

The Boy Sleuth

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/21080138) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/21080138>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Teen Wolf (TV)
Relationship:	Peter Hale/Stiles Stilinski
Character:	Stiles Stilinski , Peter Hale , Claudia Stilinski , Sheriff Stilinski , Scott McCall (Teen Wolf) , Derek Hale
Additional Tags:	implied child neglect , No underage , Brief kidnapping , Fluff , Semi-Canon Compliant , Canon Character Death (Claudia) , Gratuitous Nancy Drew References , Light Angst , Good Peter Hale , First Kiss
Language:	English
Collections:	Teen Wolf , Fave Teen Wolf , Library
Stats:	Published: 2019-10-18 Words: 6,000 Chapters: 1/1

The Boy Sleuth

by [Shey](#)

Summary

Stiles is eight when he discovers a box of his mom's old Nancy Drew Mysteries in the back of the guest bedroom closet.

Notes

I didn't plan to post this until I finished my other fic, but then I found out they were making a new Nancy Drew series, and decided I should probably finish it before the premiere (almost made my deadline!).

This happened because I read a fun line in a fic where someone asked Stiles "Who do you think you are, Nancy Drew?". I don't even know. But here, have some cute kid-Stiles, and some eventual Steter fluff.

Thank you Nightwalker for cheer-leading and checking my Hardy Boys references!

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

THE BOY SLEUTH



BY SHEY

When Mischief is four his favorite thing in the whole wide world is *Where the Wild Things Are*. He can read it all by himself. His daddy asks if he memorized it, but he didn't, he's learned all the words, knows their shapes. Mommy says they're proud of him. Most of the kids in his preschool class are still learning their letters, Mischief is almost finished with the beginning-reader shelf at the library. Mommy says it will be a problem when he runs out of "age-appropriate" books. He's just too smart for his own good. It's something he hears a lot, especially after his daddy finds him in the yard at two in the morning, all ready to sail away on an adventure with his monster friends. He hears lots of new words that night.

He's in kindergarten when he learns how to sneak a flashlight under the covers so he can keep reading past bedtime. *The Berenstain Bears* aren't that great—they're always talking about rules—but mommy and daddy say he isn't old enough for big-kid books like *Junie B. Jones* or *Animorphs*. They think he'll be scared, but they're wrong. He isn't scared of anything, not even being alone in the dark. Mischief will just have to be sneaky to get what he wants.

Unfortunately the grown-ups see through his sneakiness and distractions, so it's not until his sixth birthday that he finally gets what he's after. His first chapter book. *Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective*—his dad will spend many years regretting that purchase. The deputy sheriff somehow misses that books aren't where his son gets his love of puzzles and sticking his nose into trouble.

Stiles is eight when he finds a box of his mom's old *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* in the back of the guest bedroom closet. He slides the books, with their hard cloth covers and faded yellow bindings, down the hallway and into his own bedroom. He hides them in a corner beneath his Beyblades stadium, a mountain of Beanie Babies, and a deconstructed Furby.

It's the middle of the day and the house is quiet. His mom is lying down and Stiles is supposed to

be resting too, but he just can't make his brain be still for long enough. He sorts through and finds the book labeled number one, *The Secret of the Old Clock*. The cover has a woman in a dress and a funny hat, with a big clock wrapped in a blanket under one arm. She's creeping through the woods, but she looks more sneaky than scared.

Stiles likes sneaky, and if there's a mystery he needs to get to the bottom of it.

Late that night, under the covers with his flashlight, Stiles opens his new book. The first chapter is called "The Rescue" and Stiles is immediately spellbound, the story unfolding like a movie inside his head. Nancy Drew's adventure makes sparks race under his skin. His heart pounds with adrenaline, and he can't put the book down until he knows she's solved the case, and caught the bad guy.

Stiles powers through the first book in one very long night. He's relieved when his parents are too distracted with work and doctor's appointments to notice his exhaustion the next day.

