Walking The Wire

by emquin

Summary

Tony Stark always knew about Peter Parker. He didn't know that Peter was going to get superpowers and become Spider-Man, but he always knew about Peter because Peter was his son.

This will span from pre-Iron Man up through the rest of the MCU (eventually including Infinity War) and will be for the most part canon compliant except where I've taken some liberties and interpreted canon a certain way.

Notes

This fic was originally meant to be a one-shot but it has turned into something else. I have a lot of it already written, but I still un-edited so I'll be posting as I edit, but I also want to get the rest of it written. This is going to be very canon-compliant with my own interpretations and additions to canon.

I've been using the Collider MCU timeline to keep everything canon.

This fic's title is an Imagine Dragons song which is really fitting for Peter and Tony. Enjoy.
Someone requested an index of what chapters cover what movie so here it is:

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

2000

The fact of the matter was that paternity claims came in all the time. They weren’t an everyday thing, but they happened often enough that Pepper had actually gone through the trouble of creating a folder for them just so she could keep track. Jarvis helped to make correlations between the ones that were fairly possible, but everyone knew that while Tony liked to keep his bed warm that he was also a stickler for protection. Still, every contraceptive was only 99.99% effective so there was a whole set up to verify pregnancy and paternity if there even was a pregnancy. Some girls just showed up trying to get a marriage out of the claim, while others wanted a hand out. Pepper gave them nothing. Tony left it in her deft hands -- just like everything else -- and things just went on.

Then, came Mary Fitzpatrick.

Pepper had met Mary sometime after Mary started working for Stark Industries. She stood out a bit in part because her background wasn’t in mechanics but instead bio-chemical engineering. Pepper didn’t know the logistics behind what Mary did for Stark Industries, but she knew that Mary was a good conversationalist, absolutely brilliantly smart, and that she was beautiful. She looked the part of the kind of girl that Tony went for, but Pepper thought she was too smart to get ensnared in that web.

Mary had worked for Stark Industries for about a year before she met Tony. It happened at an office party and Pepper remembered seeing Tony break away from Obadiah to speak to her and had known that Tony would either charm Mary or get shot down hard.

Pepper knew everything about Tony and was in charge of almost every aspect of his life, so she was well aware of the moment when Happy picked Tony and Mary up and drove them back to Tony’s house.

Tony and Mary became friends. It surprised Pepper, at first, because Tony never befriended the women he took to bed, but she shouldn’t have been surprised because Mary was different and she seemed to keep up with Tony when it came to all the science talk. Tony even invited her into his workshop at SI a few times and they seemed to work well together. Pepper saw promise in the partnership and she could see how easily Mary could change Tony for the better.

2001

Two months later, Pepper found Mary crying outside her office.

Mary just whispered two words. “I’m pregnant” and Pepper knew. She invited Mary into her office and gave her a drink of water and let her calm down before asking if she was sure.

Mary gave her the full story. She had a long-distance relationship with a man named Richard Parker. He was in New York City but it was temporary and he was moving out to California to be with her and in the meanwhile they had an open-relationship to make things easier. Mary hadn’t expected for Tony to come into her life the way he did and she definitely didn’t love him. Mary loved Richard. There was no possible way for Richard to be the father and Mary hadn’t allowed herself to see anyone else in any sense except for Tony.
“So what do you want to do?” Pepper asked.

“I can’t have an abortion,” Mary said at once. Then, unlike all those other women claiming to be pregnant and carrying little Starks, Mary demanded that Pepper never tell Tony.

“I’ll talk to Richard. He’s -- he’s very understanding and we always wanted to have children. Tony doesn’t want kids. He doesn’t need this and this life he leads is not one that a child should be introduced to. This is my two weeks notice. I just need you not to tell Tony.”

Pepper couldn’t keep it from Tony. Not only did she not want to try to keep it a secret, but she knew enough about Tony Stark to know that secrets were not things he handled well. What he did handle well was being told how something was going to be.

“Mary Parker tendered her resignation. She’s pregnant, Tony.”

Tony’s expression was surprise and he was at a loss for words for once.

“She is leaving for New York in two weeks to her boyfriend. She doesn’t want anything except to be left alone. She’s going to raise the baby with her boyfriend or on her own. Mary didn’t even want me to tell you but I figured you should know.”

Tony responded just as Pepper had expected him to after the immediate shock had blown away.

“Set up a fund for the kid,” Tony said, “make it accessible on his or her 18th birthday and make sure that Mary gets some sort of paternal support. She has the right idea, you know, I wouldn’t be good for a baby.”

Mary sent Pepper pictures and stories and little tidbits about her and Tony’s son over the next four years and even though Tony never acted like he was interested, Pepper showed them to him and had Jarvis keep a file on him. Peter Parker was a beautiful boy with chubby cheeks, a huge smile, and just a tuft of brown hair on his head. His brown eyes were Tony’s and Pepper suspected that he would look more and more like Tony as he got older. Even though Tony had been reluctant to look at the pictures, once he did he seemed to be fascinated by them but even then he didn’t ask to contact Mary or ask to meet his son.

Every year brought more pictures and stories and a toddler Peter looked more and more like Tony had in the baby pictures that Pepper had found once in an old photo album. It was almost sad that they didn’t actually know Peter.

Then, Mary and Richard died.

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2005

Pepper found out when May Parker called searching to Tony and for a long moment Pepper had feared that this woman who wasn’t even related to Peter by blood wanted Tony to step up and take his son or that worse she wanted some sort of incentive to keep the secret of Peter’s parentage. Having worked for SI for long enough, Pepper was well aware of how horrible some people were.

She was surprised when instead, May said: “My husband and I are going to take Peter in. He’s a wonderful kid and it’s what Mary and Richard wanted and specified in their will. I just figured that you might want to know. That Mr. Stark might want to know where his son is. He’s in good hands, Ms. Potts. Mary told us about Peter’s father and she always felt respected because Mr. Stark followed her wishes. These are her wishes.”
To Pepper it had felt a little bit like May was making sure that Tony wasn’t going to try and get custody because as Peter’s father he had more of a claim to be Peter’s guardian than May Parker did.

Since Tony had never expressed interest in actually meeting Peter, it felt better to just let May and Ben Parker take Peter. They were his family, after all, and Tony had only gotten worse since Mary. He had men and women both in and out of his bed and Pepper was just the face they saw in the morning on the way out. No one ever got as close to Tony as Mary had and while there were still paternity claims, none were true or Tony’s in one case. That girl had been happy the baby wasn’t Tony’s and so confused that Pepper had had to wonder about where he’d picked her up in the first place.

May didn’t send updates as often as Mary did, but she always sent a thank you note after all of Peter’s birthdays for the birthday gift that Pepper picked out and sent with Tony’s signature -- which she had perfected over the years. Along with it usually came a few pictures and tidbits about Peter’s day to day. Even though his parents were gone, Peter seemed well adjusted and happy.

Pepper knew that it didn’t matter what May sent because Tony looked in on Peter in his own way through Jarvis. He had files on him that had things like his school reports and medical records and all kinds of things that Tony really shouldn’t have had and yet there they were. He still sent money for Peter too and when that wasn’t enough made sure that Peter went to the best school in New York City, even if he was still just entering elementary school. He cared in his own ways, a care that intensified in some ways after Mary and Richard died.

Then, Afghanistan happened.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!
You can also find me on tumblr where you can totally come talk to me about this fic or just anything else MCU related.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone that's read, commented, and left kudos! This chapter takes us to Iron Man, I hope everyone enjoys it.

A note on the timing: When I started writing this story I did indeed perceive it as happening in 2008 when the movie was released but due to all the time plotholes in the MCU, it's actually suggested that it actually takes place in 2010 even though there are plenty of in-movie references that make that difficult. The date 2008 is all over the movie. I'm going off the Collider MCU timeline which seemed to be the most coherent out of everything I looked up but ultimately one line in Civil War and a "eight years later" timestamp in Homecoming has us in this position.

2010

Peter Parker was eight years old and even he understood when his aunt was worried about something. He didn’t know what that something was, but he knew that she stared nervously at her computer screen sometimes and that she and Uncle Ben had whispered conversations. It reminded him a little bit of the days after his parents died -- even though he didn’t remember much from that time having only been 4 years old -- and how May and Ben just didn’t seem to know what to do with him.

It went on for weeks. Once, after school, he saw her talking on the phone and she was wiping tears away. She tried to smile his way but it never reached her eyes. It almost made Peter worried that someone else had died.

A few months passed before whatever had been worrying her just faded away and Peter didn’t think on it again.

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“I want contact with the kid,” Tony said. His arm was still in a sling and his head was throbbing almost as bad as his chest but that didn’t matter. There were things that Tony needed to do and all of those were far more important. One of them was the kid. Peter.

Back in the cave Yinsen had asked him: “Do you have any kids, Mr. Stark?”

It had been on the tip of his tongue to say no, but then Mary had popped into his head followed closely by Peter, a boy that he had only ever seen through pictures who he was never going to meet.

“Yeah. One. His name is Peter.”

He vowed in that moment that he would get to see Peter once he got out of that cave. It kept him going as they dunked his head in water and then later while he and Yinsen worked and he hauled that car battery around. As he invented and created with just the scraps from weapons he himself had created, he thought about Peter. Never once did he admit to Yinsen that he didn’t even know Peter,
he just told him he wanted to see his son.

“I don’t know if that’s possible, Tony,” Pepper said, “he doesn’t know you’re his father and I don’t know if the Parkers would want him to.”

Tony didn’t know what to say. This was what he had chosen long ago. It had been easier to know there was a child and yet not be involved because Tony would never make a good parent. He remembered when Mary and Richard died, though, and the tiny moment where he had considered stepping up because at that point he had been the only parent that Peter had left but May and Ben had stepped up instead and even though they didn’t share any biological ties to Peter, they seemed to be good people and Peter was lucky to have them.

“I’ll try and figure something out,” Pepper offered to his silence. It was something.

In the meanwhile, Tony needed to start working on a new arc reactor. He also needed to start figuring out exactly what direction he wanted SI to go. The arc reactor tech gave him options but Tony still needed to figure out exactly where he wanted to start. And no matter how much Obie seemed to be impressed by it, he knew that he wasn’t happy with Tony’s decision and with the way that Tony had announced it to the public. Tony just hoped that he could turn that around and show his business partner that they could do something other than weapons.

He didn’t tell anyone when he started to work on Mark II. Rhodey and Pepper were aware that Tony had built himself a suit to get out of the cave, but they didn’t know that he intended to build another. Tony was so lost to his work that he didn’t press Pepper about Peter and like always he just left the company for Obadiah to take care of assuming that his friend and business partner would just do as Tony asked. He should have known better from the moment that he was asked to stay out of the spotlight and from SI entirely. Having Christine Everhart show him how his weapons were still being used by the enemy against innocent people had made him angry enough to know that there were other ways to take care of the problem. Even then, he’d been too naive to realize the extent to which Obadiah had betrayed him.

A few months later and Tony was glad that Pepper never got back to him about meeting Peter. He was crawling in his workshop trying to get ahold of the first arc reactor sure that he was taking his last breaths. He couldn’t imagine what it would have done to Peter if they began some sort of relationship just for Tony to die.

Afterwards, after Tony had taken down Obie -- no, Stane -- and almost died himself, all he could do was hold on to Pepper. Pepper who had been instrumental in the death of his mentor and father figure -- the man that had lied and tried to kill him and had probably hated him for most of his life. Tony was glad to be rid of him and yet Stane had been such a huge part of the aftermath of the death of his parents. He should have known better than to trust him because Howard had always had bad judgement. It was just that Tony had been grieving and Stane knew the company better and Tony didn’t want the responsibility or the work. He wanted to hide out somewhere and tinker.

Stane’s death was easy to move past after all the headlines started coming in about the blown building and Iron Man. Tony felt some pride at hearing the name. It was a proper superhero name sort of like Captain America. It made him feel incredible to know he had created the suit and even more that he was the one in the suit. Pepper, he could tell, disliked the whole idea of it. Rhodey was blown away and excited by it and Tony didn’t have the heart to tell him yet that he wouldn’t be sharing it with the U.S. Military. Tony really was out of the weapon business and while the Iron Man suit could be considered a weapon it was also something else entirely.

Pepper introduced him to Agent Coulson the next morning as Tony was putting in his new arc reactor. Coulson debriefed him, told him he was on some kind of list, and that they were taking care
of details of what had occurred the night before. No one could know what really happened. Hours later Pepper called for a press conference and despite all the plans he told the world he was Iron Man. It was only afterwards that he realized that bringing Peter into his life now that he was a self proclaimed superhero wasn’t a good idea. He really should have kept to the cards.

Still, after everything was said and done, Tony still looked up the Parker’s address and he flew the Iron Man suit out to New York and he looked in on them from afar.

Peter was small and thin and adorable. His hair lay messily atop his head and he seemed to smile and laugh easily as he walked on the street with his aunt and uncle. He looked happy. Tony was glad.

Later that night when he returned to Malibu, Tony found Nick Fury in his living room. Tony didn’t know what to make of Fury. He held himself with authority and yet he spoke to Tony as if he respected him. Fury wanted to form some sort of team and he wanted Tony to be involved. It sounded more like an idea than anything concrete, but there was an appeal to it that Tony couldn’t necessarily deny. Either way, neither he or Fury set anything in stone and Tony didn’t hear from Fury or Coulson afterwards so he supposed it didn’t matter.

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“Iron Man,” Peter said.

The whole superhero thing had come out of left field for May and Ben. They had heard about Stark Industries and the blown up building in California like everyone else did and perhaps they were a little more invested in news about Stark, but no one had expected for everything that followed.

The media had been shaky on the reporting of the incident, no one sure exactly what had happened except that there were eyewitnesses claiming two robots had been fighting on a freeway and all of it had sounded strange and convoluted.

Then, images had appeared of who was being dubbed, Iron Man. It did look like a robot and yet the newscasters spoke about it as if there was an actual person inside it. There was a whole political todo about it too with some of the more conservatives members of congress calling out for some action to be taken against whoever Iron Man was.

In the end, it came to a head when Tony Stark held a press conference and declared that it was he who was Iron Man. Ben and May shared a look over Peter sitting between them who had latched on to the whole superhero thing with gusto.

“I guess he’s really turned over a new leaf,” Ben said.

“Yeah,” May said, “a dangerous one. I’m glad that -- well, I’m glad things are the way they are.”

Ben nodded and leaned over to press a kiss on her cheek.

“It’s so cool, Aunt May,” Peter said, “there’s a real superhero like Captain America from the comics.”

Ben grinned down at Peter and nodded. “Sure is,” he said, “you know Iron Man’s dad is said to have made it possible for Captain America to be a supersoldier.”

“Really?” Peter asked.

May stood up, but not before ruffling Peter’s hair. When it came to comic books and superheroes it had never been her thing. But now there was a person out there really living that life and she
shouldn’t have been surprised that it would be Tony Stark. He was eccentric and brilliant enough to pull it off. She just hoped that it wouldn’t directly hurt Peter.

Chapter End Notes

So I know this feels a bit rushed and actually the reason for that is that I hate to repeat the movies to a point where it is pointless. The first few movies will be covered in shorter scenes just due to the fact that I'm not altering anything almost at all. However, I did like the idea of adding in thoughts and perceptions for things. Later on there will be more things that my plot will start to fill in and weave into. Also just the fact that this was going to be a one-shot and so I didn't want to spend too much time on some things. It's part of what I'm editing now. The chapters will remain relatively short just due to how long it takes me to edit things and because I just want to get content out faster.

thanks for reading!
This fic now has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Heavy Pepper chapter. I really thought her perspective in Iron Man 2 was important just because she didn't know that Tony was dying and I feel like the way her character was portrayed in this one was interesting.

Thanks to everyone that's reading! Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

2011

Pepper didn’t know what to make of the new Tony Stark. He hadn’t actually changed too much where it mattered, but his kidnapping had made him aware of the wrong doings that he had been a silent part of and with that had come change. Pepper appreciated that Tony wanted to do the right thing. She just didn’t like that to do that he needed to be some sort of superhero. She didn’t like that he spent even less time working and more time running off in the Iron Man suit. Every time she saw him on the news she feared that something might go wrong and he wouldn’t come home. Tony somehow didn’t seem to see her fear as valid. He was much too sure of himself.

Pepper felt like she was the only one worried about Stark Industries, too. Tony put the ball moving when he invented something new or innovated something else, but he wasn’t concerned by their stock, or by the lack of profits made since he had completely shut off weapon manufacturing and then destroyed the weapons that they still had in stock. SI had other forms of revenue but they had never been truly invested on or seen as important which could be blamed directly on Stane but also Tony who had never pushed for them.

In the meanwhile, Tony wanted to resurrect the Stark Expo. Tony had been all of four years old when the last one was held and yet he wanted to bring it back. That to him seemed to key to bring the company back to what it used to be.

“It will make things better, Pep,” he said, “it will bring a lot of bright minds together and it might give us some sort of path in which to take SI because sustainable energy is good but we need more than that.”

Pepper still thought it was a waste of time. It was a waste of time and resources and Tony put too much of the planning on her even though he was the one that wanted it to happen. He was too charming for his own good, still trying his hardest to make Pepper admit that there was something there between them. His flirting was getting old. Pepper didn’t want to admit even to herself how good it felt to have Tony see her that way. She also didn’t want to admit that Tony was actually serious because lately there had been no one to get rid of in the morning.

