Sense Memory
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/21162341.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Teen Wolf (TV)
Relationship:	Chris Argent/Peter Hale/Stiles Stilinski, Peter Hale/Stiles Stilinski, Chris Argent/Peter Hale, Chris Argent/Stiles Stilinski
Character:	Chris Argent, Peter Hale, Stiles Stilinski
Additional Tags:	Angst, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Angst with a Happy Ending, Canon character death mentioned (Allison), Stetopher Week 2019, the wild hunt, Memory Alteration
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-10-24 Words: 1,452 Chapters: 1/1

Sense Memory

by Shey

Summary

Chris flinches awake in the dark with his throat locked against a gasp. He's shaking. There's a bitter chill at his back, and his hands grope blindly across the cold sheets before falling still. It's silent in his bedroom, apart from the pulse pounding in his ears. He's alone. Of course he's alone. He tries to steady his breathing.

Nothing has changed.

Notes

Just a little bit of Chris angst in honor of Stetopher Week. I've been so busy, but I'm hoping to post a few little things before I scurry back to the stuff I should really be working on. Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

SENSE MEMORY

BY SHEY

Chris flinches awake in the dark with his throat locked against a gasp. He's shaking. There's a bitter chill at his back, and his hands grope blindly across the cold sheets before falling still. It's silent in his bedroom, apart from the pulse pounding in his ears. He's alone. Of course he's alone. He tries to steady his breathing.

Nothing has changed.

The pain is a frozen ache. He can't remember how long it's been like this, but it's become familiar. The sensation that someone took a knife, flayed him opened from throat to navel, and hollowed him out. Like every scrap of good has been carved away, leaving the remains to slowly, silently decay. He grinds the heel of his hand against his chest, digging into it, searching for the wound, for proof that this isn't just inside his head.

He's rotting.

Reality is a distant, faded thing he recognizes across a numb fog. He goes through the motions, wondering if anything will jar him loose. He leaves the house, runs errands, works with the pack, fights monsters, everything exactly like usual. Routine.

The kids argue over the bad guy of the week. Bicker. He doesn't have the energy to be the adult in the room, the voice of reason. He tries, but he's shouting into the void. He leans against the wall by the stairs, isolation sinking under his skin, and stares at the growing distance between them. These people are hardly a pack, his or otherwise. There's nothing to keep him here beyond loyalty to the daughter he lost. For now it will have to be enough.

There are groceries spread out on his kitchen counter. He stares at them. Too many. Boxes of a

sugary cereal that he hates, and more fresh meat and vegetables than one person could ever possibly need. It looks like he's been shopping for a bunch of teenage bottomless pits. His eyes burn and he shuts his them, head tipped back toward the ceiling until the discomfort stops.

He keeps moving. Continues to the best of his ability.

He zones out in the car, drives home on auto-pilot. Except he ends up on the wrong side of town, looking up at an apartment building he doesn't recognize. The vast space behind his ribs throbs. He wraps a hand around his wrist and squeezes hard, counts the thundering beat of his pulse. He doesn't know why he's here. He has the urge to run, run, run. Or maybe stay. Drown himself in this ache until there's nothing left. Until everything stops.

Maybe after everything, after his father, Kate, Victoria—after Allison—this place is finally driving him mad.

Maybe he's just overtired. He hasn't been sleeping well.

At night his hands reach out, close on air and startle him awake. Tears scorch his cheeks. He stares at the ceiling, lets them run back into his hair, bewildered. It might be some kind of delayed grief for Victoria (that's a lie, there had been no love lost between them by the end). He knows it's not Allison, that's a whole separate ache that hovers behind his eyes, sits heavy in his gut—he compartmentalizes his grief. He bites down on his wrist to muffle the gasping breaths that he can't control. That he doesn't understand.

He should probably look into therapy.

He finds himself in strange places, a diner in town, the edge of the preserve, the movie theater, the apartment building again. It happens as soon as he stops paying attention, like muscle memory. It should be terrifying, but there's nothing. He's lost the ability to fear. His body keeps returning to the unfamiliar, keeps reaching out into emptiness.

He doesn't—can't—think about the way he turns, a sarcastic comment ready to be spoken into the air by his right shoulder, or how his left hand automatically reaches out to steady another when there's a bump in the pavement.

How when he's half asleep he thinks he hears someone whisper *Christopher*, thinks he feels warm, chapped lips brush against his collarbone.

