

**we can take our time**

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# we can take our time

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## Summary

Tact and social mores are completely relegated to the back of Derek's brain, and without thinking, he blurts out, "Did you spend your heat *alone*?"

Stiles' head jerks around in surprise, and then he flushes pink and looks away. His voice comes out brusque and unfriendly. "Not that it's any of your business, but I spend every heat alone."

## Notes

Ohhhhhhkay so first I thought I would never write a/b/o and then I thought I would never write a/b/o that involved heat cycles and yet here I am, writing this fic. All I can say is that my brain is a very strange place.

Warnings for a view of a/b/o that involves a lot of serious discussions of whether or not consent can be granted in this sort of setting. I'm not trying to kinkshame anyone here, just exploring the concept. Plus there is a detailed description of a past rape and a suicide attempt (not in the first chapter, but later in the fic). So yeah, definitely some trigger material in here, take care of yourselves!

# Chapter 1

The decision Derek makes to transfer to Beacon Hills is an easy one. He has no family, no significant other, no real reason to stay where he is. He lives in a one-bedroom apartment with his cat. The pay in Beacon Hills will be better, and to be honest, the idea of working in a small town is more appealing than the city.

He arrives for the first day on the job in his neatly pressed uniform and reports to the captain, a man who's only a few years his senior, named Jordan Parrish. He hadn't met him before, having interviewed with the sergeant and the administrative assistant. "Have a seat," Parrish says, gesturing at the seat across from himself, and Derek sits.

They exchange pleasantries, Parrish asks about his experiences working in Los Angeles. About five minutes go by before Parrish glances at his watch and says, "So, I'm going to partner you with Stilinski. He's a bit younger than you but his father was a sheriff so he's lived and breathed police work since he was in diapers. Don't let him give you any shit."

Derek bites back a smile. "Yes, sir."

"One other thing." Parrish hesitates for a moment before saying, "You're an alpha, aren't you?"

Derek is surprised by the question. It's not precisely rude to ask, but most people consider it something of a taboo subject. But he grew up with it; he's not ashamed of it. "Yes, I am."

"Stilinski is an omega. Sometimes . . . alphas have problems working with him."

"Ah." Derek can see why Parrish is concerned, even if he needn't be. Despite all the efforts to educate the public about the exact relationship between alphas and omegas, most regular humans will never really understand it. And sometimes alphas play up the attraction between the two for dramatic reasons, further muddying the waters. "That won't be a problem, sir."

Parrish hesitates again. "Look, Hale. I'm not saying all alphas become beasts ruled by their impulses whenever they see or smell an omega. I know that's not true. I know that you're in just as much control of yourself as I am. There are . . . circumstances, with Stilinski, that can make it difficult for alphas. I just want your word that you'll let me know if you have a problem."

Derek has absolutely no idea what that means, but this man is his boss now, so he nods and says, "Absolutely."

"Great. Dismissed."

Derek heads out into the precinct feeling baffled by this conversation, and now more than a bit uneasy about meeting his new partner. He scans the room and immediately narrows in on Stiles; he's one of only two omegas in the precinct, and the other doesn't seem to be in the

room at the moment. Derek heads over and extends a hand. “Derek Hale. I guess I’m your new partner.”

The other man looks a little startled, but not uncomfortable the way Derek feels. “Oh, hey! I’m Stiles.” He shakes Derek’s hand.

“Is that a nickname?”

“Yeah.” Stiles waves a police report at him, and Derek peers at it.

“Mieczyslaw Stilinski,” he says, and sees Stiles’ jaw sag at his accurate pronunciation. “Polish?”

“Uh, yeah, wow. How’d you know?”

“I moved around a lot when I was a kid. Army brat. Spent three years on a base in Germany, and I wound up learning bits and pieces of a lot of European languages. Put a page of Polish in front of me and I’d know how to pronounce it but I wouldn’t have a damned clue what I was saying.”

“So I can still insult you in Polish? Okay, good to know,” Stiles says, and grins at him. “Come on, I’ll show you around.”

Twenty minutes later, they’re in the car, and Derek is still trying to work out what the hell Parrish had been talking about. Sure, he can see how Stiles would annoy some people. He’s a ball of frenetic energy, always talking, never still. It doesn’t annoy Derek, who just lets it wash over him like he’s a rock in a river, but he can see how some people would want to kill him. He can also see how some people would find his know-it-all attitude about police procedure obnoxious. But that doesn’t have anything to do with Stiles being an omega. That’s just Stiles being Stiles.

After the first day, he shrugs it off. Whatever Parrish had been talking about undoubtedly stemmed from some human misunderstanding about the relationship between an alpha and an omega. It’s not anything to worry about.

As to Stiles’ status as an omega, that just isn’t Derek’s business unless Stiles brings it up. At Stiles’ age, it’s safe to assume that he has a steady partner, or at the very least knows where to find one when he needs one. Derek will need to find a partner as well, but alphas go into heat far less often than omegas – about once every six months rather than every six weeks – so he has plenty of time.

Stiles really turns out to be the best sort of partner once Derek learns to tune out his rambling. He’s extremely competent, but doesn’t take himself too seriously. He also knows everyone. “I grew up here,” he tells Derek, after the third time he’s recognized during their first shift. “And my dad was the county sheriff for years, so, basically everyone knows me.”

The job is less stressful, too. Sure, it isn’t *nothing*. There are domestic disputes and theft, vandalism and drugs and DUIs. But there’s no gang violence in Beacon Hills, no drive-by shootings. His entire first week passes without an incident that involves a gun.

More often it's rounding up the drunks at last call, manning the speed trap just around the curve where the speed limit drops from forty-five to thirty, and responding to car accidents. There's a four-year-old who goes missing only to be found a few hours later playing with frogs at a nearby creek. Some bored teenagers who get caught with more marijuana than they know what to do with. A guy who's caught drugging drinks at a bar.

Derek finds himself admiring Stiles more than he would have expected. He's just honestly a good cop. He's thorough and meticulous when questioning the parents of the missing boy. Compassionate enough to let the stupid teenagers off with a slap on the wrist even though they could have been charged with possession (but not so compassionate that he doesn't call their parents). Flat out badass when the asshole would-be rapist tries to pull a gun on them when it's clear that he's caught.

By the time a month has gone by, Derek has basically forgotten about Parrish's warning. He's only reminded of it when he smells Stiles' heat coming on. From his experience, most omegas start to give off the telltale scent about twenty-four hours before the heat starts. He doesn't say anything about it, though. Even to people who don't consider it a taboo, mentioning it is impolite.

At the end of their shift, when he's changing back into his street clothes, Stiles clears his throat and says, "So, uh. I'm gonna be out for a couple days."

Derek glances at him and nods acknowledgement. It would be impossible for an omega to work during their heat, so accommodations are made. "I figured Captain Parrish would probably just have me catch up on paperwork or clean up the evidence room or something."

"Nah, he'll just send you to work as a crossing guard for a few days." Stiles makes the joke, but it comes without his usual grin. Derek is thinking about asking if he's okay, before Stiles turns to change, and strips his shirt over his head. At that, Derek forgets about their conversation and has to turn away for a moment. Sure, alphas are in control of their instincts. But every once in a while, it can be difficult, and when an omega on the cusp of heat, an omega that he's already attracted to, starts taking their clothes off in front of him, is one of those times.

He doesn't dare turn around until he hears Stiles' locker shut. "See you in a few days, then?"

"Yeah." Stiles hesitates for a brief moment. "Look, uh . . . if, uh, when I get back, if . . ."

Derek frowns at him. "What is it?"

"Nothing." Stiles grabs his bag. "Never mind. Enjoy the evidence room."

Derek is again left confused, but he doesn't say anything, letting Stiles depart. Some people get weird when they're going into heat. And it's possible (can he even hope that it's possible?) that if Stiles is attracted to him, he was having thoughts of asking Derek to join him during it. But if that's what was going on, it was good that he hadn't. Making decisions at this point in the cycle was never a good idea. Stiles could spend this heat with whatever partner he had previously arranged, and they could have a detailed discussion about it later.

He goes home, feeds his cat, grills himself some burgers and eats dinner. Work the next day is just as boring as anticipated. He does paperwork and prepares for a court case he's going to be doing the next week for a string of car thefts. The next day is more of the same.

He's a little surprised when Stiles isn't back on the third day, but not entirely. An omega's heat lasts anywhere between twenty-four and forty-eight hours. Some of them are fit to go back to normal activities right away, but sometimes they aren't. It's not entirely unusual to need a third day to recuperate. Derek has a momentary pang of jealousy, thinking of what Stiles' alpha must have been doing to him so that he required a day of rest.

All of that is forgotten when he sees Stiles in the locker room the next day. He looks wrecked, pale and gaunt like he's dropped a bunch of weight over the last three days. There are dark circles under his eyes, and his lips are ragged, like he's chewed them raw.

Tact and social mores are completely relegated to the back of Derek's brain, and without thinking, he blurts out, "Did you spend your heat *alone*?"

Stiles' head jerks around in surprise, and then he flushes pink and looks away. His voice comes out brusque and unfriendly. "Not that it's any of your business, but I spend every heat alone."

Derek's jaw sags, and he stares at Stiles. He can't even comprehend it for a few moments. He's never spent a heat alone, but he's heard about what it's like. He's heard that it's agony that can't be put into words. Heard about people who have hurt themselves in the efforts to find relief. Every time he's heard of an omega who had to endure a heat alone, they talk about how they never want to go through that again. He's also heard that it gets worse over time, that every heat spent alone is more painful than the last. "Why?" he finally asks.

Stiles slams his locker shut, but when he turns to face Derek, his face has more grief than anything else. He stops and takes a deep breath. "Look. I. I understand if you don't want to be my partner. Most alphas can't, can't deal with it when this happens. They want to." He swallows hard. "Help me out. You know? But I, I have reasons for doing what I do. So if it's going to be a problem for you, just tell Parrish. He can assign you to someone new."

"It's not that – look, it's your business, I won't – impose," Derek says. "It's just that you're obviously in pain, and, and yeah. It's really hard for an alpha to see an omega in pain. Especially for this reason."

"I know." Stiles rubs a hand over the back of his head. "And I know it doesn't make sense to you. It doesn't have to. You don't have to understand it. I just need you to respect it."

"Yeah, sure." Derek can't help but stare at him. He *doesn't* understand it. What could drive someone to hurt themselves like that? "You know, if you were raised in one of those families where –"

"No," Stiles says. "Stop. Don't do that. No, I wasn't raised in a fundamentalist family. I know there's nothing wrong with being omega. I don't judge other omegas or alphas, for that matter, for doing what they do. So don't judge me for what I do. Or *I'll* talk to Parrish."