Two months into the planning something changed. Tony didn’t detach himself from planning or from Iron Man, but he felt distant none-the-less and while he still flirted with her, he didn’t push as much as he had before. Instead, he was burying himself in work. At first she thought it was the arc reactor technology and Tony losing himself in his work as he was wont to do, but he wasn’t acting that way. Jarvis hadn’t informed her of Tony spending more than a full day in the workshop. It was something else and Pepper could tell that it was bothering him even if he didn’t want to say anything
about it.

For a small moment, Pepper had even thought that it had something to do with Peter, but Tony hadn’t brought up his son again even if she was well aware that he had gone over the line of checking in and stalking a long time ago. It was a good thing they had Jarvis and very secure server.

“I just want to know that he’s okay,” Tony said in defense of his antics.

“He is okay,” Pepper said, “we both know that. You just want to know his life as intimately as you know yours.”

“I’m his father,” Tony said.

“Yes. But you’re not his parent.”

Pepper knew he would never change his ways and it was really sweet in it’s own way how Tony cared.

By the time the opening day of the Expo rolled around, Tony almost seemed reluctant to go. Pepper wouldn’t have been entirely surprised if he skipped out on it. She was too busy in California dealing with the company to go to New York, but she saw the coverage as she worked and hoped that Tony would stick to the script and wouldn’t do something crazy. Surprisingly enough he didn’t go out of his way to make things difficult. It gave her some peace of mind and she actually poured herself a glass of wine while she worked.

Then, she got a call from Happy. Tony was driving to Washington D.C. because he’d been served to appear before the Senate. Pepper got on Tony’s private jet at once and flew out for the hearing.

They really should have seen it coming. Ever since Tony had refused to sell weapons for the U.S. Military they had been trying to find a reason to go against him somehow. Worse, no one had even tried to give Tony a heads up that a summons was coming. This was where Pepper would have expected Shield to step in, but they hadn’t. Either way, Pepper was sure that Tony could handle himself. Sure enough, Tony did. It was almost amusing if a bit embarrassing and yet Senator Stern deserved all of it. More even for involving Rhodey’s report of the Iron Man suit in the hearing. Seeing Tony there essentially using every ounce of charisma and brilliance to turn it around made Pepper sure that she had been wrong about there being something wrong with Tony.

Afterwards, when they parted ways with Rhodey and she and Happy went with Tony to the airport, Tony seemed distracted again. It was as if he were trying to figure something out that just wasn’t working for him.

When he made her CEO hours later, Pepper started questioning Tony’s motives again but in some ways she knew that Tony felt it was the right thing to do. Pepper was in some ways more capable and more qualified to run the company, but she had never expected to be put in charge just like that. To go from assistant to CEO was insane and unheard of, but Tony Stark did things his own way and Pepper decided it was better if she went along with it. If Tony ever wanted the position back, then she would give it up gladly.

After that, all the stress from before tripled and quadrupled. Suddenly she was both CEO and Tony’s assistant and Tony wanted her to take over at once. Pepper had to get the transfer papers ready and find a replacement for herself even as she felt the pressure of needing someone to do things for her as well. She met Natalie Rushman when she went in search of SI’s legal team.

Natalie was not someone that Pepper had ever seen before, but she was the first to offer to help and
she was fast and meticulous. Natalie was impressive, and Pepper almost felt a little bit like the time when Mary had become her friend and then Tony’s lover and friend all at once, especially once Tony met her.

They had actually had to seek him out at his own house to get him to sign everything over and suddenly Natalie was in the boxing ring and Happy was on the ground and Pepper found herself liking her even more. She didn’t like that Tony seemed smitten and already trying to maneuver to have her become his assistant. Pepper felt like she was being thrown aside for a new model and it didn’t help that Natalie didn’t seem to want to rebuke Tony. It was a lawsuit waiting to happen. So naturally Tony got exactly what he wanted.

Tony made Pepper go to Monaco and went ahead and invited Natalie too before he somehow ended up driving his race car as if that was the reason he was there.

Pepper could have been more cognizant of the spiral of self destruction that Tony was having after it all went down and they were back on the jet and headed home and yet she just had so much else to deal with and think about and Tony just wanted to run away from the problems and Pepper just couldn’t. She should have listened when he mentioned wanting to cancel the huge birthday party that was planned seeing as it was completely out of character for him, and yet it was the last thing that Pepper wanted to think about so she brushed it off. That was a mistake.

She arrived at the party a little late to a drunk Tony wearing his Iron Man suit and she knew things were not going to end up well. They didn’t. Pepper felt like a whole slew of new problems were placed before her as Rhodey actually took one of Tony’s suits and left destruction in his wake.

Somehow even though Tony had hired Natalie as his new assistant, it was Pepper that needed her help the most and Natalie didn’t seem inclined to not help her. As expected, she excelled at her job and Pepper could find no fault in her. Natalie also found a way to make things with the Expo easier even as Pepper detested the whole event.

The Expo was still under way and Pepper hated that an event that she hadn’t even wanted was still very much her responsibility. Passing some of the work on to Natalie felt good, but Pepper still had to make an appearance there especially since the media didn’t like that Tony had appointed her CEO. They all thought she was sleeping with him. It didn’t bother Pepper what the media said, there were other things that were more important.

There had been plenty of presentations and new inventions and new tech that like Tony had suggested would bring along new ideas and SI could hope to fund and manufacture and profit from some of it. He was right. Tony was just absent from seeing that he was right and he seemed to be single mindedly working on something he wasn’t telling anyone about. He didn’t even seem that concerned about Ivan Vanko or anything that had gone down in Monaco.

Somehow Justin Hammer had managed to get himself a full presentation slot at the Expo and Tony had allowed it because while he disliked Hammer, Tony was amused by Hammer and how easily he failed.

Pepper had been impressed with how quickly Hammer Tech took on the Military contracts because everyone knew that Hammer didn’t produce anything of quality. Tony had laughed himself silly when he heard and Rhodes had been just a smidge offended. So it was a bit ridiculous that Hammer would be featured at the Expo even if Tony had only allowed it to see him fail.

Still, all of it infuriated Pepper because Tony had spiralled into something worse than the drinking and the picking up of inappropriate people. He had become a liability for his company and for his work as a superhero. He was downright dangerous and as much as Pepper cared for him, she didn’t
have the time or patience to deal with his particular brand of bullshit. It hurt a little to cut him off and send him on his way out of an office that had once belonged to him and that Pepper was lucky to occupy, but his erratic behavior was not something she wanted to add onto an already heavy plate.

Natalie tried to make excuses for Tony as they flew into New York, but Pepper had known Tony long enough to know some things just couldn’t be excused.

After Tony saved her from that exploding drone, and after Natalie gave away that Tony had been dying, and after it turned out that Natalie was actually Natasha, and after Pepper quit being CEO, and after Tony actually kissed her, Pepper felt like she had been wrong on too many accounts. She was also angry because the signs had all been there and he had almost died and she wouldn’t have known.

Afterwards, Tony just said: “When I wasn’t looking for a cure I was flying out to New York to see Peter. I had my will revised. One day he’s going to know who he is and I do want him to be my heir.”

Pepper didn’t tell him that May and Ben had taken Peter to the Expo multiple times since it opened because Peter was obsessed with Iron Man and Tony himself because not only was he a superhero but he was genius and Peter loved science. She didn’t tell him that Tony was Peter’s hero even in spite of all the bad press he’d been getting. She kept it front him that she had even given the Parkers all access to the Expo from the moment it opened and that Peter had been present during the Hammer presentation.

Chapter End Notes

I mostly have the next chapter edited already which will actually continue on with Iron Man 2. It will probably be up Thursday when I have the time to post mostly because I'm going to see a production of Sweeney Todd tomorrow in NYC that I'm super excited for.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter Notes

This one continues with Iron Man 2.
Thank you to everyone that's read and left kudos! Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter didn’t know how Uncle Ben and Aunt May managed it, but one day after school they gave it to him. The all access pass that they had gotten him for the Stark Expo for the full year. They all had passes because they didn’t want to go alone, and Peter just knew that it must have cost a lot. Money that they really didn’t have because Peter had already resigned himself to knowing that he wouldn’t be going to the Expo. In fact, when he went and looked it up on the website there was no such thing as an all access pass. There were passes for the opening night and for the closing night and for some of the presentations but the actual Expo was free admission when it came to everything else which would have been enough for Peter even if he didn’t get to see all the cool things that everyone was excited about.

In the end, the passes were only used a few times. The night it opened, a few weeks later when both Aunt May and Uncle Ben weren’t busy, and then the night that Hammer Tech was making their presentation mostly because everyone knew he was unveiling some sort of Iron Man related project and Peter wanted to see how badly it went. He just knew that no one could replicate Iron Man.

The first time on opening night it had been ten times better because Tony Stark had gotten out of the suit and actually talked about science and Peter had known then that he wanted to work for Stark Industries in the future. Uncle Ben had told him once that his mom had worked there before she got pregnant with him but he didn’t know much else and he didn’t think that Uncle Ben did either. Peter just knew that his mom must have been super smart to have worked for Mr. Stark and that he wanted to follow in her footsteps.

The night of the Hammer Tech presentation became entirely more interesting the moment that Iron Man arrived, but even before then Peter had been enjoying the show. Then, everything turned to chaos. Somehow, in the commotion he lost track of where he was going. Uncle Ben had bought him an Iron Man mask and Peter had been so excited to be wearing it when Iron Man showed up that he just had it on in the middle of the crowd of running people fully understanding that something bad was going on, but safe and secure behind his mask. Then, one of those things was singling him out and Peter was stupid to think that pretending to be Iron Man would keep him safe.. He was lucky when Iron Man himself showed up and shot the droid away. He even thanked Peter and for a moment Peter felt like he was important, but the feeling faded away as the realization of what had just happened settled on him.

Moments after that Uncle Ben found him and Uncle Ben actually picked him up and they ran for it with the rest of the crowd. Somehow they ended up in a car that wasn’t a Taxi or for that matter theirs but someone was driving them away. While Aunt May looked him over, he tried to tell them about Iron Man but they were too distracted to listen.

The next day on the news they showed how much had been destroyed of the Expo -- basically of it - - but they confirmed the bad guy was dead and that the accomplice, Justin Hammer, would be going
to jail. Tony Stark and his friend Colonel James Rhodes were receiving awards.

“He’s a good man that Tony Stark,” Uncle Ben said.

“Of course he is,” Peter said, “he’s Iron Man.”

Peter didn’t see his aunt and uncle share a look, but he felt May run her hands through his hair.

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He wasn’t dying. Somehow despite how much Fury and Shield had been responsible for his lack of dying, he was solely a consultant to them when it came to the Avengers Initiative due to Natasha Romanoff’s view of him. Tony pretended that it didn’t matter when in all actuality it left him a little cold mostly because Natasha had been almost like a friend and yet even up close she hadn’t wanted Tony and didn’t understand that he was Iron Man. Either way, he knew that the Avengers wasn’t ever going to happen the way Fury wanted it and that Tony would be included when it mattered because he couldn’t not be.

There were other things that didn’t include Shield to worry about. Pepper had quit being his CEO, but not officially, and Tony was looking forward to convincing her to keep the job. Howard had provided a new element to him and suddenly the arc reactor tech was all that Tony could think about because clean energy was the future and it was all within his grasp and he needed Pepper at his side in every way possible to make it happen.

When he go back home, he found both Pepper and Rhodey at his place. They were looking at the mess he’d made and yet they were both there.

“So you were dying and you started giving your stuff away,” Rhodey said and shook his head. “You keyed me to the suits. You let me take that suit -- made sure I took that suit.”

Tony shrugged. “If it couldn’t be me, then it was going to be you,” Tony said. “You were getting the suits and Pepper--”

“Was getting the company,” Pepper said. “You had it all worked out and didn’t think we’d want to help you or be here for you?”

“That was the whole point. No one could help me and there was nothing to be done that I hadn’t tried and I didn’t want those looks of pity and sadness and so I didn’t tell you. It was easier. It made things easier.”

“On you, maybe,” Rhodey said, “and I don’t think it actually helped. Did you think about us at all? About how we would feel?”

Tony had. It had crossed his mind time and time again. So had Peter and what it would do to him when he was given Tony’s company and his trust fund but there was no Tony left for him to know.

“I’m sorry,” Tony said, “but this was hard enough without the two of you knowing.”

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“The first one has to be in New York,” was what Tony said after they decided to start building new Stark buildings with the arc reactor tech. They would be prototypes to spread out over the entire world in part of give Tony landing ground for Iron Man business and also because the company needed the infrastructure.
Tony had spent a long time after he was no longer dying working out exactly what his father had wanted to do when it came to clean energy and then improving on it. He had also looked into the new projects that Pepper had taken on for them and pushed until she remained CEO and he could take a role in research and development which meant that stock for SI was up and better yet, so were their profits.

Tony designed the building himself and made sure that the top floor would be Iron Man friendly and Tony Stark friendly. Pepper only kissed him and rolled her eyes when she saw all his plans. Tony was still a little in awe of how Pepper hadn’t just written their kiss after the fight at the Expo off as a result of the two of them not dying and instead turned it into an actual relationship. It was something new for him, but it was good.

“Are you planning on moving to New York City any time soon?” she asked.

The truth was that he was. He wasn’t in direct contact with Peter or even his aunt and uncle but he was certainly keeping track of them. When he had time he flew out to Queens to see him from afar and sent gifts and monetary help when he felt it was necessary. Tony looked out for them and he wanted to be even closer. May was still in contact with Pepper and she sent along stories and pictures and all kinds of things that Tony appreciated because it had such a nice touch when it came from May and yet it was starting to not be enough.

“I think I should,” Tony said.

Pepper eyed him. “We run SI from California,” she stated.

Their relationship didn’t come without hurdles, but Tony had never felt the way he felt about Pepper about anyone else before. She was everything and Tony truly loved her. It was easy to love her and to see how much better his life was when she was in it.

“I won’t live there all the time,” Tony said, “but I’d like to try out the new building for myself and I’d be closer to Peter. I think -- I think it’s time he knew who he is.”

Just as everything was being settled to start building, Tony got a call from Fury. Tony had seen like everyone else, the footage of The Hulk and The Abomination fighting it out and he had wondered about Shield’s involvement in the whole thing so it wasn’t too much of a surprise that he was asked to go on a recruiting mission even if he didn’t understand why they weren’t recruiting The Hulk. Tony had looked into Bruce Banner and he was impressed by the other man because he was a genius in his own right and a far better recruit than the one that Shield wanted.

In the end, General Ross didn’t go for the offer and Tony didn’t think it was a huge loss. A part of him was offended that Blonsky would be asked to join the non-existent team that he was only a consultant of. Later Rhodey laughed at him when he explained what happened.

“I think they sent you in to botch the deal, Tony, I don’t think anyone would have wanted that guy. I guess even Shield has it’s politics.”

“Don’t I know it,” Tony muttered.

Chapter End Notes

I think it's been confirmed that the kid in Iron Man 2 was Peter somewhere, but even if
he wasn't I definitely wanted to use that. Also, since I re-watched the movie while writing this it seemed like he showed up twice. Once at the opening of the expo and later when Iron Man saves him.

And now we're heading onto The Avengers in the next chapter. Should be up tomorrow or the day after. thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Two chapters in one day and we've made it to the beginning of The Avengers. I'm loving all the response this is getting and I hope you stick around. Enjoy.

2012

“Is Tony Stark moving to New York City?” Peter asked.

May Parker was in the middle of cooking dinner and she didn’t know what Peter was talking about. Ever since Tony Stark had told the world that he was Iron Man, it hadn’t come as too much of a surprise that Peter started singing his praises. He had never known of anyone that was as smart or as inventive and amazing as Tony Stark and on top of all that he was a superhero and Peter was obsessed. A part of May didn’t know what would happen if Peter ever found out that his hero was his father and that his father had made the choice to stay out of Peter’s life. She hoped it wouldn’t break his heart.

May knew that in his own way Tony Stark cared. He made sure that they never wanted for anything and that Peter in particular got anything he wanted. Tony had made sure that Peter could attend good schools that encouraged kids like Peter who were curious and interested in learning. Had Peter had an interest in sports she was sure that he would have made that happen too. Tony also paid for Ben’s car when it was crashed into while parked outside their house and he had gone as far as to pay their mortgage too and refused to admit to doing either thing when they tried to speak to him or Ms. Potts about it. The Stark Expo passes had been a gift and a nightmare after everything that happened there. It was the first time that May was glad Peter didn’t have direct contact with Tony because the danger would just be too much.

Then, of course were the other gifts. Science kits and books and all kinds of things that May and Ben had to slowly give out to Peter before it became too suspicious. Sometimes, Tony even sent money directly into their bank account and those were the gifts May hated the most except that the money always came only when they really needed it. It made May paranoid that Tony was monitoring them closely.

“They’re saying that the new building in Manhattan is Tony Stark’s,” Peter said, “and everyone’s saying he might be moving.”

“Well, he has plenty of money to have more than one place to live, Peter,” May said.

“I guess,” Peter said, “but wouldn’t it be cool if he did move?”

May laughed. “Yes. Very cool. Except that it might bring the bad guys to New York just like with the Expo.”

“But Iron Man would protect us,” Peter said.

May just smiled. “Yeah. He would,” she said.
May was still entirely grateful to Tony’s team for getting them out of the Expo. Somehow they had known that they were there and even in the mess of people running away had found them and put them in a car that sped them away across town.

“Do you think I’ll get to meet him someday?” Peter asked.

May nodded. “I think that it’s very likely you will, Peter. Now get back to your homework or we won’t have movie night tonight.”

