gesture, make *poof* motions with his hands, but he's got two handfuls of baby that he's got to have the utmost care with. “I took a break from one of my summer readings to take a leak and when I came back there was a baby. On my bed.”

Derek raises unimpressed eyebrows at him, and Stiles shrugs minutely.

Whatever, everyone has to pee now and then.

“So, are you gonna touch her already? Because your hand's been hovering over her face like that for a while, and it's getting creepy.”

Derek rolls his eyes at him and lowers his hand until his fingers are brushing the baby's features; brushing softly over her tiny button nose, and her soft cheeks.

Stiles' heart relocates into his throat, lodges itself there, stuck like an overly large bite of food that won't pass. It hurts when he swallows, beats loud to his own ears and painfully intense. *Damn.*

A few seconds pass by while Derek softly *caresses* the baby's face, and when his face starts melting into this content, peaceful expression Stiles clears his throat and asks, “So, do you know how to take care of a baby?”

That successfully breaks the spell.

The baby's wailing is *piercing*, Stiles doesn't know how Derek can stand it. He tries shushing her and cooing at her and bouncing her a little, but the crying only gets louder, and in addition to hurting his ears, it's hurting his *soul*.

“Stiles,” Derek interrupts him mid-croon, eyebrows meeting over the bridge of his nose, “have you fed her since you found her?”

Stiles gapes and looks down at the baby's distressed face as she *bawls*.

“Jesus Christ, Stiles.” Derek takes the baby in his arms, frowning at him like he can't quite believe Stiles is a real, existing and breathing person.

“I'm... going to buy formula, right now?”

“And a bottle,” Derek adds, fixing his eyes on the sleeping infant. Then he furrows his nose a little. “And some diapers.”

“Oh, man, *gross*.”

They end up putting a list together of things they'll need to take care of the baby in the immediate future; Stiles checks blogs on the Internet because the last time he was this close to an infant he'd been one himself, and Derek just quietly scribbles things down every now and then, with the squirming baby on one of his arms (her little face red and gloomy and, Christ, she looks *hungry* now and it makes Stiles feel like an asshole for not thinking about this on his own).

“You should go get all that,” Derek tells him once they're done with their list, nodding at it, eyes going from him to the baby a few times. “I'll stay with her.”

“I won't *break* her, you know,” he replies, even as he takes the list and sticks it inside his hoodie's pocket. “We were doing okay until you came along.”

Derek rolls his eyes at him hard enough that had it been anyone else Stiles would've been worried about permanent damage.

“You forgot you had to *feed her*, Stiles.”

Fair enough.

(Derek had ended up giving Stiles his credit card to buy everything, so there is that at least.

“Don't buy anything too ridiculous,” he'd said as he handed the plastic card to him with pinched eyebrows, “or I'll make you regret it.”

“Sure, big guy.” He'd rolled his eyes as he took the card and put it away in his pocket.

Derek's lips had done that thing where they'd insinuate a smile, the barest shadow of it, without giving an inch. Stiles' heart had followed that invisible movement with an improvised tap dancing number of its own.

As he'd turned around, fists clenching inside his pockets and cheeks going red, he'd vowed to find the most outrageous item in stock and buy three.)

There are so many things. So much variety, and so many brands.

It's a little overwhelming.

“Need help?” An enthusiastic voice interrupts his perusal of the different brands and sizes of diapers.

“Yeah, that would be awesome,” he says, turning around.

To come face to face with Caitlin. 'I like girls and boys' Caitlin.

“Oh, hi,” he says, lamely, a small smile tugging at his lips. “I didn't know you worked here.”

Caitlin smiles back at him, bright.

“Such's the life of the broke college student,” she states; then, looking over his shoulder at the diapers' display, she adds, “I didn't know you had a baby.”

Stiles gives himself whiplash turning towards the display and back, tripping over his own feet trying to put some distance between himself and it.

“Uh, no, no. No kids. Yet.” He makes a few inconclusive and vague gestures with his hand. “I'm, uh, shopping for a friend? Who recently had a baby? And can't leave her alone yet, so I'm, uh, I'm helping them out.”

“Oh,” she says, smile as bright as ever, bouncing on her feet. “That's so sweet of you.” Then she laughs a little and shakes her head. “For a minute there I thought I'd made out with a hot dad.”

Stiles grins at her, feeling pretty damn good about himself for the 'hot' part.

“So,” Caitlin says, “what do you need to buy?”

Stiles handles her the list, watching her eyebrows climb at the length of it.

“Your friend was, um, a little unprepared for this, weren't they?”

Stiles flinches and scratches his chin, mutters *kinda*.

“So,” Caitlin starts, intently studying the diapers' display, “how recently did this friend have their baby? How old are they?”

“About three weeks? I think?”

Caitlin seems shocked for all of two seconds before arranging her face back into a pleasant and non-judgmental smile.

“Okay then,” she says under her breath as she reaches for a bright purple box of diapers with the label 'Luvs' on it. “These ones should be the right size.”

“These ones were the ones Emily's baby brother used.” She hands the box to him, with softer eyes, and her mouth set in a sad smile. The expression is soon gone, however, as she checks on the other items on the list.

The words are like a knife burying itself underneath Stiles ribs, digging in in *in*. A little reminder that they haven't been the only ones who've lost so much in these past months.

Caitlin looks up at him and smiles brightly again, says *we'll get the bottle and formula first*. Stiles gives her a lackluster smile and a nod.

He's putting all the bags (so many bags, so *so* many bags) filled with baby stuff in the jeep's trunk when his phone goes off, annoying generic ringtone that he hasn't yet bothered to change blaring until he takes the call.

“Unless someone's dying I'm busy. As hell.” He holds the phone in place between his ear and a raised shoulder as he keeps putting things away, wondering how the hell it's fair that something so tiny needs so much stuff.

And that's when he hears the piercing wailing in the background.

“Please tell me you're done,” Derek grinds out, almost comically anguished, and Stiles *feels* for him, really.

In his *bones*.

(The only reason why he hurries up putting the rest of the stuff away and sprints to the driver's side door, tripping all over himself, is because he's a decent guy who wouldn't let a baby starve. Really.)

As soon as he parks the jeep outside his house, Derek is coming outside, bawling baby in arms and a harried look on his face. Stiles gets out of the car as Derek practically *sprints* towards him.

“*Stiles*,” he greets him pointedly when he's just a few feet away, green eyes narrowed dangerously, but arms holding the baby softly against his chest, one hand patting her back

comfortingly. “What the *hell* could have possibly taken you so long? *She's been crying non-stop.*”

Stiles rolls his eyes at Derek but cringes as the baby lets out a particularly loud and pained sound, and then does this little piteous noise like she's trying to hiccup but it's getting held up in her throat. It's *awful*.

“Yeah, sorry,” he answers then and makes motions at Derek to give the baby to him, which makes Derek look at him uncertainly.

“Dude, *really*? How many times do I have to tell you that I won't break her? We were doing *perfectly fine* before you showed up. Just, hand her over and get all the bags inside, okay? You don't wanna wait for my skinny ass to finish bringing *all of that* inside, do you?” He nods towards the jeep's trunk and takes the baby from Derek while he's oscillating between frowning at him and the jeep in confusion.

“All of that *what*?” Derek asks, voice taking a carefully neutral tone as he walks a few cautious steps towards the trunk.

Stiles shrugs, biting his lips to hold a smirk in as he bounces the baby a little.

Derek's baffled expression when he opens the trunk and takes in the amount of bags there makes Stiles' face break into what must look like an insufferable and shit eating grin. He's not even sorry about it.

“*Stiles*,” Derek bites out and looks at him with raised eyebrows. “*What the hell.*”

“Yeah, turns out babies are higher maintenance than we thought and our list was found lacking.”

As he's making the way towards the house he hears Derek throw an incredulous and somewhat flustered sounding *Stiles!* In his direction that makes his lips curl up into a smile as he crosses the front door's threshold..

“Looks like he found the breast pump,” he tells the baby in an overly cheery and dulcet tone, and her eyelids flutter in response, one tiny fist uncurling and curling again.

Derek is good with the baby.

He knows how to hold her and how to properly feed her (he'd even taken over bottle-preparing-and-testing duty after taking a look at Stiles nervously reading the instructions at the back of the formula -biting his thumbnail aggressively and sort of jiggling his leg in place, as awkward a motion as that was while standing- and deeming him unsuitable for the task), even knows how to burp her. Holds her tight against his shoulder with big hands that seem even bigger when splayed on her tiny back, on top of this new baby themed dishtowel, taps her lightly and whispers short little words to her that Stiles can't quite hear, but tug at his heartstrings anyway because even though all he hears is gibberish it sounds *comforting*.

Stiles doesn't want to think much about where all of this experience comes from, why all of this comes to Derek so naturally and easily, doesn't want to ask. The way he softly runs his hand over the peach fuzz on her head after she's let out a sonorous burp (that, well yes, does make Stiles snort because he's seventeen, okay) and looks at her, all sad smiles and nostalgia and longing in his squinted eyes, all gut wrenching intensity in the way he cradles her so so carefully once he is done, tells him more than enough.

Stiles feels as if there was a rock trying to make its way down his throat as he watches Derek taking care of her with that look on his eyes, feels heartburn in the worst possible way.

"I'll, uh, I'll go wash the bottle," he says, voice grainy, when it all threatens to become too much for him, when it all starts to feel too close to overflowing from his body and his stupid mouth, too close to being all rushed, spilled soft words of *I'm sorry for everything that's happened to you* and *I'm sorry you can never catch a fucking break, man* and *tenderness is a good look for you*.

Derek's only reply is a humming noise that feels cottony to Stiles' ears, tingly on the nape of his neck.

Derek does make Stiles change her diaper, though.

Stiles had tried to protest to that, but Derek's argument that Stiles had a far less sensitive nose was a pretty solid one and Stiles wasn't that much of an intentional dickhead.