Nancy is amazing. She's clever, rebellious, popular, and talented. She solves every mystery she comes across, is always willing to help, and never gives up until she catches the criminal. Stiles is infatuated. He's never heard of someone who can do all the things Nancy can, and she's only sixteen. He wants to be her when he grows up.

He's nearly to the bottom of his stolen box of books when he gets caught. It's been a few months and, instead of sleeping, he's traveled with Nancy to haunted mansions, road-side inns, and even a ranch in Arizona—he's making a list of the things he needs to learn, from first-aid, to boating, to horseback-riding. It's the exhaustion of multiple all-nighters that gives him away in the end—he's only in third grade after all.

His teacher calls home about his manic, over-tired behavior in class, and his mom sets up a sneaky trap, peeking into his room in the middle of the night and catching him in the act. His mom is a lot like Nancy, he thinks.

The consequence of staying up past bedtime is a month of no books in his room, and a nightly search for contraband flashlights, but the reward is three more boxes of mysteries hauled down from the attic. He had no idea Nancy went on so many adventures. He doesn't tell anyone, but he gets a little teary when he finds out that he isn't going to have to give up his idol anytime soon.

He'll never forget the smile on his mom's face when she dashes into the house a few months later, shopping bags filled to overflowing. She has to make three trips to the car, because she's been at the bookstore, and there are fifty-nine books that neither of them knew about. *Fifty-nine, Mischief!* Her excitement brightens the shadows under her eyes, and makes her too-pale cheeks glow.

That night she stretches out next to him in bed with #115, *The Suspect in the Smoke* opened on her lap. Stiles is still reading #43, *The Mystery of the 99 Steps*—he can't read nearly as quickly when he has school, and homework, and *bedtime*—but he doesn't mind if she gets ahead. If he stays focused he might catch up before she finishes the last one.

Before she and dad kiss him goodnight, his mom sneaks a tiny flashlight into his hand with a wink and a grin. Stiles hides his answering smile in her shoulder when he hugs her tight. His dad ruefully asks if he should start stocking up on Hardy Boys books as well.

A year after that his mom is gone. It's a year filled with doctors, and hospitals, and experimental drugs. Stiles tries not to think about it—doesn't want to remember how she slipped away long before she left.

He's lying on the floor in front of his bookshelf, running his fingers over the spines of the books she gave him, trying to feel some hint of her in the paper, when he realizes it. He's half an orphan now, ten years old and without a mom, just like Nancy. He's not sure if it makes him feel better, or worse, but if Nancy can survive it, so can Stiles. It's going to be hard, he's desperately sad and lonely, but his dad needs him—Carson Drew is in danger all the time, and he's only a lawyer, not a sheriff. Stiles will have to work hard to keep his dad safe.

He latches onto his new purpose with the hyper-focused tenacity that only a kid with ADHD and too much unsupervised time can manage. To start, he moves "learn to cook" higher up on his list of Sleuth-Skills. His dad is so busy that he hardly comes home before bedtime anymore, and Stiles might go on strike if he has to eat pizza for dinner one more time this week. Who knew a kid could get tired of pizza? He worries briefly that there's actually something wrong with him—he'll have to "Google" if taste-buds can get sick.

Rice and vegetables are easy enough to figure out, he's seen how the rice-cooker works plenty of times, and vegetables just need to be boiled. Chicken is a little more difficult—it's frozen when he finds it, and he doesn't understand why it ends up so dry and hard to cut—but it doesn't taste too bad. He wraps his dad's plate up and leaves him a little post-it note, just like mom used to, and feels a warm thrill of satisfaction when the plate is empty in the sink the next morning.

Next, he does some cleaning. He really doesn't like cleaning, but it's a good cover story if his dad notices something's been moved. He's decent with a vacuum, but the real trick is to dust the tabletops just enough that he needs to shift things around. His dad's got files piled all over the coffee table and Stiles knows he's not supposed to touch them, but he's *cleaning*. And if he just so happens to copy down all of the clues from the open cases while he does it, who can blame him?