She heard his book open again and when she glanced at the screen in the corner of the kitchen sure enough they were discussing the building of Stark Tower. They listed the sustainable energy movement Tony was trying to start and showed some footage of Iron Man flying into New York City.

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Somehow, the move to New York City didn’t ruin his relationship with Pepper. Tony had thought it might because Pepper insisted that she needed to work out of California for the good of the company. She seemed to do a lot of things for the good of the company and Tony appreciated it, even when it felt like Pepper was more focused on that than him. Then again, they were slightly obsessed with their own work. Still, it helped that Pepper could fly out on the jet without much preamble and that Tony could do the same with the Iron Man suit so they saw each other plenty.

Soon after getting into the city, Tony had reached out to May and Ben Parker and let them know that he was going to sticking around. He had made it clear that he had an interest in Peter but that he wouldn’t approach him without their consent or get in their way. Ben had returned his e-mail.

Mr. Stark,

We really appreciate everything you’ve done for Peter. He’s a really special boy and he hero-worships you. May and I are thankful that you allowed Mary to make a choice on what she wanted to do with her boy even if it meant excluding you from his life. You’ve made yourself known anyway. Peter isn’t aware that Richard was not his father -- I know you know this -- but it is true that you are. I don’t know if Peter needs to know about that right now. He’s still so young and I wouldn’t want him to think that you did not want him or have any interest in him.

Peter is like a son to me and May and we really have tried to do our best to raise him. He has a normal life away from all the attention that you seem to attract. There is attention and danger in your line of work. I do not want to keep you from Peter -- as he is your son -- but there are factors to consider, Mr. Stark, and I would hate to put Peter in any danger or any emotional turmoil.

For now, I think it best that we continue as we have in the past. I admit that Peter has been very excited since you’ve moved to New York and he’s seen Iron Man flying over the city a few times. He wishes to meet his hero and yet would be a nervous wreck if he ever did meet you whether as Iron Man or Tony Stark. He is fan of both. I don’t know how that would translate if he were to find out that you are his biological father. Someday in the future, I suppose we will deal with that.

I do respect the care and interest you have in our boy and I do hope that someday the two of you can meet. In the meanwhile, May and I will send you everything we can to keep you up to date. May says that she might even suggest to Peter that he can write you if only so you can have some form of contact. I know that he would love it if you, his hero, responded.

Thank you,
Ben Parker
As far as e-mails went, Tony agreed with everything that Ben Parker said and he meant it, that he would do as they asked and so despite being a little disappointed, Tony continued to watch Peter from afar and to sometimes try and be seen near Queens hoping that it could give Peter some joy to see Iron Man.

In the weeks leading up the tower being completed, Tony was so busy that he didn’t remember Ben Parker had said Peter might write him until a letter arrived back at the Malibu house and Pepper flew it out with her on the night that Tony was finally turning the tower on.

“It was sent directly to your house,” Pepper said when she handed the letter to him, “so I figured it was probably Peter.”

Tony opened it at once and sure enough it was from Peter.

Tony had received lots of fanmail over the years. Back before Iron Man some of it had been more in the lines of hate mail but even then there had been fans. Mostly from people fascinated by his work. High School students and College students and plenty of others in between. Then there was the other kind of mail. The weirdly porny mail that came in with full on pictures of men and women alike in all states of nudity and descriptors of everything they wanted to do to Tony. Those had always creeped him out a bit and not stopped at all since he became Iron Man. So, for the most part, Tony didn’t look at the fan mail. There was someone at Stark Industries that dealt with it and actually sorted everything. When they found something from a genuine fan they sent them back a pre-written letter thanking them and then if they found something particularly nice or moving they gave it to Pepper and sometimes she would respond personally or pass it on to Tony to see.

Most of those were drawings or touching letters from people that Tony had directly helped or whose children wanted to write to him. It was all very sweet.

“I think I’ll read it later,” Tony said. He wasn’t sure if he could handle reading his own son’s words.

“Okay,” Pepper said with a small caress to the back of his neck.

“I have to go turn the tower on,” Tony said with a grin. “Are you ready for this to become reality?”

Pepper nodded. As Tony went to suit up, she sat down in front of his computer screens and Jarvis patched her in through he flew out. It was all done quickly and when Tony flew back STARK was lit up as was the rest of the tower. It looked exactly as he had imagined it and because he had designed it, he knew that it was going to work. It meant they could break out the champagne and have a proper celebratory date night. But first, Peter’s letter.

Before he got a chance to read Peter’s letter, they had an unexpected guest that changed the entire course of the evening. Agent Coulson hadn’t shown himself since he’d sent Tony in to talk to General Ross and Tony wasn’t particularly in the mood to deal with Shield so he wanted him to go away. Instead, he persisted and Pepper actually liked Coulson so somehow his plans for the night were changed and he was left to look through all the files Coulson had brought him and Tony would be lying if he said they didn’t interest him. Somehow, he forgot all about Peter’s letter.

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed writing this one in particular the Peter and May scene just because Peter’s just always nice to write and of course he’s been a fanboy for forever and it's just
an irony I love in terms of May and Ben because they know the secret. Thanks for reading everyone. I'll try to get the next chapter out soon. Sometime this weekend for sure.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Thank you to anyone that's read and stuck around to keep reading, you guys are wonderful and I'm so glad you guys are enjoying it. This is one of my favorite chapters. I think I got really excited about writing this fic around the time I wrote this chapter.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

People always said that meeting your heroes wasn’t all it was cut out to be and while Captain America had certainly been a part of his childhood in more ways than he should have been, Tony had almost been excited to meet him and probably would have been even more interested if it hadn’t been for the current threat. Of course, he hadn’t expected for Steve Rogers to judge him before even meeting him. He also hadn’t expected for Steve to be everything and more and to actually fit into the role of the person that Aunt Peggy had told him about. He didn’t even want to think about how Steve filled out his uniform.

As it turned out, the whole team thing had been a bad idea and Tony realized it almost as quickly as he realized that Shield wasn’t telling them everything.

But then, when the world really needed them the team thing worked. It worked really well. Tony just hated that it had come at the price of Coulson’s life.

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Peter was super excited when the field trip was announced, especially when it was to the American Museum of Natural History. It was one of Peter’s favorite places to go and he regularly begged Aunt May or Uncle Ben to take him and they did every once in a while. They hadn’t had time to go lately so it was even more exciting to see what new exhibits they had added.

Then, the day finally came and Peter couldn’t wait to get to school. The last time his school had gone on a field trip it had been over to Ellis Island and that just hadn’t been as fun.

The whole day was going well. May had packed him a good lunch and Peter got to sit with Ned on the bus on the way there. They had been placed in different classrooms this year which meant they didn’t see each other as much, but they still went over to each other’s houses after school all the time.

They toured the museum in small groups and were supposed to stay close to the chaperones they were assigned to. Ned and Peter had been put together luckily and so they whispered to each other with every exhibit they saw. Everything was just so interesting and Peter loved learning new things.

It was after they had finished their lunch and were going back to tour the last few exhibits that it happened. People were screaming and the whole building shook. Then there was something loud like an explosion and everything was chaos and Peter was thrown aside as people started running. Ned somehow grabbed him and they held hands as they ran after other people even if they couldn’t see their classmates or teachers anywhere.

People were running out to the street, but when Peter looked out, it looked like things were even
worse out there. He and Ned saw some sort of flying ship go past. They were being attacked by aliens!

“Peter, Peter, we have to go. We have to go.” Ned was saying and he was crying and someone slammed into Peter’s shoulder.

“Where do we go? Have you seen Ms. Martinez?”

Ned was shaking his head and suddenly someone that worked at the museum was asking people to stay inside and Peter figured that it probably didn’t matter where they went because it wasn’t like the aliens or whatever were aiming for anything specific. The building shook again. More people ran out.

Peter tugged at Ned and they moved back but another crowd of people were coming and they were pushed close to the doors and then they were outside and outside it was chaos.

Peter knew that somewhere in the chaos was Iron Man and that made it a little easier to let Ned lead them away. Police officers were trying to get things under control and somehow they found themselves going into another building and then down to the basement. As they passed there were reporters outside trying to get footage of what was going on and when Peter got to glimpse at some of the screens he saw that Stark tower was at the center of it all. That’s when he remembered that Uncle Ben worked near Stark tower and that he had definitely gone into work.

Somehow Mrs. Martinez had ended up the in same basement as Peter and Ned and she called them over when she saw them. There were a few other kids from the trip with her too.

“Oh, thank god,” she said, “we lost track of you. Everyone else is here.”

She actually hugged each of them.

They were down there for a good while before someone came to let everyone out. The streets were a mess, but it seemed that the attack was over.

Mrs. Martinez got on her phone and Peter and Ned stuck to her side with the other kids while everything was being arranged. He didn’t remember getting on the bus again, but he did remember looking out the window and how the whole way there he could see smoke and what looked to be parts of the aliens on the streets. The entire time he was worried about Uncle Ben.

The chaperones had started letting kids call their parents and Peter was waiting for Ned to get off the phone with his mom to try Uncle Ben and Aunt May.

---

Captain America saved him. Ben had been walking across the street to grab a late lunch when the wormhole opened up over Stark tower. Like everyone else he had stopped and stared until it became clear that real actual aliens were coming through and that they were set on destruction. He was pushed inside the cafe and things just started going from bad to worse. Everyone was trying to stay inside and out of the way but watch at the same time and Ben just knew that none of them were safe where they were. After all these were aliens and whatever they were after, it didn’t matter to them what they destroyed or who died.

The police was outside but even they couldn’t do much and then as Ben finally decided to get out, he saw Iron Man fly by with some giant alien thing chasing after him and Ben hoped that Tony Stark would come out of it alive. That was Peter’s father and one day Ben did want them to meet and have some sort of relationship.
Ben was trying to run with a few others to get out of the fray when something from above came spiraling towards them. Ben saw his life flash before his eyes, but before anything could happen someone had pulled him out of the way. When Ben looked, it was Captain America from all those comics and reels and Ben couldn’t believe it because it was him -- the same guy. Ben would have known him anywhere and it wasn’t someone else wearing his uniform.

Then, he saw him throw a shield and take down one of the aliens and Ben came back to reality and quelled the inner fanboy and had to listen to the police officer leading him and the others to safety.

There was a tv inside and some of the battle was being shown and Ben saw Iron Man, Captain America, and others. The aliens just kept coming and they just kept fighting and Ben didn’t think that things were going well until suddenly Iron Man was flying towards the wormhole and Ben couldn’t breathe.

“He’s not going to survive that,” someone standing behind him said.

“Could the suit keep him alive?”

“It’s Tony Stark, but even he wouldn’t have planned to go into a wormhole,” someone else said. Ben didn’t want to think about it. He didn’t want to process that he might be watching Peter’s dad die. He watched with bated breath as Iron Man fell back out of the wormhole as it closed, but he just kept falling.

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Tony tried to call Pepper. She didn’t answer.

The HUD went black.

Space was before him and it was vast and threats were all around them.

He thought about Peter. His son. As he fell away from the alien ships and everything started to get fuzzy, he thought about how much he wished he had met him even if just the once.

He woke up to Hulk’s scream.

---

Peter felt like he couldn’t breathe when May hugged him, she held him so tight. Ben’s hug came next and Peter was just glad that the three of them had made it. He liked how tight they held him and how May didn’t seem to want to let him go.

The news was playing in the background on their tv, replaying the moment when Iron Man had been woken up by the Hulk. Peter was a bit fascinated by the team of heroes that they were calling The Avengers. He was even happier that Iron Man was still alive.

---

Tony saw the letter when they went back into the tower for Loki. He had forgotten all about it, and all about Peter until he had been dying. He picked it up and while Thor dealt with making sure Loki didn’t get away, Tony opened the letter because he couldn’t put it off any longer.

Dear Mr. Stark,

I don’t know if you actually read these, but my uncle said it’d be a good idea if I wrote you. I think
he just wanted me to stop talking about you and actually tell you how much I admire you and Iron Man and just everything you’ve done. And I do. I do admire you. I think you’re so cool, Mr. Stark. Iron Man is amazing.

My aunt told me that your building in New York is going to sustain itself and I just know that’s going to be useful. So I guess I also just want you to know that I want to work for you one day. My mom worked for you, did you know that? Mary Parker. My uncle says that she was smarter than anyone she’d ever met before.

I went to the Stark Expo last year and I saw you there and it was the best thing ever. I really liked all the new things people are coming up with and one day maybe I’ll be a part of it.

I don’t really know what else to write or that any of it could even be interesting to someone like you. I’m sure you’re really busy doing amazing things and saving the world. I’m just a really big fan and I hope I get to meet you one day.

Peter Parker

It was like a lot of the other letters that Tony received from kids except that it was Peter that had written it and this was the first time that he was getting any kind of contact with him and Tony read it twice. He needed to meet him. He could have died and he wouldn’t have ever met him.

“J, make sure to scan the letter and add it to his folder,” Tony said.

“Of course, sir,” Jarvis responded and then, “Ms. Potts is calling. Should I patch her through?”

Tony gave a nod. He was still in the Iron Man suit, but someone had broken the faceplate off and Tony didn’t know where his phone had gone.

“Yes, patch her through.”

It was lucky that the tower hadn’t gotten completely destroyed during the fight. It was still going to need some rebuilding, but Tony was glad that at least Jarvis seemed to be wired and so when Pepper appeared on one of the screens he rushed over.

“Oh, Tony,” she said and he could tell that she had been crying, “are you okay? Of course you’re not okay. I just -- I can’t believe it. I can’t believe any of this.”

“Hey, Pep,” Tony said, “I’m okay. Honey, I didn’t think I would be, but I am. And I need to see him. I need to see Peter. Make that happen for me. If anyone can it’s you and I know they didn’t want me to meet him but I could have died today and I didn’t even read his letter.”

“Okay, Mr. Stark,” she said and smiled at him, “I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thanks, Pep. I’ll see you soon, alright. I -- I love you.”

“Love you too, Tony,” she responded and hung up.

Tony hadn’t cared that the rest of the team was around for the call, but when he turned around he found Natasha and Steve were watching him.

“Right,” Tony said, “so Shawarma?”

Chapter End Notes
Hope you guys liked this one. Next one should be up either tomorrow or Sunday. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
I'm loving how much everyone likes this fic so far! You guys are all wonderful! This chapter is Post-The Avengers but Pre-Iron Man 3 which we will start with in the next chapter.
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dear Peter,

I remember your mother well. Mary was a good friend and I believe that had she remained at Stark Industries that she would have made great things. I was sad when I heard of her passing, especially because I knew she had you and I hated knowing that you were going to grow up without her.

I get a lot of letters from kids and while I don’t read all, I read some, but they all get read by someone. I really enjoyed your letter and I appreciate how excited science makes you. I think you take after your mom.

Peter, one day, I'll be lucky if you still decide you want to work at SI and I would hope to still be around to work with you and see all the great things that you will accomplish. Actually, I'm going to hold you to that. You'll finish school and there will be a job waiting for you if you still want it.

Thank you for being such a fan of Iron Man and of myself. I never set out to be a hero, but someone has to be. I know you probably know what happened in New York and I don’t really want to discuss it except to say that I am lucky to be alive and even luckier to have gotten a chance to read your letter.

I hope to hear from you soon,

Tony Stark

He wrote it after they all got back to the tower that night. Parts of his floor had been damaged but not all and Tony had invited all of them to stay the night mostly due to the fact that they were all too exhausted to go anywhere else.

Tony had plenty of rooms and he told them to just pick whatever room they wanted. Tony had watched them all go before he settled himself in the kitchen and wrote a response for Peter. He figured that writing to Peter wouldn’t hurt until they figured out a way to get the Parkers to let Tony meet him. Tony wouldn’t even mind if he didn’t get to tell Peter he was his father just yet.

“Hey.”

Tony jumped and his letter fell. He watched as Steve Rogers bent down to pick it up. For the first time since meeting the iconic hero, he wasn’t wearing the Captain America uniform. Instead he was in pajama pants and a t-shirt and Tony almost didn’t know what to make of him.
“Couldn’t sleep?” Tony asked.

“I don’t sleep much,” Steve responded, “it’s the serum. I wanted to clear the air. I had my own ideas about who you were—”

“Completely based on Natasha’s opinions of me while she was spying on me a little while ago. I’ve read the report. Iron Man yes. Tony Stark not recommended. What’s missing from that report is that the entire time she knew me I was dying and all of my erratic behavior and recklessness was probably due to that.”

Steve looked down for a moment and then he nodded. “That was not included, no,” Steve said and after a moment, “I knew your father.”

Tony let out a chuckle. “Yeah. I’m aware that you knew my dear old man. He might have mentioned that once or twice while I was growing up -- or you know every time he went on an expedition to try and find you and another ten times during dinner.”

Steve laughed. “I’ve gathered that he changed from the man I knew. But really all I wanted was to let you know that I misunderstood you and your motives.”

Steve noticed, then, that he was still holding the letter and he glanced at it and then back at Tony.

“Who’s Peter?”

Tony considered just telling him that Peter was a fan, but something about the ernest way that Steve had come to him made him reconsider.

“My son,” Tony said, “who doesn’t even know I’m his father. He lives with his aunt and uncle in Queens.”

“Oh,” Steve said with some surprise.