The first time they'd needed to, he'd given Stiles directions as he'd taken her into his room and laid her down on top of a towel (Caitlin had suggested a changing pad, and he'd looked at the box with furrowed brows for a few moments and almost bought it, before remembering that it was... well, it was probable that the baby wouldn't be with them for that long, so he'd shaken his head at her after a little while, said "no, maybe we'll come by and get that later".) on his bed, taking special care to support her head properly as she went down, standing at the door and frowning a little (probably at the smell); and he'd kept giving instructions while he unbuttoned her onesie. And as he was pulling the sticky taps, scrunching his nose at the way the smell (the *stench*) had gotten *stronger*.

"Okay, okay, I get it. Dude, I have this, okay?"



He didn't. He didn't have it.

Oh God, he absolutely did *not* have it.

(Stiles would tell Derek to shut *up* but it's the first time Stiles has ever heard him laugh and even though he's covered in--- *poop*, he's covered in baby *poop*, he still can appreciate that.)

Bathtime was something Stiles hadn't wanted to face yet; or at all really. But it had also been *necessary* after that.

And bathtime had been... Something.

The baby was young enough to not make a mess, just squirm around in Stiles' hands, kick at the water irregularly every now and then but it had still been unnerving and stressful. Derek had sat on the toilet and left him to his own devices, the asshole.

"You're doing okay, Stiles. You *totally have this*."

"I swear to God if I drop her I'll put Nordic Blue in your dinner," he'd muttered, pouring some water with a cup on the baby's head, paying special to care to avoid pouring it in her eyes.

When she finally goes to sleep after they feed her for the second time, Stiles and Derek end up on Stiles' bed, propped up against the headboard side by side in companionable silence. Stiles didn't really register how they ended up like this, but he isn't objecting. He's bone tired and lax with the baby sleeping on his chest and Derek's body brushing his, heat seeping through their layers, and he's comfortable.

"We should call her something in the meantime," Stiles whispers after a while, though, because his mind never gives him a break and he's been obsessing over this for the last ten minutes. He's got his hand on her back, and he's feeling the steady rhythm of her breathing, and really, they just can't keep calling her *the baby* much longer.

"Stiles, we can't-- *you* can't get attached." Derek's voice is soft and low, even as he corrects himself.

*I think it's a bit late for that, big guy.*

"Still," Stiles says before his mouth runs away from him, and he tries to lift the baby off his chest, but she furrows her brows in her sleep, squirms and brings her fists up, as if preparing herself to put up a fight. Or to wake up and cry desolately until Stiles feels like a shitstain. "Oookay, you can stay there, no problem. Chill."

Derek is... Smiling, when he looks back up at him.

And that's how he ends up blurting, "we could call her Laura?"

Derek freezes on his spot next to Stiles, muscles locked up tight.

"... Or not?" He quickly amends, heart racing.

Fuck, he fucked up, he fucked up, he--

"That's--" Derek interrupts his inner meltdown, face pale but green eyes and locked firmly on Stiles, voice low but steady, "that would be... Okay. I think that would be fine. With me."

The corner of his mouth tilts, and he drops his gaze to the baby resting on Stiles' chest (Stiles tries not fixate on his dark, long eyelashes), and he looks sad; yes, he looks sad and devastated and Stiles *gets it*, but he also looks warm and devastatingly open, tiny smile growing faintly as the baby snuffles in her sleep.

"She does look like a Laura," he says then.

Stiles, because he doesn't know how to properly respond to meaningfulness, asks, "And how, exactly, does a Laura look like, dude?"

And it makes Derek snort and roll his eyes at him.

"She's not a werewolf. Or anything else that I know of. She smells human to me. But we should still call Deaton," Derek says after a moment of silence, adjusting his position against the headboard, shoulder and leg coming to press firmly against Stiles. "If someone can tell us anything about this, it's him."

Stiles groans, because yeah, Derek's probably right, and Deaton's a more than alright man (he's great with Scott, and that's thawed him some over time), but trying to squeeze any information out of him? Yeah, that's not a process Stiles enjoys much.

Deaton tells them to bring Laura in the next morning when they make the call, brief and mysterious and forthcoming as ever, says that he can't help them right now, that he's... *busy*, which doesn't sound suspicious at all, right?

"I'm about to neuter a cat, Mr. Stilinski, would you and Derek want to be present for that? It *is* a rather interesting procedure."

"No," Stiles replies, because dry humor or not, he's been covered in poop today already and he doesn't need to add any more traumatic experiences to his day. "No, that's okay. We'll wait. We can wait. Tomorrow. We'll go tomorrow."

Deaton huffs out a vaguely amused sound, hastily bids him goodbye and hangs up on him without giving Stiles any time to reciprocate or even try to sound polite.

Derek leaves maybe two hours or so after that.

Isaac had texted him about hanging out, and he'd gotten a *look* on his face, pinched and guarded. He'd done *things* with his eyebrows, and made several aborted attempts at writing a reply that ended up with him putting his hands back on his thighs and gripping them like lifelines just to grab the phone back and attempt again.

“You should go, man,” Stiles had said, after watching him do this dance a few times. “Laura and I will be fine. And you should--” he gestures around awkwardly with one hand while he holds onto Laura with the other one trying to convey *bonding/patching things up/tying up loose ends/unfucking things* in a single loop of his fingers, “with Isaac. Since he's-- you know.”

He hadn't wanted to say *since he's leaving*, but it'd still hung between them, unspoken but clear as day, almost tangible in its weight.

Scott wasn't talking about this. He wasn't talking about Allison and Chris leaving, and choosing to take Isaac with them. And Stiles wasn't pressuring him, because despite his innate nosiness, he did know how to be a good friend to Scott, how to be a good brother to him, how to and when to push or let sleeping dogs lie.

(He also knew Scott had talked to Allison about this, that they'd gotten together after the *nogitsune* had fallen, and that they'd sorted things out. Had talked pack business and hunters business and *them* business.

Allison had explained about Chris wanting to leave for a while, about him sitting her down once the school year was over and for the first time in maybe ever speaking with her with all the cards on the table, talking to her about responsibility and learning about their history and about other hunting clans and *yes*, about him needing to just be *away* from the place where he'd lost his wife, his sister, and had almost lost his daughter too; about craving distance. Scott told him about how she'd looked at him and given him a sad, tired smile with dimples, and said *he's my dad, and he's never been this open with me, Scott-- I have to do this*.

And that had been that. Stiles hadn't even tried to mollify Scott by telling him she'd come back. Eventually. Scott knew that. But he was still-- touchy about her. Everyone was. They'd cut it so close that sometimes even Stiles felt the need to send Allison a text to check in on her, just to be sure that she was still here, walking and breathing amongst them.)

“Yeah, I should,” Derek had replied, and gotten on his feet.

Then he'd done this thing where he'd crowded into Stiles' space to touch Laura's face tenderly, which had almost killed Stiles on spot.

Laura had opened her eyes sleepily, blinked once or twice, and then seemed to focus on Derek, even though what little Stiles knew about babies told him she probably couldn't make even the contour of him yet.

Derek's face had softened anyway, the tense line of his lips going loose and his eyes going crinkly. Stiles bit his lips to contain anything stupid from coming out, and then licked them to soothe the pain over; Derek had caught the tail of that motion, eyes trailing it until Stiles set his lips back in a tiny smirk.

“Gonna kiss me goodbye, honey?”

He'd thrown a wink in for good measure, and Derek had raised both eyebrows at him, all *are you aware of what's coming out of your mouth?*, but there'd been a small blush dusting his cheeks there too.

“See you tomorrow, Stiles,” had been all he'd said before getting out of his room.

Stiles had refrained from staring at his ass as he walked away by looking down at Laura, who had still been blinking sleepily, and promptly decided to yawn at him, all cute and wrinkled at the same time Stiles heard the front door opening and closing.

His dad's reaction to finding Stiles sitting at the kitchen table with Laura asleep on his arms when he comes back home from work is... well, it's actually better than expected. He just rubs one of his hands against his chin, groans, plops down onto one of the other chairs and while he pinches the bridge of his nose, he says:

“I thought we'd always been very clear about the importance of wearing condoms?”

Which makes Stiles blink -dumbfounded- a few times, mouth gaping.

“I know Malia and you have been... sexually active in the past, before she left town with Mr. Tate,” his dad continues and if Stiles didn't have a tiny, frail human being's life in his hands (quite literally), he'd bolt to his feet and *run*, or at the very least cover his ears and start humming enthusiastically because no matter how open he is about his sexuality this is *his dad*.

“Dad, dad, stop,” he says instead, interrupting him before he can say anything permanently damaging to Stiles' life (or worse: his libido), “she is not mine. This baby? Totally not mine. I haven't had a kid. You're still grandkidless--”

“Okay, okay, I get it,” he cuts him off mid-sentence. “Not yours.”

“Not mine,” Stiles repeats, over enunciating the words.

“So,” his dad starts, looking at him as if he wasn't quite sure he wanted to keep questioning Stiles, but had to, “whose baby is it? And why have they left them with *you*?”

Stiles is downright *insulted* by the implications in his dad's words. Really, he is.

“I'll have you know,” he says, haughty and hugging Laura tighter to his chest, ruffled like a wet cat, “that I've been taking *excellent* care of her so far.”

“I will need a drink for this,” is what his dad replies to *that*, getting on his feet and walking to the cabinet where he keeps the strong stuff.

“Magic.”

“Yep.” Stiles replies, popping the 'p' obnoxiously, squinting at his dad and bobbing his head up and down like one of those toy dogs people put in cars, “Magic.”

“A baby,” his dad says, stretching his legs and crossing his arms as he reclines himself on the chair, a worn expression on his face. “A baby materialized out of thin air. Into your room.”

“Got it in one, daddy-o.”

His dad reaches for the whiskey bottle and pours himself a finger.

Stiles winces, but says nothing as his dad drinks it in one go.

“I swear to God, Stiles, if you have kidnapped this child--,” his dad starts.

Stiles frowns.

“What? No. No, dad. I wouldn't.” He takes a deep breath, looks down at Laura, who's frowning in her sleep, and bounces her a little, face going softer. “I wouldn't do anything like that, okay? And if I knew anything else, I'd tell you. 100% honesty policy, okay? Or at least, you know, 95%.”

His dad looks at him for a few seconds and then nods.