He tucks the notes into a heating vent behind his desk, and leaves the vent cover in place, but loose—it's important for a good hiding place to look undisturbed.

He reads witness statements, searching for the moment when they give themselves away, flips through evidence reports for hidden clues, and memorizes crime scene photos, looking for the puzzle pieces that were left behind. He's not sure if he's relieved or disappointed when his dad is too tired to notice.

The first mystery Stiles solves is a robbery at a restaurant downtown. He's only eleven, and he can't *believe* no one else suspects the chef's brother. Stiles almost laughs at how obvious it is. The man is jealous of how popular his brother got by using their grandmother's recipes, and he wants a share of the money.

The confrontation with the thief doesn't go as well as Stiles hoped, but he's barely kidnapped

before his dad arrives and arrests the man. He definitely doesn't deserve to be grounded until he's thirty. Luckily, once he finishes soaking in the dad-hug that may or may not have included a few minutes of shaking and hiccupping breaths, he's able to talk the sheriff down.

He still ends up under house-arrest for the *whole summer*. It's frustrating, he caught the bad guy after all, and he was never really in danger—Scotty was waiting outside on his bike as back-up. Stiles even remembered to record the confession so the lawyers would have plenty of evidence.

His dad doesn't understand or agree with his arguments, and Stiles spends the summer between fifth and sixth grade shuffled from home to the station, and back. He does however get a reward for solving the mystery, Oreo milkshakes and curly fries from his favorite restaurant. And he doesn't think he's imagining the pride in his dad's eyes as Stiles tells him all about the way he cracked the case.

He doesn't mention it when the first book in the *Nancy Drew Files* series, 'Secrets Can Kill' appears on his shelf.

The bonus of half-way living at the station is that Stiles has access to his dad's computer, and the holy-grail that is evidence storage. It doesn't take any time at all to copy the key—he uses a tin of putty, and a kit for casting your own handprints—and as long as he sneaks out and causes trouble at regular intervals no one ever thinks to look for him there. It's a little dark in the depths of the storage room, but Stiles doesn't go anywhere without a flashlight, and he hasn't been scared of the dark in years.

By the time Stiles turns fourteen he's read all 159 of the Simon & Schuster published Nancy Drew Mysteries, 14 of the 15 written after Aladdin Publishing took over and made a mess of the continuity, and even powered through the 124 *Files* books during the summer Scott spent in San Francisco with his dad. (He's also developed a secret fondness for the Nancy Drew-Hardy Boys, Super Mysteries, even though the crossover universe feels a little bit like an AU).

There's only one left, #175, that he keeps in a box under his bed with his other important things. It's the last one his mom got to read, curled up next to him in bed, only a week before she went to the hospital for the last time.

He takes it out from time to time, staring at the cover, memorizing the details of the artwork. He's always tempted to read it, but the thought of being done makes the ache of missing her flare up in his chest. Opening the cover feels like letting the last piece of her go. Like she'll be leaving all over again.

So he keeps it hidden. He's not ready for that yet. And until he is, there's always one last piece of his mom to look forward to. One last thing they'll be able to share.

Stiles is fifteen and he has a *reputation*. He thinks it's great, but his dad doesn't particularly agree. He's solved half a dozen mysteries, helped get even more criminals put away, and most importantly, kept his dad safe from all the crazies out to get the sheriff. So even if his reputation is for "bending the rules"—and it's a little lack-luster where law enforcement is concerned—the deputies have a soft spot for the sheriff's kid. He's practically grown up at the station these last few years. They also tend to forget when he's in the room, especially if he has his headphones in—he's gotten good at bobbing his head and chair-dancing to music that isn't playing.