“Okay.” Derek lifts his hands in surrender. “Are you going to be okay to patrol?”

“I wouldn’t be back at work if I wasn’t. Come on, let’s go.”

To say that the day is awkward would be an understatement. Derek tries not to think about it, but he can’t help it. It nags at the back of his brain. He keeps imagining what the last few days have been like for Stiles. He’s never gone through a heat cycle alone, but one time his partner got stuck in traffic and was an hour late, and Derek vividly remembers that hour, how he was ready to claw his own skin to shreds just to get away from the intense cravings heat brought on. To hear that Stiles does that *every time*, that he does it *voluntarily*, he just can’t make sense of it.

Fortunately for Derek, the day is busy. There’s a three car accident in the morning rush hour, and one of the people involved starts literally trying to beat the shit out of the person who cut them off and caused it. It takes a couple hours to get all of that sorted out, by which point there’s another call waiting for them because some jerk got disruptive at a coffee shop when they messed up his order.

Stiles is clearly feeling a little better the next day, even if he’s still quiet. He keeps looking at Derek like he’s waiting for the other shoe to drop. By the third day, he’s back to his usual self. Derek can’t help but wonder exactly how many partners he’s lost because of this problem. Stiles’ problem isn’t just whatever’s causing him to spend his heat alone – he’s also clearly convinced that Derek is going to ditch him. Derek resolves that this will not happen.

That’s easy to say during the month, but the weeks creep by and he finds himself bracing for it despite himself. The instant he smells Stiles’ heat coming on, he practically has to duct tape his own mouth shut to keep from asking if he’s going to spend it alone, is he *sure*, Derek would be happy to spend it with him, there’s no reason for him to do this to himself. When Stiles leaves for the day with the same ‘I’m going to be out for a few days’ speech, Derek slumps into a chair and realizes that his fingernails have dug furrows into his palms.

“Shit,” he says. He won’t ask to change partners. He *won’t*. But he feels like he has to understand.

A little snooping leads him to a popular cop bar in the town next door. There’s only one alpha in the cluster of police officers who are clearly enjoying their off time, and Derek hesitates but approaches. “Scott McCall?”

“Yeah, what’s up?” Scott is about the same age as Stiles, with an open, friendly face.

“I, uh, I’m Derek Hale, with the Beacon Hills police.”

“Oh, hey! Nice to meet you.” Scott shakes his hand like they’re old friends. “What can I do you for?”

“I was wondering if I could ask some incredibly impolite and invasive questions,” Derek says, and Scott laughs. “See, uh. I’m new to the force over there, and . . . partnered with Stilinski.”

The smile immediately falls off Scott's face. He doesn't look angry, but upset. He looks away briefly, then says, "Okay, yeah. And you want to ask me questions because I was Stiles' most recent partner. Let's get a drink."

Derek is happy to have alcohol to help ease this conversation along. They get a table in the corner. "I'm really sorry to intrude like this. It's just –"

"You have to understand." Scott nods. "I've been there. And I wish I could help you out, but I can't. He won't talk about it. Any effort to get him to talk about it, and he'll just tell you to talk to the captain about changing partners if it bothers you." He takes a long pull at his beer. "I told myself I could handle it, you know? That it wasn't a big deal. I have a steady partner – hell, I have a *wife*." Scott holds up his hand to display the wedding ring. "It shouldn't have mattered. I made it through four cycles before I had to get away from it. I transferred precincts and everything because I just – couldn't watch him do that to himself."

"I'm on the second." Derek pushes a hand through his hair and tries to hide his disappointment. He suddenly doesn't know why he came here, why he expected that this guy would have the answers.

"Look, this is just my opinion, but if I were you, I would ask to transfer now." Scott sets his beer down. "You're gonna do it sooner rather than later, and it'll suck less for both of you if you just get it over with."

"Maybe. I just feel like – he's waiting for someone not to abandon him." Derek shakes his head. "That's the vibe I got from him. He just looked so fucking *sad* when he told me I could ask to change partners if I wanted."

"I get it, but that's his choice, you know? He knows it's going to happen." Scott sighs. "I don't know, man. I wish I had answers for you. I really do."

Derek thanks him and heads back home. He paces for a large part of the night, nearly driven out of his skin by the idea that Stiles, energetic, sarcastic Stiles, is suffering. He works out for a bit and eventually has a few drinks so he can sleep. He wishes it wasn't the weekend. Work would be a blessed distraction right now.

He ends up at the precinct anyway, and knocks on Parrish's door. Parrish looks up, sees him, and sighs. "Come on in."

Derek does, and shuts the door behind himself. "I'm not asking to change partners," he opens with. "I just wanted to ask a question, if I could."

"You want to know why I would ever pair Stiles up with an alpha partner to begin with," Parrish says, and gives a little smile. "You aren't the first to ask that question. And no, before you posit your theory, it's not because I'm hoping I'll eventually find the one that can change his mind. I've known Stiles since he was seventeen, and *nothing* changes his mind."

"Was he . . ." Derek trails off, because among all the various things that aren't his business, that is *definitely* one of them.



Parrish answers anyway. “As far as I know, yes. He doesn’t talk about it, but it’s my understanding that Stiles has never spent a heat with a partner.”

Derek’s mind shies away from that. “Then – maybe he just doesn’t understand – ”

Parrish gives him a tired look.

“Right.” Derek rubs his hands over his face. “He has his reasons and it’s his choice to make. But, seriously, why do you give him alpha partners?”

“You’re the fourth alpha partner he’s had, and there’s been a different reason each time,” Parrish says. “The first time it was because we didn’t know any better. It . . . went badly. We weren’t prepared for it. He ended up being transferred to a different city. Second time, we thought, okay, we know it might be a problem, but personnel issues kind of forced my hand. His regular partner, who was human, went on maternity leave, and I didn’t have anyone else I could partner with him. We all went into it with open eyes, and the instant there was a problem, I separated them and put Stiles on desk duty until Erica was back. He was with her for two years before she got promoted to sergeant and transferred. Again, I was strapped for better choices. We talked about it and decided to give it a try again. We thought that if *any* alpha could handle the problem, it would be Scott McCall. He was married with kids, has been with the same omega partner since his teens, so we hoped it wouldn’t bother him. And he tried, Lord knows he tried not to let it, but he eventually said he couldn’t handle it and asked to be transferred.”

“And now there’s me,” Derek says.

“Stiles had been on desk duty for six months and he was driving all of us bonkers. I shuffled people, gave him a chance in the field when I could, but it wasn’t the same as having a regular partner. When I hired you, somehow it got overlooked in the paperwork that you were an alpha. So I had already told Stiles I had a partner for him, he was going to be back in the field regularly, and he was ecstatic. I realized the problem the day before you got here. He begged me to give it a chance, said he was losing his mind driving a desk. We thought maybe the problem was that we had overexplained in the past, primed the alphas to get upset about it, so we decided to just tell you to let us know if there was a problem.”

Derek sighs. “I don’t want to not be his partner, so I guess I’ll just have to deal with it.”

“Thanks. For giving him a chance. He’s a great cop, and I hate to waste his talent. So just . . . keep me posted, okay?”

“Yeah, okay.”

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## Chapter 2

When Stiles comes in on Monday, he's exhausted and moving stiffly, like he's still in some pain. Derek orders himself not to mention it, but he can barely even *look* at Stiles, which leads to a lot of awkward silences while they cruise around town, both of them hoping desperately that something will happen to distract them.

It's a quiet few days, which only makes things more awkward, as both of them decidedly don't talk about it. It takes almost a week for things to get back to normal, and even then, there's that terrible sense of waiting. Derek thinks about what Scott had said, and wonders if maybe it *would* be better if he just chopped this off at the knees now. Certainly it's what Stiles expects him to do.

He's thinking about that more and more as the cycle draws to a close when they walk into the station at the end of their shift and he sees Stiles' face genuinely light up. "Erica!" he shouts, waving madly at a blonde woman across the station.

She turns and smiles back. "Hey, Stiles!" she says, and walks over to wrap her arms around him in a tight hug. She sees Derek behind him and says, "Damn, nice! You traded up!"

Stiles flushes pink and punches her in the shoulder. "Erica, this is my new partner, Derek Hale. Derek, Erica. She was my partner for two years before she got promoted and transferred."

"Nice to meet you," Derek says, shaking her hand.

"Likewise." She rakes her eyes up and down him, then grins at Stiles. "I'm back, bitch!"

"Really?" Stiles' eyes light up with excitement.

"Yep. Sergeant Reyes of the Beacon Hills PD, reporting for service. Since Lahey was getting transferred, a position opened up here and I swooped in and took it. Knew you chuckleheads couldn't live without me. Still a sergeant, though," she adds, as Stiles opens his mouth, "so you can keep your new partner."

"Ha ha, yeah, right," Stiles says, shifting uncomfortably.

"How are you two handling that?" Erica asks, frank and forthright unlike the way everyone else tiptoes around the subject when they're both present. "You've done a couple cycles together now, right?"

"Yeah." Stiles' gaze darts to Derek like he's not sure what the answer is.

"It's fine," Derek says, then adds, "I won't lie and say it's easy, but, you know, we're handling it."

“For now,” Stiles mumbles.

Erica sighs and dramatically rolls her eyes. “Well, I can see that we have a lot of catching up to do. Come on, I’ll take you out for a drink. Nice to meet you, Derek,” she adds over her shoulder as she tows Stiles away.

Whatever they talk about, it must help, because Stiles is in relatively good spirits the next day, even with his heat coming on. They part with minimal awkwardness.

Somehow, Derek isn’t surprised when he comes in the next day and Erica immediately nabs him. “Hey, since you’re without a partner for a few days, you can partner up with me. I’ve been super nostalgic for that speed trap out on Rock Hill Road. Seriously, those assholes make the best faces. Let’s roll.”

“Sure.” Derek is actually thrilled with this development, because Erica clearly wants to talk to him in private, so he feels like he might finally get some answers to his five hundred questions. They drive out to the edge of town and pull off onto the shoulder where the cruiser will be hidden by the curve.

“So here’s the deal, Hale,” Erica says, without preamble. “Stiles is a good friend of mine, and I want to make sure I’m not going to have to break your kneecaps.”

“I prefer them unbroken myself,” Derek agrees. They clock the first car coming around the curve at thirty-four.

“You’ve lasted two cycles, which is better than a couple jackholes have done, but McCall made it four before he finally peaced out. I don’t want you to do that to Stiles. And he said you’ve been pretty cool about the whole thing, so, I thought I’d give you the shovel talk.”