“Okay. Okay, kid. I believe you. It's just, a baby? First werewolves and hunters, then druids and demons, and now a *magical baby*?”

“Trust me, I know.”

His dad helps him with Laura for a few more hours, talks to him about when *he* was baby, how fussy he was, and how *colicky*, and smiles fondly down at Laura all the while, grabbing

at her little fist and enfolding it tenderly with his own big hand.

“I wish we still had some of your old stuff,” he says when Stiles is warming up formula for her. “But when your mom-- when she-- she felt it was better to give it all away to someone else who would need it.”

Stiles' heart stops. And his hands do too.

They don't talk about his mom. It's an unspoken rule of the Stilinski household. Even during the whole nogitsune debacle, they'd mostly spoken around her, around the name of her, around the weight of her. This is maybe the first time his dad has brought her up while sober.

It feels momentous.

“She's going to need somewhere to sleep,” his dad says after clearing his throat when Stiles fails to come up with anything to say back.

“She'll, uh, she'll sleep with me tonight.”

His dad snorts.

“Good luck with that, kid.”

Stiles gets two hours of sleep. Maybe two hours and a half. Tops.

It's a good thing he's used to pulling all-nighters.

It's not even that Laura stays up all night crying.

Don't get him wrong, she *does* cry. She spends what feels like at least an hour crying non-stop at about three am, and Stiles takes to walking around his room bouncing her, trying to calm her down, asks her questions she can't answer.

*Are you hungry? Do you need a diaper change? Does something hurt? What the-- what is wrong with you? Please.*

He *does* check her diaper, and he *does* give her a bottle, but she doesn't quiet down. She just keeps going on and on until it feels like it's hurting her throat to keep producing so much noise, and Stiles feels bad for both her and his dad.

At one point he lies down with her on his chest, starts rubbing soothing circles on her back, and whispering incoherent stuff at her and it seems to calm her down. So he keeps going. He caresses her back and grabs her tiny feet and her little hands, and trails his hand over the back

of her head, and she goes practically silent, teary eyes blinking sleepily, red blotched face relaxing.

“Huh,” he whispers to himself, feeling victorious.

... The feeling doesn't last much.

Once she falls asleep, he's left with her bundled on top of him, splayed like the world's pinkest, most adorable frog, and Stiles finds himself unable to move for fear of waking her up.

He lies on his back, still, for about an hour, breathing carefully, hands at the ready so she won't accidentally fall or something.

Once he feels certain enough that she won't wake, he moves her to his side, carefully and sighs, rearranging his limbs to get some sleep (he winces when he notices one of his legs has fallen asleep, *great*).

Only he can't sleep.

He's just... he's worried. He's worried he'll roll around in his sleep and *crush* her.

*Oh God.*

He looks at her tiny raising and falling chest, and feels panicky at the thought of accidentally harming her.

“Oh God,” he says, “this sucks.”

He ends up falling asleep at around six, and when he wakes up one or two hours later, to his father's noisy alarm, he can't shake the sense of dread that's choking him until he checks on Laura, checks that she's still breathing and that she's not bruised or, or *broken* in any way.

She wakes up when he's done inspecting her, long fingers still holding onto one of her little legs; she blinks at him and yawns, big and scrunching up her face, and kicks with the leg he is holding.

“And good morning to you, too,” he whispers, and bends over her to place a kiss on her cheek because he's tired and achy from what he assumes was sleeping two long hours on the same position, neck bent and arms next to Laura, almost touching her just to check she's there, and legs trying to bracket awkwardly around her little body.

There's a little drool on her where his lips touch her soft skin, and it should feel gross, but she makes this tiny noise at him and starts opening and closing her mouth against his cheek in what he knows is a reflex but feels like a kiss, and he can only smile.

So much for not getting attached, huh?

When his dad checks up on him before going to work, he's still lying in bed next to Laura, one hand on her tummy.

His dad gets a look on his face that Stiles can't read before smiling at him.

"Didn't get any sleep, huh?" he says, lying on the door frame.

"Did you?" Stiles fires back.

"Actually, I did," he replies, smiling smugly at him. "It's not the first time I've done this, kiddo."

Stiles smiles back at him.

"Yeah, yeah, you are an experienced old man. A level 100 dad. I get it."

"And don't you forget it," his dad tells him, straightening up. His smile dims a little and he starts looking uncertain.

Stiles is about to ask him what's going on, when he says, "You'll get used to it with time, kid."

And then he's turning around and throwing a *take care* over his shoulder as he walks away, before Stiles can decipher what the words mean.

Stiles decides, while he's changing his first diaper of the day, that if he has to be awake, so does Derek.

So he calls him up.

"Sup, big bad wolf," he chirps into the phone.

"I will kill you, Stiles," Derek grunts out, and Stiles can hear a faint sound of rustling.

Annnnd the *last* thing Stiles needs is to picture Derek in bed.

"Yeah, sure you will, big guy."



“*Kill you,*” Derek reiterates, and the rustling noise intensifies, as if Derek were just... rolling around in bed while talking with Stiles on the phone.

Stiles swallows and looks down at Laura, who's sleeping. He's pretty sure if she were awake she'd be looking at him with her big eyes and silently judging him.

“Kill me, you will. Okay, Yoda, I get it. Now get your ass up here, we have to go to Deaton's.”

He hangs up just as Derek starts saying *you little shit*.

He smiles to himself as he pictures Derek with dark bruises under his eyes, lying on his bed and cursing into his phone like a normal, everyday twenty something. Like that's the worst of his worries, just losing a little sleep.

Sometimes it's the little things.

“Okay.” He bounces Laura a little when she fusses a little. “Let's get you dressed up, alright?”

Derek shows up an hour later, when Stiles is feeding Laura her second bottle of the day, so he gets the door with her in arms.

Derek's eyes drop immediately from him to her and his face goes from vaguely pissed off to mildly shocked, eyebrows climbing high and mouth loosening, all bodily movement stopping in its tracks, and then his lips tighten in a straight line and his eyes go back to Stiles (who's leaning against the door frame and giving his best wide eyed innocent look), intense enough to make Stiles break out in goosebumps.

“Stiles, what the hell is the baby wearing.”

“A onesie?”

Derek's eyebrows do a complicated dance then, before he grits out, “I'm not going out with her dressed like that.”

Stiles rolls his eyes, takes the mostly empty bottle away from Laura, and moves aside to let Derek in.

Not that he's moving.

“Stiles, I'm *serious*,” Derek says, crossing his arms over his chest and trying to stare him down.

Stiles splutters indignantly.

“Oh, *come on*, do you know how hard it was to find a wolf onesie for a newborn baby? If anything, you should appreciate my determination.”

“She's wearing a *wolf onesie*, Stiles. You've put her in a *wolf onesie*. It's not funny.”

“It is, man. And she looks hella cute in it, too. C'mon, don't be like that.”

Derek keeps drilling holes into him with his eyes for a few moments more, refusing to budge, frown firmly in place.

Stiles lifts his eyebrows at him and juts his chin up, all defiance.

Laura squirms a little in his arms, which probably ruins the picture.

Derek looks down at her, however, and... the fight drains out of him. *Visibly*.

He just... deflates like a balloon.

“It does,” he starts, and winces like the words are paining him, doing him this great disservice by simply falling out of his mouth of their own accord, “look kind of cute on her.”

Stiles' smile is practically torn from him, all facial muscles acting on their own.

He just lets it show, big and bright, and lets Derek in.

They take Derek's SUV, which Stiles had been expecting.

What he hadn't been expecting, however, was that--

“You have a baby car seat. Derek Hale has a baby car seat. In his car.”

“Wow, you're incredibly observational, Stiles. Please tell me more, this is riveting,” Derek deadpans, fixing the thing on the backseat.

Stiles would've replied *well, fuck you* in any other circumstance, but a) he couldn't harness much annoyance at a Derek Hale that only moments ago had been carrying a diaper bag and looking like the surliest first time dad ever, and b) Derek was bending over while he adjusted the car seat in this jeans that were so tight they could've been painted on, and Stiles is only human.

So what he does is look down at Laura, who's awake and sucking on her fist studiously, with a raised eyebrow and mouths the word *asshole* down to her. Her response is to blink sleepily a couple of times and wave her tiny fist around a little.

Stiles nods along, pretending it's a gesture of agreement.

“*Stiles.*” He looks up to Derek, who's finished fixing the car seat and is just... staring at him with an amused glint in his eyes.

Stiles can feel himself blushing, skin growing warm and hot and tight on his cheeks.

“Shut up, you bought a car seat, you have no room to talk,” He snaps, shoving Derek aside with his shoulder to bend down and put Laura in the seat.

“Okay,” he gets out as he carefully sets her down and then frowns at the thing and its many belts, grabbing one randomly, “how does this work?”

“*Move.*”

It turns out that having a baby on board makes Derek be the most conscientious driver. Stiles is taken by surprise by how *unsurprising* he finds this new piece of information.

Stiles also catches him looking at Laura through the rearview mirror a couple of times. The first time he thinks about saying something, making some smartass remark about it, about how the big bad wolf is softening for a baby; has a few comments on the tip of his tongue, things designed to rile him up, to push at his buttons just right, because Stiles is good at that. He's good at getting reactions from Derek, at making him push back like a textbook example for the laws of physics.

But he bites it down when he thinks back to himself awkwardly kissing Laura's cheek, checking in on her, and feels hypocritical.

“Well,” Deaton says after looking Laura over, “she's not a changeling.”

Stiles sighs in relief, even though the idea (terrifying as it was), hadn't even crossed his mind up till this moment.

“In fact,” Deaton moves on, frowning a little even as he steps closer to Stiles and lets Laura grab one of his fingers, “she seems completely human.”

“Well, damn,” Stiles mutters, and Derek lets out a huff, this loud gust of breath that on anyone else would've been the quelling of imminent laughter.

“There aren't many myths about creatures known for giving magical gifts such as this,” Deaton says, calmly picking Laura up with the utmost ease from Stiles' arms (and Stiles' arms feel tingly and odd without her nestled there). “And I've never come across anything like this. This is... quite a situation you have in your hands, Mr. Stilinski.”