The best way he's found to get information is to turn up at crime scenes, usually with Scott in tow. Scott is his always reluctant Bess, and Stiles regrets that they don't have a George to round out their sleuthing trio. He definitely blames their lack of George when they get caught. He carefully doesn't mention Ned when plans go south, turn into kidnapping, and Stiles finds himself in need of a college-aged boyfriend-in-shining-armor. He's not sure he wants to have that conversation outside of his own head just yet.

Besides, crime-fighting will only get easier when he finally gets his driver's license—his mom's powder-blue Jeep is waiting in the garage for him. It's not a roadster, but the color's right, and he thinks it's probably better to have something that they can off-road out with. The preserve isn't River Heights after all, and Nancy got herself into a few scrapes when her car couldn't handle the terrain. Also, if they ever do find a George, or a Ned—or heck, a Frank and Joe—they're going to need the Jeep's extra seats.

It's winter break and Stiles is only a few short months from seventeen. He's grounded again, stuck at the station for sneaking into a suspect's house during his search for clues—despite the deposit slips he found breaking the bribery case wide open, you're-welcome-very-much, dad.

When he discovers an old case file in the bottom desk drawer that his dad usually keeps locked, he thinks it will be a good distraction. He's honestly not sure why he never looked into the Hale fire, except that it happened right around the time his mom died. Most things from that year are pretty hazy. He spent a lot of time in the corners of hospital rooms, reading and pretending he was anywhere else.

Everything about the file screams *wrong* to him. Too brief, too strange, and too quickly forgotten. Nine people dead, one survivor pulled from the flames—if you can call comatose and in long-term care surviving—only two family members spared because they weren't home at the time. Stiles reads the file cover to cover, examines the crime scene photos and the evidence report with the keen eye of experience, and has *so many questions*.

First of all, why the hell didn't the Hales escape? There were seven able-bodied adults in that house, the doors were open, big, beautiful windows and porches everywhere, there must have been two dozen exits. Why were they all found in the basement, their bodies huddled in the corner furthest from the stairs?

Second, how was the case closed so quickly? Barely 48 hours after the fire was out and it was already ruled an accident. Stiles has read fire reports before and this one is a joke, hardly glancing the surface, not even the usual tests done to check for accelerants or tampering. The potential arsonist probably didn't leave a diary behind filled with clues to their crimes like in *Suspect in the*

Smoke, but considering how the investigation was handled, if they did it would have gone unnoticed.

Third, why had Laura and Derek Hale, the two survivors—he doesn't really count poor, half-dead Peter Hale as a survivor—skipped town so quickly? They were interviewed by the police, cleared as suspects, and then basically vanished. There's a phone number with a New York area code listed, but no forwarding address and no further contact mentioned. Stiles wonders if they even visited their uncle in the hospital before they bailed. If he's learned anything over the years, it's that the ones who go missing are the ones with all the answers.

Three very interesting questions without even starting his own investigation. Stiles is hooked. There's a mystery here, and as always, he needs to get to the bottom of it.

The biggest stumbling-blocks in his hunt for clues end up being his dad catching him snooping, the end of the semester exams, a rash of animal attacks, and the half-of-a-body found in the woods. By the time Stiles can really dig into the case, he realizes he's smack-dab in the middle of it.

Peter Hale is not what he was expecting. For one thing, he's not in a coma. For another, *werewolves are real*—Stiles is twitching with the need to research until he knows *everything* there is to know about the supernatural.

It's painful to have to wait, but things are happening too fast to process. Laura Hale is dead, Scott's been bitten, and Peter is half-way through a vendetta that Stiles is having a hard time disapproving of. Stiles has disregarded a lot of authority, and broken a lot of rules over the years while trying to keep his dad safe. He has a pretty good idea what he would be capable of in the name of revenge. Apart from Laura—who *left Peter*, broken and defenseless, who ran—all of the murders are easily tied back to the massacre of the Hale family. (Biting Scott is another matter entirely, but Stiles can't help the flare of relief when they realize Scott's asthma is gone.)

Peter may be a monster, but Stiles isn't sure that what he's doing is wrong.

