Oh, What a Tangled Web We Weave

by Siddal

Summary

The Avengers are back together, civil and fighting crime, but the Secretary of State isn’t having any of it unless it’s on his terms. He’s got just the thing to keep the costumed freaks in line. Proof of an inappropriate relationship between Tony Stark and his protégé.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
The Avengers gather in a conference room, the same room that had once been witness to their falling out. After saving the world again and the reconciliation that followed, the team had been trying to settle back into the old Avengers facility. But since that fateful meeting all those years ago, the conference room had been neglected by all members.

Now, all Avengers, active and otherwise, are invited to a meeting with the man that drove the wedge among them to begin with.

“What does he want this time?” Sam grumbles.

“The same thing he wanted last time, I’d imagine.” Says Natasha.

“Now, I get why he wants it and I know how dangerous this statement is, but how does he expect to enforce this exactly?” says Tony with a scoff.

“Reigning us in? I know I was for it before but they didn’t exactly think through how it was going to work. Cap was right, the limitations and the procedures took too long. There were too many people in the kitchen to get anything done. If he wants control he needs to give some up.” Said Rhodes.

“Well, that would be the day. We all know oversight isn’t Ross’ sole concern.” Clint pipes in.

“He’s not exactly a fan of our sort.” Bruce grumbles.

“The Accords was obviously railroaded by Ross. Maybe he has something new. After everything that’s happened, not everyone in the UN can still think the Accords as they originally were are a good idea.” Wanda says optimistically.

“If this is different,” Bucky starts and the rest turn towards him “would Ross still be the one at the helm?”

“We’ll soon find out. Secretary Ross is arriving.” Vision announces.

The Avengers settled in their seats and awaited the arrival of their unwanted guest. There is a knock at the door and it opens to reveal Maria Hill ushering in the Secretary of State, two of his armed guards and a sheepish young man who looks to be an assistant.

“Good afternoon gentlemen, ladies.” Thunderbolt Ross smiled at the visibly irritable superhumans before him.

“We all know why we’re here. We all know what happened the first time we did this so, let’s just get straight to it.” And like before, Ross hands them a document just as thick as the one he dropped before.

The team proceeds to riffl through the document as Ross continues.

“Miss Maximoff, along with officially being reinstated as a member of the Avengers will be granted citizenship. Sargent Barnes’ honors will be returned, full veteran benefits and if the team so desires, he can be made a member of the Avengers as well, on probation and with regular psychiatric
evaluations of course. Pardons all around.” Says Ross, arms wide open.

“And the change in procedure?” asks Steve to which Ross just smiles.

“So there aren’t any changes. Just party favors?” Tony scoffs.

“There are some small changes but you can’t expect that the world would be satisfied with accountability after the fact and charitable donations that only soothe your own guilt.” Ross looks at Tony pointedly.

“We don’t need a total overhaul, just a change in procedure based on how effective the team has been under the new regulation. The team can’t function under the same circumstances as before.” Cap argues.

“Think long and hard about your choices, gentlemen.” Ross say menacingly.

“Or what? We retire? And who would you call for the next global invasion?” asks Natasha.

“Or those party favors are off the table. Half the team are once again made into fugitives and the rest follows if they go back into action without signing the agreement.” Ross reaches out to his assistant, who’d been fiddling around with the A/V system since their arrival, who hands him a remote.

“Oh and this goes public.” A silent video plays on the screen which gets everyone’s attention.

The screen shows an alley. Two arguing men walk into the alley, one of them is obviously Tony and the other, only Rhodey seemed to recognize.

Rhodey turn towards a pale Tony who asks “What is this?”

The men on the screen seem to reconcile and kiss. The team gasp quietly, trying to contain their shock. The kiss is familiar, not something done in the heat of the moment but done to reassure.

The video is replaced by an image of an ID card.

“Peter Benjamin Parker, 19 years old. Originally a resident of Queens, New York. A beneficiary of the September Foundation. Biology major at MIT. A bright young man. I’m sure you could try to spin the story. Tell the media the affair started very recently, not until he was of the age of consent. Hard sell though since you’ve known him a while. Came into your life at a very interesting time too didn’t he? And that height. That build. He kinda reminds me of that spider fellow you folks work with sometimes.”

“Bastard.” Tony says under his breath.

“See, if you want to keep the identity of your little protégé a secret, preserve his modesty as it were, I’m going to need at least your signature on this thing, Stark. After all, you could all retire but I don’t think Spiderman over here is going to do the same anytime soon.

You have the week, and I suggest you take all that time and think long and hard about how you want to proceed. Because trust me Stark, there’s more where that came from. And the rest…well someone from my team described it best. He said you ‘stuffed that kid like a turkey’.” says Ross with a laugh.

The screen is turned off and Ross proceeds to leave with his entourage.

Maria and the team are all staring a Tony who looks like he’s going to be sick.
“I have to go.” Tony moves to get up but Maria stops him.

“You can’t go to him.”

“What?”

“You can’t be seen with him.”

“He said we had a week.” says Tony, not thinking entirely rationally.

“A week I’m sure he will be surveilling. If he has anything else on you, we have to acquire it and make sure nothing on there is illegal. And we certainly can’t be giving him more ammunition.” says Maria in a calm but firm voice. "We need to make sure none of you are compromised. Popular opinion will be more difficult to combat but we need to make sure he has nothing to convict you with first.”

“Tony…” Rhodey reaches out to him.

“I’m sorry. This is my fault. Again!” Tony squeezes his eyes shut in frustration.

“It’s not.” says Steve.

“He’s got us by the balls because of my indiscretion!” Tony shouts.

“It’s not your fault that Ross plays dirty. And he was reeling us in with those ‘party favors’ to begin with.” says Natasha.

“They’re taking their time, but I’m sure they’re itching to round us all up. Your indiscretion isn’t the only thing they’re holding over us. Technically, if we don’t take the deal, we are still fugitives, they’re just looking for ways to get the rest of us. This isn’t your fault, we’ve all had our missteps.” Steve insists.

“Missteps? We’re not going to address the fact that I’m having an affair with a teenager?” Tony asks with outrage.

“Maybe don’t say it that way to the press.” Maria says under her breath.

“I don’t have to say anything. I know how it’ll look. He’s young, he’s smart and he’s broke. He’s officially speaking, a beneficiary of my foundation!”

“One question.” Sam pipes in.

“Did I take advantage? Might as well have.” Tony continues to speak in his loud panicked voice.

“Not what I was going to ask but, is that kid…guy really Spiderman?”

“Yes.” Tony sighs. "Yet another thing at risk here. The world can’t know he’s Spiderman.”

“We should just go underground again. Take everyone this time.” Clint grumbles.

“Back to Wakanda? We go back there we’re putting T’challa’s people at risk.” says Steve.

“Somewhere else then. Bring the kid even…guy…man.” Clint stumbles.

“He’s not like us. He has a life out there, friends, and family.” says Tony.
Maria tries to steer the conversation back to the issue at hand.

“Hard question but it’s my job to ask. How old was he when this began?”

“Seventeen.”

“Well, that’s the age of consent in our favor.”

“It wasn’t intentional.” says Tony.

“Maybe so but at least, if Ross does have any explicit footage like he implied, their time stamps would be to our advantage, unless they’ve been doctored but even tampering of the sort can be proven.” Nat tries to reassure.

“None of it was intentional.” Tony continues, shaking his head.

“Tip for you.” Maria places a hand Tony's shoulder. "If this does goes public, you can’t appear as guilty as you do now. You need to appear like you understand the unusual nature of the affair but you need to also appear like you know you’re in the right and the relationship was consensual from the start, you both do.”

“He can’t go public.” Tony insists.

“But there is a chance he will have to and along with that chance is the chance that the world will put two and two together and find out he’s Spiderman. You need to be ready for that.”

“Then I need to contact him. I can’t blind side him with this.”

“I’ll get you a secure line.” says Maria.

“I need to see him.” Tony says firmly.

Maria nods and says “I’ll see what I can do. For the rest of you, Ross is playing dirty. We need to plead our case. Doing that, we might just have to play dirty back.”

“We need to get rid of Ross.” says Clint who then back tracks after a pointed look from Maria. "...legally.”

“In the meantime, it’s better if everyone stays in the compound.” says Maria.

“So we’re all in one place when they finally decide to arrest us?” asks Sam.

“So we’re all in one place when we decide to fly off to some secret island instead.” Maria humors him.

“Seriously considering that.” Sam calls after her as she leaves the room.

“Tony.” Rhodey reaches out to his friend once more.

“I’m sorry.”

“Stop apologizing. Maria’s right, if this goes public, you can’t look this guilty.” says Rhodey.

“Hard to do when you are guilty.” Tony admits.

“You care about him.” says Rhodes.
“I shouldn’t. Not like this.” Tony shakes his head shamefully.

“But you do. Why didn’t you ever say anything to us?” asks Rhodes.

“We were a mess. Even now, none of us talk like we used to.”

“It’ll take time Tony but we are here.” says Steve.

“I was a mess. Even before the Accords. The guilt. Ultron. The fear of what was coming. My break up with Pepper. It was all just too much. I know you all try not to mention the drinking but it got really bad back then. And then this kid came along. And yes you can call him that, it drives him up the wall, it’s hilarious.” Tony chuckles grimly.

“That’s why I’m guilty. On top of everything, I dropped all this baggage on this kid.”

“You shouldn’t feel guilty for needing someone, Tony. We left. You needed someone.” says Steve.

“And it feels like I went into this just because I needed him.”

“Does it feel like that or do you think it just looks like that. Because you don’t seem like you’re just leeching off of this kid, Tony.” says Rhodes.

"Do you love him?" Rhodes continues. "You wouldn't risk this much otherwise."

Tony nods before saying "Yes."

Chapter End Notes

Just working through some writers block and just fell down this Tony/Peter ship hole. Not sure where this should go. Maybe they should just fly off to a secret island. Maybe I should get really explicit with Ross' collection of Tony/Peter footage. That has some PWP potential.
Tony got out of the taxi onto a familiar campus. He’s dressed in something more casual than his usual getup. He puts on some sunglasses and walks towards the spot he and Peter had agreed upon after he’d received a text from the kid saying “We need to talk. Urgent.”

He saw Peter approach. He allowed the young man to enter the alley before him. Once there himself, he saw Peter pacing nervously up and down the alley.

“What is this about, kid?” Tony asks.

“Aunt May knows.” Peter answers with a nervous timbre to his voice.

Tony turns away for a second to scoff. This isn’t the first time Peter had concerns regarding his secret keeping capabilities.

Tony grabs him by the shoulder to calm him and stop his nervous motions.

“No, she doesn’t.”

“Yes she does!” Peter insists.

“Peter, you’re being paranoid.” Tony puts his other hand on his cheek.

“I'm not being paranoid! And I haven't even told you what she knows.”

“She knows nothing.” Tony insists back.

“Stop saying that!” Peter shrugs off Tony’s hands. “She was asking weird questions when I left this weekend.”

“Well she can’t know about your arachnid...persuasion because we've established the level of freak-out that would result in and that hasn't happened. If it's the other thing, well she could either call the cops on me or be silently plotting my demise, but she seemed to be fine when I last flirted with her.”

“What!” Peter gives him a warning look “You flirted...”

“Relax. It was this thing I did in denial of...us.” Tony cuts him off. “I just kept at it because it seemed like a good misdirect.”

“You realize how weird that is right?” Peter begins a litany of worst case scenarios. “What if she likes you? How do you think she'd feel then, when she finds out about us?”

“Relax, kid. She's not taking it seriously. Adults flirt. It doesn't mean anything.” Says Tony as he holds Peter by his shoulders.

“You seriously don't want to get into the age thing right now!”

Peter gives a pointed look but soon relaxes into Tony’s hold.

Tony pulls him in closer into his comforting embrace and says “Peter, we're fine. She doesn't
Peter reaches up to him, taking hold of the back of his head and Tony meets him halfway with a kiss.

The team have since left the conference room and were now sitting around, dejected in the living room. Tony walks out into the veranda and Rhodey follows close behind.

Tony slumps over on the railing, resting his head on his arms. He sighs loudly as Rhodes grips his shoulder in an attempt to reassure him.

“You okay?” asks Rhodey.

“Always.” Tony says flippantly, guards back up after the short lapse from the recent shock.

“Tony.” Rhodey urges him on.

“Why are you being nice?” asked Tony.

“You’re my best friend, Tony.” Rhodey says matter-of-factly.

“All the more reason for you to be all scoldy right now.”

“Scoldy?”

“Geniuses make up words all the time. Some even make it into dictionaries.”

Rhodey steers them back into the conversation before Tony goes off into a tangent.

“Alright Tony, I’m not being ‘scoldy’ right now, because for a minute there I thought you were about to have an…” Rhodey hesitates.

“An attack. Say it. It’s not a trigger word.” Tony insists irritably.

“Yeah, anyway, you probably already know I don’t approve. And we all just figured out you’re pretty conflicted on the matter yourself. But we also know you love the kid and legally speaking you’re both adults. Whatever this is, people can judge you all they want, the team can be uncomfortable about it for however long, but we can’t stop you from being together. And right now, the team including Spider-man, have a lot more pressing matters to be worried about. So all I really want from you right now is for you to tell me if you’re really okay.”

Tony takes a moment and a breath before saying “Yeah. I’m okay.”

“Anything else you want to tell me?”

Tony ponders for a minute, Rhodey waiting patiently. Finally, he can talk about this with his oldest friend. Not really knowing where to start, he just goes with his gut.

“It was weird…” he blurs out “…in the beginning. First time we met, his aunt was there and I flirted with her. And for so long I thought he looked at me like a father figure because he didn’t have a dad and he just lost his uncle. Oh god, even that would have been a disaster. Can you imagine me as a ‘role model’?”

Rhodey opens his mouth with a reply but Tony cuts him off.
“Don’t answer that.”

Tony continues on to say “And then when they happened, I just shrugged off the looks because I thought it was just a crush.”

After a moment, Tony wanders off into another tangent.

“He’s brilliant. I thought I could just keep admiring him and mentoring him and nothing would happen but he’s so much more than his brain and his powers. He’s so much more…so much better than me.”

“Pepper was like that.” Tony continues "Patient. Like she could handle all my shit and not take any of my shit at the same time. I’m gonna screw this up like I did with her.”

“Don’t say that.” says Rhodey, shaking his head.

“But haven’t I already screwed it up? He’s got the Secretary of State after him because of me!”

“You’re Tony Stark. Your life will always have complications. You’ll probably make a lot more big mistakes in the future and people can judge you for them all they want, but being Tony Stark also allows you to do more good than a whole lot of them. This kid chose this life, long before you came along.”

“It was six months in…”

“Whatever. But if you broke up today, even stopped mentoring him, would he stop being Spider-man? Would Ross not go after him if the two of you never happened at all?” asks Rhodey.