“Yeah,” Tony said, “his mom didn’t want me to be involved and I was fine with it. She had a fiance that was willing to raise Peter like his own and it just felt like the better and easier choice to keep Peter away from me and from the life I was leading then. His parents died in a plane crash when he was still little and they named Richard’s brother and sister in law his guardians. I could have fought it, but I figured he’d be better off and I think he is. I just -- now I want to know him and I don’t know if they’ll let that happen.”

Steve didn’t respond, but he placed a hand on Tony’s shoulder. “You’re a good man, Tony,” he said after a long while.

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Pepper felt weird as she walked up to the Parkers’ home. She rang the doorbell and wished that she had dressed down to go meet them and not gone directly there from the meetings at the tower. Pepper hadn’t expected that there would be a lot to deal with after the Avengers saved New York, but there was and it was mostly to do with the prototype Stark tower and the repairs and Tony’s insistence that they redesign it with The Avengers use in mind. On top of all that, Tony had gotten busy with all the reconstruction and clean up that the city had ahead of it and so Pepper had been dealing with everything else. One important factor being Peter.

The door opened and a woman that had to be May Parker opened the door. She was smiling and her glasses sliding down her nose.
“You must be Pepper Potts,” she said, “come on in.”

“It’s nice to finally meet you, Mrs. Parker,” Pepper said.

“Call me May. We’ve e-mailed each other long enough that we can go without the formalities. Peter is out at a friend’s house so we don’t have to worry about him for now. What did you want to talk about?”

Pepper followed her through a nice living room and sat down on the cream sofa. May sat across from her and folded her hands over her lap. Pepper could tell that she was nervous. The truth of it was that legally, Tony held all the cards. He was the biological father and he had never given up his claim to Peter. May and Ben Parker weren’t even related to Peter and all they had going was that Richard had named them in his will.

“I’m not here to take Peter away from you,” Pepper said, “I think it’s better for him to be with you and your husband. He’s growing up normal. The thing is, Mr. Stark wants to meet him. He wants more contact with him and while the letters are a good idea, they aren’t going to be enough.”

May nodded. “We understand that,” she said, “we want Peter to know his father. We really do, and I think Peter is going to need his father someday. But his father is a superhero and he almost died recently and what am I supposed to do if he does die?”

“Well, when he dies -- and we have to face that it could happen -- Peter will become Mr. Stark’s heir which means that aside from the trust fund that was started at his birth he will also inherit Mr. Stark’s fortune and the majority shares in his company and when he is eighteen he will know that Tony Stark is his father. So what will happen when he learns that he never got to meet his father or that you knew and never told him? Mr. Stark takes risks, it’s part of being Iron Man and not something that I particularly like or care for, but it’s not something that he will stop doing any time soon. He doesn’t want to miss out on knowing Peter, but he also feels that his work as Iron Man is important.”

Pepper knew that May understood where they were coming from, but she could also tell that May wanted to protect Peter at all costs. In a way, Pepper appreciated that about May. That fierce protectiveness was one of the best things about May when it came to Peter and Mary had been just the same.

“We don’t have to tell him he’s his father at first,” Pepper said, “to keep the pressure off.”

“I think that would be best,” May said, “Peter is quite the fan. I just don’t know how well that will translate once he knows the truth.”

“But it’s going to have to happen at some point,” Pepper said.

May nodded and then seemed to gather courage before she said, “I want to be assured that you won’t take Peter away. Ben and I love him as if he were our own son and we just ask that once he finds out that you don’t take him from us. This is his home. Peter might be related to Tony Stark, but that doesn’t change who actually raised him.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone liked this one. Next chapter will probably be up tomorrow.
This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Goodness the response to this fic is so great! Thank you to everyone reading!

This chapter begins Iron Man 3.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

In the end, he had to move back to Malibu. All the inspections on Stark Tower told him that it was unlivable and then of course were all the additions that Tony wanted. Either way, all of The Avengers weren’t staying together. Steve had managed to beg off of working for Shield for the moment and took off on a motorcycle to travel around and get a feel for the future. Tony suspected that Steve just wanted some time away to get used to the future on his own terms. Natasha and Clint were back at Shield and Tony didn’t even want to know what they might be working on and Thor had taken Loki and the tesseract back to Asgard with no idea as to when he might return. Only Bruce had hung around with Tony while Tony was still in NYC. Tony had already gifted him one of the labs for his personal use but once Tony was set to move he too decided it made good timing for him to go on his way too even if he planned on returning as soon as he could.

Tony had had to deal with the reconstruction of NYC, too, mostly in the aspects of funding it and figuring out what to do with the leftover debris in the form of alien tech. Apparently despite wanting to blow NYC off the map with a nuke, The World Security Council didn’t believe in then cleaning up the mess too. So, Tony had formed the Department of Damage Control and assumed that it would become a necessity in the future. Between them and Shield he figured that anything dangerous would be taken care of.

Tony had known that he wasn’t okay after the battle, but he’d figured it was like everything else that came before it and he would just move past it. After all, not too long ago he had been dying and this time he had survived. He should have been fine. Instead, every time he closed his eyes he saw space. Open, dark, and vast space full of aliens with tech that even he couldn’t go against.

It was hard to even deal with people wanting to talk to him about it. He had brushed Pepper off when she asked and tried not to react when strangers came up to him to thank him. The thing was: they all thought the threat was dealt with when it wasn’t. There were more out there and who knew when they would come again and who knew what might happen then. It wouldn’t be good, that was for sure.

Once he was back in Malibu, things just got worse. He couldn’t sleep without nightmares waking him. Jarvis had to calm him down from a panic attack more than once and only Pepper being around seemed to help except that she wasn’t always around. Some days, Tony didn’t see her at all. So, a month after being back in Malibu, he asked her to move in with him and Pepper agreed mostly because she already spent most of her time there when she was in California anyway. It just made sense.

For a little while, things were going well. Pepper was CEO and only demanded that Tony show up to half the board meetings as long as he was productive as head of R and D. It meant that Tony mostly worked from home and that most of his work was more related to Iron Man and The Avengers than SI, but Pepper didn’t say much about it.
Letters from Peter helped too. Tony still hadn’t met him, but the letters made a difference and they were trying to figure out a good time for Tony to finally meet him. The Parkers just wanted Peter to be a bit more prepared and used to him before they let Peter meet him and Tony was all for it.

The latest letter was sitting right on his workspace and Tony had been reading it while looking over the plans for another Iron Man suit. It had become increasingly easy to come up with newer suits for every occasion. So much so, that Tony had had to actually find a place to store them as he built them, especially once Pepper started to realize what he was working on all the time and not the latest Stark phone or tablet.

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Mr. Stark,

Uncle Ben and I walked past the tower today. I saw that only the A remained from Stark and I was wondering if you were going to keep it that way? Make it Avengers tower instead? Like I said in my last letter, it’s really cool that there’s a team now. You’re still my favorite, though, don’t worry. Ned thinks that Captain America is cooler but I disagree. And actually, Uncle Ben loves Captain America. He’s let me read some of the comics he kept from when he was a kid.

We went to a science fair yesterday at Midtown High. It’s a high school that focuses on science and tech and Aunt May says I’m going to go there when I’m in High School. But anyway, my class was invited to the science fair and it was just so much fun. Someone made one of those volcanoes that explode so that was fun to watch and someone built a robot. I mean, it’s probably not as interesting as yours, but it was a real robot and it moved and everything. One of the experiments was a DNA test which was interesting. And someone even did an experiment about cookies. That one was yummy.

You said last time you weren’t feeling too good, so I hope you’re feeling better now. You don’t have to keep writing me if it’s taking too much of your time. I know you’re really busy.

Thank you.

-Peter

Peter looked over his letter. It felt silly to just talk about the science fair he’d gone to when Mr. Stark probably had a million other important things to focus on. It was just that he had asked Peter to just write to him about his day or just anything at all. Sometimes Mr. Stark asked questions and that was easier, but other times he didn’t and Peter just had to find something to write about. He just didn’t want to stop writing to him. It made him feel special to know that Tony Stark wanted to communicate with him and Peter never wanted that to end.

---

Hey Peter,

Science fairs are awesome. Most of them are for amateurs or kids and teens that love science which is great because it makes science all that more interesting and fun. I loved a science fair in my day. Of course, it was different for me. My father expected me to be better and create things that were way beyond me and some of them were. I think I pushed myself to do them anyway and prove I could. It’s why I like the Expo so much and want it to keep going. It brings the fun of it back to us again. Makes it more than just about the work. I’m sending you a volcano kit. You and your friend Ned can have some fun with it. It’s a little more advanced than other kits, but I know you’ll figure it out.
I don’t want you to worry about me, Peter, and I shouldn’t have said anything about feeling off, but I hadn’t slept much before the last letter. That’s mostly my problem -- not being able to sleep. But I’m working on it, okay. It’s not something you should worry about. Just worry about having fun with Ned and that volcano. I want pictures and a lab report!

Of course I’m going to keep writing you. I’m not a kid person, but you’re a pretty cool one, Peter. You remind me a lot of myself and I really am interested in anything that happens to you. It helps me with the not feeling good.

Tony Stark

Tony had completed Mark XLII and it was an entirely new kind of armor. It was his baby and exactly what Tony had been aiming for since he had begun finding peace in working on Iron Man suits. Inventing seemed to be the only thing that would cure his insomnia. Not even getting exhausted on date night with Pepper did it anymore.

Rhodey didn’t help much either, the few times that Tony got to see him. At least with Rhodey, Tony knew that his friend was protected in his own armor. Pepper had Happy as head of security and bodyguard but Tony knew it wasn’t enough. He worried about Peter too.

Peter never said it and May and Ben never did either, but Tony knew that they had been affected by what had been dubbed The Battle of New York. He knew where Ben Parker worked and that enough told him that they had almost felt a deep loss like so many others that day. He wanted to do his best to prevent that.

---

Pepper knew that there was something truly wrong with Tony and yet she couldn’t give it her full attention. SI was just so much more and it meant everything and Tony understood that and he didn’t seem to want her help or her opinions especially when it came to the Iron Man suits. Ever since New York, it had become even more abundantly clear that Tony could die and while Pepper knew that he was Iron Man, she knew that he was Tony Stark and that if he wanted to, he could walk away from the suit.

That there were others out there to pick up where Tony had started made it even better. Easier. Tony didn’t seem to see it that way even if the events of New York had changed him.

So instead of making herself crazy with worry over Tony, she pretended that things were normal and for the most part they were. SI wasn’t easy, but the work was satisfying. Tony was creating things left and right and even when he was too focused on Iron Man, Pepper couldn’t deny that he was putting SI and R & D as a priority.

It was just that Tony wasn’t sleeping.

When he did sleep there were nightmares.

Pepper tried to help, but she couldn’t take the dreams away, and Tony didn’t want to talk to her or anyone else. As the holidays approached, she didn’t know if it was going to get any better.

One good thing about it was that she and May had finally figured out a way to have Tony meet Peter without all the “this is your father” stuff. They were going to make it a Christmas thing and it was going to work out because of the letters that Tony and Peter were exchanging. Pepper actually wanted it to be a surprise for both Tony and Peter, so she hadn’t even mentioned it to Tony yet.

When she saw the giant bunny that Tony bought her for Christmas, she almost reconsidered the plan
entirely because a man that bought a bunny that large didn’t deserve to meet his son for Christmas.

“I actually sort of wanted to give one to Peter,” Tony admitted, “but I figured they wouldn’t have the room for it.”

“We don’t have the room for it, Tony,” Pepper had replied half amused, but mostly infuriated.

“Right, right. I might have made a misjudgement.”

Pepper didn’t tell him that later when she asked Jarvis about it, Jarvis confirmed that Tony had purchased it on only two hours of sleep. That was when she realized that he was spending nearly all of his time in the workshop and that he only pretended to go to sleep with her most nights. She shouldn’t have been surprised when one of the suits showed up in their bedroom one night, ready to attack. Tony dismantled it with one move, but she was shaken and upset and why couldn’t Tony just get that the armor didn’t make her feel safer. It just made everything worse.

Then, things just went from bad to worse.

It began with Aldrich Killian showing up and then despite his presentation, she had known they couldn’t go into business with him. Tony might not have been CEO, but he still had a say and everything that Killian was proposing felt like it was toeing the line on wrong and illegal.

Then, Happy was in the middle of a terrorist attack and suddenly Tony was deeply involved in figuring out who The Mandarin was and Pepper knew that Tony wasn’t going to let it go. Pepper had asked him to call in The Avengers but he refused. He didn’t even bother calling Shield. Ever since Coulson’s passing, Pepper hadn’t had a form of contacting them either so instead she focused on planning the meet up with Peter and hoped that by the time Happy was better Tony would just let things go.

That was when Tony choose to make their address public to the world and a known terrorist.

Chapter End Notes

I really liked this chapter a lot so I hope you guys did as well. Next one should conclude Iron Man 3 and will likely be up tomorrow. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Thank you to everyone that's read this so far! You guys are just the best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Dear Mr. Stark,

They say you’re dead. But you can’t be. You just can’t. I don’t believe it because you’re Iron Man.

All of the news people say you died because you never came out of the water but it can’t be true.

Your house was destroyed, though. I saw it on the news before Aunt May could turn off the tv and it must be horrible to lose all of your things and your work and especially your robots.

I really do hope you’re okay. You have to be. For me. I’ll be really upset if you’re not.

Please be alive.

-Peter

There were tear marks all over the letter, but Peter didn’t bother with rewriting it. Instead he stuck it into an envelope and put a stamp on it and the address and he put it in his school backpack because he knew Aunt May wouldn’t want him mailing a letter to someone that everyone thought was dead.

Aunt May and Uncle Ben were acting weird about the whole thing and Peter could tell that they were hiding something. He just didn’t know what it was. He also wasn’t too concerned because all he wanted was news about Tony Stark because there was no body found and that had to mean he was still alive. He was Iron Man so that had to mean he was alive.

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May: Are you alright? I know you were in the house when it all happened.

May: Is it true? Is Tony Stark really

May: Is he dead?

May: Because if he is I don’t know what I’m supposed to do and Peter’s taking it really hard as it is and he keeps saying that there’s no way he’s dead and I just hope that he’s right.

Messages redirected to Jarvis.

Jarvis: I’m sorry, Mrs. Parker, but Ms. Potts is currently unavailable. She will receive your messages as soon as it is possible. - Jarvis

---

May didn’t know who Jarvis was, but she had some inclination that he was a computer program.
Peter was always going on about how Tony Stark had created his own robots and maybe this was a part of that -- some program that answered missed calls or text messages.

May didn’t know how many times she had called Ms. Potts only to be sent to voicemail before she tried to text her and that was when Jarvis answered. May supposed that Pepper had a lot on her plate since the attack on Tony Stark’s house. Watching it get blown up and fall off of that cliff had felt like the day that New York was attacked and Peter was out in the city on a school trip. May knew she was lucky he and Ben had come out of it alive.

“No answer?” Ben asked.

“No. Some computer program responded that she wasn’t available. I think we just have to wait and see and hope for the best.”

Ben reached for her hand and pulled her closer and May just leaned into him. She couldn’t imagine doing all of it alone. When they took Peter in, they had known that there would come a time when things would get complicated, but they had never imagined it would be this complicated.

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Harley Keener could have been Peter. He was the first child in a long time that Tony didn’t immediately dislike. Harley was intuitive and inquisitive and just a good kid and Tony was glad to have met him. He was also brilliant in many ways, enough so that Tony felt comfortable leaving his suit with him to recharge and rebuild while he went and dealt with everything else.

Pepper always separated him from Iron Man. Said that the suit was one thing and he another, but she never understood they were one and the same and that he was Iron Man even outside of the suit. He didn’t know what she would have said about him sneaking into the house in Miami with tools he’d created and designed with things bought at a hardware store.

Finding out that Pepper had been taken in order to leverage him made him angry and somehow throughout all of it, that anger helped to keep his demons at bay. It was another thing that Pepper didn’t understand. His nightmares came because he’d flown into the wormhole and because of all the other things he hadn’t dealt with, but they weren’t enough to keep him from being Iron Man because that alone made him feel saner.

Still, by the time that he was watching Pepper fall, and he couldn’t do anything to save her because even though he had built 42 distinct Iron Man armors they didn’t matter because none of them were there to catch her, Tony knew it didn’t matter who he was. Pepper was still dead.

The shock of it faded away into anger and the next few minutes were a blur in his memory until he was on the ground about to die himself and Pepper was there, glowing a little, and just so beautiful and Tony could finally catch his breath again as she did the saving and it reminded Tony that he didn’t need to protect Pepper all the time. She could protect herself.

---

“He’s alive,” Peter said, “I told you so.”

May had breathed a sigh of relief when the news coverage of Iron Man rescuing all those people that had blown out of Air Force One had interrupted whatever Ben had on. Ben who had been sitting next to her when the news came on, squeezed her hand. There were only so many times that someone could be almost dead before it became true and Ben expected that with Tony Stark they would end up dealing with more similar moments.
“You did, Petey Pie,” Ben said and ruffled his hair. Peter tried to shake him off, but then leaned into him. Ben had never really liked kids and he and May hadn’t planned on having any and yet he couldn’t deny that having Peter in his life made things ten times better.

Everyone at the Parker household was in a good mood for the rest of the day, until there was more breaking news and President Ellis had almost died but then was saved by The Iron Patriot. Iron Man had also been present with a whole bunch of suits that were destroyed after everything was said and done.

It wasn’t until a few days later, that they received an e-mail.