*No shit* is what's resting on the tip of his tongue, but he bites his lips to keep it in and nods, crosses his arms over his chest for something to do with them, suddenly hyper aware of their weight and length.

When he looks at Derek, he notices that he's tensed up. Not enough to be obvious to just about anyone, but enough that Stiles can tell he's uncomfortable, unsettled.

"I'll look into this," Deaton says, still impassive, and Stiles looks back at him and feels a bit queasy at the thought that by 'this' he might be referring to Laura, "but I'm afraid that nothing will come up, and that you'll just have to default to more... mundane proceedings and avenues of action. Maybe go to your father, the Sheriff?"

Deaton smiles at him then, and hands him Laura back.

Stiles doesn't want to analyze how right it feels to have her back in his arms, snuggled up against his chest in her onesie, frowning in her sleep and drooling a little as she grabs for his shirt.

"I'm sorry I can't be of any more help, gentlemen, but if that will be all, I have patients to care for."

"Well, that was particularly unhelpful," Stiles says as he gets in the passenger seat.

"Worth a shot," Derek replies, putting the key in the ignition.

"So, what now?" Stiles asks, wiggling the fingers of one hand against his leg and bringing up the other one his mouth, to nibble absently at his thumb.

Derek sighs, looking at the rearview mirror and then putting the car in gear.

"Now we do what he says."

"That must be a first," Stiles says, spitting his thumb out to wave his hand around, "you agreeing just like that with something Deaton said."

"It's not like we have other choices right now."

And he's right.

"Well." Stiles cranes his neck to look at Laura. "I think my dad isn't going to be able to explain a mysterious baby apparition away. Especially since special agent asshole McCall came to stir things up."

He looks back at Derek.

“She's gonna have to stay with us.”

Derek nods, the look on his face contemplative.

“She could--,” he swallows, and Stiles' eyes are drawn to his throat, “she could stay with me in the meantime. I could take her in.”

“Derek, no offense, but I've seen where you live. That's not an appropriate place for a baby to stay. Even temporarily, bud.”

He feels like an asshole as soon as the words leave his mouth, and he winces. Derek's face scrunches up for a second, but then it goes to something that looks so close to defeated that Stiles wants to make him pull the car over and just give him a hug.

“Yeah, I know.”

“You know,” Stiles starts, and looks carefully for his words, softens his voice so it won't sound like an attack, because it's literally the last thing they need right now, “you should look for somewhere else to live. It's not--,”

*It's not healthy, he wants to say. It's not healthy, and it won't bring Boyd back. Nothing will bring him or Erica back, and you should stop punishing yourself for this, stop beating yourself up for this.*

“-- it's not sanitary,” is what he says instead. “I've seen the hole on that wall, and I've seen your bathroom. You should get yourself a real place. One that has four walls. Maybe even a full kitchen.”

Derek's face looks dangerously blank for a while, hands white knuckled where they are resting on the steering wheel.

“I know,” he mutters after a while, eyes on the road, shoulders tense. “I know. I'm working on it.”

“Okay, big guy,” Stiles replies, gently.

They end up getting the crib one town over. Derek had wanted to go to the place where he'd bought the car seat, but that was the place where Caitlin worked and... well, Stiles wasn't up to the possible awkwardness of the situation.

Also, it'd probably look suspicious as fuck for them to be buying a crib together.

They make a stop so Stiles can change Laura's diaper and Derek can feed and burp her, and she starts crying just as they are getting to this fancy baby store, but other than the trip's fairly uneventful.

"It's your turn to calm her down," Stiles tells him as he unbuckles himself once Derek is parking.

"Having a kid is expensive." Stiles concludes, as he inspects what must be the hundredth crib they've seen.

"Don't they teach that in high school?" Derek asks him, coming closer to him and brushing against his side as a heavily pregnant woman walks by with her husband.

"Nah," Stiles says and straightens up, stopping to fix the little ears on Laura's onesie so they're standing instead of being forlornly dropped to the sides, "they mostly tell us they will eat away our lives, stop our youth in its tracks, and suck the fun out of the marrow of life."

"That's Finstock, right?" Derek sounds amused.

"Yeah. You had class with him?"

"Econ." Derek moves a little to look at another display. "He wasn't the lacrosse coach back then, though."

"I like this one." Derek points out at a regal looking rocking cradle that's all dark wood and sleek looking curves with delicate carvings on it, then. "Motion soothes them, they sleep better."

Stiles doesn't even have to look for the price to know that he can't afford something like that.

"I don't have that kind of money on me, dude."

Derek shrugs.

"I'll pay for it."

Stiles smirks at him.

"Does that mean you're my sugar daddy now?" He wiggles his eyebrows, and bites his lip to avoid laughing at the scandalized expression an old woman walking by them gets. "Because if that's so, there's this thing I've been wanting to get for my jeep fore--"

"*Stiles*," Derek shuts him up, voice commanding. The tips of his ears are red, however, and Stiles feels a blaze of triumph in his chest, warm tendrils of gratification running all over him

at being able to get Derek like this. "Shut up."

Stiles only does so because there's an unspoken and mortified *please* somewhere in there.

(Derek does end up buying the fancy rocking cradle that's far out of Stiles' price range, anyway, and the clerk who rings them up and helps them store the box away in Derek's car oscillates between dispensing politely amiable smiles at them and warm, sincere smiles at Laura all the while and congratulates them on the birth of their baby.

It's surreal.)

Stiles straps Laura in her little car seat and watches her suck on her little fist lazily, a little dark wet patch forming on the fabric beneath her chin.

His chest feels tight, warm; he smiles at her and wipes some of her drool from her face with the left corner of his shirt.

Derek taps the steering wheel with his thumbs, clears his throat and asks him, completely out of the blue, "Do you... do you really need me to buy you something for your jeep?"

"Oh my *God*, Derek," he chokes out, eyes going wide. "I wasn't serious about that. You're *not* actually gonna be my sugar daddy."

"Really? You don't want to be my kept boy?"

Stiles turns his head to gape at what he can see of Derek's eerily calm face.

And then Derek's jaw muscles tick, and there's this little tilt of a lip that Stiles is intimately acquainted with by now, because *this* is Derek pushing his buttons back, giving back as good as he gets.

"You *asshole*."

"I can come home early, if you need me to." Scott looks worried, the weight of his attentive gaze heavy even through Skype.

"Nah, we're fine. Aren't we, Laura?" he asks the infant that's asleep in the rocking cradle Derek had helped him assemble after they'd come back.

"Laura?" Scott asks, and when Stiles looks back to his screen, he is raising both eyebrows and leaning forward onto his arms.

"Yeah." He can feel himself flushing under Scott's scrutinizing gaze.

Scott knows him too well.

"She just looked like a Laura."

"Sure," Scott agrees, earnest, nodding along with his words. And then changes topics to ask him whether they've already gone to Deaton.

Stiles loves him a lot, okay?

Derek comes by a little after Scott hangs up on him to go spend some time with his mom (which had, after all, been the reason they'd taken the trip at all, even though Melissa had been reluctant to take a vacation, and Scott had been reluctant to leave at all), and he's carrying several bags.

Bags of baby stuff. That he brought in through the window.

Stiles resists the urge to mock Derek about this, just grabs Laura from her baby throne and walks up to where Derek is putting all the stuff on his bed.

"Dude? Did you just... go shopping *right after* we went shopping?"

"These are all things she'll need," Derek defends himself, taking out clothes and diapers and *and* out of the bags, putting everything carefully down.

"Sure she will," he replies, mockingly, as Derek takes out a stuffed giraffe out of one of the bags.

"Don't." Derek's cheeks are flushing as he tries to make the giraffe sit down on its own ineffectually. "Cora had one of these when she was a baby."

Stiles grimaces, and is about to offer an awkward apology or something for soiling his childhood memories with his general assholery when he notices Derek's lips jerking almost imperceptibly upwards.

"You are such a dick."

"Takes one to know one."

Stiles huffs.

Laura blinks her eyes open a few times then, tiny mouth parting in a yawn.



Stiles frowns at her. "Don't you dare side with him, little miss."

Derek snorts. Then he turns his back to Stiles, starts rummaging around one of the bags, and says, "it feels right, spending the-- spending *that* money in someone new, in new life."

Then he takes a box out of the bag and puts it on the bed, acts like he hasn't just shaken Stiles' world apart with his raw openness.

When his dad comes back home that night, Derek is still there, casually lounging on his bed, putting batteries in one of the expensive looking baby monitors as Stiles sits next to him, slumped over a little, folding baby clothes, marveling at how tiny socks can be.

"Your dad's home," Derek tells him seconds before Stiles can hear his dad's car parking outside.

Stiles looks at him, at the way he's calmly inspecting the baby monitors' box, mouth in a curl, eyebrows furrowed in focus.

Stiles hears the sound of a car door slamming.

Derek turns one of the baby monitors on.

"So you're just gonna," Stiles gestures at the expanse of Derek's body, "stay there?"

Derek turns to look at him with his lips a little parted. Stiles can see his bunny teeth before Derek licks over his lower lip and says, soft, "Do you... do you want me to go?"

And Stiles opens his mouth to blurt out a *well, yeah?* But something in Derek's demeanor makes him pause and bite his lips, tap his fingers on the inside of his thighs and sigh out a, "you can stay for dinner if you want?"

Derek's eyes roam around his face, almost vulnerable, as he nods.

Stiles, for some reason, nods along with him, biting his lips again.

And that's when Stiles hear the door.

Dinner is excruciating.

His dad doesn't put his gun on the table, and doesn't chew his food threateningly in Derek's direction, because in some bizarre turn of events, it turns out he *likes* Derek, but everything

still feels oddly tense; even though they mostly talk about Laura and where she could've come from, and what it is Stiles' dad can do to try and locate any family she could have, it feels stilted. Like the three of them are walking on egg shells for some extraneous reason.

Derek is weirdly polite, addressing Stiles' dad as sir, and making little small talk questions once they've gone through the topic of Laura.