“That’s great,” Derek says, giving her a sideways glance. “You’re a beta, right?”

“Yeah. So yes, before you mention it, I know that I can never really understand what it’s like for either of you. Stiles compared it to drugs, once. Said the cravings felt like that but were twice as bad, and going without was physically comparable to heroin withdrawal. Which I also can’t relate to, because I’ve never done heroin. But I get the idea.”

“For him. But not for me.”

“Fair.” Erica glances at the radar as another car comes around the curve. Forty-two. “Eh, not worth it.” She leans back in her seat. “Look. I can’t tell you why Stiles does what he does. I mean, even if I knew, which I don’t, I wouldn’t give away his secrets. But I *can* tell you how to help him without putting your dick in him.”

Derek frowns at her. “Thanks for that. I think.”

“I’m trying to help you, here,” Erica says. “I mean, you’ve obviously got a thing for him that has nothing to do with alphas and omegas – don’t even start with me, I’m not an idiot. You’ve *obviously* got a thing for him. And I know from hearing about what happened with McCall what’s going to happen now. He comes back, you tiptoe around the subject, there’s a

whole lot of awkward silence, and the end result is that Stiles feels like some sort of freak who should be in the circus.”

Derek winces. It’s accurate, and he knows it. “I don’t mean to . . .”

“I know you don’t. That’s why I’m here, in this car with you, so I can – forty-eight, nice!” Erica jams the car into gear and flips on the bubble lights.

Ten minutes and an extremely disgruntled driver later, they’re back at the side of the road. “So what am I supposed to do?” Derek asks.

“I’m not saying you guys have to have an in-depth discussion about it,” Erica says, much to Derek’s relief. “But you need to not treat it like he’s insane. Treat it like he’s been sick or something. When he comes back in, bring him some donuts or something, say you brought them because you know he probably still feels a little woogly. Ask him if he wants you to drive. And for God’s sake, don’t stare at him. He hates it when you guys stare.”

“It’s hard not to.”

“Does it help?” Erica asks.

“No,” Derek admits.

“Then suffer, bitch.”

Derek snorts.

“Look, he likes you, and he’s so sick of feeling like nothing in his life will ever work out just because of this whole stupid heat thing. So just, just try to act normal around him. I promise that it’ll help.”

Derek isn’t sure about that, but she knows Stiles a lot better than he does, so he decides to give it a whirl. He knows that Stiles likes ridiculous coffee drinks, so on the way to the station on the day he expects Stiles to be back, he stops and gets him a caramel frappuccino. When Stiles comes into the locker room, practically stumbling with exhaustion, Derek holds it out to him. “Figured you would probably need a pick-me-up today,” he says. Stiles blinks at him in surprise, but takes the drink and thanks him. “You want me to drive, or would you rather?”

“Oh, uh, you can,” Stiles says, still clearly a little surprised. But he starts drinking the coffee, and it does start to perk him up a little.

“Seen the trailer for the new Star Wars movie?” Derek asks casually as they start their patrol, because if *anything* can cheer Stiles up, it’s going to be Star Wars. It works like a charm. Stiles forgets all about his fatigue and his pain and starts giving an in-depth critique of every frame of the trailer.

Erica was right about one thing – it restores their relationship back to normal much more quickly than the previous few times. Stiles is basically back to his usual self by lunch time.

They eat at the Greek deli and he's smiling, although still clearly tired, at the end of the day. Erica glances up from her desk as they come in, and gives Derek a genuine smile.

Since that seems to work, Derek figures he can roll with it. The days approaching Stiles' heat are still bad – those are the worst days for him, as he fights down his own instincts – but the days afterwards can clearly be managed. Just knowing that he's helping Stiles feel better afterwards helps him fight his impulse to try to help during.

So he's a little nonplussed at the end of the next cycle, when he shows up for work with another ridiculous coffee monstrosity and Stiles isn't there. Parrish catches him just outside the locker room and says, "Stiles called this morning and said he's going to be out an extra day this time. Go see Sergeant Reyes, she'll give you something to do."

Derek is hoping that Erica will have something to say about Stiles' extended absence, but she doesn't. She just takes the coffee that he had bought for Stiles, gives him a list of tasks, and puts him to work.

The next morning comes. Derek brings the coffee. Stiles looks as haggard as ever, but he takes the coffee and even smiles a bit, apologizes for being gone an extra day, and then immediately starts talking about a book he thinks Derek would like.

The next week, Stiles surprises him by saying, "So your heat must be coming up, huh?"

"Uh, yeah." Derek gives him the side-eye. He's felt it creeping up on him for the last week. Alphas don't go into heat as often as omegas, but it lasts longer, and it's more gradual. Still, he didn't think he had been giving off any signs. "How'd you know?"

"I own a calendar," Stiles says, looking at him with an amused expression. "It's been a little over six months since you came here. You've gotta be due soon."

"Very soon, yeah." Derek folds his arms over his stomach and hopes that Stiles doesn't take this conversation the wrong way. He finds himself wondering, if Stiles himself doesn't submit when he's in heat, would he have a problem having sex with a partner who was in heat? Where exactly is the problem? "I've been, uh, looking for a partner on the ABO website. You know."

"Oh, yeah, see anyone you like?" Stiles asks, and when Derek blinks at him, he rolls his eyes. "I *told* you, I don't judge other people for what they do."

"I guess you did." Derek sighs and forces his posture to loosen up a little. It's hard to find an unattached omega without help, which is why he's been looking on the web. Omegas outnumber alphas, and they're more likely to have steady partners, since their heats come on more frequently. But there are some who don't, who like to have some variety. "I don't know. I've sent a couple messages but haven't gotten any hits. I'm hoping I don't have to go back to LA."

"Here, call this number." Stiles has his phone out and is texting. "There's this omega I know, Danny? Who's basically always game. And you're his type. He doesn't go online because

some stalker doxxed him once and it really put him off of it. But he would totally be up for it if I vouched for you. I'll text him to let him know you'll be calling."

"Thanks," Derek says, surprised.

"I don't want you to . . ." Stiles flushes pink and looks away, but when he speaks, his voice is steady. "I don't want you to have to do what I do. It sucks. So. Danny will help you out."

"Okay." Derek fiddles with his phone for a minute. "Hey, six months, huh? We've been partners for six months. We should celebrate."

Stiles smiles a little at that. "Okay, yeah. You want to go get a drink?"

"Sure," Derek says. "I'd like that."

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Danny is every bit the accommodating partner that Stiles had suggested he would be, and Derek has a surprisingly good time with him. They part with a wink and a 'call me', from Danny, and Derek heads back to work feeling good. The tension has been released, he got a great workout, his crops are watered and his skin is clear.

Of course, that just makes him wonder again about Stiles, about why Stiles refuses to spend his heat with a partner. He tries not to think of it. He was gone for about a week, and Stiles isn't there when he gets back. He checks the calendar and realizes that Stiles is probably out for his own heat cycle.

He's not sure which day of Stiles' heat it would be, but he doesn't mind having another day or two to mellow out. That's what he's thinking until the next day, when he overhears Erica on her phone. "I know, but – look, Stiles, you can take all the time you need, you're not going to get fired or anything. But I'm *worried* about you." Her voice lowers. "They're getting worse."

Derek wants to stay and hear the rest of the conversation, but he also doesn't want to get Reyes pissed off at him, so he goes about his business. Stiles had typically been out for three days, now it's four every time. He wonders if he didn't even need an extra day off at the beginning, since he certainly isn't suffering from overexertion.

He's inclined to fuss over Stiles the next day, buying him lunch and trying not to think about what Erica had said. Stiles wants to talk about how Derek did, and Derek tells him about it, but then he *has* to ask, he can't *not* ask. "Look, I'm sorry, but I don't get it. You seem to understand that I had a perfectly good time during my heat, so why – why won't you let anyone help you through yours?"

Stiles' jaw sets and he looks away. Derek is expecting another brush-off, but instead he gets, "I just can't. When I'm in heat, I'd have sex with anyone with a dick. Regardless of how I

felt about them twenty-four hours previous. I can't *do* that, Derek. It's gross. I know most people don't see it that way. I know it's probably because of what – ” He looks away and cuts himself off abruptly. “I just can't do it.”

Derek thinks about that very carefully for a minute, not wanting to push, but wanting to make sure Stiles gets the right information. “I think most people think that if they arrange it ahead of time, consent is, you know, pre-granted.”

“Yeah, well, that isn't how consent works.” Stiles swallows convulsively. “Especially knowing what it does to have to go through it alone. You know, an omega goes through a heat alone and after that, they'd agree to just about anything to avoid it happening again. How is that *consent*?”

“I don't know,” Derek says quietly. “I guess most people just don't think of it very much. Since it's a, a biological imperative, like eating or sleeping. It's just something we do.”

“And that's why I don't ask anyone to see it my way. Hell, I'm happier for people if they don't see it my way, because that makes it so much easier for them. You had a great time with Danny. I'm thrilled for you. I don't consider Danny a rapist because he had sex with you while you were in heat. Or vice versa, if it should ever happen that way. It's just my opinion, just my . . . way of looking at it.”

Derek lets him have that for a minute before he feels confident enough to push. “But they're getting worse, aren't they.”

Stiles' intake of breath is sudden and ragged. Finally, he says, “Yeah.”

Derek nods and lets out a quiet breath of his own. “Understand that I would never pressure you into anything you are uncomfortable with. Your friendship, your partnership, is more important to me than any day of heatsex could ever be. But I just want you to know that if there's *anything* I can do for you, whether it involves my dick or not, anything that would make this easier for you, please let me know. Okay?”

After a long minute, Stiles nods. “Okay. And thanks.”

“Good. You wanna grab a burger after work?”

Stiles manages a wan, lopsided little smile. “Yeah. Sounds good.”

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It's the seventh cycle. Derek has been in Beacon Hills for nearly a year. He knows that Stiles' heat is approaching, as he always does, and they have their usual conversation about what sort of partnerless drudgery he'll have to go through before Derek remembers he left something on his desk. He comes back into the locker room a few minutes later to find that

Stiles has collapsed. He skids to his knees beside the other man, calling his name. Stiles is pale and shivering, sweat beading on his forehead.

“Came on so sudden – ” he chokes out, and the scent of him is so thick in the air that it practically hurts. It’s all Derek can focus on for a minute.

“Hey, hey,” he says, getting Stiles’ face between his hands. “You’re okay. I’ll get you home, okay?”