“Probably not.” Tony admits.

“It’s not your fault. Ross is just an asshole.”

“Okay. Plan A was a bust. We have no record of the meeting.” Says Maria Hill calls from inside.

“What do you mean we have no...Friday!” Tony calls for his virtual assistant as he and Rhodey comes back from the veranda.

“Sorry boss. But it seems Secretary Ross's assistant may have used a device to disable my surveillance capabilities in the conference room.” Replied the disembodied voice.

“So he could deny everything he just did to threaten us? By his account of this meeting, he'll probably be the most civil and diplomatic politician that ever existed.” Clint piped in.

“Of course the bastard’s gonna cover his ass.” Sam mumbles.

“Don’t waste your energy. This probably isn’t going to be the last obstacle we encounter from Ross.” Says Steve.

“I have a few other avenues to explore. If you guys have any ideas, tell me first. If we come charging in, Ross might just end up with more ammunition against us.” Maria warns the team.

“But the proposal stands? We want a representative on the panel and have a shorter processing time?” Rhodey asks the team.
“How about we just ask for old Thunderbolt Ross’ resignation.” Bruce suggests jokingly.

“How about we ask for his head.” Nat adds.

As the team bounces suggestions back and forth, Tony gets up from his seat and takes Maria aside.

“Hey, you think I can call him now?”

Maria sighs sympathetically and says “I was thinking I’d just tell you once we get a viable plan of getting him here unseen. Calling ahead might just worry him.”

Tony considers the suggestion for a moment then nods.

“He’ll swing over here himself if I called. Okay. That sounds…okay.”

Maria puts a comforting hand on his shoulder and says “We’re going to be fine, boss.”

Chapter End Notes

More to come...
More pep talks. More team bonding. More Peter!
It’s been three days since the meeting with Ross. Three days of looking into Ross’ team for weaknesses; looking into extraction plans for both the footage Ross said he had and for Peter. Both plans, Maria insisted, will not involve any Avengers just to be safe.

For three days Tony has been stuck in his head, sick with guilt and worry despite his team’s attempts to reassure him. The Avengers have also been trying to get him out of his dark train of thought with tech inquiries, plans for their escape and playful suggestions concerning Ross’ demise.

Today, Steve decides to try a different approach.

“Hey.”

Steve finds Tony in the lab tinkering with one of his suit’s greaves.

“Hey.” Tony greets him back without taking his eyes off of his work.

Steve shoves his hands into his pockets, resigning himself to the awkward and only opener he could think of.

“I don’t know if you know this but I was 21 when I became this.” Says Steve.

“I do know that.” Tony replies matter-of-factly “You forget who my father is?”

They both look at each other not knowing how to proceed for a second.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean…” Tony apologizes for the offhanded comment.

“It’s fine.” Steve insists and proceeds with his original plan.

“I was pretty young when it happened. I didn’t feel young though. I lost my parents in my teens. I was sickly. I was poor. I didn’t feel young.”

Tony slumps over comically, seeing right through Steve’s script.

“And you’re New Yorker. I get it. You’re a lot like, Peter.” Tony says with a disheartened tone.

“Spotted that a mile away didn’t you?” says Steve but goes on anyway. “All I’m saying is, on many occasions, what you have with Peter could be wrong. And our world could be against it on most of those occasions with good reason.”

Tony goes off on a rant. He’d expected, that despite the man’s initial supportiveness that this sort of reprimand from the virtuous Steve Rogers would come eventually.

“Don’t you think I’ve told myself all of this before? Yes, I’m a lot older than him. Yes, I’ve been
mentally unstable in the past. Yes, financially, he’s not in the best place and being in a relationship with me is murky as all hell. Just buying him lunch makes me uncomfortable sometimes. I fought this. I tried to end this. But it won’t go away. He won’t go away.”

Steve continues on.

“Tony, I came from a time when this sort of relationship was condemned when it went bad and shrugged off when it seemed okay on the surface. And obviously, I’m not referring to homosexuality. But then of course, in time, underneath the surface a lot of them were not okay at all. Now, the world’s been more careful since. But then being careful is always advisable if you don’t know what’s going on.”

Then Steve surprises him.

“Tony, I know you. We disagree on many things, but I know you’d never intentionally hurt Peter. And I know that Peter can handle himself…physically anyway. Emotionally, I know you’re a lot like Peter too. You’ve lost people too. Yes, you’ve lived a life of luxury but I can imagine on many occasions you still felt alone and helpless.”

“I was young when the war happened but by then I had an idea of what love is. Love was mourning my parents. Love was worrying if I’ll ever see Bucky again after he left for the war. Love was the kinship, trust, respect and longing I had for Peggy.”

Steve put a reassuring hand on Tony’s shoulder.

“Peter is a young man. But he’s no ordinary young man. Being in this kind of life, I’d imagine he’s also been through a lot. Learned a lot. Seen a lot. He’s a young man but he is a man. And I think he did well in choosing you. Maybe, the two of you are just what each other needs. And there’s nothing wrong with needing someone.”

And with that, Steve just walks away, hoping that what his said helped even in the littlest of ways.

Then Tony called after him.

“Nice speech, Cap!”

Peter walked into the lab cautiously, looking for Tony.

“Mr. Stark?” He call and finds the old man hunched over some schematics.

“Are you okay, Mr. Stark?” he asks.

“Hmm...What?...I'm fine.” Tony answers, startled out of his reverie.

“You don't look fine.” Says Peter, seeing the dark circles around the older man’s bloodshot eyes. “You look like you haven't slept.”

“I haven't. I'm working on the cloaking for the new Iron Man suit. You'll be in college soon enough. Then you'll realize, not sleeping isn't that big a deal.” Tony says flippantly.

“I don't have to be in college to know about all-nighters Mr. Stark. I go to a charter school and also 'crime doesn't sleep'.” Peter says with a slight smile before dropping his backpack at his desk and proceeding cautiously.
“This doesn’t just look like an all-nighter, though.”

“It’s only been…” Tony counts the hours in his head but abandons the pursuit and settles for a “I’ll be fine.”

“But that means you’re not fine now.” Says Peter.

Friday then chimes in saying “You’ve been awake 42 hours and 27 minutes, boss.”

“That’s nothing.” Tony dismisses.

“Is the Coronel Rhodes around?” asks Peter as he walks towards Tony for a closer look.

“What? You gonna tell on me?” Tony asks with a chuckle.

“Mr. Stark, I know we haven’t known each other long and we mostly just talk shop...superhero shop, but I think of you as something of a mentor in more than just the hero stuff or the tech stuff.” Peter says with a fretful look in his eyes.


“I know you haven’t been in the best place lately, with what happened with the Avengers and I’m sure there are other reasons.”

Tony frowns, putting his guard up.

“I can only imagine how difficult it all is but...I’m not one with a lot of life experiences but I do care...a lot about you.” Says Peter.

Tony sighs, looking at Peter with sympathy.

“Look Parker, I know I’ve helped you and you’ve helped me but...This is all I can be to you.”

Peter is taken aback.

“What?”

“You don’t have to be embarrassed. We’ve been through a lot together. I get it. But we can’t…”

“What? No!” Peter cut him off. “This isn’t…I’m not…”

“Look kid, I’m not just being all cavalier here, but I can see how you look at me. I’ve seen it before and…”

“NO!” Peter shouts, backing away from Tony.

“I...I don’t....” Peter struggles to form words, struggles to hold back tears clearly gathering in his eyes.

He grabs his bag and says “I gotta go.”

“Parker!” Tony calls after him.

He dashes towards the door only turn back to face Tony.

“It doesn’t have to be me but you need help from someone. I’m just...worried.”
And he’s gone.

Peter opens his bedroom door to find Tony sitting on his bed, fiddling with the bits and bobs of his current project.

“What are you doing here?” asks Peter, trying to keep calm.

“It’s been weeks, Parker. And you came over that day for the new suit so…” Tony lifts up a paper bag for him to see.

“Did give me time to work on it a bit longer though.” Tony continues with a smile.

Not knowing what else to say, Peter decides to apologize.

“I’m sorry about…”

“What? Walking out or because I was right?” Tony interrupts but smiles at him reassuringly.

“I get that you we’re ashamed but I’m not giving up on you because of a crush, Parker.”

Peter turns away, unable to stop the tear this time around.

“Hey, don’t cry on me kid.”

“I’m not!” He tries to compose himself “And I’m not a kid.”

“Look, I get it. I’ve told you, I understand. But you realize that that can’t happen, right?” Tony explains apologetically.

In a fit of boldness or foolhardiness, Peter asks “Why?”

“Peter, this will pass.” Tony says evasively, looking away from Peter’s now steely gaze.

“No, answer me! Why?” Peter insists.

“You’re sixteen, Peter.” Tony replies, with a tone akin to surrender.

“I can wait a few months.” Peter suggests, a smile on lips but tears in his eyes.

Tony shakes his head.

“You understand that’s not what this is about, right? Age, it’s different for everyone. But you can see what it’s done to me though, haven’t you? You’ve said it yourself. I need help. I’m not right up here.”

Tony jabs a finger on his temple.

Peter rushes forward, pulling the offensive hand away from Tony’s head and draws it to his chest as he sits beside him on the bed.

“I’m just a big old fuck up.” Tony chuckles darkly.

“I also said it doesn’t have to be me. But that also means that it can be me. You’re not an old fuck up. You’re fucked up but not beyond repair. You’ve fixed me well enough.” Peter looks into his eyes
earnestly.

“Peter…” Tony tries to reason with the younger man but doesn’t manage to form any other words.

“You’re Tony Stark!” Peter announces, standing up from the bed and waving his arms about in the expressive way he does.

“Everyone’s heard about your baggage. Everyone made their assumptions long ago. But look at you. You’re the Iron Man. You’re a hero. You’re a genius. And you care. This was hero-worship when I was like 12.”

“You mean 4 years ago.” Tony mumbles but it does not deter Peter.

“I’ve seen you fuck up. I’ve seen your regret as much as you try to hide it. And I’ve seen you get back up. Maybe it is age. Maybe the problems are just worse than before. But you will get back up eventually. And I want to help because, goddamn it, I’m in love with you!”

Shocked by his own declaration, Peter covers his mouth with his hands, as if the act would allow him to take those last words back. He stands before Tony with eyes wide open, frozen in place; afraid any further movement from him would make him look more like a confused and desperate teenager. Like one twitch of the fingers over his mouth would strip the most profound and honest words he ever spoke of all its credibility.

Tony is stunned as well, which doesn’t help Peter’s nerves at all.

He said it wrong he thinks. It’s the wrong time. The wrong place. The wrong tone of voice. He’s finally scare Tony away. Now, he’s nothing more than another one of his obsessive fans.

But the shock in Tony’s eyes soften into sympathy.

No.

It’s something else. There’s a dazed desperation in his eyes as he walks towards Peter. He pulls away Peter’s hands from his face. They’re wet from the tears that had streamed down over them.

Tony wipes away the tears that remain on the younger man’s cheeks.

Peter chokes out the words “Mr. Stark.”

Tony cradles Peter’s nape in his palm.

“I’ve told you a million times, kid. It’s Tony.”

The kiss is wet from fresh tears. It is delicate as air, hesitant despite the thirst. It’s Peter’s hands reaching up into his hair, the only permission Tony needs to take it further.

He slowly pries Peter’s lips open with his own, reaching in with just the tip of his tongue. He doesn’t go further than that, just a taste of the wine that he still fears wasn’t meant to be poured out for him.

Peter is shy. But just when he musters up some nerve, just as his hands in Tony’s hair tightens, Tony pulls away, leaving him gasping for more.

Feeling the weight of his actions, Tony backs away and sits back down on the bed.

Peter has an urge to sit back on the bed beside him but the somber look on Tony’s face gives him pause, as does the hardness in his trousers that he’s finding difficult to hide while standing.
He eventually does sit with Tony, just so he could cross his legs delicately.

“You don’t have to be shy about that. I’ve got my own problems to take care of.” Tony says gruffly, looking more resigned than embarrassed compared to Peter who is now sporting a complexion similar to a ripe tomato.

Tony reaches over for Peter’s hand and squeezes it affectionately.

“I just don’t think it’s a good idea for us to…take care of it together.”

Peter nods.

“It’s a good thing I made sure your aunt wasn’t around when I came over. Fuck! That sounds creepy as hell.”

They share a quiet laugh for a moment before Tony stands up from the bed. He straightens his clothes, pats down his hair and clears his throat.

He walks towards the door but just before he leaves, he turns back to give Peter a reassuring smile and say “Listen, I gotta go. Just, call me about how you like the suit…or anything else, really. Take care of yourself out there, Peter.”
Chapter 4

Natasha wasn’t one for feelings. At least, so everyone thought. It’s not something she shares freely, not even to those closest to her; but those closest don’t usually need a conversation to know how she feels. They know when she needs them and when she needs to be alone; and that’s enough.

Tony is in a strange position. There was a trust and respect, an understanding between them, a mutual admiration; but now she’s unsure where all of it stands. Apart from Clint and Barnes, she’d known him the longest among the team; and she was the first among the team he’d ever worked with. She understands how his head works now but he doesn’t know her as well. He would trust her with his life but not his secrets.

In the days preceding the team falling apart, lines were drawn and lines were crossed, but they knew where everyone stood. They were all angry, hurt and confused but they never hated. But it’s one thing to know who you’re up against and another thing all together for someone who you thought had your back to turn on you right in the middle of a fight; even for the best of reasons.

“Hey.” Says Natasha as she approached Tony who was sitting at the bar.

“How are you holding up?” Nat asks.

Tony takes a sip of his scotch and says “Great. I’m at number 16, I believe.”

Nat frowns.

“Tony, I don’t think…”

“Don’t worry.” Tony waves, dismissing her concerns. “The drink is number two. 16 is the number of scenarios I’ve come up with for dear old Thunderbolt Ross’ demise. From my perspective, I’ve been practicing some restraint.”

Natasha smirks before asking “This seat taken?”

“You’re welcome to it.” Tony smiles back.

Not one for pretense outside of a job, Nat goes straight to the point.

“So where are we now, Stark?”

“I’m at three and you’re at one. Unless you’ve had a liquid breakfast.” Says Tony as he pours them both a drink.

They share a quiet snicker.

“I don’t know.” Tony replies seriously. “I’ve done a lot.”

“We all have. With how it all turned out, I’d do it again. But I wish I never hurt you.”

Tony turns to her with a frown.

“Are you apologizing?”
“Is that so unthinkable?”

“We’re passed that. I don’t need apologies from anyone, though I’ve received a few.” Tony scoffs before he continues. “During… we were all running on emotion, desperation and who-was-closest-to-whom. So, I accepted those apologies for my sake and theirs. But you were the only one using your head back then, like always. With handling the Accords, the fight and ultimately letting Cap and Bucky go. And now you’re back to keep us all in line. You’re the last person I’d need an apology from.”