For some reason, that makes Stiles' gut clench and makes his face feel overheated. His palms feel sweaty, and he's pretty sure Derek can hear his heart beating loudly, and he can't believe he invited this on himself.

“So, Hale,” his dad says, after taking a sip of his beer (he'd offered one to Derek too, but Derek had declined, cheeks flushing in a display that had made Stiles hide a smile by taking a sip of Coke), “what are your plans now that things have quieted down?”

Stiles feels the blood drain from his face, and he gapes at his dad, because that is an uncomfortably prying question, *Jesus Christ*.

“Well, someone has pointed out that my living arrangements may need some work,” Derek drops, and Stiles hears his fork clattering as he drops it on his plate to grunt into his hands, “... and I think they might be right, so I guess I'll be on the market looking for a new place.”

Stiles peeks from in between his fingers at Derek, and he's treated to the sight of Derek giving his dad one of those creepily charming smiles Stiles has seen him give to other people to get his way. This one seems mellower, though, and that is somehow *worse*.

“Oh, is that so?” Stiles hears his dad say, and he lowers his hands enough to look at him, and the look he's directing at Derek is one Stiles has never seen on his face: it's somewhere between his patented sheriff look, the one that screams authority, and his dad look, the one that's stern and soft at the same time.

Stiles has no idea what's going on.

“Yes, sir,” Derek replies, and Stiles has to take a sip from his glass to not cringe at the sudden eagerness in Derek's voice.

“And are you looking for a job yet, son?”

Stiles glares at his dad from over his glass because what the hell is even happening, and why is he giving Derek the third degree?

“Actually,” Derek starts, voice gruff, and Stiles sees from the corner of his eye that he reaches one hand up to rub at the back of his neck, “I'm supposed to be working on my thesis for my masters degree in history?”

Stiles turns to gape at Derek, then.

“That's pretty impressive, son,” his dad nods, smiling honestly at him.

“Thanks, sir,” Derek replies, flushing to the tips of his ears, looking pleased, and Stiles keeps *gaping* at him.

“*You went to college?*” he asks, and as soon as the words are out he cringes because *boy*, did that sound better and way less rude in his head.

“No need to be so surprised,” Derek grunts at him and practically stabs a pea with his fork.

And then his dad *glares at him* and this is officially the most excruciating dinner he's ever had.

Derek doesn't stay long after they're done eating; he offers to do the dishes, but his dad waves the offer away, clapping his shoulder and extending him an open invitation to come over for dinner whenever he wants to, calling him son again, which makes Derek flush again, and Stiles would feel jealous if it wasn't for the fact that he's well aware that this might be the first time someone has called Derek son in a long time, and that's such a heart breaking thought that Stiles can't begrudge him the way he's soaking the attention up like a sponge.

“Take care, son,” his dad tells him, and then he's bidding them both goodnight and leaving them alone in the middle of the living room, with only the baby monitor for company.

Derek doesn't look at Stiles as he puts his jacket on, and Stiles feels like he somehow has to fix this, so he clears his throat, and mutters out a quiet, “Sorry. I didn't mean it like that. Sometimes my brain just,” he makes an ample gesture with one of his hands as he rubs his chin with the other, “it just makes me sound like an ass.”

“You are an ass,” Derek tells him, but when he turns around to face Stiles, he has a smile on his face, and he doesn't seem mad (or hurt), anymore.

Stiles counts it as a victory.

“Takes one to know one?”

Derek snorts.

“Goodnight, Stiles.”

He turns to the door, and with his hand on the doorknob, he says, “Give Laura a goodnight kiss from me,” soft and gentle, and then he's gone.

And Stiles stands there, staring at the door like an idiot until Laura starts crying.

(That night is better. For the both of them.

Laura doesn't sleep right through it, but she wakes up only two or three times.

Stiles sleeps better, too, though he wakes up a few times unprompted, and just shuffles over to the cradle, puts his hand on Laura's tiny chest, his palm going up and down with the motions of her breathing, and it's... it's calming. It's good for him, it's reassuring.

Not that he'll tell anyone.)

The next day, Stiles resolves to resume life as it was before, because he has to. Magical baby or not, there's still a Nemeton drawing unfriendly supernatural beings onto the town, and there's still a darkness around his heart, encroaching and awaiting to jump on him with the same intensity every time whenever he dares to forget it.

He's still got responsibilities.

Hell, he's still got at least two books in his summer reading list to go through.

So when Lydia calls him to remind him they are supposed to be going through some old books that Peter had been hoarding before he left town that day, Stiles looks down at the baby he's holding and says *yeah, sure, I'll be there in an hour* and starts putting Laura's diaper bag together as soon as Lydia hangs up on him.

"You should feel lucky, little miss, you are going to meet *the* Lydia Martin today," he tells Laura, and she blinks sleepily up at him in reply.

Lydia opens the door and smiles at him with crinkled eyes, only to stop in her tracks when she takes in on him, bag and baby and all. Then she widens her eyes, taken aback, only to immediately compose herself and place a deceitfully charming smile on her face as she leans on the door frame and crosses her arms over her chest, small and dainty fingers of one hand wiggling a little before settling on place.

"Stiles, I'm assuming that you're neither misogynistic enough nor enough of a fool to expect me to take care of this baby, right?" Her smile promises chaos and pain and Stiles just nods at her, holding Laura tighter to himself. Fearing a little for his life.

"Great!" She chirps then, smile getting warmer. "Come on in, then, we've got some reading to do."

"Great!" He mirrors, nodding along like a puppet being jerked around by its strings.

Lydia doesn't ask about Laura, about what she's doing in Stiles' care, or where she came from, but she looks at her like she's a Rubik cube waiting to be solved. One more equation in the chalkboard that's life for her, an enigma she will solve sooner or later.

Until Laura makes this utterly recognizable face that means she's pooping.

Then she's wrinkling her nose and gesturing him towards the bathroom.

“Stiles, if you stain anything--”

And that's when Laura starts *bawling*.

"We can do this, Stiles," Lydia tells him a few hours later while Stiles feeds Laura a bottle, and even she sounds awed as her eyes roam the pages. "We need time, but we can do this. If we can harness my power, if you can help with your spark, we can do this. We can shut the Nemeton down."

She looks at him with eyes full of wonder, and Stiles is swept away, completely taken over, by the intensity of his love for her. By how real it is, by how different it is from before, from when he thought he was the town's expert on Lydia Martin, but didn't actually know her at all.

He's also intensely aware of how different in nature that love is. It feels almost distressingly platonic. Its presence real and warm and dizzying, yes, but *platonic*.

His chest feels a sudden hollowness, a heartburn he wants to chase away with his fingers, but he just smiles back at Lydia's radiant face and says, "Hell yeah, we're doing this."

One of Laura's tiny fists leaves the bottle to wrap around the fabric of his shirt then, bunching it up, and when Stiles looks down at her, it's almost as if she was focusing on him with her big eyes.

Scott comes back a few days later.

"I thought you were gonna be gone for another week, dude?" Stiles says as he lets Scott in, punching him on the shoulder.

Scott shrugs at him, a warm and unassuming smile lighting up his face. Stiles is pretty much overcome with the need to playfully loop his arm around his neck and noogie him, or at least ruffle his hair a little.

Stiles is willing to admit he's a little codependent, and he's missed Scott like hell.

“Mom was getting restless.”

It's not a lie, Stiles can tell it's not by the curl of Scott's lips, the fond, adoring look he gets whenever he talks about his mom (which is very much warranted, since Mrs. McCall is basically a goddess amongst women), but there's more.

“And?” he asks, opening the fridge to take two Coke cans out.

Scott sighs. Stiles hands him one of the cans over and he fiddles with the tab after opening it.

“And I wanted to check everything was okay with the-- with Laura.”

Stiles nods at one of the baby monitors Derek had bought, resting on top of the living room's table, next to some books Lydia had given Stiles to read over before their next meeting.

“Everything's fine, man. You shouldn't have come earlier for this. We're doing fine.”

Scott looks at the baby monitor and Stiles has a sip of his Coke.

“I trust you,” Scott says, looking at him, earnest, “but I still worry. It's-- I don't know if it's the pack thing, or just a me thing, or--”

“Scotty,” Stiles interrupts him, putting a hand on his shoulder, “I get it. I know you trust me. I know. I trust you too, you know?”

Scott smiles at him, ample and blindingly bright, and Stiles has a hard time figuring out how there can be people out there who can get mad at Scott for long.

“So,” Scott says, looking around, “where is she?”

Stiles roll his eyes at Scott and punches him on the shoulder again.

“You know where she is, dude.”

Scott smiles coyly at him.

“I'm trying to give you privacy?” he tries.

“It's not like I'm trying to hide a hot, naked hook up from you, man. C'mon, let's go get her. It's about time for her bottle, anyway.”

Laura is still sleeping when they get to his room, her cradle rocking almost imperceptibly with the momentum from the last soft push Stiles had given it the last time he'd come up to

check on her.

He lifts her up and bundles her with one of her fleece blankets.

“Here,” he says, turning around and thrusting her a little at Scott, who's already sporting a nearly reverent look on his face.

And that's when things get weird.

When Scott's eyes land on Laura's face, he gasps, and his hands rise as if of their own volition until they're both resting on the sides of Laura's face. And that's when he *flashes his eyes at Laura*, lets them bleed Alpha red at her, as if unable to control himself; the weirdest part of it all, though, is the way Laura responds, blinking her eyes open and making a tiny sound that's similar to a gurgle, as if she were overjoyed by the acknowledgment, and she starts to suck on one of her fists intently as her other hand wraps around Scott's fingers.

Stiles is stunned.

Scott frowns in bewilderment, and Stiles is right there with him because he hasn't lost control since-- he hasn't lost control in a while, but this is, it's as if Laura had just brought it out of him, ripped it from deep inside of him.

“Can I,” Scott chokes out, and his voice sounds tiny and unsure as his eyes go over Laura's face, “can I hold her?”

“Yeah, man, of course,” Stiles tells him, softly, and hands her over to him, making sure Scott holds her properly.

Which isn't something Stiles should've worried at all, because Scott is a natural, and looks like a natural too, tiny baby in his arms and against his chest, eyes glued to her in wonder, and her tiny hand gripping him tight like a lifeline.