“Please,” Stiles whispers, staring up at Derek with eyes where the irises are practically swallowed by the pupils. “*Please.*”

It would take less than a minute, and Derek knows it. The state he’s in, Derek could take him over the bench and it would be over in two thrusts. Then Stiles could finally *sleep*, could finally be rid of the terrible, aching emptiness that Derek knows is consuming him. For a moment, the temptation is very real. Then Derek pushes it aside.

“Look at me,” he says firmly, and Stiles moans. “Hey. Look at me. I need you to do something for me.”

Stiles’ gaze flickers to his face, focusing on the fact that an alpha is giving him orders. “W-What?”

“Name fifty Star Wars characters.”

Stiles gives a weak little chuckle. “Can I,” he pants for breath, “can I use the extended universe even though it isn’t canon anymore?”

“Sure,” Derek says. “I’m going to count with you. Count with me, watch my hands.”

“O-Okay. Okay. Luke. Leia. Han.” Stiles focuses on Derek’s hands as he counts off the characters. “Obi-Wan. Darth Vader . . .”

By the time he gets to twenty, his pupils are constricting a little and his breathing is slowing down. At fifty, he’s soaked with sweat but no longer shaking. Derek helps him stand up, and he’s weak but moving on his own. “I’m going to take you home.”

Stiles nods. Derek half-carries him out to the car. He slumps into the passenger seat, arms folding over his chest, hugging himself. He starts panting again, gritting his teeth against the pain. Derek feels like he should drive faster, but really, it’s not like getting Stiles home is going to help. He pulls up outside the other man’s apartment building about fifteen minutes later and gets him upstairs. “I’ll see you in a few days, okay?” he says, and Stiles nods before collapsing onto his bed, shivering. Derek hesitates, but then goes. He can’t help, and Stiles probably doesn’t want to be stared at.

It’s a long few days for Derek, but Stiles surprises him when he only misses three days, instead of four. “I didn’t bring coffee for you today,” he says when he sees him. “Sorry, I didn’t expect you to be back.”

Stiles manages another little smile. “That’s okay. We can stop by Peet’s on our patrol.”



Neither of them say a word about what happened. Not until almost a month later, when they're sitting at the speed trap, watching cars come around the bend. They've been there nearly half an hour before Stiles abruptly says, "Can I ask you for a favor that will probably suck immensely for you to grant?"

Derek laughs a little at that. "You can always ask."

Stiles lets out a breath. "What you did for me last month. It really helped. I'm not sure why, but just – having your scent in my apartment, thinking about you holding onto me, about your hands – it made it – easier for me. It's weird, I know. But I wanted to ask if you . . . would stay with me when I go into heat again. But you have to promise me, *promise* that you won't fuck me. You . . . I've never met anyone I would trust enough to do this for me. Not until you. If you don't want to, if you don't think you can, I understand. But I thought – I thought I would ask."

"I'm . . . not sure, to be honest," Derek says. "I'll have to think about it."

"That actually makes me feel better," Stiles says. "If you had just agreed, I would have been suspicious that you didn't really mean it."

Derek nods. And he does think about it. His self-control is good, but he *has* been tempted by Stiles, more than once, especially this most recent time. Then again, he had withstood the temptation then, even without the specific discussion beforehand. He doesn't know what it's like for Stiles, but he can guess that basic tasks like making food and showering are probably beyond him while this is going on. Having someone there really might help.

"Why don't you have someone stay with you who isn't an alpha?" he asks curiously, as they finish up their shift. "You know, to make sure you eat and stuff."

"I used to," Stiles says, not looking at him. "My dad used to stay with me. But it was getting harder for him, the worse it got for me. Erica has once or twice, but you know, she's married, she has kids and a career, she can't drop everything to stay with me for three days. And they're the only two people who haven't automatically treated me like I was crazy for doing this. I don't trust anyone else I know not to call an alpha hookup for me."

Derek nods, understanding. "Okay. I'll do it."

Stiles gives a little sigh of relief. "Thanks."

"But I have a few questions about how you want me to handle things," Derek says, and Stiles glances over at him. "I said I won't fuck you, and I won't, but what do you want me to do if you get physical with me? Should I stop you, or just let you grind one out?"

Stiles flushes a little pink. "Uh, stop me. Not because I think that's gross, but just because I know from experience that if I jerk off, I only feel worse afterwards. Just dump me in a tub of cold water."

"Okay. That answers my second question of whether or not I should let you do that."

“Anything else?”

“What about medication? Is there anything you can take that helps?”

Stiles shakes his head. “Well,” he modifies, “if I go for the hard stuff, narcotics can get me through the worst of it. But there was a stretch while I was in college where I used narcotics to get me through a *lot* of stuff, if you know what I’m saying. So I don’t touch them anymore. Other than that, no. Tylenol, Advil, nothing touches the pain.”

“Okay.” Derek lets out a breath and thinks about it for a minute. “If I come up with any other questions, I’ll let you know. But I think we can do this.”

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# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

I was asked to warn about the scene where the past rape is discussed, so, that's in this chapter. To avoid it, when you get to Stiles and Derek on a stake-out, you can skip ahead, just search for the word 'dating' and it'll take you to the bit where they're talking about that. ^ \_ ^

Derek is nervous going into it. He's brought some things that he knows he's going to need and some things that he hopes he won't need. Stiles is edgy and nervous, but he's not fully into heat yet, so they're able to talk about books and play some cards.

It comes on suddenly, like it did in the precinct. Stiles is standing at the counter, pouring himself a bowl of cereal as a late night snack when he suddenly folds inward with a sharp gasp. "No, no, no," he moans, as Derek catches him and helps him downward. "Oh, God, it hurts. Derek, it hurts so bad."

"I know." Derek steers him into the bedroom and gets him lying down. Stiles curls up onto his side, trembling. "I bet you can't name all the different types of Quidditch fouls."

"Challenge . . . fucking . . . accepted," Stiles says. He closes his hands and starts reciting them from memory. His fists clench and unclench, so Derek reaches out to take one of them. Stiles squeezes it hard, so hard that it hurts, but he doesn't stop talking. When he curls up tighter, Derek rubs a hand down his back, over the back of his neck.

"Better," Stiles says about five minutes later, his body relaxing. He lets out a long, quivering sigh.

"Let's get you something to drink." Derek props him up and grabs a bottle of water out of his bag. He holds it to Stiles' mouth and lets him sip. When he tries to lay Stiles back down, Stiles hangs onto him.

"Please don't let me go," he says, his voice tight and strained. "Please don't stop touching me."

"Sure, okay." Derek feels like this might cross a line in and of itself, but Stiles is fully clothed, and hadn't said anything about not touching him at all, so he thinks it's probably okay to keep rubbing his back. "Hey, let's put on a movie. You keep saying I haven't truly seen Lord of the Rings until I've seen the extended editions, right? That'll keep us busy for a while."

“Right,” Stiles says, panting for breath. Derek gets him on his feet and guides him out to the sofa. Stiles shifts uncomfortably and whines a little when Derek puts him on the sofa and lets him go. “Come ba-a-a-a-ack.”

“Just a second,” Derek says. He gets the DVD on and then sits down on the sofa next to him. Stiles immediately curls up next to him, climbing half onto Derek’s lap and trying to grind against him. “None of that now,” Derek says, removing Stiles from his lap.

“Please,” Stiles whispers. “Please, Derek. Please.”

“You’re okay, sweetheart,” Derek says, the endearment slipping out without him thinking about it. “Come on, the movie’s starting. Galadriel, right?”

“Yeah.” Stiles rubs both hands over his face, taking several deep breaths. He manages to get through a half hour of the movie before the next wave hits. He winds up doubled over on the floor while Derek rubs his back.

“Want me to stop the movie?” he asks.

“No. Leave – leave it on.” Stiles curls up and grabs a pillow off the sofa. He presses his face into it and screams, his whole body going tense and rigid. He does that for a long minute before pulling away and panting out, “Helps me – focus on – something else.”

“Okay.” Derek sits beside him squeezes his hand while he alternates between watching the movie and screaming his lungs out into the pillow.

It’s easier than he would have expected to control his own instincts. To be honest, he’s really not feeling compelled to have sex with Stiles at all. It surprises him, but what he really feels compelled to do is *help* Stiles. Since Stiles seems comforted by his gestures, as little as they are, he can avoid thinking about the quicker, easier solution to the problem.

“You should get some rest,” he says, when the first movie is over. Stiles nods, groans a little, and lets Derek drag him back into the bedroom. Derek has brought along plenty of Red Bull to keep himself awake, and he’s hoping Stiles will sleep.

He does – for about twenty minutes. Then he starts to toss and turn. Derek reaches out to smooth down his hair, and frowns when he touches Stiles’ forehead. It’s hot to the touch. The fact that Stiles has a fever isn’t surprising, but he still doesn’t like it. He’s a little startled when Stiles grabs him by the wrist and climbs on top of him. Before Derek can react, Stiles is kissing him, desperately, his body practically glued against Derek’s.

“Whoa, whoa,” Derek says, trying to pull back. It’s difficult. Stiles is strong, and every time Derek thinks he’s gotten him off, he just comes back. He’s moaning and crying a little as he tries to grind against him.

Finally, Derek gives up on getting him off and just picks him up. Stiles wraps his legs around Derek’s waist and doesn’t even seem to notice that they’re on the move until Derek dumps him in the bathtub and turns the cold water on him. He lets out a yelp and flails to get out, but then seems to realize where he is. He tugs all his clothes off in a rush and just lets the cold

water soak him. Some lucidity seems to return to him. “Distract me,” he mumbles, curling up in the cold water.

“Okay, uh, name all the major houses in Game of Thrones and their mottos,” Derek says.

“I don’t watch Game of Thrones,” Stiles says. “Are you kidding, with what they do to those poor characters?”

“Yeah, I don’t watch it either,” Derek says. “Honestly you could have just made some stuff up and I wouldn’t have known.”

Stiles blinks at him, then starts to snicker. Hearing him laughing is so gratifying that Derek’s heart swells with it. “Help me up,” Stiles says, fumbling at the edge of the tub. “It’s freezing.”

The rest of the night and next day are much the same way. Stiles will scream or cry, his body curled so tightly that it looks like something might snap, until fatigue overwhelms him. Then he’ll be quiet for a little while. Occasionally he’ll climb onto Derek or start jerking off. Two more times, Derek has to give him a cold shower.

Derek keeps the TV on in the background and tries to get Stiles to focus on other things. They talk about stupid movies and Derek makes him recite as much trivia as he can come up with. Finally, around two o’clock in the morning, Stiles gives a little shudder and his body relaxes. “It’s over,” he says softly.