There's a folder hidden in the vent behind Stiles' desk, filled with evidence that could prove the animal attacks are actually murders, but in his pocket he has a list of names and last known addresses. Stiles has spent most of his life searching for clues and solving mysteries. Now he needs to decide if he's going to use those same skills to do the thing that's right, or the one that feels right.

It's not much of a decision.

It's been almost a year since his world turned into a Buffy spin-off, and the best part is that research parties are a thing now. Stiles is in investigatory heaven.

His pack is spread out around the loft with an assortment of materials in front of them. Issac and Erica are on the floor near the tv, Peter is on the stairs, Lydia and Allison have claimed the loveseat, and Boyd is in the kitchen making up another round of snacks. He'll probably end up on

the floor with the other two betas when he gets back.

Scott and Derek are over by the table, leaning over a map of the preserve. Their argument about the best way to track the monster that they still know nothing about has been getting progressively louder for the last twenty minutes.

Stiles has been ignoring them for at least fifteen.

He's claimed his favorite spot, curled up in the corner of Derek's big squishy couch, his back against the arm-rest, legs stretched out across the seats, laptop balanced on his knees. It's getting late and they're running out of research options—despite Stiles threatening Peter into giving him access to the Hale vault. It's an easy threat to make, since Stiles will just break in again if Peter doesn't agree. It turns out magical underground storage units are no match for Stiles' secret passage finding skills.

So now Stiles has turned to slightly less than legal information gathering means. And by slightly less, he means he's remotely accessing the BHPD servers so that he can get ahold of the casefile on the missing hikers.

He lets out a tiny whoop of triumph when he finally gets in, then startles when a large hand lands on his shoulder and squeezes. Stiles stills at the warmth behind him, the breath tickling his neck as the other person reads over his shoulder. A darting glance around the room tells him there's only one werewolf it could be.

"It seems we've got our own budding Phil Cohen. Nicely done," Peter murmurs in his ear.

It takes a second for the reference to bounce around in his head before he can place it. He's only read a few books in the series, but he recognizes the name of Frank and Joe Hardy's hacker friend. He frowns, mind already discarding the comment, and latching onto the fact that *Peter Hale knows the Hardy Boys*. His response slips out almost accidentally. "I'm not a side character."

"No, you're not, are you?" Peter's finger's trail briefly across the back of Stiles' neck as he pulls away and heads over to interrupt Scott and Derek's snarling match. "You're the boy sleuth."

Stiles isn't sure if it's the touch or the words that sends shivers down his spine and warms his cheeks.

It's his eighteenth birthday and Stiles should be celebrating with his friends. Instead he's in a motel room on the edge of town and he's tied to a bed. Not in a fun way either.

The last thing he remembers clearly is unlocking his car in the grocery store parking lot. He thinks he was picking up last minute supplies for the party—his own party, which seems kind of wrong, but Lydia insisted. There was ice cream. It's probably melted by now.

He's sad about that. It was good ice cream. Although, the room is spinning slowly, and it's making him nauseous. Maybe it's better if he takes a rain check on food, and moving, and really just keeping his eyes open. He would love to go back to sleep, but the guy with the gun won't stop monologuing at him. He's loud and it's making Stiles' headache worse.

He blinks, eyelids dragging, as the kidnapper-guy paces past him again. He looks familiar, even

with Stiles' blurry, horizontal view, but Stiles isn't sure if he knows him from pack business, or sleuthing business.

Spittle flies from kidnapper-guy's mouth. He's really worked up an impressive rant. He looks invested. Too bad Stiles can't seem to focus on him or his fast words, he's probably giving his whole plan away.

Stiles sighs and tried to blink back the spots at the edges of his vision. One of these days he's going to have to find a Ned. This kidnapping thing is getting old. Of course, normally he would rescue himself, but he's tired, the ropes around his wrists are tight, and his head is really pounding. Everything'll be fine though. Kidnapper-guy seems to be totally human, and Stiles' Frank and Joe are on their way by now.