“She feels familiar,” Scott tells Stiles, sounding faintly *wounded* as he takes a few slow steps to sit down on Stiles' bed, face pinched and lips quivering as he looks down at her. “It's such a strong feeling, Stiles.”

Stiles sits next to him, shoulders bumping and legs touching.

“Is it a pack thing? Maybe a scent thing?”

Scott nods, then frowns and shakes his head, then bites his lip and shrugs. “I don't know.”

“Okay.” Stiles tells him. “It's okay.”

A few minutes go by as they sit next to each other, looking at Laura tugging at Scott's fingers to try to suck on them.

“She's so tiny,” Scott says, and he sounds calmer, “and so cute.”

Stiles snorts.

“Wait until she gets hungry.”

After that, the weirdness seems to evaporate, leaving just good ol' Scott in its wake, who helps Stiles feed Laura, and is eager to learn how to burp her and is even enough of a trooper to offer to change her diapers (Stiles is tempted to take him up on the offer but he isn't that much of a dick).

If Stiles notices how tactile Scott gets, how he's all hands rubbing down Stiles' arms, and getting him into one armed hugs whenever he can, and carrying Laura around, even when she's soundly sleep, and stroking Laura's cheeks, and tracing her tiny nose, well, it's not like it's a bad thing for either of them.

Stiles has a long standing commitment with Kira; they meet up every other weekend to practice lacrosse, since she's recently made the team, and he's recently been promoted to an actual player who doesn't spend most of the season warming the bench.

It's a mutually beneficial arrangement.

He doesn't really know how that's gonna work with Laura in tow. Just, he could call up Derek and have him take her for a few hours? But he's been oddly silent since that awkward dinner with his dad a few days ago, and he doesn't want to--

He doesn't even know what he doesn't want to, honestly. He just feels itchy and strange, and the faintest bit pissed off that Derek hasn't come by to check on them, but his skin feels tight and uncomfortable at the thought of *doing something* about it.

The thing is, he doesn't know how lacrosse practice with Kira is gonna work with a tiny baby who needs him nearby most of the time, so he lies on his bed with Laura sleeping on him (and mouthing absently at his chest through his shirt, which had been awkward as hell at first, but he's since grown accustomed to) and calls Kira to cancel on her.

Only when Kira picks up she's all excited, blurting out a little breathless *hi!* That has Stiles cracking a smile without actively meaning to, and then she's all words stumbling upon words about *a baby*, and *Stiles, you have to bring her over, and unless you can't, of course!* And *I come come over to yours if that's the case?* And *Oh God, is she cute?* And *how old is she?*

And then just a tangled mess of indecipherable things that at one point or another might contain the words *tiny tiny baby*.



And of course, of course Scott would tell her. Stiles should've figured that one out on his own because he *does* know his best bud.

"I can still come over, if you want?" he offers, bouncing an uneasy Laura in his arms until she settles down in her sleep, lips parted and limbs sort of everywhere. "We can work on strategies? Theory and that stuff. It's boring shit but it could always help."

"Yeah, of course!" Kira replies, still upbeat, and Stiles can almost see her in his mind's eye, nodding enthusiastically, the way she does everything.

Kira opens up the door in a rush, hair up in a messy bun and wearing her lacrosse jersey, and she takes the diaper bag from Stiles pretty much instantaneously, fixing her eyes in Laura as she ushers him inside and to the living room, not even wasting time on a *hey there* or even a disinterested *wassup*.

It's pretty obvious soon that she thinks Laura is the cutest thing to ever happen to the world. She coos, and downright *gushes* at her and kisses the soft pink skin of her cheeks a lot, drags her fingers through her peach fuzz until it's sticking up in complete disarray.

"She's so tiny and so cute," she whispers at Stiles, eyes bright and filled with wonder, and Stiles can see why Scott feels about her the way he does, because her sheer happiness is contagious in that moment and he can't help but smile back at her.

"Yeah, I guess when she's not screeching like a banshee, she's pretty darn cute."

Kira rolls her eyes at him good-naturedly, smile big and showing dimples, all *I can see right through you, don't even try with me*.

When her eyes go back to Laura her eyebrows furrow and she squints at her and then looks up to Stiles, and her eyebrows furrow even more.

"Don't you think she kind of has your nose?"

Stiles... Draws a blank. He looks at Laura, who's now got a little spit dribbling down the lower half of her face, and... Huh. He gapes for a moment, and then utters a strangled, "she kind of does, yeah."

Kira grins at him, bright and giddy, and then takes out a few binders out of her backpack and starts talking to him, ignoring how momentous everything feels for Stiles right now, and how bizarre, and how it seems like a blow will shake him apart because *God, what is going on?*

"So I was looking for lacrosse strategies on the Internet and--"

Kira's words fade into background noise as Stiles just *stares* at Laura, heart beating wildly.

When he convinces himself that they're probably just seeing things, that there's no way the baby can resemble him, it's been maybe an hour since he got to Kira's, and Laura's been awake for at least the last ten minutes, and she's starting to wave around her fists in what Stiles has started to recognize as both hunger *and* impatience, like her own way of telling Stiles *what are you doing and why aren't you feeding me right now?*

He rolls his eyes at her, and a traitorous voice in him whispers *if it's anyone you resemble, it's Derek* at her.

"Hey, Kira," he cuts her short, and she blinks up at him, pen perched behind her ear.

"Yeah?" She asks.

"Can I use your kitchen to warm up Laura's bottle?"

She smiles at him and nods emphatically, little strands of hair falling from her bun with the motion.

"Sure," she says, standing up and accidentally throwing to the floor a binder that had been resting on her legs. Stiles winces at it as all the printed pages scatter around, and she says, "oops?"

Mrs. Yukimura is having tea in the kitchen, reading glasses perched on her nose as she reads a book that looks old and dusty and about as interesting as Greenberg's life.

She looks up at them with a polite smile when they come in, and Stiles watches it vanish from her face as her eyes lock on Laura's tiny frame.

"Hi, Mrs. Yukimura," greets her Stiles, feeling suddenly protective of the tiny human being he's carrying.

"Stiles," she greets back, eyes never leaving Laura.

Kira, most likely sensing the tension in the air, claps her hands.

"Okay!" She chirps. "I can hold Laura for you while you warm her bottle up, okay?"

Only she doesn't let him reply in any way, just hurrying over to him, and putting her soft hands where Stiles' are, underneath Laura's body, and on the back of her head, and Stiles just hands her over to avoid hurting her.

Mrs. Yukimura keeps looking at Laura like she's not entirely sure she won't explode in their hands at any given moment all the while Stiles is warming up the bottle (hurrying himself up, feet jiggly, and the back of his neck sweaty), but when Stiles is done and about to take Laura

from Kira, she just gives a gentle smile to him and puts the baby in her mom's arms with determination and care, making sure to make eye contact with her and grin, telling her to not drop her.

Then Mrs. Yukimura is left with a handful of tiny, hungry, squirming baby, and Stiles' heart has relocated to his throat, but when he's stepping forward to take her back, Kira grabs at his arm and he stills, watching as Kira's mom frowns for a few seconds before her expression softens, melts like butter under the direct heat of the sun.

“Huh,” she whispers, shoulders losing their tension, back resting against her chair, as her hands come over to try and tame Laura's standing tufts of fuzz. “So it's like that.”

Stiles wants to ask her what she's talking about, but Laura's cheeks start going flushed and her fists go up to her face and she's scrunching her nose, and oh.

“Here.” Stiles says, handing Mrs. Yukimura the bottle. “She's really demanding when she's hungry.”

And then Mrs. Yukimura is feeding Laura, face smooth and relaxed, and Stiles can't shake the feeling that something's happening here that's eluding him.

“Okay,” Kira says, “let's go back to lacrosse?”

Stiles nods, distracted, and follows her to the living room.

The next day someone rings the doorbell and when he goes to get the door, it's Derek.

Stiles leans on the door frame and lifts his eyebrows at him.

“Is anything wrong?”

Derek lifts an eyebrow back at him.

“Aren't you going to let me in?”

Stiles scowls at him.

“I don't know, should I?”

Derek makes an *are you serious with me right now?* face that ticks Stiles the hell off.

The truth is: Stiles is pissed with Derek.

He's been absent for a few days, now. Hasn't come by, called, sent a text. Nothing.

And it's not that Stiles thinks Derek is obliged to, but it would've been nice of him to check on both him and Laura, after all the fuss he'd made about Stiles' qualifications to take care of her at the beginning.

“Are we gonna do this at your front door, in the middle of the day, with your nosy neighbor trying to spy on us from his window?” Derek asks him as he crosses his arms over his chest.

Stiles smirks at him.

“What, don't want any more rumors to spread around town about you, big guy?”

Derek rolls his eyes at him and takes a few steps towards Stiles, puts his hand on the middle of Stiles' chest, pushes him inside and closes the door behind them.

“Hey.” Stiles scowls at him and rubs at the place where Derek's hand had been. “That's gonna bruise.”

“Tears,” Derek drawls, taking his jacket off and hanging it on Stiles' coat hanger, “are trailing down my cheeks for you.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Stiles says, turns around and starts walking to the stairs.

He can feel Derek following him, the silence between them getting charged.

Stiles doesn't care. Derek can talk to him first if tension bothers him, Stiles has endured hours long detentions with *Harris*.

When they make it to his room Stiles sits on his bed, determined to keep doing just what he was doing before Derek came by; he takes the book he'd left at his bedside table and tries to keep reading, but he just keeps going over and over the same sentence.

He looks up from the book, frustrated, and finds Derek picking up Laura from her cradle.

Laura, little adorable traitor that she is, reacts to Derek's presence like a sunflower to the sun. She grabs onto his henley and makes happy yawning sounds that make Stiles' gut tremble and his face want to break into a smile.

Derek just smiles down at her, grabs one of her tiny fists and opens it delicately to trace her palm and her tiny fingers and then he just sits down on his bed, next to him, takes his shoes off one-handed, and lies on his back cautiously, placing Laura on his chest, and holding her with one hand as he puts his other arm behind his head.