“We were in a high risk situation in Leipzig. Whether we were pulling our punches or not, they call us enhanced for a reason. And I didn’t have your back when I should have.” Says Nat, cringing at the turn of phrase and what it implies for Rhodey.

“We all suffered blows, physically and emotionally. But we all survived the last shit show because despite everything, we work, all of us together. That’s enough for me. If anything, I should be the one apologizing. We’re in this fresh mess because of me.”

“Because of Ross!” Nat protests.

“Because of Ross we wouldn’t be able to operate like we used to. Because of me, we could lose all our credibility. Which is more important in the work we do? You said before that ‘we have to win their trust back’. How is my indiscretion helping with that?”

Nat takes a moment to sip her drink and compose a response; then approaches the issue the way Tony had commended her in doing before, with her head.

“Indiscretion is a good way to describe it?” she starts.

Tony is taken aback by her response. Part confused, part apprehensive and a tiny bit offended.

“In terms of age, financial status and experience, he’s at a disadvantage. He trusts you but you barely trust yourself. Don’t get me wrong. You’re confident in your skills and your mind but not in the way you handle relationships. And there’s precedent for that. And there’s the issue of mentoring him, making him quite impressionable under your tutelage.”

Tony shrinks into his seat with every bullet point Natasha relays in the clinical way she does. But is shocked into confusion with the question that follows.

“Do you know how I met Barnes?” Nat asks in a more conversational tone.

“He…shot you.” Tony replies hesitantly.

“So, you don’t know yet.” Nat says with a dreamy smile, further confusing Tony.

“Don’t know what?”

Nat turns on her seat, looking at Tony’s eyes intently.

“I’ve known James Buchanan Barnes since I was a little girl. He didn’t have that name though. Department X had the Winter Soldier on loan from Hydra. He trained me. You could say he was my mentor and I was his protégé.”

Nat pauses, allowing Tony a moment to absorb her words, the comparison.

“I grew up seeing him a handful of times in a year but I truly became his protégé when I was 17 or
18. I learned a lot from him but he also learned a lot from me. I had only known a life of order and
believably until him. And he had lost himself long before and even more than I did.

“Together we built each other up. Filled in the missing pieces as best we could. And despite the
years that has gone by and the holes in our memories, I still love him. I still get excited when I see
him in the morning. Seeing him on a motorcycle or in a three-piece suit still gives me goosebumps.
My day is always better when he tells me joke, whether it’s funny or not.”

“What are you saying?” asks Tony.

“We are stupid when we’re young and finding love during that time is a risk whether you’re training
to be an assassin or not. But sometimes it happens, and it’s real and it lasts. If it doesn’t. At least it
still happened.”

“Now in any other version of these sorts of situations, with any proof of abuse, I would beat the crap
out of you. Because it can be wrong. And back then, Barnes wasn’t the only one who touched me;
and the others didn’t ask permission and weren’t as gentle.”

A somber moment passes between them, but being the sort of people they are, they let it pass and
end it with a sip.

“So wait, you and Barnes?” Tony asks with a playful lilt in his voice.

“Oh shut up, Tony!” Nat replies with a laugh.

“Ready, Natalia?” asks a voice behind them.

It was Barnes, dressed in head-to-toes black. But it wasn’t his tactical gear, just jeans and a hoodie.

“One for the road?” Nat lifted her glass, offering it Barnes.

Barnes walked over and took a sip from Nat’s glass.

“The road?” Tony asks.

“No worries. It was one drink. And you may have a propensity for alcohol, Stark, but I can still drink
all of you under the table.” Says Nat who proceeds to down what’s left of her drink.

“Cause what do I have?” she asks playfully.

“Not tolerance but composure.” Tony and Barnes say, playing along but not without the compulsory
roll of the eyes.

Nat and Barnes proceed to walk away, with smiles of goodbye but Tony calls after them.

“But where are you two going?”

Nat replies with a sigh “Queens.”

Tony’s eyes grow wide, suddenly on attention.

“Why you two? This isn’t gonna be a fire fight is it?” Tony ask with a panicked tone.

“Nah. We’re just good at not being seen.” Nat replies in a comfortingly dismissive way.

“I thought Hill said ‘no Avengers.’” Says Tony.
“Again. We're good at not being seen.” Barnes reassures him. “Don’t worry, Stark. We'll keep him safe.”

They’re nearly out of the room when Tony calls again.

“I still don’t get what you meant by ‘indiscretion’ being a good word for it.” Asks Tony.

Nat waves off Barnes to go ahead of her. She then gives Tony an affectionate smile.

“Don’t let them see your heart, Tony.” She says “It’s the only way Barnes and I have survived this long.”

Tony replies only when Nat is already out of earshot.

“I’m afraid they’ve already seen too much of it.”

It’s been days since Tony last contacted him. Peter’s beginning to worry but he understood. The Avengers were back at the compound and with the Accords being reformed, there were probably few opportunities to get away. But he worried nonetheless.

They had rules. When things of this nature come up, visitors, long-haul missions, negotiations, the odd gala and the like; he was not to come over unless collected. But he’d not heard a peep from Tony, not a call, text or email. It was like the Avengers were having their own version of a papal conclave, confined to the compound until decisions were made. Even Karen wouldn’t give him anything. Every time he’d ask about Tony, the other Avengers or the compound he’d get the same reply.

"The residents of the Avengers Facility are currently occupied with matters concerning the Accords."

That’s some comfort. At least that means they’re still alive in there.

So here he was, on patrol with no one but Karen to keep him company. The electronic voice only entertaining his technical inquiries and none of his musings, for the subject of his musings have remained quite singular for the past few days.

His musings are then interrupted by the sounds of a struggle. It sounds like a mugging three alleys down from the building he was perched on. He leaps and swings over quickly, and looks down from the roof of one of the buildings adjacent to the alley.

A blonde woman was struggling against a hooded man in black. Peter descends from the roof by web, landing quietly beside the man. He grabs and pulls him away from the woman, pulling him about to face him.

Peter is shocked to see a familiar face, eyes looking up from under the hood and bowed head.

“Sarge?” Peter asks.

“Shove me.” Bucky whispers.

“What?”

“Shove me towards the wall. Do it.” He insists and Peter complies, careful of his strength.
“Aaaarg.” Bucky cries out before collapsing.

“Hey...” Peter starts to ask as he looks to Bucky and then the woman.

“Please don't leave me! I'm scared!” pleads the blonde woman, who also bears familiar face.

“Miss...?”

“Russell. It's Russell.” Nat cuts him off. “Please don't leave me!”

“We can't just leave him...” says a flustered Peter.

“Please! My car's parked just a block away. Just walk me to it. Please!” says Nat, now with tears in her eyes.

“O...okay. Let's go.” Peter says, playing along.

They run to the car. Nat looks round for a moment then pushes Peter into the passenger seat quickly. She goes around the car and gets in to sit on the driver’s seat. Once the car is on the move, she sighs and the act ends. She wipes away her tears coolly but keeps her wig.

“It's safe to talk.” She says.

“What the hell!” Peter exclaims as he pulls off his mask.

“This is an extraction.” Nat explains.

“What? Why? What was with the act back there?” Panicked questions pour out of Peter’s mouth.

“We couldn't grab you from any of your regular spots. Not at home or school or wherever. Had to catch you on patrol.” Says Nat.

“Catch me?”

“We're all being monitored but you're still safest upstate.” Nat elaborates.

“Upstate? Hold on! I haven't heard from anyone for days and suddenly we're doing alleyway theater? What is happening?” asks Peter, getting more and more frustrated.

“Ross is making a move. He's threatening to basically arrest us all. Probably not gonna happen but he'll try. Unless...”

“Unless what?” Peter urges her to answer.

“Unless we cooperate.” Nat says with a sigh.

“I'm guessing that's not an option?” asks Peter.

“Nope. Not his way, anyway. But we had to pull you out. He's particularly fixated on you and Tony.”

“M...Me and Mr. Stark?” Peter asks cautiously.

Nat smiles ad says “No need to be so formal. The team knows. Unfortunately, so does Ross...You'll be briefed back in the compound.”

Peter pushes passed the shock and the worry and asks “What about Sergeant Barnes? Is he gonna be
“Okay?”

“You can ask him yourself.”

And just then the car stops, and Bucky gets into the back seat.

“Hey kid.” Bucky greets.

He’s now lost his hoodie and is wearing a green v-neck shirt.

“Oh my god! Did I hurt you?” asks Peter.

“A little. Nothing a light massage won’t fix.” Bucky replies with a teasing tone.

“Only if you’re good.” Nat replies.

Losing to the temptation Peter asks “H...How’s Mr. Stark holding up?”

“He’s worried.” Nat admits.

“Is he...nevermind.” Peter shakes his head dismissively.

“Is he drinking, you mean?” Nat smiles sympathetically and says ”Not enough to cause any alarm and you'll be with him soon enough.”

And with a squeeze of the hand from Nat, Peter settles in for the ride up to the compound.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Flashback chapter. It's a raunchy one. Hold tight.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Mr. Stark?” Peter calls Tony as he enters the shop.

“Over here, kid.” Calls Tony, not really looking away from the hologram of the Iron Man suit towering over him.

“Mr. Stark.” Peter begins.

“Yep?” Says Tony as he moves the hologram leg around in his hand as if it were the real thing.

His eyes are focused, twisting the model around, looking at components made of light.

Peter fusses with his fingers, nervous about what he’s about to say.

“Tony.” He says and finally gets Tony’s full attention on him.

“What is it, Peter?” Tony asks with a frown, suddenly worried by Peter’s behavior.

Peter forces out a chuckle to reassure him before saying “Well, my 17th birthday’s coming up.”

“Saturday. I know.” Says Tony, smiling back at him.

“Oh.” Says Peter, slightly surprised. “Well, May was thinking of inviting some people over for dinner. I was wondering if you’d…”

Tony sighs and says “I have a thing I can’t get out of actually. But I have the morning and the afternoon free. I was thinking we could do something together.”

“Oh.” Peter is again surprised and also excited.

“Just tell your aunt I’m going to show you some new tech as a treat for your birthday or something. We could have breakfast together. I’ll set my alarm early and everything.”

“Tha…That would be nice.” says Peter with a big goofy smile on his face.

Tony chuckles and then says “Now get back to work, kid.”

“Hi.” Says Peter as he’s greeted by Tony at the door, which is an uncommon thing for Tony.

“Hey! You look great! Come on. I made pancakes…Well, someone made pancakes.”

Peter looks down at his polo shirt and pressed black trousers, and blushes at the compliment. They
certainly fit right, which can’t be said for a lot of his clothes, but he didn’t think they were in anyway special.

He shakes of the warm feeling and composes himself before saying “So, new tech?”

“Well not much, since you’re here every week. Though I’ve finally ironed out the kinks on the cloaking I was working on last week. We can check it out after breakfast if you want. Or better yet! Breakfast in the shop!” Tony says excitedly.

“Sounds very irresponsible with all those electronics there.” Peter says teasingly.

“I’m a rebel, baby.” Says Tony with a wink.

His blush deepens in color.

They spend much of the next hour going through a pile of pancakes, talking shop and cracking jokes. It’s simple, but Peter thinks it might just be one of his best birthdays yet or ever will be. He can’t help but smile from ear to ear. He can’t get over how impossible and dreamlike it all is, yet it is real.

He’s unapologetically swooning at a man over two decades his senior, richer than rich and the most intelligent man he’s ever met. He’s sophisticated, charming, heroic and devastatingly gorgeous; and he’s having pancakes with Peter and smiling back.

Tony takes Peter’s hand in his and Peter just hopes Tony didn’t hear him gasp.

“Peter, I know we haven’t addressed this thing between us since that kiss. I just want you to know I didn’t just do that so you’d stick around.”

“I know.” Says Peter, still smiling.

“You’re a great kid. You’re smart. You’re driven. And you’ve got this heart…I’ve been thinking a lot about us. I mean, we work great together. You say I’ve been helping you and that you want to help me too. And you have. And that kiss. I wanted it.”

Peter is stunned into silence by the confession.

“I initiated it. I told you I’ve seen the way you look at me. Well, I don’t know if you’ve noticed but, I’ve been feeling like such a creep looking at you the same way. So, yes there is something there. Something more than mentoring you or turning you into a project to make myself feel better.”

Peter gives him his other hand and tightens his hold on Tony.

“But you realize this is not an ideal situation, right? For one, your aunt will kill me if she finds out. Your scholarship could be put into question. And if someone looked hard enough, they could figure out who you are.”

Peter nods in agreement and says “So, we keep it a secret?”

Tony’s eyes widen.

“Okay that was supposed to be me letting you down gently and scaring you off with the consequences, not proposing we…”

“Didn’t sound like it.” Peter says with a confused frown. “And you’re forgetting I already told you that I love you the last time.”
Tony huffs playfully and says “You know what I forgot to say when I was describing you? You’re also a smartass.”

“So are you.” Say Peter before reaching up to cup Tony’s cheek. “It’s my birthday.”

“I know, I’m sorry.” Tony says ruefully

“No. It’s my birthday. I want this.

And with all his resolve, Peter reaches up with both hands, pulling Tony’s face to him.

The kiss is slow and gentle, feather-light and cautious. Tony takes Peter’s hands from his face and Peter looks up to him with blurry love-drunk eyes. He watches as the tension in the older man’s shoulders bleeds out and then they are floating.

Tony’s guiding him somewhere he realizes, only to feel his head resting on something soft. He only has a moment to realize that they are on the shop’s large grey couch, before their kissing resumes. This time it’s more frantic, hungry. He feels like his drowning in Tony in the best of ways.

Despite Tony’s hunger, it is Peter who makes the move. He breaks the kiss and lifts the polo off over his head. Tony stares back at him, breathless.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.” Peter practically sobs.

“Have you ever…?”

“No.” Peter admits, looking down timidly.

“Okay.” Tony nods and proceeds to stand and undress slowly.

Peter watches shyly, looking away several times but then looks back again. He is looking down when Tony lifts his chin, looking him in the eyes. He takes Peter’s hand, pulling him to stand, and then reaches for the fastenings of his trousers.

“This okay?” Tony asks for permission.

Overwhelmed, Peter only nods. Suddenly, they’re both standing naked in the middle of the workshop. Tony presses on Peter’s shoulder, urging him to sit again.

“Stay put. I’ll just be a moment.”

And so he does. Peter sits there, naked on a couch, with a buzzing in his head. He hears Tony come back into the room and a rattling behind him as the man places some things on a table close by.

“Ready?” Tony says before he even appears within view.

Peter closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

“Yes.”