"Who the fuck are Frank and Joe?"

Stiles winces at the loud words, and turns his face away from the rank breath. Kidnapper-guy smells like old booze. Definitely not a supernatural problem.

"I believe that's us," Peter drawls from where he's lounging in the doorway, lock-pick in hand. Derek hauls kidnapper-guy away from Stiles and flings him into the wall. His face leaves a bloody smear as he slides to the ground.

Stiles blinks and suddenly Peter is hovering over him, hands on his face, worried blue eyes searching his. "You can't tease me for getting kidnapped by a human. It's my birthday," He tells Peter seriously, words slurring a little with the effort.

The werewolf cuts through the ropes holding him down, and Stiles curls his sore wrists to his chest in relief. Derek is dragging the body from the room, and Stiles vaguely hopes they have a plan for turning kidnapper-guy in. His dad doesn't like it when the wolves take care of human problems their way.

"I wouldn't be so predictable." Peter slides careful fingers through his hair until he finds the lump on the back of his head. He probes at it gently, making a soothing noise when Stiles whimpers as pain jolts through his skull. "Though just to be clear, darling, if you want to experiment with bondage, all you have to do is ask."

Stiles tries to glare at him, but he's pretty sure his eyes are crossing. "I'm legal now. You aren't allowed to tease me like that anymore." Peter seems to have finished his examination of Stiles' injuries, and is helping him sit up. Stiles clings to his shoulders and squeezes his eyes shut against the rush of vertigo. He hears Peter's soft chuckle.

"You are definitely concussed." Strong fingers wrap around the back of his neck, and suddenly the pain is gone, sucked away by werewolf mojo. Stiles lets out a heart-felt moan and melts into Peter's chest, body going loose, mind floaty.

"Oh my god, you're my favorite," he mutters, nuzzling against soft cotton. "Way more clever than Ned. Hotter too."

He's falling asleep now that he's safe, and he feels, more than hears, Peter hum as strong arms cradle him close. "Is that right?" Peter sounds ridiculously smug, and Stiles is too comfortable to care.

He does spend the next few days wondering if he imagined the press of Peter's lips, warm and dry against his temple.

His friends redo his birthday the next week, once he can tolerate noise and light without wincing. This time he has a ride to and from the party. Because if Peter wants to play werewolf-bodyguard, then who is Stiles to argue? Spending more time with his Frank is not a hardship.

It's a few weeks after the "birthday incident", and Stiles is once again riding the giddy adrenaline high of a successful case as he exits the sheriff station. The bad guy is behind bars, there's a recorded confession on his dad's desk, and best of all, the priceless inheritance has been returned to its rightful owner, and the young woman is going to be able to keep her Grandmother's house. He's already daydreaming about his celebratory Oreo milkshake.

Stiles turns around with a grin to ask Peter—who's still moonlighting as his shadow—if he wants to join him, and startles as he's crowded toward the side of the Jeep, back connecting against the driver's door with a thump.

Peter's hands are tight on his shoulders, his expression tense, blue eyes narrow and preternaturally bright. Stiles realizes his heart is beating faster than it does when someone has a gun to his head. "Peter, what—?"

"How am I supposed to back you up, if you don't signal me when things go wrong?" Peter bites out, a muscle in his jaw jumping as he grits his teeth.

Stiles blinks at him dumbly, mind stalling as he's distracted by hands, heat, and firm muscle hovering so close. "But, nothing went wrong. He was confessing." He squirms a little, fighting the urge to melt into Peter's warmth, or bear his throat and invite the wolf closer.

"He was pointing a gun at you!" Peter shakes him a little, frustration furrowing a line between his eyebrows. "At what point does that become a problem?"

Stiles lets himself be moved, hands coming up to brace against Peter's ribs for stability. "He wasn't going to shoot me, he was telling me his tragic backstory. What kind of bad guy shoots the audience in the middle of their monologue?"