His shirt rides up and Stiles' breath catches.

“I've been looking at houses with a realtor,” Derek drops, out of nowhere.

Stiles' eyes leave that sliver of skin between Derek's jeans and the hem of his shirt and looks up at his face.

“O... kay?”

Derek huffs, and his face gets pinched before it relaxes again.

“That's why I didn't come by,” he clarifies. “That's what I was doing. It's not-- It's not that I didn't want to be here.”

Stiles nods and leaves the book back on the bedside table.

“It's not,” he can't quite find the words, “it's not like this is your responsibility, you know?”

Derek gives him this *look*, then, like he can't believe Stiles is capable of being so dim, and Stiles feels affronted even if he has no idea what he's said now to warrant such a look.

He looks at Laura, who's drooling all over her fist.

Something occurs to him then:

“Huh, we never bought her a pacifier. Maybe we should get on that.”

Derek frowns at him.

“Pacifiers are bad for kids, Stiles, her teeth will grow out all crooked.”

Stiles smirks at him.

“That what happened to you, big guy?”

“My teeth. Are not crooked,” Derek bites out, ferocious, the arm behind his head moving and his hand twitching a few inches away from his face, as if he was stopping himself from covering his mouth from Stiles' view.

They fall into a much more comfortable silence then, until Stiles gets a little antsy.

“I,” he starts, and one of his hand drops to Derek's chest, where Laura is, and he grabs at her tiny fist, as if anchoring himself for what he's about to say, “I don't wanna go to college.”

Derek blinks up at him, confused.

“I want to get into the police academy,” he keeps going, “it isn't-- it's not all about my dad. I want to do this.”

He doesn't know what any other words to use to embellish that, so he leaves at that.

Derek doesn't say anything back, and Stiles doesn't need him to. In fact, he appreciates that he isn't trying to cajole into changing his mind about going to college, or telling him that everything's okay. It feels nice not to have to deal with any of that, with any empty platitudes.

It's just... nice to have the truth out there. The knowledge that someone else besides him knows this now is liberating.

Derek goes back to spending time with Stiles and Laura, after that.

His dad's... Weird about Laura.

He'd gone through countless archives, and he'd called other stations and surreptitiously wondered about mysterious disappearances, and there had been nothing. He'd come up with absolutely zero results about her.

He looks at her both like he can't believe she's popped up from nothingness, and like she's the most endearing thing (person) he's seen in a while.

He holds her a lot when he's home from his shifts, feeds her, burps her, talks at her in a sweet and fond tone, but he still drills Stiles about whether they know anything more, if they've found a way to trace the spell (that's the only thing they know for certain, that it was a spell what brought her to Stiles' room, because there's no other explanation, because Deaton had called them and told them he hadn't found any creature with the power to do this, any creature that *would* do this, just... drop a human baby on them). Anything.

Stiles doesn't want to read much into it, doesn't want to attribute any of that to anything other than the fact that his dad IS the law, he's the town's sheriff, he can't have a baby of dubious provenance under his own roof.

It's hard to, though, when his dad is blowing raspberries on her soft tummy, making her make these faces that crack Stiles up, not quite smiles, not quite frowns, but somewhere in between, like she ain't sure what's happening to her or how she feels about it.

(Stiles gets these pangs, too, when his dad talks about not 'making progress' and about finding her parents, and he tries to ignore them. But they are there. Just like his dad's weirdness.)

It takes Stiles some time to notice that he and Derek are settling into a routine.

When he does, however, he starts wondering how the hell he missed it.

Derek comes over every other day, helps him take care of Laura. They trade tasks on and off, for the exception of diaper duty and burping duty (which are Stiles' and Derek's things, respectively), and it's... it's oddly domestic.

Sometimes Derek shows him pictures of the places he's considering and they snark back and forth over them; and sometimes he brings a notebook with him and works on his thesis ("A notebook, Derek, seriously?" "Shut up, Stiles.").

Sometimes Stiles talks about school, about the pack, and Derek listens to him.

Sometimes he even talks back.

A lot of the time they actively seek to annoy each other and try to get a rise out of each other, but their words don't have the same sharp, cutting edges they had before, when they'd first met each other.

Sometimes Derek stays for dinner, and he freaking *preens* under Stiles' dad's attention.

Sometimes Scott comes and hangs out with them, looks at them with knowing eyes that make Stiles feel pinned.

When Derek leans in to kiss him after they've been taking care of Laura for three weeks, it's both shocking and not. It's a calming balm on a faint buzz inside his mind, soothing down to his bones, Derek's soft lips against his, and it's also a blood rush, an adrenaline hit straight to the brain, to his hands that are pulling Derek closer, pawing at him clumsily, and to his feet that are glued where he's standing, chest to chest with Derek in his kitchen, next to a stove where there's a pot filled with water and a bottle.

It's organic, a natural progression of events, kissing like they've been doing this, or a version of this, forever; kissing like they know each other's cues, like they know each other's rhythms, like they can read change and need and want as easy as breathing. It's Stiles finally curling his hands on Derek's soft henley, and Derek tenderly gripping his face like he wants to make sure he's there, like Stiles is something precious to be held with the utmost care.

They only break apart when they hear Laura fussing over the baby monitor, and they smile at each other, foreheads touching like lovelorn fools, like Stiles never thought he would, like he thought only couples in movies did, because who even *feels* that much?

(*They* do, apparently.)

“I'll get her,” Derek tells him, warm puffs of air touching Stiles' lips.

“Okay,” he replies, nodding a bit, still a little dazed.

Derek smirks at him and dives in for a chaste, close mouthed kiss, before leaving him alone with burning cheeks, a fast beating heart, and his suspiciously silent brain.

On the one month mark Stiles wakes up *knowing* that Laura is theirs. Was always *meant* to be theirs, as they were meant to be *hers*. That they aren't going to find anyone out there looking for her because she belongs to them, whoever gave her to them not stealing her away but *creating* her for them.

He feels that certainty deep down on his bones, can't shake it. It's not the feeling he went to bed with, the heavy one of knowing that sooner or later they'll have to give Laura back, no matter what they may want, or how that might tear them apart because they've carved a space in their lives for her, made her part of it.

It's different, feels set in stone, final.

He gets up from bed and goes to check on Laura, who is sleeping in her rocking cradles, fists by her face, chest rising and falling calmly, and the tug on Stiles' gut that claims Laura as theirs *solidifies*.

His body tingles as the tugging, the certainty, ties a tight knot on his gut, resolutely plants itself there.

Laura stirs, eyelids fluttering and legs kicking and one fist going to cover her face, as if in response, as if she felt it too

*Magic.*

*It's magic.*

Like they'd known before, a spell, but now Stiles can *feel it* coursing through him, like he feels the darkness swimming around his heart on bad days.

His phone starts ringing, and when he goes to pick it up he sees Derek's name on the screen, *of course*.

“Do you...?” Derek opens the conversation as soon as Stiles takes the call. “Do you *feel it* too? Does she...? We need to--”

“Come over?” he interrupts, and starts looking for moderately clean clothes to wear.



“Yeah, yes,” Derek answers, and from the rustling he can hear on the other side of the line, Derek's getting dressed too.

When Derek makes it there, Stiles is waiting by the door with Laura. Buzzing in place, holding himself together by sheer force of will.

He tugs the door open before Derek can even attempt to knock or ring the doorbell, and Derek is walking straight up to him, enfolding both him and Laura in his arms, and... oh.

*Oh.*

“How are we,” Stiles starts, and he's got the feeling there's something stuck in his throat, so he starts again, “how are we gonna do this? What are we gonna do? I'm not even out of high school.”

Derek's nose is resting against his neck, dragging along his skin slowly, and he nods.

“I know,” he says, and he sounds as unsure as Stiles feels, “I... we'll figure something out, okay? We will.”

He lifts his head to kiss Stiles' lips chastely and press their foreheads together briefly, and then he goes back to the hollow of Stiles' throat.

(And they do.

It takes them an entire day of almost panicking at the intensity of everything, and Stiles calls Scott about two hours after Derek arrives, and Scott tells them he feels something too, something like a taut string inside that's found its place, and Stiles *gets* it, and so does Derek.

But they do, even if it's an option neither of them are entirely comfortable with.)

“So, you and Derek, huh.”

Stiles chokes on his carrots.

“Well, you and Derek, *and Laura.*” Adds his dad, waving his fork around a little.

Stiles drinks some water and closes his eyes, trying to calm himself. He knew this moment was coming, he knew he'd have to talk about this with his dad sooner or later, but he'd always imagined he'd be the one setting the pace, he'd be the one bringing it up. None of his scenarios had prepared him for dealing with his dad springing it up on him.

He should have been more thorough.

His dad takes a bite of his salad, and then he sets his fork down.

He looks at Stiles and lets out a deep sigh.

"Look, I want you to live up to your potential. To not have any regrets. But above everything, and before everything else, I just want you to be happy. I love you, kid. And that's unconditional. No matter what you choose, I'll always be your old man, and I'll back you up."

Stiles gets choked up.

He opens and closes his mouth a few times, not finding the right words, but after a few tries, he succeeds.

"I know, dad. I love you too." He takes a trembling breath. "And I know I'm young and in far over my head, but this? The pack? Derek? Laura? They make me happy."

He laughs, battling tears, blinking them away with stinging eyes, "I feel so sappy saying that. But it's true."

His dad smiles at him, eyes suspiciously bright.

"I know, son."

Stiles smiles back, then he laughs again.

"This might be a good time to tell you I want to be a deputy? And that I will probably end up moving in with Derek sooner rather than later."

His dad rubs his face tiredly.

"Yeah, probably, kiddo. Let's get it all out in one go. Anything else you wanna tell me?"

Stiles squints, bites at his lip.

"I was the one who broke that one ugly vase when I was ten and not Scott?"

His dad laughs at him.

"I already knew that, kiddo. You two couldn't lie to save your lives."