Mr. and Mrs. Parker,

I am extremely sorry for everything that you must have gone through thinking that Tony was dead and that I was ignoring you. The thing is that I was kidnapped and Tony decided that being dead suited him while he was looking for information on the bad guys. He didn’t have a protocol for what Jarvis should do if I was kidnapped but he tried his best to answer you. I guess Tony never considered it an option and yet it happened. He worries that any affiliation that he has with Peter will lead to Peter being put into such a situation. Still, Tony wants to meet him. If you still want to go through with our plan we can. It will just have to be postponed for at least a few weeks if not a month. There are other concerns that have to be dealt with first including a move to New York now that Tony’s house was destroyed. Let me know if anything comes up and we’ll figure out a good time for them to meet.

Pepper Potts

---

Getting Extremis stabilized was easy. Well, it was easy for Tony to do and as he was doing it, he remembered that he had written out an equation that was the beginning of the fix back when he met Maya. After he finished it and he could actually take a look at what Extremis could do, Tony felt impressed.

“Are you sure you don’t want to keep it?” Tony asked Pepper.

They were in the lab at Stark Industries that Tony rarely used. But it had been that, or going to the tower in New York and Pepper wanted Tony to work on it as soon as possible. Tony was just glad that she was alive and so he was willing to do anything she asked.

“No, Tony, I don’t want to have this inside me. I want to be a normal person.” Pepper leaned back on her chair and watched him as he had Jarvis test the formula one more time.

“I’m just saying that it won’t do any of the glowing and exploding thing anymore. It’ll just fix you up anytime you get hurt. It’s probably the closest thing to a super soldier serum.”

Pepper shook her head. “I don’t want it, Tony.”

Tony nodded and glanced the hologram that Jarvis was displaying. “Make sure to keep those files and the fix in my personal server, J,” Tony said, “not even Shield can know about this.”

“Is that why you didn’t even bother to try and get your new team involved?”

In part it was because Tony had wanted to handle it himself. After all, Shield had also been looking as The Mandarin closely and Tony had gathered as much information as he could from their servers. It was just that they didn’t realize that he wasn’t just a terrorist -- and actually a fake one at that --
otherwise the agents would have been all over it and things might have gone differently.

Then, of course, he had been dead and Tony supposed that that would have been the perfect time for Shield or any of The Avengers to step in but no one had. It hurt a little bit that no one had tried to avenge him, as it was. In a way, though, Tony was glad because he really didn’t want anyone to get their hands on Extremis whether it be the old unstable formula or his revised one. He just didn’t trust Shield to not use it and he really didn’t want anyone else like AIM showing up and trying to abuse it.

“I guess,” Tony said, “Shield keeps enough secrets and who knows what they would do with this. Anyway, I think I’m going to need Dr. Banner’s help with getting Extremis out of your system so we’ll have to tell him what happened.”

“Might be good for you to talk to someone about everything,” Pepper said.

Tony rolled his eyes. “I really think we’re past all that.”

He got the Extremis in Pepper stabilized in the next hour, which was the least he could do before asking for Bruce’s help. He just didn’t want to hurt Pepper even more and removing Extremis wasn’t going to be as easy as getting it stable. As he worked, he didn’t tell Pepper about the other use that Extremis was going to offer him if he used it on himself.

After they were done they drove to the remains of his house. It had been one of a kind and Tony had designed all of it himself and had it built on the cliff to prove to everyone that he could. The cleanup had been going well so far and he had a team looking for his bots too, but Tony still didn’t know if he wanted to rebuild the house. After all, the tower was finally ready in New York and it would keep him closer to Peter too.

“I think I want to move to New York,” Tony told Pepper.

“Well, that’s one of your homes that is still in tact,” Pepper said, “and I think I can work out of the office there. I’ll just be using the jet a lot.”

Tony leaned over and kissed her. She laughed into the kiss and pressed herself against him.

“I promise I’ll get you another bunny,” Tony muttered in her ear and she hit his shoulder before laughing again.

“Don’t you dare.”

Chapter End Notes

This was another chapter that I really enjoyed writing so I hope everyone liked it! On another note, I’ve been sick this week so aside from going to work I haven’t done much but stay in bed with my laptop so I’ve started writing again and as of now this fic is about 48k words and counting so that's exciting.

The next chapter will probably be up Friday since I'm not sure if I'll have any time to post before then. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

I've been doing quite a bit of writing over the last day or so mostly because I've finally made it to Civil War and I've planned out most of the scenes that are coming up for me when it comes to that movie and all I can say is that I cannot wait to share those bits because they are turning out to be my favorite of this fic so far. It's just so exciting!

Thank you to everyone reading/reviewing/leaving kudos, you guys are fantastic!

This chapter finishes off Iron Man 3 and then it becomes a little bit more interesting because this is the last time we see Tony on screen until Age of Ultron so that was a fun element to deal with.

A note on the timing: Iron Man 3 would take place the Christmas of 2012 so by the time that the movie ends we're at New Year's and Tony wouldn't be telling Bruce about it until sometime after that in early 2013. Thor: The Dark World would then take place much later that year around November. There's a bit of a time skip here because next chapter will enter into 2014 in time for Winter Soldier which would take place around May 2014 and from there there is a whole year until Age of Ultron in May 2015.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

2013

Bruce hadn’t meant to fall asleep while Tony filled him in on exactly what had gone down with President Ellis and The Mandarin, except that Tony had had him up all night working on getting Extremis out of Pepper. And as interested as he was in the surgery that Tony had put himself through to finally get rid of the electromagnet in his chest and the arc reactor to boot, Bruce was exhausted.

“I really cannot believe that you fell asleep on me, Banner,” Tony said and shook his head. “I don’t know if I’ll feel up to retelling this story later.”

Bruce shook his head and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. “I’m sure I can persuade you to. Anyway, don’t you have somewhere to be today?”

Tony nodded. “Yeah,” he said, “I do. I really don’t want to think about it too much because it could just go wrong, you know. Letters are one thing, but actually meeting him. I don’t know if I can. What if I just don’t live up to expectation.”

Bruce hadn’t been surprised when he found out that Tony had a son. Actually, he had expected there to maybe be more than just the one considering his past, but he also hadn’t expected for Tony to want to meet his son and to want to be a part of his life. He didn’t know much about Peter Parker aside from who his father was, but Tony clearly cared a great deal about him,

“You won’t disappoint him, Tony,” Bruce said, “you just have to be yourself. You’re a decent guy, you know, and a lot like a kid, so the two of you will get along just fine.”
“I don’t know, May,” Ben said, “I just -- the man almost died again. At this rate it’s going to happen and then what do we do? I know we aren’t telling Peter that he’s his father yet, but do we really want Peter to meet this guy?”

May looked at her husband and sighed. “Peter is already being affected, Ben, and this way when he does find out at least Stark won’t be a stranger.”

It had been an argument that spanned weeks. May had been convinced that it was the right thing to let Peter and Tony Stark meet, but ever since the week or so that Tony had been dead to everyone and even his girlfriend wasn’t answering she had started to question it.

“And what if someone bad finds out,” Ben pressed, “what if they target Peter? Look at what happened to his girlfriend. If we open this can of worms it won’t just be one meeting. It’s going to be more and more and someone is going to catch on to Tony Stark having a son and then what do you think will happen?”

---

There were two floors for conference rooms and office space for SI without counting all the other lab space. Pepper personally loved her office. It was spacious and had everything that Pepper might need on any given day. It also gave her space away from Tony when she needed it.

She was in her office when the e-mail arrived.

Ms. Potts,

I am sorry to do this, but Ben and I have spoken about it and we feel that it would be best if he and Mr. Stark didn’t meet just yet. The way that Peter reacted when Mr. Stark was assumed dead is concerning to us as well as the events of the last few months. We do not want Peter to be exposed to the superhero life and to become a target as Mr. Stark’s son.

I know this will greatly disappoint Mr. Stark, but I hope he understands that we are only trying to look out for Peter’s well being and safety. Peter is a smart boy and I know that he would question the meeting despite the letters and knowing their relationship might not be in his best interests right now.

I am truly sorry,
May Parker

Pepper felt shocked. She read the letter twice until she remembered that the meeting was supposed to take place later that day and that Tony was probably bursting with nerves and she was going to have to break his little happy bubble of finally getting to meet his son. For a moment she let herself hate May and Ben Parker, even if she knew they meant well. It was just that they were hurting her Tony.

The walk to the elevator and then up to the penthouse felt long and when she finally got there, she saw Tony right away because he was walking into the kitchen.

“Hey, hon,” Tony said, “so do you think I should bring a gift or am I gift enough?”

Pepper braced herself. “I, um, I have some news.”

Tony turned to look at her, one eyebrow raised. The eyebrow dropped a moment later and he started to frown instead.
“What happened? Did Shield call?”

Pepper shook her head. “No. But May Parker e-mailed and--”

“And they don’t want me to meet Peter,” Tony finished for her. Pepper could tell that it pained him and when she nodded he nodded back. “Yeah, I guess I should have expected that after everything. It’s not like -- I guess it doesn’t matter. I wouldn’t be father material anyway.”

Pepper tried to reach out to him, but he pulled away and ran a hand through his hair and then gave Pepper his media smile.

“I’ll be in my workshop.”

“I’m sorry, Tony,” Pepper said.

“Me too,” Tony muttered.

---

The next few months were quiet and somehow while the nightmares didn’t go away, the anxiety and the worry became more of a background thing to him. Working with Bruce helped, and not thinking about Peter helped even more. Tony had decided that it was for the best that he didn’t meet Peter and that he might as well leave all of that to rest because in the end the Parkers were his guardians and short of trying to get custody, Tony had no rights. Not as the absentee father that he had ended up becoming.

At least, he still had the letters. But Tony had pulled back even in that respect. It was easier to try and see it as fan mail than a relationship with his son, so Tony tried not to make things too personal and he let Peter lead on the conversations. He also didn’t answer everything at once. If Peter noticed a change, he never wrote about it to Tony.

Between working with Bruce, and passing along new tech to Shield when they asked for his input, Tony was kept busy and time just moved on.

Tony was alerted when Thor made a reappearance on Earth when Jarvis found video footage of him from England. It was more aliens. It made Tony’s skin crawl to see the destruction that they caused and that he hadn’t even known it was coming. At least he had confirmation that Thor saved the day with the help of his girlfriend, Jane, from Shield who were tasked with the clean up. Tony had gone ahead and offered up some money for the reconstruction. Pepper created a whole new fund for it and Tony appreciated that she didn’t say much more about it.

Thor showed up at the tower around the same time as Steve did right before Christmas and it became a small reunion and party. Tony even managed to get Rhodey to show up in New York for it. They were just missing Natasha and Clint, but Tony was sure they were off working on something for Shield.

“I will be staying on Earth for some time,” Thor told them, “if they need me in Asgard I’m sure I’ll get word. In the meanwhile I want to spend some time with Jane.”

Knowing that Thor would stick around was a bit of a relief in case of any other alien threats. After listening to Thor and Jane explain exactly what had happened in Greenwich, Tony definitely suspected that it wouldn’t be the last time they had to deal with threats from outer space. In some ways, he supposed it to be a definite and Jarvis agreed.

“And what about you, Captain, what will you do now?” Thor asked.
Tony was interested too. Steve had apparently been on an extended road trip since the battle of New York and he had travelled across the U.S. and into Canada and Mexico.

“I’m going to be working with Shield,” Steve admitted. “I already have an apartment in Washington they’ve set me up with and I don’t really know what I want to do but I’ve traveled enough for a while and Agent Romanoff thinks it’s a good idea. It’ll be a bit like what I used to do.”

“Always following orders,” Tony said.

Steve gave him a look. “Despite their intentions with the tesseract, Shield still seems to be doing the right thing and I’d like to help where I can.”

Tony nodded. The thing of it was that he didn’t trust Shield or Fury mostly because Tony was paranoid about most things, but also because they continuously kept things from him and didn’t ask for his help and when they did ask they only gave him half the story and got upset when he asked for more info. That just made him more and more curious about what they could be hiding.

“Well, I’ll just say this: don’t follow blindly. How much do you really know about Fury?”

“Noted,” Steve said.

“Anyway,” Tony said, “I did have something to ask you. They’re doing an exhibit on you at the Smithsonian and they contacted me to give them a few things of yours. My father ended up with some of your things and they just want to display them. You left on your trip before I could mention them to you so I figured you’d maybe want to pick what I should give to the museum.”

Tony could tell that Steve wasn’t too happy with the news about the exhibit, but he nodded. “Yeah, probably for the best. I can’t believe they’re doing that.”

“You’re the great American hero, Cap, most people are just excited to know you’re alive. You’re a part of history. Own it.”

Steve scoffed. “That’s easy for you to say, Stark, you like the spotlight.”

Tony just shrugged.

Chapter End Notes

The one thing I wanted to note on a bit especially after this chapter is that there is a constant obstacle for Tony meeting Peter which comes naturally from what is happening with the canon that we’re working with and I actually wrote towards a meeting at this point. I wrote the meeting and I didn't like it for a lot of reasons and I felt it was forced and that it would have almost been uncharacteristic of Ben and May to let it happen after Pepper was taken because that just reiterates once again that anyone close to Tony can and will be used against him. But the meeting will happen and I actually am in the middle of working on it now ;)

Next chapter will probably be up this weekend sometime. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter Notes

I was going to post this one last night, but I ended up rewriting a part of it instead. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter received one letter from Tony Stark after things calmed down after he was no longer dead. It was short and to the point in a way that letters from Mr. Stark usually weren’t.

Peter,

As you probably already know I’m alright. It was a mixture of luck and my own engineering prowess that kept me alive and then I have to admit that my own friends were heroes in their own way and got me through that mess. I hope that you weren’t too upset about it.

On the way I met this kid that reminded me of you a little. He helped me out a bit and I think given the chance you would have done the same.

Tony Stark

After that Peter responded and Mr. Stark just didn’t answer for weeks. It was almost two months before he got an answer and the letter was not too long or interested. It left Peter feeling ignored in some way and yet he wrote back again and this time it was another long wait. Where once their letters had come and gone every week they were down to every few months and Peter hated it. He hated it enough to write extra letters to send just in case but Mr. Stark seemed to have gotten busier or more interested in other things or in other people.

Peter hated that he always went back to that first letter since Mr. Stark didn’t die and the kid he mentioned. Peter was jealous almost because at least that kid had gotten to meet Tony Stark and help him and Peter was just not even getting full responses to letters that had at one point been the highlight of his week.

By the time that Christmas came around he was actually surprised that Mr. Stark sent him a Christmas present. It was a bunch of books on science and Peter appreciated the thought, he just wished that Mr. Stark cared enough to have a conversation with him even if it was only through letters. They just seemed to get longer and longer in between.

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2014

Pepper still received e-mails from May every once in a while, usually updating her and Tony on Peter. It felt a little bit like being extended family that couldn’t ever visit but Pepper liked hearing about how Peter was doing in school and all the other little things that came up like Peter entering his first science fair and winning first place because of course he would.

At times it felt a bit bittersweet because Tony should have been there cheering Peter on and not hearing about it weeks later, an afterthought.
Tony didn’t really talk about Peter. Not that he had talked about him often before, but he was rarely mentioned at all and to Pepper it felt like Tony was giving up on being anything but a stranger to the boy. Instead, Tony began building again and Pepper was concerned that he was falling into old habits but instead it wasn’t more Iron Man suits but robot suits that Jarvis could control. He called them the Iron Legion and explained it as extra support. That and his work on some tech for Shield kept him busy and Pepper didn’t know if busy was good or not.

“Pep, there will never not be some sort of threat coming our way. Just look at what Thor just dealt with. Hon, I need to know that we can have some sort of support. Not for fighting or anything like that but more because when the fights come we need to get the civilians out of the way and out of danger.”

Bruce Banner at least seemed to be a great help. They had been dubbed “Science Bros” by their fans ever since Tony had tweeted out a picture of him and Bruce in Bruce’s lab. Pepper was glad that Tony often forgot about twitter because it meant less work for SI’s PR department. Pepper was definitely fond of Bruce who seemed inclined to listen to Tony and more importantly understood him when he rambled off expecting everyone around him to follow the train of thought that had appeared in his mind.

Things seemed to go back to normal, or whatever normal was for Tony and for a while things were great especially since Tony wasn’t flying off as Iron Man all the time. Rhodey was taking care of most things for the U.S. Government as War Machine and Tony let him, only getting involved when necessary.

He had designed a few new Iron Man suits, and Pepper still didn’t really like that Tony was likely never going to quit being Iron Man despite no longer having the arc reactor in his chest. Instead, she wore the necklace with the shrapnel that had been in his chest around her neck on most days and remembered that she loved Tony even though he was Iron Man.

She was eating a quick breakfast in the kitchen before heading down to her office when an e-mail from May came in.

Ms. Potts,

I hope everything is going well. I need your advice. I know that in the end this choice will end up being mine and Ben’s, but we’re a bit conflicted. Peter’s always been a bright student. I think he actually isn’t challenged very much and his teachers think that the material could bore him and affect his performance in school. They want us to consider letting him skip a grade or two depending on some placement testing. I guess his similarities to his father are coming through. We just don’t know if that’s the best course of action. What do you think? What does Mr. Stark think?

May Parker

Pepper forwarded it to Tony. “Jarvis, make sure he reads that and tell him there’s fresh coffee in the kitchen.”

She nibbled on her toast and figured she’d give Tony a few minutes to get there. Like May, Pepper wasn’t sure about what to do with Peter. She knew that Tony had skipped a bunch of grades and actually gone to MIT by the time he was fifteen, but then Tony had also been treated like an adult for most of his childhood. Peter had grown up relatively normal so far and she just didn’t know how disruptive to his life it would be to just separate him from his classmates and move him up a grade.