"You—" Peter's shoulders slump and he leans in, pressing their foreheads together with an exasperated groan. "You're infuriating. How are you so brilliant, and so horribly reckless at the same time?"

Stiles feels his lips twitch up and tilts his head to rub noses in a gentle nuzzle. "You think I'm brilliant?"

"Yes. That's the take-away here." Peter sounds resigned, behind the scathing sarcasm.

"Were you worried about me, creeperwolf?"

Peter pulls back, eyes flashing, to give Stiles the full force of his raised eyebrow and icy glare.

Stiles smiles at him, warm pleasure curling in his belly at the concern. “I’m fine. I knew what I was doing. And we solved the case, didn’t we?”

Peter’s eyes flick to his mouth, then back up again, staring at him with the kind of focus usually reserved for rare books and magical artifacts. His eyes narrow further.

Suddenly, Stiles’ heart feels like it’s trying to escape his chest, because that look isn’t anger, or frustration. It’s want. Stiles’ breath stutters and heat rushes to his cheeks as he takes in the man in front of him. Peter wants him. And Stiles knows that Peter is seeing the same desire reflected back in his own expression. He wets his lips, voice coming out more hesitant than he expects. “Peter?”

Peter releases his shoulders and moves to cradle his face, confidently angling Stiles’ chin higher as he closes the distance between them.

The kiss starts out soft, just a long, gentle press of warm lips that sends shivers down Stiles’ spine. When Stiles opens his mouth, eager tongue sneaking out to taste, it deepens rapidly.

The enthusiastic response makes Peter groan and he steps closer, hips pressing Stiles against the side of the jeep as he fits them together like puzzle pieces. Stiles’ keeps him there with a tight grip on his shirt and melts, losing himself in the kiss.

It takes them a long time—and Stiles’ dad clearing his throat more than once—to remember that the parking lot of the sheriff’s station is probably not the ideal place for this.

Stiles is nineteen and he really should finish packing. It’s nearly 2am and they’re leaving bright and early to make the drive down to Berkeley. He knows he doesn’t have to pack everything, he’s going to be back in three short months for Thanksgiving, but he started sifting through the boxes under his bed, and now he’s caught somewhere between a sneezing fit and what he refuses to admit might be tears.

He flops back onto the floor and rubs at his eyes, trying to will the stinging away. He’s got his last Nancy Drew Mystery, yellowed and creased but never read, clasped loosely to his chest. He hadn’t forgotten it, but between werewolves and kanima, Alpha packs and Darachs—not to mention all the kidnapping—it’s been a busy few years.

“I swear Stiles, these people get kidnapped almost as often as you do.”

Stiles looks up at Peter, lounging on his bed, feet bare and ankles crossed, but otherwise still dressed despite the late hour. He’s reading #55, *The Mystery of Crocodile Island*, and Stiles has to smile at his annoyed sneer.

“Like your beloved Hardy Boys are any better at keeping themselves out of trouble.”

“Frank is perfectly capable of it. It’s Joe that’s the problem.”

“If you say so.” Stiles rolls to his knees, then climbs up on the bed to collapse face down with a groan, sprawled sideways across Peter’s legs. He lets his book fall on the mattress next to his head.

Peter, used to Stiles’ melodramatic flailing, just drops a hand down and starts running fingers through his hair.

Stiles' voice is muffled by the bedspread. "I'd rather be kidnapped than finish packing."

Peter's hand curls into a fist and tugs, hard enough to make Stiles' breath catch. Flailing out with one hand, Stiles raps his knuckles quickly against the wooden nightstand. "Sorry, sorry. No jinxes." He melts when Peter resumes his petting.

"I told you, you didn't need to pack anything."

"And *I* said I'm living in the dorms like a normal freshman for at least a semester."

Peter huffs in response, then puts on his best woe-is-me voice. "Sex on a single bed again. I definitely don't miss that particular right-of-passage."