They arrange for a neighboring pack to take Laura in temporarily, a few months, a year, maybe, since they-- they can't take care of her properly right now. They might want to (Derek definitely wants to, Stiles can see it written all over his face as he looks down at Laura with

an adoring glint that Stiles has become pretty used to -but still makes his breath stutter with its sheer force- and lets her curl her tiny fist around one of his fingers; and who is he even trying to kid? He wants to, too, fiercely), but they aren't ready for it. Scott, Derek, and himself leave Laura in the sheriff and Melissa's care and go over to the Alpha's territory, do the whole proper werewolf protocol deal, with long and tedious ceremonies and meetings, and when they come back they are worn, ready to sleep for a week, but they are content with the end results.

Not happy. Nobody is precisely happy about this arrangement, but they aren't selfish enough to keep Laura in Beacon Hills when there's... when there are still things to be taken care of. When Stiles is so painfully young to be a father, hasn't even gotten out of high school yet, is still a senior. When Derek is just beginning to put himself together after losing his pack for the second time.

So they work the deal out with this neighboring pack, the Rivera pack, that's been allied to the Hales for generations; Derek explains to them the situation and calls in a few favors, says that they'll fully cover Laura's living expenses (which makes the Rivera pack's alpha -“you make me feel so *old*, please call me Sandra”-, a middle aged woman with a kind face and crinkled dark eyes and skin, roll her eyes at them with a gently amused smile in place).

“I,” Derek rasps out, hands twitching where they are entwined on top of alpha Rivera's desk before he steels his voice and goes on, “I want us to be able to visit her at least every few weeks. To be able to spend all the time we can with her. We can't-- we don't want to sever ties, even if it's just for a year.

“We want to be part of her life.”

Scott puts his hand on Derek's shoulder in a display of support for a few beats, and Stiles sneaks his hand onto Derek's leg, lets it rest there.

He feels like his body is burning, chest *hurting* while alpha Rivera looks at them, silent and considering.

“You're doing the right thing,” she says at last, reclining herself on her chair, looking nothing short of regal and composed. “You're doing the best thing for your cub, here.”

Stiles squeezes Derek's leg at the word *cub*, because she is, Laura is their *cub*, no matter how she landed in their lives, and that's overwhelming, a wave of feeling washing all over him.

“Of course you can visit her,” alpha Rivera says after they've been silent for a few seconds, staring at her with wide eyes. “Don't be silly here, boys.”

Stiles lets go of a breath he didn't know he was holding in and she smiles warmly at them then and her eyes crinkle at the corners; she looks matronly and like she will offer them a lemon bar any time now, and though Stiles isn't fooled by it because he can see the strength in her gaze, in her hands, all over her body, he can't help but wanting to *trust* her.

“Thank you, alpha-- Sandra,” Scott says then, earnestly. “We're very grateful for this.”

“I imagine,” she replies, and it isn't mean spirited. It's sincere, like she entirely understands how deeply grateful they are for this, and like she can understand -underneath that- how this is still incredibly painful for them.

“The Hale pack has come to our aid on many occasions, proving to be genuine and valuable allies,” she says then, and for a few seconds her face contorts into something that looks like sorrow and her eyes go to Derek, who is very still. “It is my wish to honor alpha Talia's memory, and the ties that have bound us for many years already.”

They hash out a few details then, talk about when they are bringing her over, and who is going to stay with her the first few days, to help her acclimate and to get to know her primary caretakers, to make sure everything is in fact okay (Derek); alpha Rivera asks about Stiles and Derek's relationship, inquires whether they'll come to visit together, and whether they'll need mate specific accommodations and though it makes Stiles squirm nervously on his seat, Derek remains unshaken by it all and provides answers calmly: *yes, we will, as often as possible; it would be preferred, thank you for your consideration.*

While alpha Rivera is talking a few things over with Derek (Stiles thinks he hears the word *Skype* thrown somewhere around there), Scott commandeers his attention and looks at him with a raised eyebrow that Stiles takes to mean *really?* And maybe *is it like that already?* And Stiles hasn't got solid answers to give him, other than a knee jerk reaction to nod back a *yes, it's like that*, so he gives Scott a shrug that is the best as he's got right now.

“Okay, then,” alpha Rivera says, putting her hands flat on the desk, “I think this would be all?”

All of them nod, and Scott gets to his feet when she does, shakes her hand firmly (and blushes pleasantly when she calls him a *formidable young alpha*), thanks her again as Stiles and Derek shake her hand too, and then turns around and leads Stiles and Derek out.

The weeks following the meeting with alpha Rivera are... hard. Hard for everybody. For him, for Derek, for his dad, for Scott, for Kira. Even for Lydia, who's come to appreciate Laura on her own way, since she'd become a permanent addendum to their biweekly *how to get rid of the fucking Nemeton* meetings.

They prepare her things to take them to the Rivera pack, pack them up in boxes, and put those boxes in Derek's car; and most importantly, they prepare themselves, which is harder.

His dad takes to looking at him like he's both incredibly proud of him and like he doesn't know what to tell him to make him feel better; Stiles knows that one look, he'd seen it a lot after his mom's death.

Stiles just smiles at his dad and nags him about his eating habits, makes digs about him being a grandpa already, and needing to take better care of himself now since he isn't as young anymore. It gets him annoyed eye rolls, cuffs to the back of his head, and unintelligible grunts.

It distracts his dad a little. And though it doesn't do much for him, it's still nice.

His dad lets Derek stay the night before they're meant to take Laura to the Rivera pack.

For the first time Stiles gets to have someone on his bed, It's depressingly platonic; they just hold hands a lot, and make out a little, and fall asleep breathing each other's air, like something out of a Lifetime movie.

They also alternate Laura duties, and the last time she wakes up, at about seven, they just stay up. Bring her over to the bed and lie there together, the three of them with her in the middle.

“Are you ready?” Stiles whispers at Derek.

“No,” Derek lets out, “are you?”

“No.” He brings his fingers up to smooth Laura's baby fuzz.

Derek sighs.

“Let's do this.”

Stiles nods, and echoes him, “Let's do this.”

### ***Epilogue:***

Laura is a terror.

Stiles is pretty sure she is going to give him premature gray hairs.

She runs more than she walks and she scrapes her knees with an alarming frequency and she puts her little, mischievous hands everywhere. Stiles has already had some minor heart attacks over that; once when she tried to stick her fingers in a power outlet; and another time when she wanted to put her hand down the garbage disposer.

(Derek has some horror stories of his own to share about her propensity towards getting in trouble (that he blames on Stiles, the dickhead) and her love for mischief, and when he tells them he does so with this fond look in his eyes that betrays his unamused façade, because he's the softest softy to ever soft; he's a total pushover, and Laura (who isn't even *five*, yet) knows it perfectly well and *exploits it*.

It's sort of hilarious, to see Derek's big, hulking frame, intense brooding face and hard cold steel determination yielding to Laura's whims as soon as she bats her eyelashes at him and calls him *dada*.

It's also quite possibly the cutest thing ever, and Stiles can't help but fall in love with him all over again, the tenderness and the quiet love shining through Derek's demeanor making him itch to hold his hand and kiss him silly.)

His dad often tells him she's his karmic retribution (and they spend quite some time together, now that Stiles is a deputy, so he does it all the time, with knowing and smug smiles), here to make him experience what raising a Stiles was like, firsthand.

Laura is also the best thing that's ever happened to Stiles.

She sneaks into their bed on stormy nights because lightning scares her, kicks them in the kidneys with her sturdy little legs (and Derek in the *nuts*, this one hilarious time) when she climbs over them, she gives the best hugs, even when her little fingers are grubby and sticky, and gives the best slobbery baby kisses (Stiles had thought of those kinds of kisses as gross before having his own slobbery kid, how things change).

She also has the most amazing and imaginative mind, makes Stiles look at things in different ways, makes him come down from his cynicism and do ridiculous things with her just to hear her clear, bright laugh.

She's brilliant. Lydia spends a lot of quality time with her, and brings baby Einstein type books that Stiles thinks *he* probably would've never been interested in as a small kid, but Laura listens to Lydia in rapt fascination, hanging onto her every word and making *questions*, so many questions.

And she's kind. So kind. Scott takes her with him to the animal clinic, and she spends hours with the animals, talking to them earnestly, telling them they will get better soon, and that she'll come visit them until they can go home and it's *gut wrenching* and beautiful to witness.

("Man, are you crying?" Scott smirked at him, eyes crinkled and soft and Stiles muttered back, "No, I'm not, you asshole," sounding a little choked.

"Swear jar!" Yelled Laura, pointing at him with one of her tiny fingers, diverting her attention from the kittens she was petting diligently towards him for a few seconds, until one of them meowed demandingly at her, and she went back to them, cooing.

“Sure you aren't, buddy,” had been Scott's reply, accompanied with a condescending pat on his back.)

And maybe every parent thinks their kid is special and perfect and capable of no wrong, and maybe Stiles *knows* she can be a little moody sometimes, and that she doesn't always remember to be her most polite self, and that she can be a little spoiled from time to time, and that she honestly *is* a terror, but whenever he lays eyes on her, all he sees is how frankly wonderful she is, and how *lucky* they are to get to have her in their lives.

Derek calls her a miracle in private, because of course he does, the big ol' softy.

Stiles can see his point when Laura smiles at them with a miniature version of his own nose and a set of bunny teeth like Derek's. Eyes crinkled and that indecipherable color that's pure Derek, and the chocolate brown unconquerable mess of hair that *screams* Stilinski.

A miracle, yes.

“We're two old saps,” he lets out onto the warm skin of Derek's neck.

Derek's hand rubs circles on his back, and he hums deep in his chest.

“We're two old *married* saps,” he replies matter-of-factly after a while, the thrumming waves of his voice sending thrills down Stiles' body. “Do you wanna have domestic, sappy married sex? The way old married saps like us do?”

Stiles smiles against Derek's skin, slides his hand down Derek's chest and onto his abs, curls his fingers over the elastic band of his underwear, where there's a trail of curly hair still damp from Derek's shower leading down.

“I think that can be arranged.”

(And then they grow old together to be the most embarrassing dads ever.)

## End Notes

Okay, so I'm feeling incredibly self-conscious, since this is my first somewhat long fic. I hope I didn't fuck up too badly.

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