When he opens his eyes, Tony is crouched down on the floor before him. Peter is pulled into another kiss. It is as if Tony means to comfort him and kiss his nerves away. Tony moves away from his lips and kisses down his body. His tongue on his nipples, his stomach and just below his navel. And just as Peter thought that he was approaching his hardness, Tony lifts Peter’s legs and props them on his
shoulders.

Peter wheezes slightly as he inhales sharply. Tony looks down hungrily then looks back up at Peter. Suddenly, his mouth is down there, making wet noises against his hole. Peter can’t help but moan loudly. Tony’s tongue presses against him, entering, wetting everything within reach.

Peter claws at the couch, meaning to grip but it’s filling not allowing it. He struggles for a hold and feels like he might float away. It’s an irrational thought but the restlessness is real and felt deep in his bones. He gives up resisting, gives up the shyness, and gives in to the need. He finds his hold in Tony’s hair.

Just when he’s close to completion, Tony pulls away satisfied with his work.

Peter whines and shivers.

“You okay?” Tony asks.

“Keep going.” Peter pleads and Tony does.

Peter hears a click. A cap on a bottle he realizes. He jumps slightly from the wetness of Tony’s touch. Tony caresses the puckered flesh tenderly and says “I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You won’t.” says Peter.

“I won’t. But this is my first time with you, your first time. I need you to relax and I need you to tell me if it’s too much…” says Tony before continuing with smirk. “…or not enough.”

A finger pushes in slowly making Peter groan all the way to the knuckle.

“Peter?” Tony asks.

“Good. So good.” Says Peter as his head falls back.

The finger moves in and out, touching something within that makes Peter arch his back.

“AH!”

Tony continues with the motion until it becomes smoother. He then pulls out his finger and reenters carefully with two.

“Tony!”

“You're good, kid.”

Peter is so hard, his cock weeps. Tony couldn’t resist but lick away the milky bead, making Peter’s arms flail about, avoiding his cock.

“NO! Not yet. I’m…”


“So close. Feels so good.” Peter whimpers.

When the motion of his fingers smooth again, Tony pulls out his fingers and adds another. When he’s satisfied with the stretch, he pump the fingers in and out, contemplating the need for another finger.
“No more. Please I need you in…” Peter starts to plead but is cut short by his own cry.

Tony pulls out his fingers carefully. He climbs onto the couch and holds Peter’s convulsing body close, sparing no thought for the mess Peter’s made between them.

“Tony.” Peter pants his name, as is apologizing.

“It’s okay. It’s your first time getting touched there right?”

“Uh huh.”

“It’s natural to be overwhelmed.”

“Have you been with other men?” says Peter, pausing every now and then to catch his breath.

“Not sex but I experimented a bit in college.”

A shaky chuckle escapes Peter before he says “Of course you did.”

“Do you want to keep going?” Tony asks.

“Yeah.” Says Peter.

He then, more swats than grabs Tony’s arm as the man reaches for a condom he’d deposited on a nearby table.

“You don’t have to put that on.” Peter says shyly.

“Pete.” Tony tries to reason with him but is cut off.

“I’ve never been sick since I got these abilities. So when I said that you won’t hurt me I meant it. I doubt you’d give me anything anyway.” Peter rambles.

“It’s just habit. You I know I…have a reputation.”

“You get tested, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And you’re fine.”

“Yeah.”

“Have you been with anyone since…”

“No!” He looks at Peter intently and says “Not since.”

Peter looks back at him, thinking to ask ‘Not since getting tested or not since…’ He feel he knows the answer, he sees it in the look in Tony’s eyes and decides there’s no need to ask. His heart swells.

“Would you prefer…” Tony starts to ask, suddenly feeling vulnerable.

Peter pulls him close, his arms around his neck, and his legs around his waist.

“It’s my birthday. I want to feel you.”

Tony pushes his hardness into him. They both groan. Peter is tight and the entry is slow.
“Should have added another finger.” Tony thinks but sheds his hesitation when Peter pushes his hips onto him.

“Oh fuck!” Peter cries.

Peter is lifted of the couch and holding onto Tony for dear life.

“Fuck, you’re tight!” Tony groans, the rumble of his voice vibrating into Peter’s chest.

They’re rhythm begins slowly but as Peter gains his bearings, Tony gets bolder. Their pace quickens, their thrusts more forceful. Peter heaves to lift his head up, resting his forehead on Tony’s. They stare into each other’s eyes, tears overflowing from Peter’s.

“Oh fuck…Tony!…Oh god!…So big…Fuck me!…Tony!…So good!…OH FUCK!”

Peter climaxes and Tony continues to thrust into him, prolonging his young lover’s pleasure. When he reaches his own climax, he thrusts hard and deep, holding Peter close and groaning his name. A warmth flooding into Peter.

They find themselves a tangle of limbs, Peter lying on Tony and Tony half hanging off the edge of the couch.

“Oh fuck.” Tony whispers, quietly reprimanding himself.

But he can’t help but smile as the smaller man nuzzles at his chest.

“I’m guessing you enjoyed that?” Asks Tony.

“Yeah.” Peter replies dreamily but then shots up, as much as he can anyway, and asks “Did you?”

Tony tucks a lock of Peter’s hair behind his ear, wipes away the remains of the young man’s tears and says “You were amazing, kid.”

They stare at each other adoringly for a moment before Tony says “Wait a sec.”

Tony stretches an arm out to reach something on the table. When he turns back to look at Peter, he’s confused by the furrowed brows.

“You okay?” Tony asks.

“Yeah. It’s nothing.” Peter says with a blush.

Realizing what he’d done, Tony shifts his hips earning a gasp from Peter.

“You sure it’s nothing?” Tony asks teasingly.

And Peter says “Shut up.” As he squeezes down on the cock still inside him.

“Oh! Wow, kid! You learn fast.” Tony exclaims at the sensation.

Peter smirks and says “Isn’t that why you like me, sir?”

And for a moment it’s awkward, then racy and then utterly hilarious.

The two laugh manically.

“Jeez, kid! Ever heard of kink negotiation?”
“I only meant, ‘sir’ cause I’m your…”

“Yeah I got it!”

“Oh fuck!” Peter suddenly grips at Tony’s chest.

The jostling of their laughter proved to be quite stimulating.

“Oh shit! Sorry.” Says Tony as he holds Peter steady. “Right, I’m pulling out.”

Peter shivers from the wet noise and sensation for a moment, then settles on Tony’s chest again.

“What’s that?” asks Peter, pointing at the cube in Tony’s hand.

Tony hands the paper wrapped cube to Peter and says “It was supposed to be a ‘Happy birthday. Sorry, we can’t be together’ gift but we just had sex so; it’s now a ‘Happy birthday. Good luck with dealing with me’ gift.”

Peter lies on his side and tears at the paper to reveal a glass-encased puck that glowed.

“Is this…?”

“It was my first arc reactor. Weird thing to bring up now but, Pepper once had this put in another case that said ‘Proof that Tony Stark has a heart.’ Kinda like ‘break the glass in case of emergency’ and so I did. I had it redone for you.” Tony rambles nervously.

“So, you’re original plan was to let me down gently then give me a gift that symbolized your heart?” Peter looks with Tony with a raised brow?

“No! It doesn’t have the ‘heart’ thing engraved anymore, see.” Tony says defensively.

“You really think I would have given you up after this?” Peter lifts the case in front of Tony’s eyes.

“It’s a mini arc reactor. I thought you’d like something historical and tech related.”

“Uh huh. Sure.” Peter says with a chuckle.

“Shut up! I may have mixed my script up a bit. But I wasn’t planning to have sex with you on your birthday you know, despite the hints you were dropping.”

“I wasn’t dropping hints. I was inviting you to very family friendly dinner. My aunt would have been there.”

“Yeah. But you didn’t have to say it was your 17th birthday.”

“I was surprised you already knew though, like you were counting the days until I was of age.” Peter says teasingly.

“Was not!”

They stare at each other, smiling blissfully.

“There’s something else.” says Tony.

“Not another gift! This and you are enough.” Peter holds the encased arc reactor close.

“Well, I’m not sure if it’s really a gift or a burden.”
“What is it?”

Tony sighs and says “I love you.”

“Best gift ever.”

A fresh set of tears come streaming down Peter face as he sets the arc reactor aside and pulls Tony into a passionate kiss. They pull apart a moment later and Tony’s own eyes are glistening with unshed tears of his own.

He smiles and says “Happy Birthday, Peter.”

Peter's head was reeling. The team now knew about them and it's because of Secretary Ross. He thinks back on how it all began, the best of times. And he thinks of all the consequences they've been dreading, the worst case scenarios they've come up with over the years.

Finally, after a drive that felt longer than it was, the Avengers Facility came into view. It looked strangely dark and desolate. The other times Peter had gone, as private and exclusive a place as it was, there was always a skeleton crew rushing about, running the place. Even in the late evenings, there were flickers of light coming through the glass windows from the holograms and monitors scattered around the halls.

Natasha insisted that they get out in the garage just in case the compound was being watched. Once they’ve parked and the garage doors have closed behind them, they moved to exit the car.

“Hold off on the reunion make-out for us, alright kid?” Nat says teasingly, making Peter blush.

The facility has been given up to its automation. Usually there’d be people welcoming them, opening doors and taking their gear if there were a lot of it. A luxury that always made Peter uncomfortable as well as obligated to be more mindful of which outfit he came in. Now, he walked around freely in his suit with his mask off, with doors opening on their own before them. But the absence also made the place feel cold and bleak.

As he walks down the halls, trailing behind Nat and Bucky, he realizes the lack of lights seen from outside was due to Friday tinting the windows. The Avengers were isolating themselves. The risk of exposure seemed direr now and Peter was anxious to know the extent of the problem.

Suddenly, a voice rang out in the quiet halls, startling Peter.

“Welcome back, Mr. Parker. If you could all please proceed to the infirmary.” Says Friday, followed by a distressed Bruce who appeared suddenly, seeming to have ran to meet them.

“Peter!” Bruce panted.

“Dr. Banner?” asks a shocked Peter.

“Come with me.”

The four of them jogged to the infirmary.

“What's going on?” asks Peter as he jogged up beside Bruce, worry growing within him.
Bruce looks at him, sympathy in his eyes and says “Something’s happened to Tony.”

Chapter End Notes

Too much?
They approach the infirmary. Peter slows down to a walk, allowing Bruce to enter the room first. Peter looks at the crestfallen Avengers flanking the outside of the door and he’s suddenly dreading to look inside. He takes a deep breath to settle his nerves, and enters the room. Before him is an unconscious Tony, lying in a gurney, hooked up to a drip, with a tube running into his mouth. Peter shivers. He feels like he’s going to be sick.

“Tony!” Peter sobs, rushing to a chair beside the gurney.

Peter takes Tony’s hand in his, noting how clammy it feels there.

“What happened?” Peter asks, not looking away from Tony.

It’s Steve who answers “Alcohol poisoning.”

“He’s so pale…and cold.” Peter says through his tears.

“We thought he was turning in for the night. But he was drinking in his room. He'd all but closed it off from Friday. Friday's alarm just got triggered when he almost choked on his own vomit.” Steve explains apologetically.

“Will he be okay?” asks Peter.

“He’s been seen to by Doctor Cho. He's in really bad shape but we think he'll be okay eventually. We've done all we can for tonight.” Says Bruce.

“I'm not leaving him.” Peter declares, thinking that they’re asking him to leave.

“Thought as much.” Says Bruce smiling sadly at Peter as he turns back to look at him. “He can’t be left alone while he’s unconscious like this.”

“So, I’ll watch him.” Says Peter.

“But you’ll have to sleep at some point.”

“I’ll watch him.” Peter insists.

The other occupants of the room bow their heads, conceding to Peter’s assertion.

The silence that follows is broken by Steve asking Peter “You hungry?”

Peter shakes his head, only then noticing that all the others had left except for Steve.
“I don’t think I can eat.”

“We’ll get you cot. Call us through Friday when you start feeling sleepy.” Steve says firmly as he heads out of the room as well, giving Peter his time with Tony.

In his solitude, Peter finds himself thinking about the times that he’d seen Tony like this and he’s coming up with a blank. Maybe Ms. Potts or Colonel Rhodes has seen this before but he hasn’t.

He realizes that Tony has gotten close to this before though. After Leipzig, after Siberia, from what Tony’s been able to share, he got pretty low, though he hid it well for a time. Peter had seen the dark circles around Tony’s eyes, the increased frequency of self-deprecating humor, the haven’t-slept and forgot-to-eats. The empty bottles.

He remembers Tony telling him that he would never have lasted...lived...stayed sane this long without him. And he’d just thought it was hyperbole. But Tony did seem to get better even as things between them got more complicated as a result.

He’d spent what felt like hours watching Tony. He’d caressed his pale skin back to warmth. He’d found things to clean and adjust for Tony’s comfort. But then the atmosphere got too unlike being in Tony’s company. The lack of wisecracking or silent cuddling, the quiet stillness just became too unbearable.

“Friday, can you call someone to watch Tony just in case I fall asleep? I’m starting to feel a bit drowsy here.” Peter says to the ceiling.

“Of course, Mr. Parker.” Replied a feminine voice.

Minutes stretched and the silence nearly choked him, until someone came along.

“Hey.” It was Cap who’d come to the rescue with a sympathetic smile.

“Hey.” Peter blew out a shaky breath.

“You’ll be okay with a fold-out?” asked Steve lifting the metal framed cot into view.

“Yeah.”

“How are you holding up?” asked Steve as he laid out the cot set down the pillow and blanket he’d wedged under his arm.

It took a moment for Peter to compose a response and even comprehend the question before that.

“I’m...confused. I’m trying to figure out how Tony would let it get this bad. He knows he has a problem. He knows his limits. He was getting better. I’ve seen him drunk but he’s never gotten this bad.”

Steve nods with a somber look on his face.

“It could be the stress. He’s been blaming himself for this whole thing with Ross. We’ve all been talking to him, trying to get him out of his head. But you know Tony. It’s easy for him to forgive just about anyone but himself. He did seem better earlier. He was drinking but not more than usual, until later of course. Seemed like he had a handle on it actually. It looked like he and Nat had a good talk. He ate fine at dinner. I don’t know. It caught us all by surprise.” Cap’s own bafflement and concern was clear on his face.
“Captain Rogers, if I may…” Friday interjects.

“Friday?”

“Mr. Stark received a message before heading to his room. It was addressed to him personally so I did not bring it up before. But according to my assessment, it may have affected his state of mind. If Mr. Parker, could just check his phone.”

Steve turns to look questioningly at Peter, who had picked up the phone from the side table.

“I know how to get into his phone.” The young man says.

Steve nods and says “I'll get the team.” As he rushes out the room.

Steve returns with some sleepy Avengers in tow.

“I got it.” Says Peter holding up the phone. “It's an email.

“What does it say?” asks Steve.

Peter looks down to read silently for a second and his face suddenly gets marred by a frown.