Peter was going to be thirteen later that year and entering 8th grade and they probably wanted him to skip right into high school and knowing whose genes he had probably right into 10th grade or even...
11th. It was jarring enough for kids to go from middle school to high school and despite how smart Peter might be adapting when younger than everyone else just wouldn’t be easy.

“I’m a little surprised that they even want my opinion or yours on the matter,” Tony said when he arrived and headed straight for the coffee.

“They can’t let Peter skip a grade,” Pepper said at once. “I don’t think it would be good for him at all.”

Tony took a gulp of his coffee and nodded. “Just look at what it did to me,” Tony said, “I was this scrawny too smart kid that never belonged anywhere. If it wasn’t for my Rhodey Bear I don’t know that I would have actually survived MIT. My drinking problem really did begin there.”

“I think they just want someone to agree with them. I don’t think May Parker is really considering this,” Pepper said.

Tony shrugged his shoulders. “Just tell her not to let it happen. The kid has friends his age. He’s always talking about Ned. Tearing them apart is not a good idea and neither is rushing him towards graduation just because his teachers don’t know what to do with him. Peter deserves better than that.”

Pepper stood up and wrapped her arms around his waist, pressing herself into his chest. “I think we’re on the same page. I just hope that May and Ben see it this way.”

Tony raised a hand to play with her hair and he stared at her like he always did, with a tiny bit of amazement. “They love him and I think by now I know that they will do anything for that kid which is a good thing. I just -- I hope he won’t hate them for keeping this secret. Well, no, he’ll probably resent me for being his hero and not his father.”

It was the longest conversation about Peter that they had had for a while and Pepper just wanted to make all of it better. She wished that she could go back in time and tell Mary to tell Tony herself and to have Mary include Tony in Peter’s life even if from afar. The thing was that Tony back then hadn’t been ready for that responsibility. He hadn’t been ready to stand up and be a father in any way and the out that Mary had given him had been taken without much protest. Maybe they should have insisted when Mary and Richard passed and made it a condition to include Tony when May and Ben took in Peter.

“Hey, what are you thinking?”

“That you would have been a great father, Tony,” Pepper said.

“Yeah, well, I guess it doesn’t matter now.”

He was likely to be infertile. Pepper hadn’t known for a while about it, not until there had been a moment when she was late and for a long week she thought she was pregnant. Three false tests later and Tony laughed away her worries.

“I mean, had you been then I would have known you cheated on me or something,” Tony said, “although I guess there’s like a 1% chance I could get you pregnant.”

Tony had explained it, then, telling her about how the palladium poisoning had been the main cause just due to how long it had been going on. For many women it would have been a deal breaker to find out that the man they loved would never be able to have children, but Pepper didn’t mind. She wasn’t really a baby person to begin with and while as a girl she had always thought that one day she might be a mom it hadn’t been a goal.
Thanks for reading! Everyone's response to this fic has been pretty amazing.

So I've been writing a lot lately and last night I had time to break things down into chapters so that editing is a bit easier (I wrote it just straight without doing the chapter breaks) and currently this fic has 31 chapters and I still have quite a bit of writing to do to get it to the end so that's a fun prospect.

Next chapter will probably be up on Tuesday.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

We have arrived at The Winter Soldier.

Thank you to everyone reading/commenting/leaving kudos. You guys are the best and I wouldn't spend so much time working on this without you.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

On the day that Shield fell, Tony was having a normal day. Pepper had forced him to go to a board meeting and had actually pulled him out of the workshop and dragged him into their bedroom and watched him change into a suit. Then, she had pulled him into the elevator before Bruce could say a word to him and taken him to one of the conference rooms.

Tony sat down and pulled out his phone almost at once and while Pepper spoke and gave some sort of presentation, Tony texted with Bruce and Clint because Clint was on a mission in South America and bored.

Things had been boring and going on as normal when they suddenly changed. It began with an alert from Jarvis via text.

**Jarvis:** Security compromised. Your attention is required.

Tony stood up at once so fast that his chair almost toppled over just as another text came in and he glanced at it before facing Pepper and the rest of the board.

**Bruce:** I think Nick Fury is dead.

"I’m sorry, but I really have to go. Something is happening that needs my attention."

Pepper opened her mouth, glare already in place, but he met her eyes and shook his head and she knew it was serious so instead she pursed her lips and just watched him go.

He texted Bruce back as he ran towards the elevator.

"Jarvis what’s wrong? What do you mean security is compromised?"

"Someone tried to hack our servers," Jarvis responded immediately. "I have stopped the hack, but they may try again."

"What do you mean someone tried to hack us," Tony said, "our servers aren’t hackable off premises and even then. Did an employee try?"

"I’m not sure, Sir, but it is likely," Jarvis said.

"Well, find out."

When he arrived at the penthouse he knew that something was wrong from the way that Bruce was clutching at his coffee mug and looking at his tablet.
“What happened?” Tony asked. “What do you mean Fury is dead? Did they come at him from his bad side or something?”

“Tony,” Bruce said in an admonishing voice.

Tony didn’t know what to feel about it and he certainly didn’t know what it would mean for Shield. He was aware that the World Security Council had a big say in anything to do with Shield’s bigger world protecting projects and Tony didn’t trust them at all after the nuke, so he didn’t know if that meant they had a say in replacing Fury at Shield or for that matter what they would do with The Avengers Initiative. Tony also had to wonder about the propulsion systems that he had developed for Fury whose use he still didn’t know much about although he could only imagine that they were constructing more improved versions of the helicarrier.

“Someone tried to hack us,” Tony said.

He was looking at the attempt and it was a bit scary to see how close the hacker had come to getting into his main server. It wasn’t even SI that they had been targeting but Tony himself and his personal server which had information such as the fact that he had a son.

“Sir, there is something you must see,” Jarvis announced suddenly and brought up files onto the nearest screen.

It was a data dump. The biggest data dump that Tony had ever seen and it took him a moment to figure out that it was coming from Shield which meant that all of their secrets were out in the open for anyone to read. Files upon files of information. Tony had never had unrestricted access to all of Shield’s files, and even he knew that the super classified stuff needed to stay that way. But someone had managed to get everything and they were just putting it up on the internet.

“Shit,” Bruce said, “what do you think is going on?”

“Nothing good,” Tony said.

“Do you think it’s related to the hack Jarvis detected?”

“Possibly. Probably. What do you have for me, J?”

Jarvis turned on the tv and on the screen was news coverage out of Washington D.C. where three helicarriers were hovering over a building that Tony could identify as one of many Shield facilities. Then, the helicarriers began to shoot at each other and fire and explosions began and even the newscasters didn’t seem to know what to say.

“Well, shit,” Bruce said.

“Yeah,” Tony said, “what the hell is going on?”

The helicarriers crashed into the shield building and into the river below and Tony could only watch. He texted Clint but received no answer. He was undercover in South America and Tony could only hope that he was alright and not affected by whatever was going on with Shield. Natasha didn’t answer either and when Tony tried Maria Hill he was directed to voicemail.

“I guess we just have to wait,” Bruce said.

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The number of secrets that had come out of Shield were numerous and not even Tony could go
through the files. Especially since some of them were encrypted and required quite a bit of work to
open. He searched for the things that mattered instead so as to not be blind sighted by any
information that had gotten out.

Luckily, no information on his armor or the arc reactor had actually been in the data dump which
made it clear to him that Shield had never been able to get that information. What had been in the
data dump was information about the palladium poisoning which wasn’t something that Tony would
have liked to get out but at least it would be buried under the million other things that Shield had
wanted to keep secret. He also spotted some info on Extremis in there too but it wasn’t Tony’s
improved formula at least. Tony didn’t even bother to really look too far into anything about Howard
because he knew that his father couldn’t have been Hydra and that he would have been devastated to
see the end of something he spent so long building. Tony did find out that Obadiah Stane had been
Hydra, though, and that Shield/Hydra had been adamant about not letting anyone go look for Tony
when the whole Afghanistan thing happened. It also explained why no one had even tried to help
with The Mandarin.

The next few weeks became an exercise in not getting frustrated and walking away from all of it.
Shield’s fall brought along a million different problems and Tony found himself as one of the few
people that could help. He had the money, the knowledge, and the means to be able to help. Shield
was branded a terrorist organization and the entirely infrastructure of Shield seemed to fall apart
almost overnight.

Sharon Carter was the first to reach out and Tony should have expected it because Sharon was sort
of like a distant cousin that he hadn’t seen in years and yet knew he could trust. Tony hadn’t actually
known she was a Shield Agent until she called, though.

She was the one to explain as much as she could. How Fury had been shot in Steve’s apartment and
then Shield was calling for Steve’s head and how no one knew what was happening and how she
just had known in her gut that something was wrong.

“Nothing was normal. Things changed from one moment to the next after Fury died and I couldn’t
believe they wanted everyone to drop all of their missions to try and catch Steve. Captain America. I
should have known then,” Sharon said and Tony could tell that she was crying a little.

Sharon didn’t tell him everything over the phone just in case, but enough for Tony to get the gist and
know that not only could they not trust anyone, but that things were never going to be the same. He
helped Sharon get herself situated elsewhere without much trouble because almost every known
agent of Shield was in danger of getting picked up by the government for terrorism. Tony didn’t
blame them because they just didn’t know who was a good guy and a bad guy and it was hard to
distinguish.

“You should go visit Aunt Peggy,” Sharon said towards the end. “She does ask about you
sometimes.”

“I should,” Tony said and meant it.

Maria Hill contacted him next and Tony threw his blanket of protection over her as well. They
backtracked her hire date at SI just in case and Tony put his lawyers on the case for any trouble that
might arise. It was also good to have Maria on board SI because Tony needed someone he trusted to
get to the bottom of the unexplained hack and anyone else that might be a Hydra loyalist.

Clint showed up at the tower around the same time as Maria, looking a bit shaken and bruised but
not any worse.
“I was under cover,” he explained. “One minute we were on a mission and the next my partner is trying to shoot at me.”

That was when Tony realized the other thing the data dump had done. It had torn missions to shreds. Now, it wasn’t a bad thing because some of those missions must have been in process for some Hydra plot, but either way agents out under cover had their covers blown because the plans for the missions were out on the internet for anyone to read. And if they didn’t have their covers blown, then they had to face being out on the field with a Hydra agent that likely had instructions to kill their partner if Hydra was coming out of the shadows. Someone higher up had probably even arranged for real Shield loyalists to be paired up with Hydra loyal agents.

Somehow, it was Natasha that ended up facing a hearing about the whole matter and Tony watched what they televised, impressed at how Natasha handled them. She was telling the truth. They really couldn’t touch them when they were the reason the world was safe. Of course that only referenced The Avengers and some members of Shield, but overall the federal government was searching and capturing who they could and no one could tell who was Hydra and who was Shield.

Tony helped those he could -- those he could trust and know to be loyal to the ideals that Shield actually stood for. He helped them get other jobs or hired them himself to replace the twenty or so people that Maria had weeded out including a man that had been working for SI for long before Tony was even born and a scientist that Tony himself had worked side by side with on certain projects. Hydra really seemed to be everywhere.

In addition to everything else, there was the destruction in DC. Tony had sent the DODC in and footed anything that could be used against them in the future but it looked like cleanup would take some time.

“You know, you don’t have to work so hard to fix this,” Pepper said one night as they got ready to go to bed.

“I don’t,” Tony said, “but it wouldn’t feel right if I didn’t. Not to mention that this is as much Howard’s legacy as SI and perhaps the one he cared about more.”

Somehow, in the middle of it, Steve had woken up in the hospital and then immediately disappeared with his new flying friend. He didn’t even try to get in contact with Tony. Natasha played it off as Steve needing to get away for a while. Tony hated him a little bit for that, because he had been the catalyst to set everything off and yet he wasn’t sticking around to clean up the mess.

Natasha and Clint moved into the tower at some point in the months that followed even though Clint often left for weeks at a time without explanation to anyone.

Eventually things began to settle down, except that Shield/Hydra left behind plenty to occupy them with. No one knew who the real leader of Hydra was and they didn’t know what aside from Insight they had planned. The files from the data dump began to give them a picture but not much.

Around the time that Thor arrived back from England and Jane, Tony realized that the data dump hadn’t given them everything and that if Hydra had been around for as long as it had that naturally there would be a lot more to be informed about at the numerous Shield bases of operation because one thing that the data dump had given them was the locations of a bunch of facilities that Maria and Natasha knew nothing about.

After he, Natasha, Clint, and Thor went to a facility in Minnesota, they knew that they were right and that there was more to be found.
So this was an interesting chapter to write because Tony isn't directly involved in the events of the movie but of course he's definitely around and definitely in New York. So I wanted to sort of show his side of it and how much Tony just wouldn't know and how he would react to what happened. Hope you guys liked it. Thanks for reading.

Next chapter will be up soon.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I really enjoyed writing this chapter. It has some of the elements that I've been writing towards.
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter understood only some of what was going on in the world. Mr. Stark hadn’t really been writing him back much and that became worse when the truth about Shield came out. Everyone was a little bit thrown off by it. Aunt May and Uncle Ben explained it as a huge spy organization that turned out to be evil all along which meant that no one knew who to trust. Somehow though, Peter could tell that it was bothering Uncle Ben and he was spending a lot of time looking through old boxes in the basement.

Uncle Ben had also added that Mr. Stark would be right in the middle of all of it trying to resolve the problem. So, Peter had written only one letter to Mr. Stark and expected no reply because Tony Stark was busy.

When he never received a response at all, Peter wrote another letter. He didn’t answer again. It made Peter’s chest hurt a little. He had just gotten so used to the correspondence and he had to admit that it was a bit disappointing to not get any answer at all and he had known that eventually this was going to happen because it was Tony Stark and he was just some kid.

“Honey, he’s busy,” Aunt May said, “he is Iron Man after all.”

“Sure,” Peter said and sighed, except that he had made time before and now Peter was lucky if he got a response at all.

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In the months that followed, Tony found that there was more to do than he had the time for. Pepper was kept busy too and some of that was Tony’s fault. The board didn’t seem to like that Tony was deeply involved in all the Shield stuff and the drop in stock prices proved that it was a bad association. Tony didn’t care.

While all the legal things became easier even with the feds still chasing down leads on Shield agents -- but really Tony just couldn’t know that the agents being hunted were Shield loyalists or on the side of Hydra so he didn’t want to get involved -- other issues appeared.

Shield had a lot of property. A lot of bases that were full of dangerous things and dangerous people. Things and people that couldn’t get into the wrong hands which was both Hydra and the U.S. government. Between Natasha and Maria they found Shield agents that could still be trusted and after clearing them of all terrorist charges they were the ones responsible with finding and securing those things. Maria seemed to have a better idea about where to put everything and Tony just let her be in charge. He didn’t ask a lot of questions.

At least Shield had been good at keeping track of all the things they kept hidden away. Tony was
sure that there were things kept off the record, but they had something to go on. A list tracked everything they found and put away. It still didn’t seem enough, and when no one could locate Loki’s scepter, it became a problem that Tony wanted to deal with personally. Natasha and Bruce agreed. They could all still remember exactly how it had affected Clint.

Natasha got into contact with Steve while Tony got in touch with Jane Foster to bring in Thor. The Avengers re-assembled.

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2015

Months upon months of searching and nothing. Not the scepter and nothing on Bucky. It felt like ever since Hydra had come out of the woodwork of Shield that things had fallen apart and Steve didn’t know what to do about it. He had been adjusting to being in the future and being a part of Shield had helped some. Natasha trying to set him up with every female agent that she came across or knew had slowly started to drive him crazy even if he knew she meant well.

Steve actually liked Natasha. She was a good partner to have out on the field and a better friend than he had expected her to be from the first time they met. He almost felt a little bad about all the secrets that they were keeping from everyone else. Tony had asked him a lot of questions about The Winter Soldier and Steve hadn’t wanted to admit that it was actually Bucky behind the mask even if he expected that Tony might actually understand why Steve had gone off if he knew why. Mostly, Steve didn’t want to bring up exactly what had gone down on his and Natasha’s end because he knew that if he did, he would have to tell Tony that Howard and Maria Stark’s deaths had been orchestrated by Hydra. Still, the number one secret that they had to keep was Nick. No one could know Nick Fury was alive, not even the team.

On a night when they had all ended up back at Avengers Tower, Steve found Tony in the kitchen staring at a screen. It was his usual state to be deep in some project or dealing with stuff to do with Stark Industries.

“Anything useful in there?” Steve asked.

Tony didn’t even startle at his arrival. “Pepper just forwarded me updates on Peter,” Tony said and motioned for Steve to sit down.

On the screen were pictures of the boy that must have been Tony’s son. He was small and scrawny but smiling. His hair was in disarray and his eyes were almost exact replicas of his father’s.

“So that’s him, then,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Tony said, “apparently he’s doing really well in school. I was supposed to meet him last year but I guess I’m a bit too dangerous to meet. I’m trying to keep my distance and really I’ve been too busy to really -- he’s good where he is.”

“I think that if you want to meet him you should,” Steve said, “because you just don’t know what might happen.”

Tony stared at the tablet for a long moment. “I don’t want to disrespect his guardian’s wishes.”

Steve could tell that Tony wanted to desperately, but he also knew that there had to be some fear and insecurity deep down that made Tony not put up a fight to see Peter and be in his life.