“Is it?” Derek blinks himself awake. “Just like that? You can tell?”

“Yeah. It’s like . . . all my muscles just suddenly turn to jelly.” Stiles gives an enormous yawn, and his eyelids are already sagging.

“Do you want me to go?” Derek asks.

“No, s’late,” Stiles says. “You shouldn’t drive. You stay here. Can sleep on the . . . sofa or the . . .” His head tilts back as he passes out. Derek stifles a yawn of his own and puts a blanket over him before he totters over the sofa and falls onto it.

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Derek wakes up to the sound of a cabinet closing. He’s half sitting up when Stiles comes into the room, wearing a loose T-shirt and flannel pants. “Morning,” Derek mumbles.

“Oh, hey. Did I wake you? Sorry.” Stiles sits down at the other end of the sofa, by Derek’s feet. He looks – well, he looks bad, but not as bad as he often does when he comes back after a heat cycle. “I got up thinking I would make you a thank-you breakfast but then I remembered that I can barely move, so instead I called Erica and bribed her into bringing us IHOP. I hope you like pancakes.”

“You know I love pancakes,” Derek says, laughing, as he thinks of different late nights on the job and all the times they’ve gone out for a diner breakfast. “How are you feeling?”

“Like I went ten rounds with a weed whacker,” Stiles says, relaxing against the cushions. “But it wasn’t anywhere near as bad as it usually is.”

Derek thinks back on the previous thirty-six hours in horror. “That’s what you call ‘not that bad’?”

“Oh, yeah.” Stiles shakes his head a little. “Remember those times when I’d be coiled tighter than a spring, screaming into a pillow? It’s usually like that *the whole time*. If I’m not wanking, which is usually followed by crying.”

“Jesus,” Derek mumbles.

Stiles is quiet for a minute. “Thank you,” he says. “I know that you can’t completely understand how much this meant to me, but . . . thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I’m just glad it helped.” Derek hauls himself off the sofa. “Mind if I use your shower?”

“Feel free, man. But if you’re not out by the time the food gets here, I’m eating your share of the bacon.”

Derek flips him off and heads into the bathroom. He’s as quick as he can be, mostly because he’s really starving and wants to be able to set to the food as soon as it arrives. When he gets out, Stiles hasn’t moved from the sofa, and Derek laughs a little. “So you said your dad used to stay with you?” he adds, and asks curiously, “Why did he stop?”

Stiles rubs a hand over the back of his head, looking embarrassed. “I, uh, I told him I’d gotten over myself and found a partner.”

“Jesus. Why?”

“Because he just . . .” Stiles lets out a breath. “Watching me was really hard for him. You know, nobody likes watching their kid in pain. Plus it was getting kind of embarrassing for me, as I got older, what with the wanking and the crying and all. But I knew he would never just abandon me in my time of need, so . . . lying to him was easier.”

“Easier, I can see,” Derek says. “But better?”

Stiles is quiet for a long moment. “Maybe. It’s better if he thinks that I’m okay now. He sort of blames himself for the way I am, because . . .”

Stiles trails off. Derek is about to prompt him when there’s a knock on the door and Erica bounces in, laden down with bags. As glad as he is to see the food, Derek sort of wants to throttle her. But she’s cheerful and friendly and wants to know how things went, so they eat while giving her a brief overview.

Once they've eaten, Stiles says he wants to get some more sleep, that he'll probably spend most of the day in bed, so Derek should go home. Derek agrees and leans in to give him a hug. Stiles holds on for several long moments before letting go.

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A week goes by. They don't talk about it. They do their job, they hang out once or twice for a drink with some of the other cops, they eat at their favorite deli. They wind up on a late-night stakeout, watching the back entrance of a bar where the suspect in a murder often goes to get his drugs.

"I was raped when I was sixteen," Stiles says, completely out of nowhere.

Derek nearly chokes on the coffee he's drinking. But he's not really surprised. He's suspected for a while that something like this is at the root of Stiles' problems. He glances at him but doesn't say anything. He doesn't want to tell Stiles that he doesn't need to talk about it. Stiles knows that. He's telling Derek this because he wants to.

"I was, uh, a junior in high school." Stiles picks up his own Styrofoam cup of coffee. "Our school was a little unusual because we had more alphas than omegas. Usually the other way around, you know. So the omegas got their pick of the field. We played it up a little. You know. We liked to make the alphas sweat it out. It was our right, you know? That's what we thought.

"There was this one alpha in the grade above me, Douglas." Stiles' voice trembles slightly, but then steadies. "He kind of had a thing for me. Used to tell everyone that he was gonna be my first. I was just starting, you know, to have those little hot flashes, you know? The ones that last a couple hours, in the months before you get your first *real* heat. First heat, always sweet. That's what everybody says about it, right?"

Stiles clears his throat, looks over at Derek quickly, and then away. "So there I am. Being a shithead, *not* picking an alpha even though I knew it was less than a month before I was going to go into heat for the first time. I liked the attention. There were three different alphas who all thought I might pick them, and they'd bring me food and buy me shit and . . ."

Stiles is quiet for so long that Derek feels compelled to speak. "I don't think that's really unusual."

"Yeah. I guess not." Stiles gives a little shrug, his hands twisting in his lap. "Doug cranked it up to eleven, though. He started following me around at school. Threatening the other alphas if they talked to me. I told him to back off, told him whoever I picked, it sure as hell wasn't going to be an asshole like him. He, uh, he followed me home. My dad wasn't there."

This time, Derek doesn't interrupt his quiet.

“When I think back on it, I don’t remember the pain as much as I remember the fear,” Stiles finally says. “I mean, yeah, it was truly spectacular amounts of pain, but . . . I honestly thought he was going to kill me. He didn’t, though. He . . .” Stiles’ voice cracks again. He reaches for his coffee with hands that shake. “He told me that he was my alpha now. That no other alpha would want me because I’d gotten taken before my first heat. That it was him or nothing. I’d heard stories, you know, about what happened to omegas who went without a partner . . . about how the heat got worse and worse until it finally drove them crazy.”

After another long moment of silence, Stiles continues, “But that wasn’t even the worst part. The worst part was that he said I wouldn’t mind once I went into heat. That none of this would matter. I could hate him all I wanted, but once I was in heat, I would *beg* him to fuck me, that I would *love* being fucked by him.” Stiles practically chokes on the words, and Derek just lets his eyes fall shut. He can’t even imagine the pain Douglas’ words had caused.

“Eventually he got up and left. He told me to call him when I was going into heat so he could ‘take care of me’. I was so fucked up, I just got dressed and went about my business like I was in some sort of fog. I didn’t say anything to anybody. I was bleeding like crazy, but I got it to stop after a few days.

“I was getting really close to going into heat for the first time, and my dad, you know, my poor beta dad who’s desperately uncomfortable talking to his sixteen year old son about selecting a partner with whom to have torrid tantric sex, kept dropping hints. I had to choose somebody. I was running out of time. He wanted to meet them first.

“So I brought Douglas home to meet him,” Stiles continues, and clears his throat. “I didn’t know what else to do. I just kept thinking about how I knew I couldn’t do it alone, but none of the other alphas in school, none of the other alphas *ever*, would want me. I felt like I didn’t have a choice. I told myself it couldn’t be that bad, you know, rationalized his rape of me six ways from Sunday. I’d been leading him on. His alpha side drove him to stake a claim. I made it anything but ‘this sick fuck assaulted me’ because I couldn’t deal with that.”

Derek opens his mouth, then shuts it. He wants to hear, *needs* to hear, that Stiles hadn’t spent his first heat, or any heat, with Douglas. But he can’t say that because he’s still not sure how this story is going to end.

“I managed to do that all the way up to the day before I went into heat, which is when I finally flipped my shit completely.”

“You told your dad?” Derek says, breathing a sigh of relief.

Stiles looks at him in some surprise. “What? No. I went out to the garage with my belt and tried to hang myself.”

“Jesus *Christ*, Stiles,” Derek says.

A sad little smile touches Stiles’ face. “Fortunately for me, the pipe that I was sure could hold my weight didn’t. It broke, and I fell and there was a huge crash and my dad came out to see what was going on. *That’s* when I told him everything. I said some things that day that I’m really not proud of. I begged him to kill me. To just put his gun to my head. I told him I’d



rather die than let Douglas touch me again, or any alpha, but that I'd rather die than go through it alone, too.

"My poor dad brought me to the hospital. They brought in a shrink and even a heat specialist, and they decided to put me in a medically induced coma until my first heat was over. They were one hundred percent sure – and one hundred percent right – that having to go through it right then would break me beyond repair." Stiles takes another drink of his coffee. "First heat, always sweet. Whenever I hear that, I think of the look on my dad's face right before I went under. I don't think he's ever completely forgiven himself for not, you know, not seeing what had happened. Not protecting me."

He goes quiet again. Derek searches for the right question. "What happened to Douglas?"

"Nothing," Stiles says, and Derek makes a strangled little noise. "Nothing, then. It was my word against his. He denied that it was nonconsensual, and since I waited to go to the hospital, there was no evidence. I couldn't even be in the same room as him, let alone get up on a witness stand and talk about what he did to me. So nothing happened, then. He went off to college and assaulted three more omegas before he screwed up and picked one with an alpha boyfriend. That alpha beat his head in so bad that they had to identify his body from his fingerprints."

"Jesus," Derek mutters again.

"For a long time, I was convinced that it was my fault. That if I'd been able to say something against him, he wouldn't have gotten a chance to hurt those other omegas. I got over that about the same time that I got into the police academy and learned that the world doesn't work like that."

"Well, that's a small blessing," Derek says. "But you never . . ."

Stiles shakes his head. "I could never bring myself to look for a heat partner. I spent almost that entire first year heavily sedated while I was in heat, because otherwise the panic attacks wouldn't stop. I got heavy-duty therapy and a bunch of different drugs to try. By the time I was eighteen, I could get through it by myself. But I never looked for anyone to go through it with me. Just – the thought –" His voice breaks. "Any time I thought about it, I just thought about what Douglas said, about how I would love being fucked by him."

"You know that's not *true*, right?" Derek asks, and Stiles looks at him again, and then away. "I mean, yes, you would feel physical desire for him, but you would still know who he was. You would still have the same emotional reaction to him that you would at any other time of the month."

"Yeah, I know. Trust me, people have explained it to me. I probably know more about the heat cycle and the different hormones and everything than anybody else in this town. It just doesn't matter. I can't get his voice out of my head."

Derek takes a deep breath. "Have you ever – had sex while you *weren't* in heat?"