“‘Something to encourage your cooperation.’ Ross sent Tony a copy of some video footage. He says he’ll be sending it out to the press.”

“Footage of what?...Peter?” asks Bruce.

Peter taps the screen and muffled voices or static emanates from it.

“It’s our last anniversary.” Peter says dejectedly before looking up at the team to explain. “Tony flew us off to Malibu. He showed me the construction for the new house and then he got us a hotel room.”

“Shit.” Clint mutters somewhere at the back.

“But wait, our week’s not up! Did he say when he’s sending it out?” Asks Sam.

“No.”

“There’s nothing online.” Nat informs the as she looks up from her own phone.

“So, maybe he’ll wait.” Wanda suggests hopefully.

“Let’s hope but let’s not count on it.” Says Steve.

Rhodey nods and says “I’ll inform Hill.”

The team disperses leaving Cap and Peter alone with Tony.

“Do you want to sleep or do you want breakfast?” asks Steve.

“I want to know what Ross wants.” Peter snaps, frustrated by the lack of action and information from the team. “Nat said I’ll get briefed once I got here. So, tell me what’s really going on!”

“Now isn’t the time. We’re dealing with it, Peter. You should focus on taking care of you and Tony.”
“No!” Peter interrupted. “I’ve dealt with this with Tony, I’m not dealing with this now with the rest of you. I’m not a child! Nat said he was fixated on us. You said Tony was blaming himself for this. And now Ross has footage of me and Tony together. I don’t even know how you guys found out about us!”

“You’re not a child but you do need your rest, Peter. Tony needs you to be strong right now.”

“You think I’ll be able to sleep now?” Peter half shouts, half whimpers.

Steve sighs in surrender and says “You know about reforming the Accords?”

Peter nods.

“Well it was all bullshit and Ross is blackmailing us so we’d sign the same thing that broke us apart four years ago.” Steve frowns sadly.

“Blackmailing you with our relationship?” asks Peter.

Steve scoffs dejectedly and says “No. He’s blackmailing us with retirement and/or arrest. Your relationship is blackmail for Tony, so that however this all pan out, he’ll still have Tony Stark on a leash.”

Peter puts a hand on his mouth to hold back the shock and shakes his head. Steve gives him a moment to process it all but Peter still has questions.

“And the footage?”

“He has several, or so he says. He’s shown us another. It was you and Tony having a fight I suppose and then kissing after. It was somewhere in MIT.”

Peter slumps on his cot and says “I think I’ll be taking you up on that breakfast now, Cap. Best have a full stomach now that I’m the one who needs a drink.”

“Friday.” Steve called.

“Mr. Barton is on his way to take your place, sir.” Replies the voice.

“I know for a fact Tony’s got some 12 year olds on his top shelf.” Peter muses.

Steve raises a brow and asks “Pancakes and whiskey?”

“Bit too young. Bit too early. Bit too pissed off to give a fuck. Besides, after all this, might have to throw some of that stuff out. Might as well have a sip first.” Says Peter.

Steve huffs and says “I’ll join you.”

“You can’t get drunk.”

“I can appreciate a good single malt and I’m the one making you pancakes. Besides, I can tell you’re not out of questions yet.”
Just a reminder that despite that infamous 'Language' line, Steve Rogers has the filthiest mouth in the MCU.
Chapter 7

Peter and Steve spent their early breakfast getting Peter up to speed. Steve told him of Maria Hill’s multiple attempts at getting them intel, how the rest of the team felt about the situation, and Tony’s state of mind through it all through Steve’s limited perspective.

There is a short pause after. Peter is wearing a frown on his forehead, trying to digest all he’s been told. He then huffs, mustering up his courage before asking “So, you guys are okay with this? Us?”

Steve gives him a sympathetic smile and says “We were all conflicted on the issue to begin with. It was a shock. Most of us didn’t know who you were beyond Spider-Man, let alone how old you were. But we saw how conflicted Tony was over it and realized who we were dealing with. Tony’s done a lot of good and a lot of bad in his life, and for so long he’s been trying to redeem himself for both. He wouldn’t do this for kicks. And despite the worry, the panic and the guilt that’s been plaguing him, we - I could see, that he thought you worth it all.”

Peter gasps silently and looks down, trying to hide the blush blooming on his cheeks. He’d always hoped that he and Tony could love one another openly one day, share their joys and troubles with their friends, but he never expected the team to be this insightful. Being the youngest on the team, he feels laid bare, like he’s wearing a sign around his neck saying “lovesick teenager”.

He’s then pulled out of his musings when Clint’s voice rings out of the PA system.

“Guys, the man’s stirring over here.”

Steve and Peter share a wide-eyed look before they get up from their seats and rush over to the infirmary. They get there to find a Clint hovering over a half conscious Tony, the tube now gone from his mouth. The man’s eyes flutter adjusting to the light.

“Oh my god.” Peter sighs in relief. Striding over to Tony’s bedside as Clint backs away.

He takes the older man’s hand in his own just as his eyes fully open and sweeps over the room for the first time.

“Hey.” Peter whispers, gently calling Tony’s attention.

A look of relief and adoration ghosts over Tony’s eyes before he gives a languid smile and sighs Peter’s name.

“You’re awake! Oh my god, you’re awake!” Peter nearly sobs as he takes a seat on the bed.

“What happened?” Tony asks with a breathy and broken voice.

Peter passes on a glass of water that’s being handed to him as he answers.

“They found you passed out in your room almost choking on your own sick.” Peter looks sad as he tips the glass carefully to meet Tony’s lips.

Tony pulls away after a brief sip and says “Shit. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“I could have lost you. Don’t do that ever again. I can’t…I…” Peter sobs as he caresses Tony’s now
“I promise. I’m so sorry. I should be better at this by now. I haven’t drank that much in ages. I have a limit…” Tony closes his eyes in a self-effacing frown.

“I know. I know. You’ll get better.” Peter coos comfortingly. “I’m not mad. I just so relieved.”

“There was an email…” Tony starts.

Peter nods and says “Friday showed us. Well, I saw it. The others didn’t. Sensitive material.” chuckling slightly.

“Ross has taken so much. And he says he has more and he’s gonna show the world.” says Tony, frowning at the sheets.

Peter cups Tony’s cheek, directing his gaze back to him, before speaking once more in a tone more resolute than any man his age has any business having.

“He doesn’t have all of it. He can’t have. He doesn’t have the first time we made love or the first time you said you loved me. Hang the rest. We’ll make new memories. He can’t hold us with this. He can’t have you. You’re mine!”

Tony smiles back at him, teary-eyed, and pull the younger man into a kiss.

They part and Peter regains his wits. He blushes thinking on his passionate declaration and the company now stood near the door, looking anywhere but at the couple on the bed.

Steve clears his throat and says. “They’re gonna want to see you.”

Peter looks at Tony for an answer and the man nods in response.

“Friday, call the others.”

The whole team are now perched on various places in the infirmary, balancing plates and bowls of breakfast foods on shelves, cushions, knees, and invisible platforms at varying degrees of success.

“I still don’t understand how he can do this! He's the Secretary of State! I just turned 19. And you guys just saved the world from aliens! Again!” says Peter, leaning with his back on the headboard of the bed, idly twirling Tony’s hair in his fingers.

“I know but he's gonna find a way to stay clean in all this. And not everyone loves us apparently.” Says Tony as he comfortingly rubs Peter’s now sweatpants covered thigh with his hand.

“If he has footage of us from way back, despite the age of consent isn't that technically still child porn?” Peter says hesitantly, wary of bringing up the age difference.

“We don’t know what he has but whatever they are, he's not gonna put his own head out on the chopping block with them. He’ll get it out there and make sure it isn’t traced back to him. Pretty sure he gave us the pitch, party favors and all, and the blackmail is just his own personal touch. That shit ain't sanctioned.” Says Nat as she picks at her dry cereal, sat on the foot of the bed.
“Don't you have a...?” Peter starts.

“Recording of the meeting? No. They took out our surveillance systems. Apparently, that sheepish assistant of his was doing more than just fiddling with the A/V system while Ross was regaling us on how great/awful we are.” Says Tony with great disdain despite his croaky voice and pancake-filled mouth.

“What about...?”

“We're looking into his team. They all seem to either hate us or be loyal to him. We haven't found the weakest link yet.” Says Rhodey, reiterating Hill’s last report from the foot of the bed opposite Nat.

“Even the sheepish assistant?”

“Lost his apartment, his last job and much of his savings to the Incident.” Says Steve who was sat on the fold-out.

“So, the Avengers basically have their own hate group.” Peter summarizes.

And Tony concurs “Pretty much.”

“Costumed freaks myaaaaah.” Clint mutters in a cartoonish voice at the other end of the fold-out making the team snicker.

“But if we could get our hand on the footage, if he hasn't made copies and we have the only existing videos, he has nothing on us.” Peter suggests.

“Hill’s sent out three recon ops to Ross’s facilities to acquire the footage or find something that at least ties Ross to all this. They all came up empty. Ross is keeping all of this close to the chest. At least we think that could mean he's not making copies but with that message, he just did or soon will be, sending them all out there.” says Steve.

“But that means the originals’ most likely location is on his person.” Says Peter.

Sam perks up from his place on the floor, looking up from his pancakes to say “Are we finally going to kidnap the bastard?”

“Because kidnapping the Secretary of State is just what we need on our record right now.” Nat shoots down the suggestion but Clint continues the volley.

“Mugging? Pick pocket?”

Bucky breaks his silence, ignoring the likeminded pair, and says “Hill’s people haven’t stopped looking but even if we acquire the footage, he could acquire more.”

“And the rest of this has nothing to do with me. He can still turn you all into fugitives.” Says Tony.

“Yeah. Hill's working on that too. There are a few avenues we can try. And we have do a contingency plan.” Says Steve.

“What is it?” asks Peter.

“Worse comes to worst, the Avengers go off grid again and I’ll sign.” Says Tony, avoiding Peter’s gaze.

“You can’t be serious!” Peter protests.
“If I sign, this all gets easier for you, for all of you.”

“I don’t care about ‘easy’! We’ll go with them.” Peter urges.

“No, this is my choice. You can continue being Spider-man and Peter Parker separately.”

“And you’re just gonna let him do this?” Peter looks around at the team before looking back at Tony
“You’re gonna stay behind?”

“Hell no! We have a sack with his name on it.” Nat pipes in with smirk.

“Come on, guys! I can’t leave anyway. I’m not just Iron Man. I have Stark Industries to think about.”

“Bullshit. Pepper’s got that place running like a well-oiled machine.” Says Rhodey.

Tony looks into Peter’s eyes says in the most grown-up voice he could muster “If the world finds out what your naked ass looks like and that you're Spider-man, you're done. He's either gonna make you sign that thing, put you away or do some other sinister shit.”

“The alternative being you under their control. Iron Man will be under their control. And if he's capable of doing all this, what makes you think he'll hold up his end of the bargain anyway? There’s no way he’s going to let me off scot-free just because you signed. If we have nothing on him by the end of the week, we’re going with the rest of them. You and me.” Peter says, equaling his resolve.

“Kid has a point, Tony.” Says Rhodes.

“You should be moving to Massachusetts and stop it with the back and forth, not going somewhere farther.” Says Tony, quieter this time as he caresses his young lover cheek.

“College? I've got two geniuses to teach me all I need to know and then some.”

“You're a Bio...” Peter arches a brow at Tony urging him to correct himself. ‘Chem and Bio engineering major. But still...”

Peter interrupts with a scoff and says “Like you and Doctor Banner don't dabble.”

“We dabble too much, really.” Says Bruce.

“That's different.” Tony insists.

“I don’t care about the degree. I'll probably learn more from you two than in class, with your resources and real life experiences…”

“We'll be on the run.”

“You think I'll be any safer here!” Peter turns his body to face Tony completely. “You think when this thing goes South, I'll get to use that damn degree without this looming over my head? No! I'll be that masked freak they caught, 'Look at him now, pushing paper.' 'Hey, it's Tony Stark's sugar baby.' I don't say this to hurt you, Tony. But I've never wanted that life to begin with, and I'm sure as hell not gonna like it any better when this goes public.”

“Peter, think of what you're giving up. This is your future, you're life we're talking about.” Tony chooses a gentler voice in the face of Peter’s more insistent one, clearly slowly warming to the idea.

“My future is being Spider-man for as long as I can be and being with you as long as you’ll have me.” Peter takes his face in his hands.
“And your aunt? Your friends?”

“My friends will understand and we could bring Aunt May...maybe. Mr. Barton has a family too doesn’t he?”

“Oh, the family’s gonna love it. We’re going tropical right? Just making sure. Btdubs kid, don’t call me Mr. Barton.” Says Clint, breaking the tension.

“Please don’t call me kid and no one says btdubs anymore.”

The team shares a quiet chuckle as Peter slumps into Tony’s chest. Tony pulls the younger man into a tight hug though still unconvinced of the plan.

“Umm, guys.”

The team turns to look at a shocked Wanda, who’d just dropped her half-eaten pancake on her levitating plate and is staring with wide eyes at her phone.

She turns to look at the couple on the bed with apologetic eyes and says “It’s online.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this took so long. Holidays.
Everyone was suddenly on their phones looking at articles and reports.

“WHOA! Sorry, I…I clicked on a thing…and there was…you guys doing stuff. Sorry.” Wanda says as she frantically tries to x out of the video without looking.

Peter gets up from the bed and reaches out for the phone.

“Let me see.” He says as he looks down at the unnervingly clear video of him and Tony, grinding up against each other in an empty public bathroom.

“What is it?” Tony asks.

Peter turns the video off and hands the phone back to Wanda before saying “The gala, last November.”

Tony frowns, not quite recalling the gala Peter’s referring to, and Peter elaborates with a blush on his face.

“I wore the red tie and the gold…”

“Oh yeah! And you had to swing off after cause of a car break-in. Jeez, how’d they get that?” Tony wonders.

A realization blooms in Peter’s eyes along with a glimmer of hope as he then says “Wait a minute. The alley, the hotel, this gala. This all happened outside of your property. What if they can't catch us at home?” The hope then slowly fades when he says “But then again…”

“We’ve had a few instances away from home.” Tony says with a grimace.

“I’m just holding onto hope that they don’t have our firsts.” Peter shrugs before looking back at Tony to ask. “So, we’re going with them right?”

Tony sighs in surrender and says “We’re going.”

The team lets out a variety of exclamations in celebrations before Tony waves at them all to settle down.

“Alright, everyone listen up. Despite originally not planning on going, I’ve had most things planned out for the move. FRIDAY’s been shipping our common stuff out to the island quietly this past few days.”

“Island. Tropical?” Clint mumbles as Tony continues.