“I think for now this is enough. I’m not fit to be a father and right now we have other things to worry about. I haven’t even answered his letters in months.”
Steve didn’t know how to respond to that. He placed a hand on Tony’s shoulder instead and he could see the same longing that he felt when it came to Bucky reflected there in Tony’s eyes.

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Ever since Shield turned out to be Hydra, things had changed drastically. Pepper had always known that Tony wasn’t ever likely to quit being Iron Man even after he destroyed all his suits. That had been an obviously impulsive move on Tony’s part. Pepper also suspected that he had done it just to appease her in some ways and to maybe feel like he could actually deserve to meet and be around Peter.

The Parkers’ refusal to allow Tony to be a part of Peter’s life outside of a hero he looked up to had been almost the last straw in holding back from a pure focus on heroics. The added pressure of dealing with Hydra and an excuse to have something more to do than deal with lawyers or board members had just meant that Pepper only ever saw her boyfriend when their schedules happened to magically align. Jarvis was to thank for that even if sometimes even the AI got it wrong and Pepper slept on too big a bed more often than she would have liked completely on her own.

They were both just too busy and their jobs too important. The added people living in the tower was also another aspect that made things difficult. It had been fine when it was Bruce because he was always in his lab. Natasha and Clint were almost tolerable because at least they knew how to make themselves scarce even if they hung around the penthouse much too often. Thor was loud and always breaking their things when he wasn’t careful and yet he was the one to spend the most time on his own floor. Steve was always polite and friendly, but he was just always around. Not always, but definitely when Pepper was looking to spend some time alone with Tony. At least he was always quick to pick up on her annoyance and he excused himself, but that just made things worse. The combination of all of them there just made things difficult in ways that Pepper had never expected.

Tony had also stopped answering Peter. May had actually e-mailed her about it, asking if everything was alright and Pepper just hadn’t known how to tell her that Tony loved to write to Peter but that for one thing he was busy and often not ever home, but that he also found it painful to have such little contact and that May was the one directly responsible for it.

It all came to a head after Tony and the rest of the Avengers arrived back at the tower from a mission that still hadn’t resulted in them finding the scepter. They had all had a meal together before Pepper left her office and so when she arrived most of The Avengers had moved over to the movie room or to their own floors. Tony for his part was in the workshop and greeted Pepper with a quick kiss on the cheek before he turned back to his work.

“How many more bases are there left?” Pepper asked.

“How many more bases are there left?” Pepper asked.

“Three that we know of. Could be more,” Tony said, still distracted by his work on what looked to be the Iron Legion.

A few of the droids were getting repaired as they spoke and Pepper could see that Tony was still trying to make them even better. The man really didn’t know how to stop working. She could still remember the week when he and Bruce built the Hulk Buster armor. It was a brilliant idea, but the single minded work the two were doing had concerned her a bit after they passed 36 straight hours in the workshop.

“Do you have to go on every mission?” Pepper asked as she took her heels off.

Tony didn’t even glance her way. “I am an Avenger, aren’t I?”
“Yes, but is this important enough to need all of you? I just -- I want to spend time with you, Tony. Over the last year it’s been you running around trying to fix everything and the company having to take the brunt of it. We have so many former Shield agents working for us that it seems like we’ve restarted Shield right in this tower.”

“A lot of them work on Avengers stuff,” Tony said, “and we needed the personel after Hill took care of the infiltrators.”

Pepper sighed. “That isn’t the point. Why won’t you just send the suit. Jarvis can take care of things. We need to spend more time together. I’m here trying to keep the company afloat and worried sick about you and you don’t seem to care about anything other than playing a hero with your friends.”

Tony finally turned to look at her. “You mean protecting the world from being enslaved if that scepter gets into the wrong hands,” Tony said.

“Yeah well what good is it to protect the world when I have May Parker e-mailing me about how sad Peter is that you haven’t bothered to even answer him. What good is a safe world if you don’t care enough to contact your son?”

Tony’s eyes narrowed on her and Pepper didn’t think he had ever been mad this way before. At least not at her.

“That is not up to me,” Tony whispered. “If I could be in his life I would. You know that.” The latter he said a bit louder and then he turned away from her.

Looking at him hurt. Pepper knew that she loved Tony. At one point he had become her best friend and being his girlfriend never came with boring moments, but Pepper had always wanted her life to be a bit more stable. She didn’t know if she could handle being CEO of Stark Industries and Tony Stark and Iron Man all at once.

From somewhere in the tower there was a small explosion and then laughter. Then something like a plate broke. This was not the home life that she had ever imagined. As much as she cared for Tony, she didn’t know if it was worth it to be out of her wits at any given moment of her day.

“I think -- Tony, I think I’ll be working out of LA for a while There’s some business to take care of there anyway. I think we have to re-evaluate this. Us.”

Tony almost fell out of his chair he turned so quickly to look at her. “What -- Pepper, what do you even mean by that?”

“I can’t be in a relationship that is only ever really real once or twice a month even though we technically live in the same place and share a bedroom. You’re never here, Tony, and when you are you have a million things going on. When you’re off Avenging or whatever I can’t -- it’s hard to get anything done because I’m waiting for someone to call and tell me that you’re gone. I just -- I can’t do this.”

Before she left, Pepper took the necklace Tony had given her after the whole extremis thing. It contained pieces of the shrapnel that had been in Tony’s chest and Pepper just didn’t feel like she could keep it anymore.
We got to the break up. So I actually couldn't be positive about how/when Tony and Pepper would have broken up but something told me that it had to have happened before Age of Ultron primarily because Pepper was not in that movie and when Tony mentioned her absence it felt like an excuse and then of course the next time after Ultron that we see Tony is in Civil War where it's implied that the break up happened sometime before the MIT presentation and he confirms it to Steve later in Civil War.

I really like the Pepper/Tony relationship but after Iron Man 3 I really felt that it wasn't going to work not because they didn't care for each other but because they want different things (although canonically it looks like they do make it work). And this story started to head into a different direction as far as well which also made sense for this to happen.

Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

And so we finally get to Age of Ultron. As most people can agree this is not the best movie for many reasons but I still rather enjoyed it when I rewatched while writing this because despite the numerous things that are wrong about it, there's still a lot that happens in this movie that made sense and that particularly when it comes to the characters really does work particularly towards the beginning where we can see the friendship that the team has.

Anyway, I'm so glad everyone's still reading and enjoying this! Your comments and kudos really do make me glad to be working on this.

On another note: Please no spoilers for Infinity War in the comments if you've already seen the movie. Not only do I not want anyone else reading the comments to get spoiled but I myself won't actually see the movie until Tuesday so I'm staying away from anything that might spoil it for me. But I'm sure that once I have seen it I would love to talk to any of you about it.

Tony had known that one day Pepper was going to leave him. In some ways it was exactly what he had expected to happen sometime after the battle of New York and after he began to develop all kinds of issues. When she didn’t break up with him and instead tolerated and helped him, Tony had let himself hope. After he thought she was dead and then she wasn’t Tony had expected her to place all the blame of everything that had happened to her on his shoulders but Pepper hadn’t. She had just moved past it, demanded he take Extremis out of her, and then probably expected Tony to quit being Iron Man. That was the point of contention. Things had been good because following all of that he had gotten the arc reactor out and for months hadn’t bothered to rebuild a new suit.

The emergence of Hydra had changed everything. Tony had known that she hated how much he involved himself in fixing things and then the missions had started and things had started to fall apart. He heard the emotion and the tears as she said her final words and Tony felt as if the Hulk had thrown him sans suit into a wall and then stomped all over his chest.

Tony closed his eyes and tried to get a grip on himself before he did something stupid like chase after her and beg her to stay. It wouldn’t change anything, not when they had a promising lead coming up in the morning and Tony was going to be on that mission no matter what.

“Hey, Jarvis, blackout mode and lets get some music in here.”

Dum-E beeped at him and his arm brushed against Tony’s shoulder and Tony reached over to pat it.

Tony wondered if he could actually quit being Iron Man. Could he take that step back and let the others take care of things? They could ask that friend of Steve’s to join up and take his place and Tony could maybe persuade Rhodey to be on call or something.

Maybe if he did, then it wouldn’t just be Pepper that would be happier with him but also May and Ben Parker. Maybe then he could get to meet Peter. It was a long shot with the Peter aspect, but
Tony could only let himself hope.

There were also other things he could do that could on their own protect and serve to make the world better. He and Bruce had been talking about it a lot since reading all the information on insight because despite how badly planned that had been they had had a point. There were threats out there in the universe and they needed to be ready. Ideally, Tony wanted it to be something of an AI that could actually determine the threats and act accordingly. A way to put Earth itself in a suit of armor. He didn’t actually know if it was possible. Jarvis, his first AI had evolved and formed from a language-user interface like those found in most smart phones. Tony had made Jarvis something of a learning artificial intelligence but that was all coding and programming protocols that ran on algorithms of If - When scenarios. They needed something greater than that to truly run independently of The Avengers and of Tony himself.

“Sir, Captain Rogers is at the door.”

Tony didn’t think he could see anyone.

“Tell him I’m busy and that I’ll see him in the morning.”

It was a bit surprising how easy it was to get along with Steve since they had gotten to know each other a bit better. He seemed to respect Tony -- probably because of the whole wormhole thing -- and he also seemed to appreciate the lengths that Tony had gone to after the fall of Shield.

“Captain Rogers is insisting I let him in,” Jarvis said.

“I’m busy, J,” Tony said.

“Not from what I can determine,” Jarvis responded, “speaking with Captain Rogers is likely to put you in a better mood.”

“Don’t let him in,” Tony said. “Start a new project file instead and make sure it’s accessible to Dr. Banner. Let’s call it Ultron.”

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They finally found the scepter in Sokovia. Maria Hill had provided the intel on the place and Steve hadn’t questioned it because he knew where it was really coming from. Fury. They had been after Strucker for a while, ever since they’d found out that he was the current head of Hydra. More important than Strucker was the scepter and Steve knew that Thor had been getting anxious about finding it. It probably had something to do with how Loki had used it the last time he was on Earth. Steve could tell that Thor was still broken up about his brother’s death but no one ever brought it up.

Steve had his own reasons for looking into every Hydra base carefully. He wanted anything and everything that could lead back to Bucky. At the last base there had been a chair and while none of the equipment had been present Steve had known somehow that they used it to restrain Bucky.

Sam was still following leads, not that they actually lead him anywhere. The one and only thing they were sure of was that The Winter Soldier was not active. That meant that they had either put him back to sleep or that Bucky was out there hiding from everyone. A part of Steve wanted to be out there leading that search, but he also knew that the threat of Hydra was bigger and more important.

The Avengers had become a real team ever since they’d come back together. They all worked well together and they had just become closer both on and off the field. It helped that Tony had offered to house them even if Steve still really wanted to get his own place. Preferably in Brooklyn.
The trip back from Sokovia was a bit more silent than the trip there at first. Bruce always had to get himself calm and relaxed after his time as The Hulk and with Clint injured there were less jokes all around. Thor couldn’t keep his eyes from the specter as if he expected it to disappear at any moment. Tony had taken control of the quinjet even if Natasha had been the first to offer. He looked a bit mellow despite everything, even when he was trying to plan a party to celebrate their victory.

Dr. Cho met them as soon as they were out of the quinjet. Steve wasn’t sure where Tony had found her exactly, but she was amazing. The things she could do with medicine seemed to have come right out of a sci-fi book.

“Where’s Ms. Potts?” Steve asked, surprised when she didn’t appear.

“Probably in California by now,” Tony said with a shrug as Maria approached them which meant that Steve couldn’t ask any more questions.

By the time that he had made it to his room to change, he’d read up on all the information Maria had gathered on the twins. They were Sokovian and somehow volunteers for whatever experiments Hydra had wanted to make with the scepter. If their powers came from it, Steve couldn’t begin to fathom what else it might do. What else Hydra had made it do.

The next few days were quiet. Tony and Bruce were working all hours of the day and Steve spent his time looking over what Sam had sent him which was not much and all of the info that Maria Hill had gathered for him. Sam thought that there had been a Bucky sighting somewhere in France but nothing concrete to go on. In the middle of it there were preparations for the party Tony was throwing. Steve kept himself out of the way and between Natasha and Thor managed to get some training in aside from his daily runs.

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Bruce thought that Tony was crazy. Crazy in the way that he himself was and that had led to his little green problem. The whole idea behind Ultron was intriguing and if they could pull it off fantastic even if Bruce thought that Tony was just a little bit too paranoid when it came to a possible alien threat.

Still, for the sake of the science, Bruce was 100% behind all the theoretical nonsense that Tony had sent his way one night. The scepter changed things. It made it somehow possible. Bruce was a bit hesitant, then, but mostly because alien tech was dangerous enough but this particular alien tech had already caused them plenty of problems and probably more that they didn’t even know about. It seemed to have thought. It was more than just an object, it almost seemed to have a brain. Bruce didn’t think that they could ever hope to truly understand it.

For three days they worked with the scepter and still, despite Tony’s belief that it would work, nothing happened. He could see Tony’s disappointment, but a part of Bruce was a bit relieved. At least trying to get it to work had given Bruce a small bit of insight on the scepter.

“At least we can say that we tried, Tony,” Bruce said, “this was our best shot.”

“You’re right. I just don’t get it. It should have worked. We’ll have to take a look at the data we gathered one more time before Thor takes it back to Asgard.”

It seemed the right thing to do, to have Thor take it back to Asgard where it could hopefully be put away so no one could use it again. The next step would be to figure out if Hydra had used it for more than the experimentation on the twins. Bruce had read up on what they knew about them and their powers and he was interested to see exactly how all of that worked. He wondered if there were
The party was nice. There were all kinds of people around. Former Shield agents, SI employees, some WWII veterans that Steve had befriended, and then other friends that Tony or the others had felt like inviting. The only two missing seemed to be Jane Foster and Pepper Potts. Bruce decided it wasn’t his place to ask. Instead, he was drawn towards Natasha.

He didn’t know what to make of it, the attraction that he had for her. Even the Hulk seemed to like her, which weirded Bruce out in a bunch of different ways. Talking to her was just easy and she just had this calming energy that at first Bruce hadn’t believed to be real. Bruce just knew that no matter what he didn’t deserve her. It was easier to stay away and keep to himself before Nat became another Betty. Either way, he didn’t think that Natasha could like him that way and he didn’t really want to know one way or another. It was better to not know.

“You should go for it,” Steve said when he caught Bruce looking in her direction later in the night. He seemed to be drinking some of Thor’s mead.

“No -- I don’t think so.”

“It’s funny,” Steve said, “all of you seem to have someone except for me.”

“Don’t say that too loudly. Natasha will try and set you up with someone again.”

Steve laughed. “For someone that seems to know a lot about everyone she’s gotten me wrong more times than I could count. Anyway, I don’t think there’s anyone that would ever really be it for me.”

Tony appeared then and clapped a hand on each of their shoulders. “That’s because you’re pushing ninety, old man. Now if we can find you an old broad.”

“No thanks, Tony,” Steve said and waved his hands in front of him.

“So an old gent then? Is that what you’re into, eh, Cap?”

Bruce didn’t think that he had ever seen Steve blush that hard. Tony just laughed.

The rest of the night just seemed to flow. Bruce found himself pulled into conversation with Dr. Cho for almost an hour and then eventually most people started to leave until only The Avengers, Colonel Rhodes, Maria Hill, and Dr. Cho remained. It was one of the best nights they had all had in a long while which naturally meant that it didn’t end well.

From there everything happened fast. Ultron was suddenly there in one of the half broken Iron Legion suits and talking about having killed “the other guy” and more suits were appearing and the party atmosphere had changed and he was on top of Nat over the bar and he needed to keep himself from going green.

By the end of it, Jarvis was gone and so was the scepter. They’d screwed up.

The next day went quick. Clean up was left for later as they tried to figure out what to do next. It didn’t take them long, even going off of physical files because Ultron had wiped everything. Bruce tended to hang back on missions, so he was on the quinjet while they followed the lead. He didn’t expect to be a target of one of the twins, but he remembered feeling anger in a way he hadn’t since the first few times he became The Hulk. His change was instantaneous.

Chapter End Notes
I have arrived at where I stopped editing with this chapter so I'm not sure when the next one will be up. Probably Monday. It just depends on what I feel like doing when I get home tonight. Editing or writing.

And just once again, please no spoilers for Infinity War in the comments. Thanks for reading!

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Honestly, I'm so surprised and pleased by the response this story is getting. I mean over 500 kudos is just amazing! It really does push me to keep writing and keep editing this and I can't wait for you guys to read some of the stuff that's coming in a few chapters.

This one covers most of the rest of Age of Ultron.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

They screwed up.

Ultron hadn’t been meant to become an evil artificially intelligent robot and yet that’s what happened. Tony didn’t know how it had gone wrong, or how it had ended up working at all, but he knew that he’d screwed up. He could also see that everyone blamed him. Even Bruce blamed him a little for pushing him to help him.

Then, Jarvis was dead.

His mask went up as he looked at what was left. Half formed pieces of code and no way to bring Jarvis back as he had been. Tony couldn’t even face to pull out another of his AI’s to get to work.

Pepper was gone and Jarvis was dead and most of the team couldn’t even look at him. The vision played in his mind in a taunting way too, reminding him of why Ultron had felt like the right thing to do.

By the time that they had gone after Klaue and Tony tried not to think about the last time he had seen that man, Tony had stopped trying to figure out exactly how things had gone wrong. He knew it was the scepter that had done it and corrupted his and Bruce’s work.