“A couple times. But with women.” Stiles gives a little shrug. “Advantages of being bisexual. Every time I try to be with a guy, we round second base and I just lose it. Panic attacks, hysterics, it’s very not pretty.”

“You need someone you can take it slow with,” Derek says.

“Yeah?” Stiles says, looking over at him.

“Yeah. You know, someone who would be patient with you. Someone willing to take the time it – ”

“I don’t think we should be partners anymore,” Stiles says abruptly.

Derek internally panics. He had overstepped, *obviously*, Stiles had put so much trust in him, telling him that story, and now he –

“Because I really want to ask you out,” Stiles continues, and Derek starts breathing again, “but dating in the workplace is a big no-no. I, uh, I’ve been thinking about taking the sergeant’s exam. I might get transferred if I pass. Then we could, you know. Date.”

“I would love to date you,” Derek says, then winces at how lame that sounds.

But Stiles doesn’t seem to think it’s lame. He turns to Derek with a smile. “Yeah?”

“Yeah. Absolutely. Sign me up.”

“I want to . . .” Stiles takes a breath and lets it out. “Douglas stole ten years of my life from me. I can’t get them back, I know that. But I don’t want to let him take any more.”

On impulse, Derek reaches out and takes Stiles’ hand, presses a kiss into his knuckles. “Well, you’re definitely going to ace the sergeant’s exam,” he says, “and then I’m going to take you out on the world’s cheesiest date. We’re going to find a carnival to go to, and I’m going to win a stuffed bear playing ring toss and give it to you, and bribe someone to stop the Ferris Wheel with us at the top so we can have our first kiss there.”

“We’ve already had our first kiss, I think,” Stiles says, but he’s grinning.

“It didn’t count.”

“Well, okay. How big a stuffed bear?”

“Enormous. Bigger than you.”

“I’m going to hold you to – oh, there’s our guy! Let’s roll!”

~ ~ ~ ~

By mutual agreement, they don't talk about it for a while. Stiles takes the sergeant's exam, and as expected, passes. He gets transferred to the precinct in Red Bluff, about half an hour away. Derek gets a new partner at work, a woman named Braeden who's tough and smart and professional. They get along well, although he still finds himself missing Stiles a lot on the job. But that's all right, because now that Stiles' transfer is official, they can date.

They go on the first date about a week before Stiles is due to go into heat again. They have to drive almost two hours to get to an amusement park, but it's totally worth it. Derek wins Stiles a stuffed bear (slightly less impressive in the reality than in the plan) and they go on every ride, some of them twice. The ride operator is barely a teenager and messes up stopping the Ferris Wheel, so their first kiss is slightly off center, quiet and sweet.

Derek stays with him when he goes into heat again. He brings two seasons of Buffy the Vampire Slayer to keep him distracted and is unsurprised when Stiles can practically recite along with the dialogue. He's a little better prepared this time. He's starting to recognize when Stiles is losing control, so he can get him in the cold shower before he does anything he'd find embarrassing. He coaxes Stiles into eating; when Stiles says he's too hot, Derek freezes watermelon and strawberries and feeds him those.

Stiles' heat ends at about seven AM, while they're sacked out on the sofa after a sleepless night. He crawls into Derek's lap and falls asleep with his head on Derek's chest. Derek sleeps, too.

They go to movies and baseball games, they go boating on Shasta Lake with Erica and her husband Boyd, they go hiking and fishing. They have Netflix marathons. Stiles teaches Derek how to make pierogies; Derek teaches Stiles tai chi. And when Stiles' heat comes on, they spend it together. It's still horrible for Stiles – Derek cringes during the approaching days, knowing it's coming. He still spends hours screaming or wracked with sobs. But he swears that it's not as bad as it had been spending it alone.

When Derek's heat approaches, he's unsure how to handle it. Stiles tells him that he should spend it with Danny again, but that seems like infidelity to Derek. They're dating, they've been dating for months; they're very solidly a couple. Even though they haven't done anything other than some enthusiastic kissing and a little light groping, having sex with someone else seems wrong to him.

"Please don't force yourself to go through it alone," Stiles says. "Don't do that for me. Okay? If it was just going to be this one time, then maybe . . . but I don't know how long it'll be before I'm ready. Maybe in six months I'll be up for it, maybe I won't."

"I'll wait for you," Derek says. "However long it takes."

Stiles presses a kiss against the corner of Derek's mouth. "I know. You are amazing. I don't want you to suffer because of how amazing you are. Go spend your heat with Danny. It's fine. I . . . I have something I want to do out of town, anyway."

"Oh, yeah?" Derek asks, pulling back.

“Yeah. I’m gonna go down to San Diego and spend the weekend with my dad. I need to . . . own up about a few lies I’ve told him.”

“Oh.” Derek squeezes Stiles’ hand. “You’re ready for that?”

“Yeah. Then he’s going to come back here with me, because I really want him to meet you.”

“Okay.” That statement makes Derek understandably nervous, but he figures that’s normal. Meeting the parents of a serious boyfriend is always nerve-wracking, despite what other issues are at play. “I’ll make my famous fajitas.”

“Sounds good.”

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# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

this chapter is very nsfw =D

Derek was a little worried that Tom would make a big deal out of his son having finally found somebody, but he doesn't. He seems to realize that this would only embarrass all of them. He does ask Derek a lot of questions, about his family, his time in LA, how he likes Beacon Hills. But it's just the standard 'get to know your son's boyfriend' kind of questions. They go to the baseball game and grill some steaks and have a good time.

He leaves on Monday after hugging his son for a good five minutes, and says he's going to come back up in a couple weeks. Derek misses their last dinner together because he gets called in to work a case, but both Stiles and his father are police officers heart and soul, so neither of them make a big deal out of it. They'll visit again soon.

By the time he gets home that night, it's late, nearly midnight, and his stomach is growling. "Hey, your dad make his flight okay?"

"Yeah," Stiles says. "There's some leftover Chinese if you want it."

"Awesome." Derek stops before going to the refrigerator to kiss Stiles, which is vastly more important than dinner. He gets distracted from the idea of food instantly, and somehow they wind up on the sofa, making out.

This isn't exactly new, and Derek is always careful not to let it get too far, but this time Stiles is being demanding, grinding his hips against Derek's and twining his hands in Derek's hair. He looks beautiful, head tossed back and eyes closed, just letting himself feel good. Derek holds onto his hips, lets his hands slide over Stiles' back and ass and is gratified when that just makes Stiles grind against him harder. Derek leans in and sucks a bruise into the side of Stiles' neck, and Stiles *whimpers*.

"Do you – want me to stop?" Derek makes himself ask.

"Jesus, *no*," Stiles says, leaning his forehead into the crook of Derek's shoulder and rocking forward frantically. He shudders a moment later, fingers digging into Derek's biceps hard enough to bruise. Then he relaxes with a faint moan. "Well. That was." He lets out a slow breath. "That was anti-climactic."

"Actually, I think it was the exact opposite," Derek says, stroking Stiles' hair.

Stiles snickers. “Okay, yeah. I can’t deny that. But I always just pictured my first time coming with a guy being really deep and complex somehow. Not just, you know. Coming in my pants like a teenager.”

“Did you enjoy it?” Derek asks.

“Oh, hell yes,” Stiles says. “I kind of want to do it again, like, immediately.”

“Then everything worked out,” Derek says.

“Except this,” Stiles says, rocking forward slightly against where Derek’s erection is still rock hard in his pants. Derek groans a little despite his best efforts. “We should take care of that.”

“You don’t – don’t have to,” Derek pants, trying not to grab at Stiles’ ass again.

“I know, but I actually, really want to,” Stiles says, undoing Derek’s belt and then unbuttoning his pants. “Like, I’m surprised by how much I want to,” he adds, as he draws Derek’s cock out of his pants. “One hundred ten percent on board over here.”

“Hnnngk,” Derek pants out, letting his head rest against the back of the sofa.

“Actually, make that one hundred fifty,” Stiles says, stroking him gently, rubbing his thumb over the head and gaining another groan from Derek. He leans in to press a kiss against the side of Derek’s neck, which turns into a long, drawn out process. Derek gives in to his impulse to grab Stiles’ ass as his orgasm hits him. “Good?”

“Yeah.” Derek relaxes, drawing Stiles in for another kiss. “Really good.”

They kiss a few more times, and Derek thinks he actually dozes off for a few minutes, but eventually he makes his way off the sofa to have dinner.

Things are going well in other arenas, too. Rarely a night goes by that Stiles isn’t at Derek’s place or vice versa. Derek is working up to asking Stiles if he wants to get a place together, maybe splitting the distance between Beacon Hills and Red Bluff, when Stiles surprises him with a list of apartments that he thinks would work. They move in the next month, and get a second cat, and throw a housewarming party that has a surprising number of people at it.

The sex is great. It’s not penetrative sex – Derek knows it’s going to take time to work up to that. But it’s a lot of handjobs and blowjobs and enthusiasm, and they’re both having a great time.

To be honest, if Stiles wasn’t an omega, Derek would have been content to leave it at that. There was no need to push him. They’re both having orgasms, they’re both enjoying themselves plenty. Plus there’s the intriguingly hot option of Stiles being on top, something that Derek finds himself daydreaming about a *lot*.

But Stiles is an omega, which means that when he’s in heat, nothing but an alpha inside him is going to be enough. That means that they have to work up to it, if they ever want to be able to end the agony that he’s going through.

When Derek tentatively brings that up, he half expects that Stiles will shoot him down. Even after all they've been through together, he doesn't know that Stiles will ever want to have sex while he's in heat. But when he mentions it, Stiles gives a thoughtful nod. "Probably best to start small. I've heard that adding a finger really spices up a blowjob."

Derek laughs despite himself. "Been reading Cosmo again?"

"I have much better sources than Cosmo, trust me," Stiles says.

"I'll take your word on it." Derek shakes his head. "Are you sure you want to do this? It's okay if you don't."

"No, I do," Stiles says. "I mean, not that the blowjobs aren't awesome. But I want, you know, everything. Which sounds greedy when I put it like that. But I still do."

"Even during your heat?"

"Yeah." Stiles gives a little smile. "I mean, I can't imagine any scenario in which I wouldn't be willing to have sex with you, so, the whole pre-granting consent thing makes more sense to me now. Well, maybe if I had norovirus. That would probably be a bad idea. Or if we had an audience of grade school children. Or if –"

"I get the idea," Derek says, laughing despite himself. He leans in to nuzzle at the crook of Stiles' shoulder. "If you're sure."

"I'm sure. You asking me if I'm sure makes me sure. I mean, we'll have to work our way up to it, but I'm sure I want to do that."