“Mostly tech stuff, equipment, furniture, hard copies of files and basic amenities. Food, obviously. You guys are gonna have to pack up your personal belongings. FRIDAY’s gonna have another shipment going out to the island at 3 PM. Anything that isn’t on it is gonna have to fly with us on the Quinjet, so keep that in mind. Have the big stuff at the hanger and loaded by 2 PM. What else? FRIDAY?”
The electronic female voice sounds out in the space and says “For digital files, the team’s common files have been sent to the island. Take the time to look over your personal files and download everything to your devices because anything left in the system will be purged by 5 PM today.”

“Any questions?” asks Tony.

“What about funds?” asks Sam.

A different female voice then pipes in with “I’m taking care of that.”

“Hill! Right on cue.” Says Stark, greeting the woman coming in through the door.

“Stark’s money has been transferred to his foreign accounts under different names. Nat has reserves all over the world. The rest of you need to sign over your money and I’ll be transferring them to your new accounts.” Maria Hill passes on a tablet and a stylus to Cap which he proceeds to sign and passes around.

Maria then hands Peter another tablet and says “Mr. Parker, if your aunt agrees to come along, she’s gonna have to sign these too. So, I’ll let you hold onto this. Now, as of a few days ago, you’re all employees at Stark Industries under regularly changing names. We’re keeping the salary modest though, to keep out of Ross’ radar.”

“Any more questions? We’re wheels up at 8 PM.” Tony announces.

“Are you sure you’re in any condition to be travelling?” asks Cap.

“We have to. But we’re keeping it at a minimum. It’s a good thing I packed ahead despite everything. Hill, hold up. Can we trust your people?” Tony calls after her just as she was heading out the room with the signed tablet.

“Of course. And they’re only being told so much.” She reassures him.

“Peter are you cool with other people packing up your dorm?” asks Tony.

“Well, I don’t have a lot of personal stuff there. Couple of clothes. But I do have a laptop and some unfinished components for the suit there.” Says Peter.

Tony turns back to Hill questioningly and she assures him with “Can do.”

“Peter?” Tony turns back to the young man.

“Okay.”

Maria nods and says “I’ll have your stuff on the jumbo jet. Laptop on the Quin?”

“Yeah. Thanks.” Peter smiles gratefully.

Tony’s voice turns into a mumble even as the team starts to file out of the room, with just Bruce left with them checking and disconnecting some of the medical equipment.

“Well, then that leaves your stuff at your aunt’s place…and your aunt.” Says Tony.

“I can pack those up. I’ll just look over my files here real quick, I don’t have much here. A car would be nice though.” Peter chatters along.

But then Tony interrupts him saying “I’m going with you.”
“What happened to ‘keeping travel at a minimum’?” says Peter in a slightly reprimanding tone.

“That is the minimum. I can’t just whisk away her nephew to an island, ask her to come with, and not show my face beforehand.”

Peter sighs and says “So, this is really happening. We’re going to tell her.”

“Not as exciting when it’s not a secret anymore?” Tony teases.

“Shut up!” Peter shoves him gently before he turns to Dr. Banner, slightly mortified, as the good doctor takes out Tony’s IV, making him wince.

“Big baby.” Bruce teases. “Now, just for the record, as of last night, the team approves unanimously and thinks you’re adorable together.”

Peter slumps face first onto Tony’s sheets with a grunt, now entirely mortified.

Once they’re finally alone, Tony continues.

“Well, as sweet as your aunt is, we both know she’s not really a fan of me. So, this might not really change much.”

“She might be less sweet.” Peter warns him.

Tony sighs in resignation and says “Well, I prefer women when their honest. They all tend to not like me to a certain degree, might as well know just how much.”

“You were going to marry a woman once.” Peter reminds him.

“Yup! And whether we’re talking about now or then, Pepper loves me to bits but she also thinks I’m can be a dick sometimes.” Says Tony with a grin.

“You are a dick sometimes.” Peter smiles at him fondly.

After climbing into one of the Avengers’ most inconspicuous, heavily tinted, self-driving cars (which still looked like it at least had the mayor on board), Peter was back on his phone.

“The media really latched onto this story fast.” Peter said with a wince.

“What are they saying?” Tony asks cautiously.

“Bit of good. Bit of bad. Oh, you might want to change the name of one of my suits.”

“Which one?” Tony looks over at him, confused.


“We have a ship name now?”

Peter scoffs and says “I’m surprised you know what a ship name is.”
“Brangelina was my generation, kid. Did you just say top 5 sex positions? We’re more adventurous than that.” Tony says in mock indignation.

“Oh, you don’t have to tell them that. ‘How to Take a Punch *wink wink* Like Spider-Man’” Peter says with a blush.

Color drains from Tony’s face as he realizes the meaning behind the euphemism.

“That’s out there? That Ross really is a grade-A creep. I guess that’s what he meant by you getting ‘stuffed like a turkey.’ Despite the grainy quality, that is a scarily good angle.” Says Tony as he looks over at Peter’s phone and at a still from the video.

The still looked like it was taken by someone looking right over Tony’s shoulder, and up at Peter’s… down there.

“Can we not? Knowing most of the world has already seen this is one thing, but getting comments like that from the Secretary of Creep is a whole different level of mortifying!” Peter grimaces.

“That comment was apparently from one of his goons.”

“What, did they do a mandatory film screening or something?” Peter’s voice becomes higher pitched in his exasperation.

“Maybe.”

“Ugh.” Peter grunts as he slouches in his seat and says “I’m just worried about Aunt May finding out about this.”

Tony takes one of Peter’s hands in his comfortingly before asking “What legitimate news outlet writes about that anyway?”

“It was from one of those gay sex advice magazines. They didn’t post the video, just the one still, but the rest is circulating.”

“What else is up?”

Peter looks back down at his phone and scrolls through more search results.

“Ummm… ‘The Real Spider-Man’ ‘Is Tony Stark Gay?’ Does it need to be spelled out for them?... ‘Stark Industries denies involvement in IronSpider Cover Up’”

“Cover up? We just didn’t tell anyone. It’s my fucking private life.” Tony exclaims as Peter continues to read.

“‘Other Gay Superheroes.’ ‘Iron Man Bottoms.’”

“Yes, he does.” Tony smiles with a proud smile on his face.

“Oh and apparently, ‘Tony Stark is Daddy’.”

“Yes, he is. Ouch!” Tony jumps in his seat after getting a pinch on his side from Peter. They chuckle together quietly, for a moment forgetting that their world is falling apart.

“Oh, you’re gonna love this. ‘Accurate Iron Man Sex Toy is Accurate’”
Tony looks over at the picture on the phone and says “I know it’s a bad time but I am so tempted to tweet that with the words ‘Not to scale’”

“Oh look, something useful for once. ‘Investigation Into IronSpider Footage Leak Underway.’ We already know who did it. ‘IronSpider footage being taken down from numerous sites.’ They’d better be, but we all know the internet is forever. Okay this one is bullshit! ‘The Avengers and Their Gay Agenda’? ‘The Prevalence of Bisexuality Among Costumed Heroes’, ‘Stark Foundation Is A Scam’? What the fuck! ‘Super…”

Peter stops abruptly, catching Tony’s notice.

“What is it?”

“Nothing. Forget it. I’m done looking.” Peter says as he starts to pocket his phone.

“Let me see.” Tony insists, seeing that Peter was clearly upset, wrestling slightly with the younger man for the phone.

“Don’t bother it’s just stupid.” Says Peter as Tony finds his way back to the last page on the phone.

“‘Super Gold Digger’. Those bastards!”

“It’s fine.” Peter insists.

“It’s not fine! I get the celebrity status means they get to ridicule us and privacy is rare, but they don’t get to say shit like that about you. They don’t know us!” Tony’s temper rises red on his cheeks.

Peter takes the phone and proceeds to rub Tony’s shoulders comfortingly.

“No, they don’t. But I expected this. They were always going to talk shit about our contrasting finances when this came out and now it has. The important thing is for you to know that it’s not true.”

Tony’s anger is set aside as he pulls Peter into a tight hug, like he’s willing away that little bit of doubt in Peter.

“Of course it’s not true! My money isn’t worth the trouble I’ve gotten you into.”

Peter smiles into Tony’s shoulder and says “But you are. You’re worth everything. Let them talk shit. As long as I get to keep you.”

They arrive in May’s apartment and immediately Tony asks “Where do we start?”

“You sit on that sofa. I’m doing the packing.” Says Peter.

“We’re on the clock, kid. It’ll be faster if I help!” Tony insists.

“You’re not at a hundred percent yet, Tony. Just take it easy. I’m not taking everything anyway. I can handle it.” Says Peter as he beelines for his room.

“You just don’t want me to find your old Iron Man undies.” Tony calls after him teasingly.
Peter teases back with “What makes you so sure they’re not Cap undies?”

To Tony’s surprise, Peter comes out with 3 boxes in a matter of minutes.

“I already knew where everything was. I just had to find boxes to put them in. Couple of clothes. Pictures. Camera. Documents. Old projects. Sentimental stuff. I found this place near campus… Doesn’t matter now.” Peter explains.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize.” Peter dismisses him with a wave. “We went over this. You. The Avengers. It’s all worth it.”

“I just don’t want you to regret it.”

“There’s nothing to regret. The choice was made for us. If there’s anyone to blame, it’s Ross.” Says Peter with no hesitation in his voice.

Tony sighs and changes the subject. “What about your aunt’s things?”

Peter checks the time on his watch and says “She’ll be here in a few minutes. Give me a sec to take out the hard drive from my PC.” Peter runs back to his room.

A few minutes later, there is a jangling noise at the door. Tony braces himself as the knob turns and the door swings open.

“Mr. Stark?”

Tony felt the need to stand at the sound of his name being called. He opens his mouth to speak but is cut off by Peter sliding back into the room.

“Hey, Aunt May.”

“Peter!” May sets down her bag and runs over to Peter to give him a hug. “You didn’t say you were coming over, let alone with company. I would have made us something to eat.”

Peter gently pushes her away and takes both her hands in his hands.

“I have something to tell you.”

“What is it?” May asks, sensing the tension.

Peter musters us his courage with a breath and says “I'm Spider-man.”

“What? That's...Peter…” May chuckles awkwardly, not knowing how else to respond.

“He is.” Tony confirms, earning himself a frown from May.

May turns her frown away from him and back at Peter, looking the young man over for any sign that this is all some kind of joke. Seeing none, she shivers in distress.

“How could you?...This is...After everything that’s happened…What if...”

“There's more.” Peter winces as he interrupts her. “And it may be worse and you can be mad at me forever for it but we're in dire straits right now and were on the clock so I just need you to listen. The Secretary of State hates super people and is targeting Mr. Stark to leverage cooperation...submission
from the Avengers and he's targeting me to get to him. He knows who I am and he knows what I am to Mr. Stark and says he'll out me...all of me if we don't cooperate. He's not going to stop. He'll always be after us. And if the Avengers don't comply they'll be forced to stop working as they have or get arrested.”

It takes moment for May to sort through Peter’s rambling before she says “So, why don't stop? Peter, this is dangerous…”

“I can’t, May. This world. There are some problem only people like us can fix. I can't stop. They can't stop.” Peter pleads at her. “So, the plan now is to let Ross do whatever he wants. Publish all that he has on us. Go ahead with whatever smear campaign he's got planned. And just leave.”

“You’re leaving?”

Peter nods.

“Just laying low for a bit. Operate out of somewhere they can't get to. Choose our battles.”

“Quinjet’s in stealth on the roof, waiting.” Tony whispers into Peter’s ear but May catches it.

“You’re leaving now?”

“I was hoping you’d come too. Ross. He…He could try and get to you.” Peter insists, shaking her hands slightly.

“What about school?”

“Please, May.” Peter pleads again.

May looks around her, gathering her thoughts, and pulls her hands away from Peter’s grasp.

“What did you mean by ‘what you were to Mr. Stark’?”

Peter looks at Tony, who miles supportively. He takes the older man’s hand and pulls him closer until their arms touch.

“We're together. We've been together since we could be. And Ross...he has footage of us together. His using the grant, the internship and just the association to frame everything the way that suits him best. Let the world figure out that Tony Stark is bedding his intern, the Spider-man. It's probably on the news right now.” Says Peter in a strange combination of sadness and pride.

May stares at their joined hands for a moment then grabs for the remote on the sofa. The screen flickers through channels until May settles for WHIH with Christine Everhart and Will Adams on Newsfront.

“You may have seen the article on DailyBugle.com with the racy headline and the racier photographs of Tony Stark in a compromising position with a young man. This story has been developing further and more footage and photographs have been circulating online. Sources are now saying that the young man is actually Queens’ very own Spider-man.” Says Christine.

“It’s certainly shocking. Everyone thought Stark was straight. I never even considered Pepper Potts was just a beard. They were even engaged some years ago.” Will comments.

“An engagement that was cancelled. And that's not the point. He's a degenerate. Sources say
Spider-man was an enhanced individual doing small time vigilantism in Queens and all of the sudden he's in the big leagues. Why? Cause he's sleeping with the boss.”

“Spider-man was doing some good in Queens.” Will Adams counters.

“Then he should have stayed there. Now, he's mixed up with this defamed organization of enhanced individuals who have no consideration for the law and have caused damage in an international scale.”

“The Avengers have repaired their reputation for a lot of people after they saved us from another alien assault and some people never had a problem with them to begin with.”

Christine shakes her head disapprovingly before saying “Well, they should. We've always known Tony Stark has very flexible morals. And then they reinstated those members who'd been fugitives. Yes, they were involved with the efforts against the extraterrestrials but that doesn't erase their crimes.”

Will Adams tries to maintain his smile as the debate gets heated.

“Some people still think they committed no crimes apart from property damage and the Sokovia Accords were problematic from its inception…”

“Let’s not get into another debate over the Sokovia Accords right now.” Christine interrupts. “I’ve just been given the go ahead to report that Spider-man’s true identity is Peter Benjamin Parker and he’s only 19 years old. 19!”

Peter’s picture from his Stark Industries ID badge flashes on the screen.

“A gifted young man.” Will comments.

“Young and inexperienced. And now he's been recruited, not to mention assigned by the Avengers to handle world ending threats? And he's having an affair with a mentally unstable, morally ambiguous, 48 year old man. And we’re supposed to trust his judgement? How long has this even been going on? He was what...15 during the incident in Leipzig.”

“I'd give him the benefit of the doubt.”

“He's also a recipient of the September Foundation Grant and interned for Stark during his high school years.”

“By the looks of it he deserved that. I've seen his work. He's making waves in the scientific field even as a college student.”

“According to a google search. But maybe he is a bright young mind under Stark’s tutelage. But it’s totally unethical to be in that mentor position and have a relationship with this kid.”

“That sort of relationship is not totally unheard of and with Stark’s own brilliant mind he's certainly qualified to be a mentor. And with Captain America around there's hardly a chance he'd allow an abusive relationship within the Avengers.”