He's outside the apartment building, again. He's lost track of how many times that is this week. It's late, and he's so, so tired. All the fight in him is gone, if it was ever there.

He lets his feet steer him up to the sixth floor. Doesn't question it when his key fits the lock. When he closes the door behind him the ache of homesickness hits like a punch in the chest.

The room is barren. Deserted.

He presses fingers to his pulse, counts his heartbeats, pounding like he's in the middle of a hunt. The apartment is silent. There's dust in the corners, on the window glass, dulling the wood floors.

There's a raised ridge of skin under his fingertips.

A scar.

His focus narrows on the silvery impression of teeth as the fog covering his mind burns away.

His breath goes short and fast, vision overly sharp with shock. Because even in the near-dark of the empty room he recognizes the mirrored crescent moons of a mating bite, where minutes ago he would swear there was nothing. His fingers convulse, nails almost breaking the skin, and he sees a flash of black on the opposite wrist.

The tattoo is small, two nearly closed loops. It could easily be mistaken for an infinity symbol. But it's not. It's an "S".

Because his boyfriend had pouted that their lover got to leave a mark, and he didn't. And, *"No, I'm not going to bite you, Chris. Human mouths are a germ buffet."* The ink was a compromise, and he loved it as much as the scar on his opposite wrist. As much as he loved the young man and the wolf who had given them to him.

"Stiles." His voice cracks on the name, choked nearly to a whisper. "Peter."

How did he forget?

He stumbles, can't breathe. He presses one marked wrist hard against his mouth, then the other, stubble painful against delicate skin. "Please."

He suddenly feels his heart, because it's breaking, being ripped from his chest, and it's a relief after the emptiness he's been carrying for months. He squeezes his eyes shut against the burn of tears, against the scream of desperation that wants to choke him. "Please," he begs, hardly able to hear past the white-noise rushing in his ears.

He can't *breathe*.

His knees give out.

Supernaturally strong arms wrap around him from behind and stop his fall. A broad chest molds itself to his back, even as a lanky frame collapses against his front. He catches Stiles automatically, hauling him close.

"Chris— You did it. Knew you would— I knew." Stiles' words are garbled. He's shaking, tears smearing against Chris' cheek as Stiles tries to pull him into a messy kiss and misses. Peter's holding all three of them up, face buried in Chris' throat, sucking in noisy lung-fulls of his scent, a growl rumbling in his chest.

Chris can't move, thinks he might be in shock, blindsided by emotion that didn't exist minutes ago. He drags a breath into oxygen starved lungs, then another. There's air again. The crushing weight on his chest is lifted. Filled.

"How?" He tries to ask with a voice that won't cooperate. He's probably hurting Stiles, he's holding him so tightly, but the fragile boy in his arms doesn't seem to mind, clinging back with equal desperation.

"Later," Peter growls through too many teeth. He's moving them, half dragging them to a sofa Chris hadn't noticed before, but now recognizes, as familiar as his own. They collapse in a tangle of limbs, Peter wrapped around his back, rib-creakingly tight, one leg over Chris', his arms pinning Stiles against them both. Stiles is half on top of them, half trying to climb inside Chris' skin, fumbling to get Chris' free leg wrapped around his hip.

When they’re finally, impossibly tangled—Stiles' tears have slowed to soft trembling breaths, and Peter’s desperate growl has faded to something like a purr—Chris closes his eyes and let himself relax, and feel. This is real. They are real.

Later, with Stiles curled in his lap, clutched to his chest like a limpet, and Peter glued to his side, fingers reverently tracing his mating bite, they’ll explain the Wild Hunt, and the Ghost Riders erasing people from existence. They’ll talk about the remaining danger they have to face, and come up with a plan.

For now he’s caught tight between his mates, their bond humming, filling all the hollow, aching parts of his chest with searing heat. He brought them back, and he’ll destroy anything that tries to take them away again.

End Notes

This happened because I saw hd-hale’s beautiful art of Peter and Stiles in the train station over on tumblr, and my Stetopher feels started up. I still want a longer version of this to spontaneously appear on my computer but for some reason that hasn't happened yet (maybe my computer is broken?). I hope you all enjoyed it!

Sometimes I post drabbles and prompts on my Tumblr!

Works inspired by this one

[Podfic] Sense Memory by bri

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!