Stiles' source – who turns out to be Danny – is one hundred percent correct. Stiles enjoys being fingered so much that for a while it's all he wants. That's just fine by Derek, who loves the noises Stiles makes when Derek's fingers are inside him. They try it the other way, too, and he completely understands why Stiles loves it so much. It feels amazing. That gives him the courage to ask Stiles if he wants to try being on top.

"Really?" Stiles asks, blinking at him.

Derek gives a little shrug. "Alphas can enjoy being fucked, I think. We should give it a try. Maybe – maybe it'll help you to see me enjoy it."

"Well, shit, don't have to ask me twice," Stiles says, and jumps him.

It's a little awkward – they're both new at it, and so neither of them have a firm grasp on what they're doing – but they get into it, and after Stiles finds a good rhythm everything fades into the background. Derek tilts his head back and twines his fingers through Stiles' and just *loves* it, more than he would have ever thought he would. He comes so hard that the world goes blank and white around the edges.

"That. That was." Stiles can't even catch his breath afterwards, sprawled out on the bed next to Derek. "Wow. Gotta do that again. Soon. A lot."

“Mm,” is all Derek can muster in agreement.

Two weeks later, Derek tops for the first time. Stiles is clearly nervous and trying to hide it, but Derek has a plan that works beautifully. He barely pushes an inch into Stiles, just enough so that he can feel Derek there, and then jerks him off until he’s moaning and comes in Derek’s hands. “How was that?” Derek asks, pressing kisses into the side of Stiles’ neck.

“Don’ think it counts,” Stiles mumbles.

“Sure it does. There’s no rule saying I have to go all the way in.”

“Guess not.” Stiles yawns and falls asleep.

They get there gradually. The first time Stiles comes with Derek all the way inside him, he cries a little afterwards. “Are you okay, did I hurt you?” Derek asks, trying not to panic.

“No, I just – I’m just really happy,” Stiles says, snuffling a little. “Thanks, Derek. Really. Thank you.”

Derek kisses him for what feels like hours.

~ ~ ~ ~

When Stiles is about to go into heat again, Derek finds himself growing more and more uneasy. Now that they’re actually having sex, the scent of him is driving Derek insane. He catches himself trying to make a move on Stiles more than once, and keeps stopping himself. Stiles is busy with the dishes, working on a case, brushing the cat. Derek *could* initiate something, but he’s more worried about how much he wants to.

As the hours creep by, he finds that he’s nearly climbing the walls. Stiles is going to go into heat and he’s not going to be able to control himself. He doesn’t want to believe that about himself, but it’s growing more clear by the minute.

Finally, he blurts out, “I have to go. I can’t – be around you right now.”

Stiles turns from where he’s been making himself a sandwich and gives him a look that’s a little bit hurt, but mostly just surprised and confused. “Huh?”

“Your scent. I can’t.” Derek takes a deep breath. “I’m going to lose control. I hate – admitting that – but it’s so much – now that we’re having sex – you don’t want to during your heat yet and I, I respect that, but I can’t stay with you this time, I can’t –”

“Hey.” Stiles moves a step towards him, and Derek retreats. He’s trying to figure out how to convince him, waiting for Stiles to say he would never do that. He wants to believe that, but he knows it isn’t true. But then Stiles surprises him. “Okay. I’ll call Erica – if she can’t stay with me, I’ll call Danny. He’s always been a little weird about the heat thing but he’ll get it



now – knowing the way things are between us. Can you get yourself a hotel room or something?”

Derek nods. “Yeah.” His breath escapes him in a rush. “Yeah, I’ll do that. Just – call me when it’s over.”

“Okay.” Stiles hesitates, then says, “It doesn’t make you a bad person, you know.”

“Let’s talk about this when I get back,” Derek says, and stumbles out of the apartment. By the time he gets to a nearby hotel and has a room for himself, he feels like a complete ass. He knows that he did the right thing, removing himself from the situation, but he should have been able to control himself. It shouldn’t have been an issue.

His phone chimes and he sees he has a text from Stiles. Somewhat warily, he opens it. It reads, ‘Erica’s coming over. I’ll be fine, so don’t worry about me.’

Derek sighs a little and slumps onto the bed. ‘Okay.’

‘Let me guess. You’re convinced that you should be able to handle this.’

Derek glares at the phone. ‘Maybe.’

‘You know that doesn’t make sense, right?’

Now Derek is really annoyed. ‘Of course it makes sense. I should be in control of myself.’

‘You \*are\*. You removed yourself from the situation. That’s control. Anyway, you’re being ridiculous. You’re the only alpha I’ve ever met who’s been able to stay with me during a heat. The only one I would have trusted.’

‘I guess,’ Derek texts back, and sighs.

‘Erica’s here, gotta go. I love you.’

‘Love you too,’ Derek says, and turns on the television to distract himself. It’s going to be a long night.

~ ~ ~ ~

Two days later, Derek comes home with flowers and chocolate covered espresso beans. Stiles laughs and cuddles right up to him. He’s tired, and although he doesn’t look great, he’s looked worse. He says that his heat went about as well as he could have expected it to.

“I tried to do research, you know, to occupy myself,” he says, sprawling across Derek’s lap. “About alphas not having sex with omegas during their heat. But it turns out that nobody’s

really studied it. So, you know, you can stop assuming that other alphas would have been able to control themselves. Before you, nobody even *tried*.”

Derek scowls at him. “Fine. I guess.”

Stiles laughs and traces his fingers over Derek’s lips. “Next time,” he says.

It’s so casual that it takes Derek a minute to figure out what he means. “You mean, next time . . .”

“I’ll be ready,” Stiles says. “Honestly, if I’d had a little time to think about it, I probably would have been ready this time. Because you, leaving like that because you were afraid you would lose control . . . that means a lot to me. You know that, right?”

“Yeah,” Derek says, feeling okay for the first time in days. “Yeah, I know.”

“So. Next time.” Stiles yawns. “Also, tonight. But first I need a nap.”

Derek laughs. “Me too.”

Over breakfast the next morning, Stiles tells him about an idea he had, brought on by something Erica had said while he was in heat this time. “I thought, it might make it easier if we got naked beforehand, you know, because we always know when I’m getting close. If we’re already on second base when I go into heat, I’ll already be feeling really revved up, and the sudden – intensity – probably won’t bother me anywhere near as much.”

“That makes sense,” Derek says thoughtfully. “I mean, it’s got to be kind of jarring when one minute you’re just casually eating cereal and the next –”

“You’re starving for dick,” Stiles agrees with a nod, and Derek laughs. “Sound good?”

“Sounds good.”

~ ~ ~ ~

A few weeks slide by, no different from any other weeks. As Stiles’ heat draws near, Derek is trying not to hover, hoping his anxiety doesn’t show. He’s afraid that Stiles might change his mind – but he’s more afraid that Stiles will want to, but won’t. He’s not sure how to ask Stiles that he’s sure without instilling doubts that Stiles doesn’t actually have.

His anxiety *does* show, apparently, because Stiles starts reassuring him that he’s fine. “I’m actually kind of, you know, excited,” he says. “I’ve never been excited about going into heat before, so this is super new for me. But I’m literally getting pep talks from Danny like, on the hour. He texts me constantly telling me about how amazing and awesome it’s going to be.”

Derek laughs. “Did you ask him to do that?”

“I might have. You know. Just as a precaution.”

Derek gives a little snort despite himself. “Sounds like an excellent plan. Especially if it’s working.”

“He also said to tell you that, although he’s glad that the two of us are gonna get busy, that he’s really gonna miss your dick. His words, not mine.”

“Oh. Um.” Derek flushes pink a little. “That’s nice, I guess?”

“I wonder if we’ll ever go into heat at the same time,” Stiles says thoughtfully. “Do we sync up after a while? Like periods?”

“Yes and no.” Derek pokes him in the ribs. “I thought you had done a bunch of research on the heat cycle.”

“Omega heat yes. Alpha heat no. And it didn’t come up, so I was gonna say ‘I guess not’, but you’re going to say that it does?”

Derek nods. “Because the alpha heat comes on more gradually, and happens less often. You’ll still have the same schedule as usual, but after the first year or so, yours will trigger mine. I’ve never experienced it, though,” he adds. “Going through a heat with a partner who was also in heat. So I don’t know what it’s like.”

“Probably very . . . sweaty,” Stiles says, and both of them burst out laughing.

“That’s appealing, thanks,” Derek finally manages.

“I do have a unique point of view.”

The next few days pass more quickly than Derek would have expected, and he’s so keenly aware of Stiles’ scent that he has trouble focusing on anything else. Stiles is getting a little antsy himself, but they manage to make dinner. “Gonna start late,” he says, as they’re doing the dishes. “Hope you don’t mind being up all night. In more ways than one.”

Derek groans. “You’re the worst. Come here and kiss me.”

Stiles does. The dishes are abandoned in short order, and they adjourn to the bedroom. Derek estimates that they still have about half an hour, so he takes his time stripping Stiles out of his clothes, keeps their kisses slow and languorous and doesn’t rush anything. He leaves Stiles’ boxer shorts on and pulls the other man into his lap, running his hands up and down Stiles’ back. “You’re so beautiful,” he murmurs into Stiles’ skin, kissing the line of his moles.

“What are you even talking about, you’re the one with the gorgeous rainbow eyes,” Stiles manages, twining his hands in Derek’s hair and just letting Derek take care of him. Before long, he’s groaning quietly and trying to rock his hips against Derek’s. Derek won’t let him, though, keeping some space between them. “Come on . . .”

“Not yet,” Derek says, nipping at Stiles’ ear and provoking a sharp intake of breath. But he does decide to get them onto the bed, spilling Stiles down onto it and sliding his underwear

off. Stiles watches him intently as Derek divests himself of the last of his own clothes, then gets down onto the bed with him. He arches up for a kiss, and Derek obliges, still leaving a few inches of space between their bodies.

“Listen, you jerk,” Stiles pants. “I’m ready, okay?”

Derek shakes his head a little and leans in for another kiss. “Not until you’re all the way into heat. I’ll know. Believe me, I’ll know.”

“But I want to now,” Stiles says, fake-whining in a way that makes Derek laugh.

“You’re the one who wanted to be starving for dick,” Derek reminded him, but he takes pity on him, leaning closer and letting their bodies press together. Stiles moans and puts his arms around Derek to pull him closer, twining a hand in his hair. “Easy, I’ve got you,” Derek murmurs into his ear, letting Stiles rock against him. “I’m going to take care of you.”