"What if I want all the rights-of-passage?"

"Eight a.m. classes, caffeine fueled all-nighters, hoarding laundry quarters, living off of Ramen Noodles, and drunken hookups?"

Stiles laughs, "Yes. All of those."

Peter grips Stiles under the arms and effortlessly hauls him up, tucking him against his side. "I suppose I'm willing to indulge you," He drops a lingering kiss on Stiles' lips, and Stiles smiles into it. "But I refuse to eat salted cardboard. You're on your own if you want to live on packaged noodles."

"But the drunken hook-ups are fine? You won't be upset if I sleep with a frat-bro?"

"Sweetheart, for a human teenager, you're terrifyingly monogamous. If you fucked a fraternity boy, I would check you for mind-control spells."

"Ok, that's fair, I'd check me for spells too." Flattered despite himself, Stiles shifts around and drapes his legs over Peter's, curling closer. "But how about if I wanna get wasted and hook-up with a hot, older werewolf?"

He can hear the smirk in Peter's voice. "I think I could handle that. You're a rather cute drunk, even if you did choose Cal over Stanford."

Stiles makes a face to hide the grin that won't quit, and rests his head on Peter's shoulder. "Snob."

"It's called having standards." Peter reaches down and snags the book Stiles left on the bed. "I haven't seen this one before."

Stiles fidgets and sighs, good humor fading a little. "It's the last one my mom bought. I haven't read it." He reaches out, fingertips brushing the cover. Peter hugs him closer and rubs a hand up and down his back. "I don't know why. It's not like it will change anything. It's not even the ending really."

There's a long, comfortable silence, broken only by the low hum of the air conditioning, and the rise and fall of their breathing. Peter's voice is measured, calm when he speaks again.

"I was reading Harry Potter to Derek's little brother, before the fire."

Stiles' breath catches but he quickly forces it even again. Peter rarely brings up the family he lost, and it feels like a gift every time he tells Stiles a little piece of their history.

"We'd just finished *Order of the Phoenix*. He was so excited for *Half-Blood Prince*." He turns the

Nancy Drew book over in his hands but doesn't really seem to be seeing it. "I never finished them."

Stiles tucks his face against Peter's throat, breathing him in and offering comfort, as close as a human can get to scenting. "Maybe we could read them together someday?" It comes out soft and he chews on his lip, waiting for Peter to say no, that he's not ready.

Peter is quiet for a while, then he shifts and hands Stiles his book. "Why don't we start with this one?"

Stiles takes it from him, folds his fingers over the softly yellowing binding and pulls it close, because that sounds perfect.

He wiggles until he's reclining against Peter's chest, Peter's arms wrapped around him, hand secure and protective on his hip, warm breath stirring his hair. He has a flash of memory, of curling up next to his mom as they read together.

She would be happy for him, he thinks. She would say that this, he and Peter together, reading this last book at the start of something new, is exactly how it should be.

Stiles opens to the title page and starts to read aloud, lips twitching up into a grin.

"#175, *Werewolf in a Winter Wonderland*. Chapter One, 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?'"

End Notes

I decided to use the details of the original Nancy Drew books from the 1930s, instead of the 1959 updates, so Stiles' Nancy is 16, her mother died when she was 10, and her car is a powder-blue, two-seater roadster.

The timeline is based off of canon, so Stiles was born in 1994. The last Nancy Drew Mystery was published in November 2003. His mom dies in early 2004. I tried so hard to keep this "historically accurate". Did you know Google, as a verb, was the "most useful word" of 2002?

Fun fact #1: When I was about ten Nancy Drew/Ned Nickerson was my first ship. As I got older I realized Ned was kind of boring, and I much preferred the idea of her dating Frank Hardy.

Fun Fact #2: Peter was not supposed to be in this story. It was supposed to end pre-series. But Peter does what he wants.

I made a Tumblr! [Come say "Hi"!](#)

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