“You mean Steve Rogers who's no longer a captain and is on shaky ground with the law as well. I’d hardly consider him to be the moral compass of the Avengers right now.”
“May, please.”

May turns back to look at them at the sound of Tony’s voice.

Peter is frozen in place, staring at the floor with tears streaming down his face. Tony can’t even pull him into a hug to comfort him. The gravity of the situation is finally dawning on Peter. Despite having read countless scathing articles on the way over, seeing it all laid out on TV with his aunt watching is hitting him harder than he’d expected. This is how the world sees them now.

May walks over to him and cups his cheek. The conflict and confusion is still there in her eyes but she wipes away his tears and sets it all aside for later.

“Yes…Yes, okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Yes I turned Will Adams into a news anchor. Someone needs to rein that Christine Everhart in.
The building has awoken at the breaking of the news. People were out in the corridors gossiping and looking out windows. Two young men, dressed casually but sporting faces unfamiliar to the residents, walk towards a door. Dodging curious looks, they knock.

Inside the apartment, Tony looks up away from a distraught Peter. He let’s go of the younger man’s hand, leaving him in his aunt's care for a moment, and walks towards the door to look through the peep hole.

"It's Hill's guys." He announces, earning him a nod from Peter.

Tony opens the door, hiding from view behind it. The two men, only about a handful of years older than Peter, enter the room and greet him enthusiastically.

"Hey, Peter!"
"Hey man!"

Tony closes the door before people could look in and the smiles on the men's faces fall into neutral scowls.

"Sir, we advise that you take the Quinjet back to the compound.” Says one of the men, a clean shaven East Asian-looking man.

“What about the car?” asks Tony.

“Someone else will be driving it back to the compound.”

"What's that noise?" Peter hiccups through his words as he makes his way toward a window.

"Sir, please come away from the window.” The agent stops him. "There are reporters and photographer outside."

"The corridors are also active. The news is spreading fast." Says the other agent, a blond with a stubbly face.

"You almost done packing, kid?" Tony asks gently.

"Almost. Come on, Aunt May. We need to start packing your stuff." Peter starts to escort May to her room.

"You don't have to pack everything, sir. A team can be sent at a later time." Says the blond.

"Won't the apartment be seized by Ross' men?" asks Tony.

"Seized!" says May, wriggling out of Peter’s grasp.

"Not until they've secured the compound, sir. Intel says Ross wants to avoid initiating confrontation. He's waiting for an admission of guilt. Something like you all vacating the premises.” The Asian man explains.

"Or appearing to make preparations to vacate the premises. They could move in once the jumbo jet gets in the air or even once they see us leaving this apartment. Stealth mode or not." Says Tony,
worriedly thinking out loud. “Status on the team?”

“FRIDAY calculates they’re at 84% done with packing.” Says the blond.

“What about cleanup?” asks Tony, though deep in thought.

“We haven’t started combing through the compound for incriminating material yet sir. Ideally we begin once the jumbo jet is completely loaded.”

Tony takes a seat on the couch, a thoughtful look on his face and a hand on his mouth.

“Get packing you two. I need to think.”

Pete reluctantly leaves Tony to his thoughts and precedes to guide his aunt to her room.

They pack her clothes, shoes, laptop, pictures, cash and medical kit. They also pack Uncle Ben’s favorite shirt, his watch and his wedding ring. They take little favorites and leave the rest behind. They’ve got everything laid out on the bed and are simply arranging them to fit into the suitcase and box they have open, when May breaks the silence.

“Peter.”

“May, please.” Peter pleads.

“I know.” May insists. “And you have to know that where you go I go. But that doesn’t excuse you from explaining all this.”

“Later, please. We don’t have much time.” Says Peter.

“We can talk while we pack.”

Peter closes his eyes as he sighs before admitting “I don’t know where to start.”

And for a moment May doesn’t know either. She then elects to ask “Are you sure about this, leaving?”

“It’s the only way.” Peter says curtly.

“For what? For you to be with him?” ask May.

Peter shows his age with an exasperated tone as he says “This is not all about my relationship with Tony. There are bigger things a stake here. The Avengers! Spider-man!”

“Peter, Spider-man can’t be all you want to be in your life.” May inquires more than says.

“It’s part of it, a very big part. Giving it up isn’t going to be easy on me or the team. And I can’t stay here even if I stopped. The world knows who I am now.” Peter explains, trying to maintain a more leveled and ‘mature’ tone.

“Peter, is there really no other way?” May probes further and though he tries to tone it down, more of Peter’s exasperation comes through.

“What other way is there? Because throwing Tony under the bus isn’t going to solve anything.”

“I wasn’t suggesting…” May takes Peter’s hands in hers to try and reassure him. “I don’t hate the
man, Peter.”

“I know, I’m sorry.” Peter apologizes for his outburst, his red-rimmed eyes glistening with unshed tears once more.

“But I have seen you cry over something this man did twice now.”

“That wasn’t…We weren’t together then.” Peter shakes his head.

“And that matters how? Please explain because from my perspective all I’ve seen is that cocky billionaire on TV and a mentor who’s successfully made you cry and then seduced you.” May pleads.

“I screwed up!” Peter stands up from his seat on the bed.

 “…like I said I did then. It wasn’t to do with the internship…well it was, kind of.” Peter admits. “It was something I did as Spider-man. He saved my ass and a lot of people’s lives that day. And this, this isn’t his fault. The Secretary of State is strong-arming the Avengers by blackmailing Tony. He’s even threatening to imprison the Avengers again. I am just a small piece in his scheme and the best thing I can do is help get us all somewhere safe.”

May stands up to embrace him as he ends his speech in tears.

“When did it really start? How? And don’t try to make it sound better than it is. Illegal or not. If it’s a bit awkward to say. Whatever. I just need to know. Lay it out for me.” Says May as she rubs his back comfortingly.

Peter pulls away and sits down once more. He’s silent for a moment, thinking on what to say.

“I was Spider-man for a while before he came into my life. He reached out because he needed help and he thought I could do some good in the world. The internship was just a cover for a while but then we got close and we realized we worked well together. He thought it was a crush at first. He started to see it. How I acted around him. How I worried about him. I was 16 when I told him that I loved him. I was so afraid that I would lose it all because of what I said. But we kissed that day”

“Peter.” May squeezes his arm comfortingly.

“Nothing happened for a while.” Peter reassures her. “We set it aside because we knew it wasn’t the best idea. When I turned 17, he… He didn’t plan it. And I didn’t plan on seducing him either. He just wanted to hang out on my birthday, show me he cared despite not getting to be together. But I pushed and he didn’t have much fight left in him.”

May nods, beginning to understand.

“He told me he loved me that day.” Peter says with a teary-eyed smile.

Gaining his bearing a bit more as May wipes away his tears, Peter take May’s hand this time.

“He’s just a part of why I’m doing this. So much is at stake. This is my life, all our lives they’re trying to dismantle. And I am going to fight for it for as long as I can. And I’m sorry it ended up this way, I never wanted you to have to uproot your life for me. But right now, this is our best plan. If it was just about me and Tony we could just whether the storm. Just walk down the street like some run-of-the-mill celebrity couple, paparazzi at every turn, pretend like nothing…”

Peter pauses suddenly.
“Peter? What is it?” May asks, concerned.

Peter takes a moment to respond, a thoughtful look on his face.

“Let’s finish up here.”

Peter carries the box and May rolls out the suitcase into the living room. The Asian agent is keeping an eye on the corridor through the peep hole and the blond agent was looking out the window but keeping out of sight. Tony was no longer in deep thought but was now distracted by the news program on the television, looking distressed.

“Pepper Potts, CEO of Stark Industries, has broken her silence with regards to Tony Stark’s latest scandal. Take a look at this.”

Pepper was coming out of a building when she was barraged with questions by a mob of reporters. Pepper took it all in stride but Tony couldn’t help but feel guilty that she now has to deal with this.

“Miss Potts, did you know of the affair?...When did it start?...Did Tony Stark begin the affair during your engagement?”

“Tony and I have maintained a friendly personal and professional relationship. I have known of his relationship with Mr. Parker for some weeks. No, he did not cheat on me. There was no cover up. Tony and Peter’s relationship began in secretive though completely legal circumstances. And I feel they had every right to keep the relationship private for as long as they did, longer even if only the party responsible for the leak allowed it. Frankly, I find the timing of this supposed scandal rather convenient considering that the reformation of the Sokovia Accords is still underway. No further questions.”

Peter places the box he carried on top of the other boxes and makes his way to Tony. Having nothing much to say, he simply embraced the older man from behind the couch, rubbing his chest comfortingly with his fingers.

Tony took one of Peter’s hands in his, held it tightly over his heart for a moment before giving it a kiss.

“All packed?” he asks faintly.

“That’s everything.” Peter smiles sadly and kisses Tony on the forehead.

Peter then turns his attention towards the agents and says “There’s no need for a team to come back here.”

“Ms. Hill insists on a cleanup here as well. She doesn’t want us to get blindsided with anything they might find here.” Says the blond.

“Well we could buy ourselves more time for that. Make a diversion. The car…” Peter suggests.

“Screw the car.” Says Tony.

“Or screw Ross.” Peter suggests.

“I’d rather you didn’t.” Tony quips.
“We get to mess with him and buy ourselves more time, for them to get to work, for us to get away. Trust me. I have a plan.”

Peter turns towards the Asian agent and asks “Can this all make it to the jumbo jet?”

“Yes sir. It’ll be up in the air and in stealth in 45 minutes.”

Peter nods and says “Then go ahead and take it there. And the cleanup?”

“We have a team on standby on the roof.” Says the blond.

“Call them in.” says Tony.

“How are personnel getting to the island?” asks Peter.

“On the jumbo jet.” Says the Asian agent.

“May, go with them. We’ll take the car.” Says Peter.

“What why?” asks May, ready to protest.

“Trust me. Please.”

“We’re gonna buy some time. Distract them from the jumbo jet’s departure.” Tony backs Peter.

“Why can’t we all get on it?” May demands.

“We can’t all fit and there are things that need taking care of before our departure.” Tony further explains.

“What about Peter?”

“We’ll be right behind you on the Quinjet, Aunt May.”

There are no words. No words can express the worry Peter already knows May feels. They embrace and May departs with the two agents, sparing one last look at Peter before the door closes.

“She’ll be fine. We’ll be fine.” Tony squeezes his hand.

“Yeah.”

“So. Diversion?” ask Tony.

“I have a plan.”

Tony and Peter descend to the lobby before the cleanup team comes for the boxes, drawing the building’s residents’ attention. Peter had never been that close to their neighbors, so no one talked to him on the way down. They just gawked at them and took not-so-sneaky pictures with their phones.

They stop a few steps away from doors, out of sight from the windows.

“Ready?” Tony asks.

“This is a terrible idea.” Peter says as he fidgets with the sleeve of his sweater, covering the suit
underneath unnecessarily.

“It was your idea.”

“Exactly!” Peter looks up at him pleadingly.

“It’s not a terrible idea.” Tony assures him, shoving him gently towards the doors.

Peter opens the doors and is instantly bombarded with questions and camera flashes.

“Mr. Parker, have you had word from your university on the matter of your conduct.”… “Have you secured a job at Stark Industries?”… “Spider-man, are you an Avenger?”… “How is your relationship with Tony Stark in the wake of this scandal?”

Having been obscured by Peter and the doors, Tony bursts out with his best smile and says “Well, I think we’re doing pretty well.”

The questions were then directed at Tony.

“Mr. Stark, when did the affair begin?”

“Come on, guys! I think our privacy has been violated enough for one day.” Says Tony, passive aggressively Peter notes.

“Any comment on people calling this relationship abusive?”

“Those are completely unfounded!” Peter who’s been struggling to get his bearing was suddenly called to action by the question.

“How does your family feel about the relationship?” The reporters turn the questioning back at the now responsive Peter.

Seeing Peter struggle still, Tony cuts in.

“Okay guys, here’s your statement. We just got done talking to Peter’s aunt about Peter moving in with me. We like our privacy and we figured that’s how we can best have it. That scoop juicy enough for you?”

Tony hooks his arm with Peter’s and they make their way towards the self-driving car, when another reporter asks “Peter, what about university?”

Peter looks to Tony, takes a deep breath and finds his voice.

“The school’s not shown any disapproval as of yet. But in all honesty, in the wake of this breach of our privacy, I think I’ll be taking a break for a bit.”

Peter thinks he should have ended it at that but nervous talker that he is, he keeps going. “It’ll give us time to work on projects we’ve been wanting to do but haven’t, since we’ve been keep things discrete.”

“And maybe a vacation.” Tony, knowing him well, cuts in to salvage the situation.

“Why keep Spider-man a secret?” asks another reported.

Peter looks up at Tony for support again before answering. Tony gives him a calming smile.
“I’m a student and it just seemed like something that could get in the way of having a normal college experience and it might pose a security risk for the school.”

“What does this mean for the Accords reforms?” shouts another reporter but Tony opens the car door for Peter before they get pushed for anymore answers.

“Alright guys, we gotta go.”

“Well that set the stage.” Peter huffs as the crowd fades away behind them.

“That was your idea wasn’t, swing the narrative in our favor?” Tony smiles at him proudly.

“Moving in. Maybe a vacation.” Peter reminds Tony of his input.

“Well, we did just pack.” says Tony.

Peter chuckles in relief. “Your move, Ross.”

“Where’s he gonna get his admission of guilt now?” Tony says smugly.

“He could still blast the Quinjet out of the sky. ‘S why I sent May ahead of us.” Peter warns.

“But then that’ll be on him, cutting our ‘vacation’ short. God, I love how smart you are.”

Tony pull Peter into his lap, tickling the younger man's neck nose and bristly chin.

“I wouldn’t call my idea smart. Petty, maybe.” Peter giggles.

“Well if this all goes to shit and he gets us, at least we got him too. But when we do get away, he can say whatever he wants, but we will be out of his reach.”

Peter cuddles into Tony’s chest for comfort. Tony smiles down at him, holding him close and kissing his brow. It's been a long day but it's not over yet. Knowing things could still get worse before they get better they savor this moment of quiet, bracing themselves for what's to come.
This took forever! I know. I'm sorry. But it's here now.

They're walking up the lawn, holding hands, when Peter breaks the silence.

“Those people back there seemed…civil.” says Peter. "Not like some of the stuff I read online. And not just the media, my neighbors and those people outside too. They just seemed curious more than anything else.”

Tony gives a humorless chuckle in agreement.

“Yeah, well the internet is a magical yet disturbing place. A lot of different opinions out there but the people who write the articles manages to distil all that noise down into the angriest of voices.”

“Had to deal with that a lot being Tony Stark huh?” Peter squeezes his hand tighter.

“Yeah. The internet’s noisier now than before but those good old’ tabloids would print anything. Though I have to admit, I gave them a lot of material when I was your age.” Tony says with a shrug.