“Derek,” Stiles gasps out, as Derek slides a hand between his legs, gently pushing them apart. “Oh, God. Derek.”

Derek hesitates, not sure if that’s a good ‘oh God’ or a bad one. “Do you want me to keep going?”

“Yes, please, if you stop I’ll kill you – ”

Derek huffs out a little laugh and goes back to teasing Stiles, running his hands up and down Stiles’ thighs and over his hips. Stiles whines again, and Derek leans in to distract him with a kiss as he reaches for the lube. Technically, it shouldn’t be necessary, but he wants this to be good for Stiles, wants to be extra careful. He groans a little despite himself as he presses a finger into Stiles. He’s hot to the touch, and he feels so *ready*. Derek goes in for another kiss, and Stiles bites at his lips frantically.

“Please,” Stiles pants. “*Please.*”

His scent changes, and it’s so subtle but so affecting, and his pupils are blown wide and his fingers are twisting in Derek’s hair, and Derek slides into him slow and easy, like breathing. Stiles’ back arches and he throws his head back and he gives a quiet little whimper. “Easy, Stiles, I’ve got you,” Derek murmurs into his throat. “I’ll get you there, I’ve got you.”

He thrusts once, twice, and Stiles’ body goes taut. His hands twist painfully in Derek’s hair and his mouth drops open a little like he’s going to make a noise, but he doesn’t. He comes so hard that it looks like it hurts to Derek, who smooths down his hair as Stiles collapses back to the bed. Stiles is flushed and panting, but his hands loosen in Derek’s hair.

“You okay?” Derek asks, brushing a few strands of hair out of Stiles’ face.

Stiles blinks at him, slowly. “Yeah.”

“How do you feel?”

“I don’t think I’m done yet,” Stiles says, his voice rather fuzzy. He squirms slightly, feeling Derek still inside him, and moans. “Yeah, I want – want to – ”

Derek isn’t sure what he wants, but then Stiles flip them over suddenly so he’s on top, grinding down on Derek’s cock and letting out another moan. Derek can’t hold back one of his own. His hands gravitate to Stiles’ hips, holding him steady. Stiles doesn’t seem to notice, completely focused on riding Derek’s cock. In fact, when Derek tries to shift slightly, he puts his hands on Derek’s chest and pins him in place, intent on taking what he wants, what he needs. Derek lets him, watches him, forgetting entirely about his own pleasure, which is no match for the exquisite sight of Stiles finally letting himself have his.

He thinks that Stiles barely even remember he’s there, he’s so focused, but when Stiles comes, it’s with Derek’s name on his lips.

“Easy,” Derek says again, as Stiles half-collapses on top of him. He runs his hands down Stiles’ body, feeling the way he’s still trembling. “I’ve got you.”

“Mmkay,” Stiles manages, his body relaxing by slow degrees.

Derek gives him a minute, before asking again, “How do you feel?”

“So good,” Stiles murmurs. “So good, Derek.”

“Good.” Derek kisses him again, soft and gentle, staying as still as he can so Stiles can bask in the feeling.

After about five minutes, Stiles shifts again. “You didn’t come.”

“That’s okay,” Derek says, and it is. He’s going a little soft now, and although an orgasm would certainly be nice, he’s not going to ask for anything. “There will be time for that later.”

“Okay.” Stiles frowns a little. “I feel surprisingly . . . lucid. Like . . . I’m still in heat, right? Shouldn’t I still be, you know, feeling like it?”

“Give yourself a little time and you’ll rev back up.” Derek rubs a hand up and down Stiles’ spine. “This is how it usually goes. You get one or two good orgasms under your belt, then you’ll feel clear for a couple hours, before it starts to build again. You’re not supposed to feel it the whole time.”

“Right. Okay.” Stiles tries to stretch, but mostly just yawns instead. “Think I’m gonna fall asleep.”

“That’s a pretty typical reaction, too,” Derek says, amused despite himself.

“You’re sure you don’t mind?”

“I’m sure.”

“Mmkay.” Stiles tucks his head against Derek’s shoulder and is asleep moments later.

~ ~ ~ ~

Derek dozes too, and wakes up a couple hours later when Stiles starts grinding against his hip. He rolls them over and kisses Stiles until they're both breathless before sliding into him again. He makes love to Stiles deep and slow and beautiful, until Stiles is a trembling, gasping mess; he takes him all the way apart and then puts him back together and it's the most amazing thing that's ever happened to either of them.

When they finally come back after that, he coaxes Stiles out of bed and makes him drink some water. He knows that Stiles will be so focused on sex that he won't remember to do things like that, and a good alpha has to take care of their omega in more ways than just fucking. They sleep for a few more hours, and then he gets Stiles into the shower. They make out for a while and finally end up having sex on the bathroom floor because they can't manage to get back to the bedroom. Then they have breakfast. Stiles isn't really that hungry, but Derek feeds him a little at a time, rewarding him with kisses between bites.

Stiles is actually okay after that, for a little while, so they settle down with a movie that they miss the second half of.

All Stiles wants to do after that is cuddle, and he does so rather aggressively, wrapping his arms around Derek and refusing to let him get out of bed. Derek doesn't mind; there's really nothing he would rather do. They cuddle until late in the evening, when he finally manages to get Stiles to let go of him long enough to get them both some dinner. They take another shower – this one sex free – and manage to sleep for an entire six hours before Stiles is ready to go again. Derek's getting more tired than he wants to admit, so he rolls them over so Stiles can ride him again, which Stiles does with exuberant determination.

It's over by the next afternoon. Stiles eats an entire pizza and then sleeps for twelve hours without twitching.

When the alarm goes off the next morning, Derek leans over and kisses Stiles on the temple. "Hey. How are you feeling?"

"Good," Stiles murmurs. "I think I can actually go to work."

"Okay." Derek kisses him again and then gets out of bed. He ducks into the shower and gets dressed, before coming into the bedroom to find Stiles still in bed. He laughs a little, because he's used to Stiles' propensity to jump out of bed with five minutes to spare, down two cups of coffee and take off. "You want me to start the coffee maker?"

"Yeah, thanks." Stiles yawns, stretches, and then swings his legs over the edge of the bed. He tries to stand up and immediately staggers. Derek catches him and helps him sit back down. "Ooooh. Okay. Maybe not so much with the work today."

Derek laughs quietly. "It was quite a workout."

“You seem okay,” Stiles says, grumbling a little.

“Yeah, that’s because you were doing most of the work at least half the time,” Derek says. He kisses him and says, “Nobody will be upset if you take a day to recover. Take a hot bath and take it easy.”

“Okay.” Stiles yawns again before flopping back down onto the bed. “I’ll see you tonight.”

When Derek gets to work half an hour later, he sees Erica smirking at him. He gives her a look, and she says, “Stiles sent me a text this morning that was a solid screenful of emojis. Wanna see it?”

“I don’t know, do I?” Derek asks.

Erica doesn’t answer his question before shoving her phone in his face so he can see the text. It’s several rows of hearts, faces with heart eyes, and hands lifted in praise to the Heavens. Derek studies it for a few moments and tries to keep the idiotic grin off his face. He doesn’t think it’s working. “I think he had a good time,” Erica says, sounding smug. “Now get to work,” she adds, smacking Derek’s ass and heading back to her desk.

“That’s harassment,” he shouts after her.

“Someone has to keep your ego in check!” she calls back.

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He ends up working late, which really annoys him, because he wants to get home to Stiles. But there’s a messy car accident, followed by a drug bust, followed by a teenager who stole his step-father’s car and is driving it like an idiot. The teenager in question turns out to have run away because his step-father is abusive, and Derek winds up sitting in the hospital with him for over an hour, calming him down and getting details.

He texts Stiles twice to apologize for how late he’s going to be working, and Stiles says not to worry about it both times. When he finally gets home, it’s after eight o’clock, and he’s starving. He comes into the house to hear soft jazz playing, and heads into the kitchen to find wine glasses, candles, and the amazing aroma of the steaks Stiles is making.

“What’s all this?” he asks, laughing. “You know you don’t need to pay me back for the last few days, right?”

“I know that,” Stiles says, glancing over his shoulder from where he’s at the stove. “It’s not payback, or a reward. It is something else.” He turns the heat off the stove and says, “Those just need to sit five minutes and then they’ll be perfect.”

“Okay,” Derek says, feeling a little flutter in his stomach when he sees the smile on Stiles’ face.

Stiles puts his arms around Derek's waist and leans in for a kiss, soft and gentle, his thumb rubbing over Derek's cheekbone. "I love you so much."

"I love you, too," Derek says.

"I was thinking earlier today about how different things are now from how they were two years ago," Stiles says. "I really, honestly, thought I would never be happy. That I would just . . . claw through each day, suffer through it, until I died on the job or of old age or whatever happened. I did it for my dad, but I never thought it would get better. You might not have saved my life, but you made it worth living."

Derek flushes pink. "I just did what – "

"What anyone would do? No, babe, you really didn't. You are the first person I *ever* met who treated me like my decisions were my own to make. Who respected them even if you didn't understand them. Even Erica – she's great, you know, she's my best friend, but even she spent the first year trying to, to solve me like a puzzle. She would say 'have you tried this and have you tried that' and finally she got to the point where she couldn't come up with any other ways to fix the problem. You didn't do that. You just accepted it. And I know that it was hard for you to do that, that you *wanted* to just fix me, but you never acted that way. You let me work through it on my own, gave me what I needed and just – just let me take things at my own speed.

"And, you know, I liked you from the first day I met you, and I knew I was interested in you by the time we'd been on the job a week, but . . . I fell in love with you that day in the locker room. When you took me home and you didn't try to give me anything I couldn't accept. And I've fallen in love with you a little bit more every day since then. For a really long time, I thought I was in this alone. You made me see that I wasn't. That even if you didn't understand and didn't know how to help, you were still *there*. I didn't have to do this by myself. I'm not alone, and I never want to be alone again. So . . ." Stiles takes a deep breath and goes to one knee, pulling a box out of his back pocket. "Will you, Derek Alexander Hale, be – "

"Yes," Derek blurts out, and Stiles starts laughing. "Sorry. I'll let you finish."

"Marry me?" Stiles says, with a charming grin, and Derek says yes again and then Stiles jumps back to his feet and wraps his arms around Derek's shoulders, his legs around Derek's waist, kissing him over and over again.

They keep kissing for a solid minute before Derek's stomach lets out a loud growl, and they both wind up laughing so hard that they can barely breathe.

"Come on," Stiles says. "Let's eat, and then we can watch the new Star Wars trailer fifteen times."

"Nerd," Derek says, and falls in love with him all over again.



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