“Promising Young Stark Heir Partying Til Sunrise?” Peter suggests.

Tony hisses at the memories. ‘That’s mild for me.’

They walk up the steps and into the main building.

The compound seems darker and even more silent than last night, if that was even possible. It would seem they missed the chaos of packing when they left. Now the halls were empty, dressed with the bare minimum in furniture, wall fixtures and Tony’s least favorite art. All things that can be fetched by personnel at a later time should they prove to be worth the bother.

Tony and Peter walk on through the corridors with a deep sense of grief. They were getting away. They have a chance to live their lives as they wanted; with each other, with the team, doing good in the world. But now at the eleventh hour, they feel the weight of the things they’re leaving behind. Friends, family, places and material things, things they won’t be seeing in person in a while, if ever again.

Peter thinks it might be easier for the more guarded or unattached members of the Avengers. No connections but to the team, no attachments to things and places but only to necessities. But arriving in the operations room, he finds that there is little ease for anyone.

Natasha turns away from the monitor showing the status of the move and video footage of the hangar interior, and gives them a tired and dejected smile.

“Nice job with that media bait, boys.” She greets them but not really managing the elation she intended to convey.
“Thank you very much. It was mostly Peter’s idea.” Says Tony, his pride in Peter no less true, just less energetic.

Peter looks at their faces with a sad but understanding smile.

They built this together. It started as a mission involving less people then they have now. A motley crew of misfits. Brilliant minds and warriors who’d all been dragged through hell, each carrying their own little bit of baggage. And somehow, despite the bad and the difficult, they built this.

“Jumbo jet?” Tony inquires.

“Went up without a hitch.” Says Natasha.

Peter shakes himself from his maudlin thoughts and asks “Aunt May?”

“She was a bit worried, but some of the team and Clint’s family already went ahead with them. Laura should be able to reassure her.” Nat smiles at Peter sympathetically.

“The power of Laura Barton’s mom-face.” Tony quips with a reassuring pat to Peter’s shoulder. “Peter’s stuff get here okay?”

“Yeah. Made it into the jumbo jet just in time.” Nat then turns to Peter to say “There’s a backpack with your laptop and other tech on the Quinjet too.”

“Who’s left on the Quin with us?” Tony asks as he looks over the data on the console himself.

“Cap, Barnes, Sam and Wanda.” Says Nat.

“So, Vision, Clint, Bruce, with Rhodey flying the jumbo jet.” Tony reiterates.

“Figured, one powerhouse per team. And I also figured we’ll probably get the brunt of the trouble if there’ll be any so I sent Bruce ahead.”

“Good. Can’t put all our eggs in one basket. Then of course there’s our decoy basket.” Says Tony as he points to another jet on the screen.

“Auto-pilot?” asks Peter with a frown on his face.

“Of course. This isn’t The Dark Knight Rises.” Tony quips.

“You do remember the ending of that movie right?” asks Peter.

“Yeah. Vacation.” Says Tony while wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

“So, how about we get this vacation started huh boys?” Nat shoos them away.

“I assume the data purge went without a hitch as well.” Asks Tony before walking on as instructed.

“Yes. Just shutting down this console and anything left will be wiped automatically and all controls transfer to the Quinjet.” Nat replies as she does just that.

“So we’re all set?” asks Peter.

“Not quite.” Says Tony.

“What else needs taking care of?” Nat asks dubiously.
“My suits.”

“You didn’t ship them out with your lab equipment?” asks Peter, a heavy feeling settling in his stomach.

“New components, my notes…the irreplaceable stuff I shipped out. I can always build new suits but I might need more than one tonight.”

“You’re deploying them to guard the jets. Can’t you do that remotely?” asks Nat.

“Yup! But I don’t want them to be noticed unless absolutely necessary.” Tony turns to Peter to elaborate. “And as it turns out that cloaking I was working on is still a bit fiddly.”

And their worries are confirmed.

“Fiddly.” Nat repeats the word in a disapproving tone.

“Technical term.” Tony says with a shrug.

“Tony!” Peter reprimands.

“Suit up kid and get on the Quin.” Tony deflects.

“I’m not letting you do anything reckless tonight, Tony.” Says Peter.

“Ms. Romanov, please escort Mr. Parker to the Quinjet.”

“I’m with the kid on this one, Tony.” Nat says with crossed arms.

“I’m right behind you. Go!” Tony insists.

“We’re home free, Tony. Don’t be extra.” Peter insists back.

“Don’t speak millennial to me. You know I don’t understand it.” Tony whines jokingly, failing to shift focus.

“You know exactly what extra means. You practically embody it daily. Please don’t get into any heroics right now.”

“Says Spider-man.” Tony grumbles.

“Tony!”

Tony huffs and concedes. “Fine! Would you prefer to accompany me instead.”

“Yes, please.” Says Peter with an unamused look on his face.

“We’ll see you on the Quin, Nat.” says Tony.

Ignoring this, Nat looks inquiringly at Peter to which Peter nods.

Nat turns back at Tony and says “I’ll see you both on the Quinjet, Tony.”

Stressing the man’s name before walking away.

Peter doesn’t even wait for Tony, walking ahead towards the lab, with his arms crossed and his steps heavy. Tony trails behind him contritely.
“So, fiddly?”

Peter looks over the suits with a frown on his face and his hands on his hips.

“Yup.”

Peter waves his hand to summon up hologram charts pertaining to the twelve suits standing in formation before him.

“Looks fine.”

Tony walks up to the one directly in front of them and smacks the chest panel with an open palm.

“It flickers from impacts.” Says Tony as veins of light dance on the surface of the panel.

“Ah. Which one are you wearing?”

“This one.” Tony answers smacking the suit again at the shoulder, the panel there producing the same lights.

“Midnight blue?”

“Fiddly, flickery cloaking panels. I thought I’d go with something less showy. See, I’m being careful.” Tony makes his case.

“I appreciate that.” Peter crosses his arms. “But you can wear showy armor inside the Quin.”

“Then what’s the point of the armor?” Tony barely holding back a whine.

“Precaution.” Peter suggests.

“Peter…” Tony begins to argue.

Peter cuts him off and says “You almost choked on your own sick just a few hours ago. You’re not going out there. Now, put on your showiest armor, deploy the other suits and come with me to the hangar.”

“You’re not going to baby me for this entire vacation are you?” asks Tony in whiny tone.

“No. Just until I know you’re better and we’re in a Thunderbolt Ross free time zone.” Says Peter.

“You think Sam and Rhodey aren’t going to be out there when shots start firing? Tony says with a huff.

“If shots start firing. And they weren’t sick this morning. What is it with you flyers anyway and this superhero compulsion to fight an aerial battle in the open…”

“You do remember trying to steer a plane from the outside with your webs once right?” says Tony.

“…when we have a perfectly safe and functioning plane up there?”

“The Quinjet doesn’t have a tail end shooter.” Says Tony.

“Yeah. Cause that would be so difficult for you, Tony Stark, to add on.” Peter says sarcastically.

“We need to get on that perfectly safe plane now.” Tony says, trying to change the subject.
“Fine! Get in your Midnight Blue suit. I'll just hold you down if you even twitch in the direction of the Quin's rear door.”

“In front of company!” Tony says with an exaggerated gasp.

“Don't turn this into a sex thing you know it works.” Peter scolds but fails to hold back a smirk in the end.

Tony chuckles and pulls Peter into a tight embrace.

“Does it now?” Tony says in a suggestive tone.

“I have less years on me which means I have far less self-control. And Midnight Blue does actually suit you.” Peter admits, earning him a kiss on the forehead.

“I promise not to be 'extra' tonight.” Says Tony but the holds up a finger to say “Except for emergencies. And you're right, there might not even be any shots fired.”

“Don't jinx it.” Peter reprimands mildly.

“I have a lucky charm to counter jinxes and he's right here.” Says Tony as he cups Peter’s cheek.

“This is really happening.” Says Peter with a thoughtful look in his eyes.

“It is. But we’re gonna be fine. We’re gonna fight to be fine if we have to. And I’m actually really looking forward to having this trip with you so definitely no stupid shit from me.”

They share a quick peck on the lips and a long and tight hug.

Tony then proceeds to put on the blue Iron Man suit and then deploys the others.

They climb into the Quinjet hand in hand. The tension is thick inside the jet but Tony, as always, has a quip ready to lighten the mood.

“Thank god, Cap's not flying!” says Tony, pointing at Nat and Bucky sitting up front in the new dual-pilot Quinjet.

“Save the jokes for later. Strap in.” says Steve as he straps in himself. “And for the record I can fly a plane just fine.”

“So, why is Barnes and Nat flying?” says Tony.

“Wouldn't want to end up in the bottom of the Arctic.” Bucky replies.

“My winter coat’s on the jumbo jet.” Nat adds.

And Wanda goes with “I get nervous in water landings.”

Steve rolls his eyes before saying “Haha. Everyone's got jokes. Let's go!”

Everyone takes their seat, the rear door closes and the aircraft starts to rumble.

Sam turns to Tony and Peter to ask “How was it? The packing. The media.”

And Tony replies with “Tedious.”

And Peter goes with “Strangely brief.”
“Final data purge complete. Disconnecting Quinjet from console.” Nat announces.

“And we are ascending.” Says Bucky.

“Red Herring ascending from East runway.” Nat adds.

“Did you seriously name the decoy jet Red Herring?” Peter asks Tony with an amused frown.

Tony simply replies with “Joy can be found in the little things.”

Around two hours in and the flight has been uneventful so far, not at all what Peter imagined escaping the country would be like but he isn’t complaining.

“Status on the others.” Cap inquires.

“ETA on the Jumbo jet 20 minutes. Red Herring is over the Arctic.” Says Bucky earning a snigger from the team apart from Steve.

“Is that a joke?” asks Steve.

And it’s Tony that replies with a “Nope.”

“You know there could be no one watching us and you're going to waste a plane for a joke no one will see.” Says Steve.

“Not a joke. It's just over the Arctic. We're not crashing it there.” Tony insists.

“Anything on the radar?” Steve asks with a huff, continuing with his checks.

“Nothing. We just passed by an Emirates flight like 15 minutes ago.” Says Nat.

“I bet they have better service over there. Do we have in-flight meals?” says Tony, turning to Peter to say “I knew we should have went for drive thru before coming back.”

“Shit!” Nat exclaims.

“What is it?” asks Steve.

The Iron Man helmet encases Tony’s head and from behind the mask, Tony says “Red Herring is taking fire.”

“That’s what decoys are for. Evasive maneuvers?” Steve asks Nat.

“I can still fly the thing but they’ll figure out that that jet’s empty sooner or later.” Nat replies.

There’s an explosion on the monitor and Bucky comments “That’s aggressive.” as one of the Iron Man suits guarding Red Herring is blown to pieces.

“That’s one of yours!” Nat points out.

“That bastard! I could be in one of those!” says Tony.

“Exactly my point.” Peter mumbles as he shares a look with Tony.

“Ross seems to have no qualms about blowing us up.” Sam comments.

“He’ll just say he’s getting return fire. The man has no morals.” Says Tony.
“Anybody on us?” asks Cap.

“Nothing on radar.” Says Bucky.

“What about the jumbo jet?” asks Peter.

“They’ve arrived at the destination.” Says Nat.


Wanda closes her eyes to concentrate and for a moment, there’s no sound but the buzz of the jet. But then Wanda gasps.

“BUCKY! GO LEFT!” shouts Wanda and the jet veers left, a missile zooms by their right.

“Hold on everyone!” says Bucky as he continues to steer erratically as per Wanda’s instructions.

“They must have something blocking our instruments. I can’t see them on the monitors until they’re really close.” Says Nat.

Peter closes his eyes for a moment, drawing Tony’s attention.

“Peter, are you all right?” asks Tony.

He opens his eyes and says “I can sense them too.”

“What?” asks Cap.

“My senses. I can take over for Wanda so that she could…if we’re all willing to get on the offensive here.” says Peter, looking around the room.

Cap looks at the faces of his teammates, getting a consensus from their expressions.

“If we have to. Wanda?” Cap calls to her, Peter taking over giving Bucky instructions.

“Let’s do it!” She replies, removing her seat belt and grabbing onto straps on the ceiling for stability.

Tony gets up from his seat too and pushes the button for the door to open.

“I’ll go defense, you go offense.” He says as he magnetically stabilizes himself on the floor and lifts up his repulsor gloves towards the coming fire.

“How much offense are we talking here?” Wanda shouts against the wind.

“Just enough for them to remember!” Tony shouts.

Wanda reaches out with her fluid energy, the red light making the two enemy aircrafts more visible. She uses her powers to impede their acceleration to the point that, though they are still moving, the space between them is growing.

“I can’t hold them for long! They’re too strong! It’s harder the farther we get!” says Wanda.

“We can’t lead them to the island! We need cover.” Says Sam.

“This thing’s still got juice. I can lose them in the clouds ahead.” Says Bucky.

“Can you block their visual even for moment?” Steve asks Wanda.
“Yes!”

“Bucky! Say when!”

“NOW!”

Wanda releases a burst of light and once she does, the Quinjet accelerates. Wanda and Tony lose balance, winded from the jolt and unable to fly themselves back into the jet. Peter catches them with his webs just in time.

Once they’re covered by the clouds, the jet slows down. Sam and Steve haul the two Avengers off of the edge and away from the doors. Steve hits the button to close it.

Sam and Steve slump back into their seats. Wanda is sitting, panting on the floor while Tony lies down completely.

Tony’s mask flips up off of his face and he breathlessly says “Yay. Team work.”

“Well, I can’t say the same for the decoy jet but I think we’re clear.” Says Nat.

“Yes. They’re not following us anymore.” Wanda concurs.

“What about the other suits?” asks Steve.

“The ones with Red Herring are gone but ours are keeping those fighter jets busy while we get away.” Tony answers, still a little out of breath.

“Are you okay?” Peter asks Tony is a panicked tone, then catching himself and asks “Is everyone okay?”

“Good save kid.” Tony says chuckles.

Steve gives everyone a quick look over, smiles and says “Everyone’s okay, Peter.”

Peter blushes but then realizes there’s no reason to. He can be worried about Tony more than anyone else and he can do it openly. Because everything is now out in the open. And because what Tony said was true. That was team work. This is his team now. People he knows will have his back. Not just as Spider-man but as Peter Parker.

Peter Parker is an Avenger.

And as he hauls the love of his life up from the floor and holds him close to his chest, the future doesn’t seem so bleak anymore. Though it may not be a vacation they are going to, as Tony likes to say, it is a new beginning.

Chapter End Notes

That's all folks!

Maybe I'll make an epilogue/spinoff/oneshot or whatever but this is the end of this.

Thank you to everyone who stuck around and I hope you enjoyed the journey.
End Notes

Comments are appreciated.

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