“I really just don’t understand,” Ultron said as he fought Tony and threw him aside with a sweep of his hand, “humans are confusing. You create children and don’t let them evolve. Don’t even tell them you created them.”

Tony’s blood went cold. Ultron knew about Peter. He knew about Peter and he could just put the information out there into the world. He fought back as Ultron came at him again, but even his Iron Man suit didn’t seem to be enough because Ultron knew his every move and had studied his armor.

By the end of it, it had been for nothing because Ultron got away with the vibranium and aside from Clint, everyone was incapacitated. Hulk was on the loose and angry. Things were just getting worse and worse by the minute. Tony couldn’t let himself focus on the Peter of it all since there was no immediate fix for that. Instead he had a Hulk to catch.

Later, after they had gotten to the safehouse, or what had been code for Clint’s farm which had come with a wife and kids, Tony tried to keep busy and not think about it mostly because there wasn’t much that he could actually do aside from helping the others regroup and figure out what to do next.

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He felt jarred, as if he had woken up after a long fever. It brought Steve back to his childhood and being a skinny kid that was one bad cold from just falling down dead. Somehow Clint had managed to get them back onto the quinjet even as thrown as they were. Natasha had been the quietest that Steve had ever seen her and he himself had only managed to get himself back together enough to help when Tony finally got the Hulk to change back but not without causing destruction in his wake.

Tony had gotten on his phone at once and Steve knew it was because he wanted people on the scene taking care of everything at once.

Logically, Steve knew that Wanda Maximoff was to blame with her magic or whatever the stone had given her, but it still did pain him to think about Peggy young again and waiting for him to have some sort of life that just wasn’t fighting.

They touched down somewhere unfamiliar and Steve watched Tony as the others got up and followed Clint. Something was bothering him and it was more than just Ultron. Still, Steve didn’t think that he could ask. He didn’t know that he could do it calmly without starting a fight.

It turned out that Clint’s “safehouse” was his own personal home and that he had a pregnant wife and two kids. It made Steve pause. Only Natasha seemed to be unsurprised. Tony just kept on quipping and Steve could tell that it was because he was trying to pretend that everything was fine. He almost reached out to him, but instead followed Thor outside and watched him leave without much explanation. He hoped that there would be a lead. Looking in at Clint’s home and family made Steve wistful. This was something that he could never have. The one and only person that had been an option for him had already lived out her life. She had kids and grandkids too. Hell, Natasha had been trying to set him up with her niece. Steve found that all kinds of weird once he’d found out that Sharon was actually related to Peggy.

Later, while he had been getting out his anger and angst out on some logs that needed chopping, Tony appeared and he was almost the last person that Steve wanted to see. He was still angry. It just -- Tony always just did things. He did things and didn’t think about them going wrong and he kept secrets and he had created a killer robot.

Tony started to chop some of the logs too, and Steve tried to keep the conversation light except that he couldn’t help but let his frustrations out. Tony seemed to think that he was fine and unaffected when that was the farthest thing from the truth. It was just that what he’d been shown felt so flimsy in comparison to the way Natasha had reacted or how it had set off the Hulk. Even Thor had been shaken as apparent by his need to run off. Steve just hoped that it would bring the answers he was seeking.

Tony’s justifications meant nothing to him, not when the result was Ultron and the whole team ending up off-kilter.

“He knows about Peter,” Tony said eventually after telling Steve his motivations were so everyone could go “home” as if he expected that they all wanted to settle down somewhere like Clint clearly had. Maybe Tony did with Pepper and Peter. Steve just knew that it would never be his life -- he would never be able to do it not with how much the world seemed to need them and because Steve didn’t know how he could.

“Ultron,” Tony said, “he knows that Peter is my son and it’s just a matter of time before he decides it’s time for the world to know. For Peter to know. I’m surprised that it isn’t out there already.”

Steve didn’t even get to respond before they were interrupted and Tony was pulled away to fix something. He was always fixing something, or trying to. He felt a little bit like a fraud as he cut the next log. Just like the others he kept his own secrets and told himself it was for the best. Maybe he
needed to cut Tony some slack.

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May followed the news closely when it came to The Avengers and in particular Tony Stark. So she was all over the videos and articles that came out of Johannesburg. The Hulk had gone wild for some reason and Iron Man had gone after him with too much destruction in their wake. She paid close attention over the next few days and was not entirely unsurprised when she heard that they had appeared in Sokovia, a small tiny country that until that moment May had not known existed.

She had watched the news while gripping her favorite mug as an entire country was taken into the sky.

By the time that it was all over and no one knew what kind of devastation had taken place, May had spilled most of the tea that had been meant to calm her onto the floor. It wasn’t until much later that all of The Avengers were accounted for that she could breathe easily.

Fearing for the life of Tony Stark more than once a year had never been May’s expectations of most of her adult life and yet that’s where she was. Ben thought she worried too much, but May knew that Peter would never forgive them if Tony died before he knew that man was his father. More and more she was tempted to tell him and let him and Tony meet and yet it was so hard to make that decision when Tony had been ignoring Peter for months and he was still in constant danger.

Chapter End Notes

I'm still avoiding spoilers (I'll be seeing it tomorrow night) so I've been doing that by working on this fic so that's been fun. This chapter and next finish off Age of Ultron. Next chapter should be up tomorrow. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
I cannot say it enough how amazing the response to this fic has been! All of you guys are amazing.

This chapter is a little bit longer than usual which I'm sure you won't mind seeing as last one was a bit on the short side. It's just something that happens during editing. I do love where this chapter takes us though and I hope you guys do as well. Enjoy.

“I really think it’s time I take a step back,” Tony said.

Rhodey stood next to him in the middle of the mess that his tower had become again. Friday had become integrated but Tony still didn’t consider her the same as Jarvis. She just wasn’t quite there yet.

“It’s not your fault this happened, Tony,” Rhodey said.

Tony shook his head. “No. I guess -- well, Clint is retiring too. It just seems like the right thing. I miss Pepper and I think we can still work it out if I really try and stay away. I’ll just supply all the gadgets and tech. Even Fury is back. They don’t really need me anymore.”

Rhodey gave him a long look and it reminded Tony a little bit of their MIT days and how easily Rhodey had been able to just read Tony and understand what he was getting at without saying the words.

“So, what you’re really saying is that they need me.”

“Yes, Buttercup, that’s exactly it. I even upgraded your armor just for the occasion. Steve thinks that Sam will join up too and then there’s Maximoff.”

Rhodey walked around what used to be his living room. “I don’t think this will make the Parkers let you be in Peter’s life. And I don’t actually think you have to do this just for Pepper. I love her, you know I do, but sometimes I wonder if the two of you can actually work. I’ve been wondering that for a while.”

It reminded Tony suddenly that none of them actually knew about him and Pepper sort of breaking up or taking a break or whatever it was that had happened. He didn’t even know if he could talk about it.

Then there was the other part. The part of him that had created Ultron because the point really was for all of it to end. He didn’t know how to make Rhodey or any of them understand that in some ways he did want out. That he did want to take that step back and become someone that could be dependable and less risky to be around. He could still remember the feeling of relief that had come over him when he figured out that it was Jarvis stopping Ultron from getting at the misle codes and also leaking the information about Peter. He had known then that it really was time for him to reexamine exactly what he wanted. He came to just one conclusion: he wanted to be in Peter’s life.
and he wanted to be a father.

“I don’t need to do it for her,” Tony said at last, “I need to do it for me. And for Peter. I think I screwed up enough ignoring him.”

Rhodey nodded. “Well, I’ll be happy to join The Avengers. I wouldn’t say that Sokovia was fun or anything, but I enjoyed being a part of the team. What about…”

“Vision,” Tony finished for him, “Steve thinks he’ll make a good Avenger. Thor’s hammer judged him worthy so I guess we can trust him. It’s still just so odd hearing him speak.”

“Threw me off the first time,” Rhodey said.

---

It took almost a full month for the new Avengers facility to be constructed with all the necessary infrastructure. Steve couldn’t believe it. He knew that Tony got things done fast, but this was on another level entirely.

After Sokovia they had returned to the tower just in time to help with clean up, but Tony had still shown them plans for another facility in upstate New York. One that would fit their needs better. Then, he quit.

“I’m going to retire from the superhero business,” Tony said.

“Stark, if this is because of Ultron we aren’t holding that against you,” Natasha said immediately. “You don’t have to quit.”

Tony shook his head. “No, I do. I think it’s time for me to really make it possible to bring Peter into my life. I think the rest of you have it covered anyway and we have some new additions so that’ll help. And if you ever need me in a true apocalyptic crisis I’ll still be here. I’m not destroying my suits this time. There will always be threats and Thor might very well bring us some bad news but the world is in capable hands.”

The move to the new facility didn’t take too long and it really was going to serve their needs better. The training grounds were perfect for their new recruits and so was everything else that Tony had added into it. Thor stuck around to help with the building and the move, but as soon as it was all done they could tell that he was ready to leave them again.

He had filled them in on everything that he knew about the Infinity Stones and the power that they wielded with a worried look in his eyes because even though he didn’t know what the new threat could be, he knew that it couldn’t be anything good.

Somehow, even though Thor was going back to Asgard, Steve found that it was Tony he was going to miss the most. His anger at the other man had disappeared after Vision was born and they were fighting in Sokovia and Tony was prepared to not make it out even after everyone else had thanks to Fury’s arrival. Wanda had said that Tony would do anything to fix his mistakes and Steve had taken it the wrong way expecting Tony to make things worse when he should have remembered that Tony was always going to fix anything he found broken and that he wasn’t the bad guy.

After Thor left, it was easy to just say it out loud, that he was going to miss Tony. It was easy to say that and to know that it was true and even as Tony spoke about maybe getting to have a simpler life, Steve knew that Tony did deserve that and yet Steve could never imagine getting to live that life. He would never get to have that because there was no one that he wanted to have it with and without anyone to share it with him there was no point to even daydreaming. It wasn’t -- he didn’t hope for
that to be his life anymore like back when they were at war and there had been Peggy and the possibility that never came to be. Tony painted a nice picture and Steve could almost imagine him with a farm similar to Clint’s or maybe just a house somewhere hidden away with some chickens running around and probably Peter. Maybe more kids. But actually, the chickens would probably not be real chickens at all but robots. A menagerie of robot animals.

“Are you okay?” Tony asked a second time, from inside the car, leaning his head out, “I don’t know what Wanda showed you, but if it was anything like what the rest of us saw then it must have really shaken you.”

“I’ll be okay,” Steve said.

“You always are,” Tony said, “and I think you mean to be, but you can’t be the perfect soldier all the time. This isn’t all there is -- I hope you’ll see that. Anyway, don’t be a stranger. Stop by the tower some time.”

Steve laughed. “Sure.”

Later, after they had started the new recruits on some training exercises, Natasha nudged him.

“I kind of figured out what the real problem with trying to set you up was,” she said.

Steve groaned. “Don’t start all of that again.”

“I won’t. I think the two of us are fine as we are. I just -- I get it -- it’s hard when you’re in love with someone else. No one can compare.”

Steve turned to face her immediately. “Natasha what do you even--”

She narrowed her eyes on him. “You can’t lie to me, Steve. I was too wrapped up in myself to see it before but I think it’s been there for a while.”

“See what?”

Natasha laughed. “You and Stark.”

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The next time that Peter got a letter from Tony Stark it happened about a month or so after Sokovia. It was still all over the news and even Peter was aware how tragic it must have been. The letter came as a surprise because Peter hadn’t really been expecting for Tony Stark to actually want to answer him after the last few letters that Peter had written had come and gone unanswered.

Peter,

The first thing I have to say is I’m sorry. I think by now you must know that I’ve been busy. I’ve always been a busy person but I always made time to answer you but I was having a hard time for a bit there and I didn’t really want contact with anyone. I’m sorry to say that it included you.

Things just got crazy for a while there too and I screwed up a few things. I think you’re probably aware of how I created something that almost killed us all so let this be a lesson to you because I know that you’re smart enough to fall into the same mistakes -- don’t let your fear or really any emotion take a lead on what you create or invent. Or rather, don’t trust anything that can think for itself. I think there’s a really good quote about that from Harry Potter but can’t be bothered to look it up.
Anyway, on to other more fun topics. If my memory and math is correct, I think you’re going to start high school in a few months. It’s very exciting. I never had the opportunity to really partake in what high school is supposed to be like because my father sent me to boarding school which was different enough except that I was also younger than all the other kids in my grade. So I just want you to enjoy it for the both of us.

Has anything exciting happened lately? I promise that I do want to know and that I will answer.

Tony Stark

Peter almost didn’t want to answer the letter as to not get his hopes up even though it was longer than most of Mr. Stark’s previous letters and also full of rambling that Peter found a little bit amusing. Aunt May told him that it was only polite for him to respond and that he really had to understand that Mr. Stark was a busy person.

Peter wrote back and kept it simple.

Dear Mr. Stark,

Saving the world is way more important than writing me. I’m just Peter and can’t be as important as all the other things you can be doing. I’m really excited for high school. For a little while my teachers were actually trying to convince my aunt and uncle that I should skip a grade but Aunt May put a stop to it. I’m glad she did because I don’t think that I would have liked it.

Nothing else has really happened lately. Uncle Ben and I are trying to convince May that we should get a dog. I don’t think she likes dogs much, but she’s allergic to cats so we definitely can’t get one of those. Uncle Ben says that maybe we’ll get her to change her mind by the time Christmas rolls around so that would be pretty cool.

Peter

He received another letter back the week before his middle-school graduation. He was only a little surprised by the arrival especially since the letter had been folded inside of a card.

Congrats Peter!

Any graduation is impressive, even middle-school! When I told Steve (yes that Steve) about it he actually drew you the card this note is in so this is one of a kind. Treasure it forever. Or sell it. I’m sure you could make a pretty penny. Maybe I should have gotten Steve to sign it too. Oh, well, I suppose you’ll have to wait until your next graduation to make the big bucks.

Did you know that he went to art school back in his day? It’s one of those facts that are common knowledge but that no one ever remembers.

Tell your Aunt May that I’m pro-dog. A boy needs to have a dog to go on adventures with. I never had one growing up but there was this mean cat that my mom owned that hated me and always tried to scratch me. Cats are evil.

Good luck at your graduation. And hey, you’re one step closer to coming to work at Stark Industries.

All my best to you,
Tony Stark

The card was really something to treasure. The front of it was a drawing of Mr. Stark and a bunch of
robots that must have been built by Mr. Stark himself and there were balloons and a speech bubble that just said “Congratulations, Peter!” . Peter couldn’t believe that it had been made by Captain America himself and that he cared enough to draw something for Peter.

Dear Mr. Stark,

I can’t believe that you got Captain America to draw me a card! I don’t even know what to say. Aunt May is actually displaying it on our fridge because she liked it so much. He’s really talented. Uncle Ben is a huge fan of his so I think he was more excited than even I was when he found out who drew it. Can you thank him for me?

My graduation went great. I can’t believe I’ll actually be in high school next year. It just seems a little bit crazy. Aunt May keeps saying that I'm growing up too fast but she still doesn’t think that I can be responsible for a dog.

Anyway, I wanted to ask because everyone’s sort of wondering. Did you quit The Avengers? Because everyone seems to think you did and last week when the Avengers were out trying to stop whatever happened in Central Park you weren’t there.

Peter

It just kept going like that for the next few months and Peter could tell that Aunt May and Uncle Ben were surprised that the letters had started up again. By the time that school had started back up, Peter couldn’t remember not having to check the mail for a letter from Tony Stark, or sitting down to write one back to him. It was just part of his life. A secret part that not even Ned knew about but that Peter cherished and never wanted to end.

Chapter End Notes

I really do love this chapter. It was one of my favorites for a few reasons. One of them being the Steve pov scene. This is the scene that really cemented for me that this fic was going to end up being Stony because it just in particular to this fic just fit for Steve to have gained a crush on Tony. It was also a very interesting moment watching it after having experienced Civil War because for all that Ultron tears the team apart and has Tony quitting, Steve and Tony in this moment are the closest we see them. Their friendship is just so evident and not burdened with everything that happened with Ultron.

The other thing is the letters! I really missed writing those so it was fun to get back to it.

Next chapter will probably be up tomorrow night but it's possible that I won't get to it.

Still haven't seen Infinity War yet, but I will in a few hours so I'm sure I'll have thoughts on that and will throw them up on my tumblr when I'm back home.

Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Oh boy. I am so blown away by the response this is getting! You guys are all so amazing and wonderful. Thank you!

This chapter was actually fully edited and ready to go yesterday. And then I started to answer a few comments and I realized that I made a mistake. So the scene in last chapter was supposed to overlap only a slightly little bit with the first scene in this one as far as timing went and then it was going to pick up timewise when Peter is in school as he does mention school starting up...however, I forgot that Peter’s 14th birthday is in August so I had to go and edit this one accordingly which still makes it work with the next chapter so at least it wasn’t a huge edit and I’m glad I caught the mistake not because it makes a huge difference but because it would have bothered me. Hence the chapter is coming in so late.

On another note I did finally watch Infinity War last night and I was blown away by it. I absolutely loved it and I won’t say much more than that here just in case someone hasn’t seen it yet but come talk to me about at my tumblr if you want to discuss.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After quitting The Avengers it had been easy to fall into the routine of R&D work for SI and improvements on tech for The Avengers. There hadn’t been any big missions for them of late, anyway, aside from some low key things to do with any Hydra operatives that were left. In the middle of it, Tony had begun to write to Peter again. The first letter hadn’t been easy, but Tony had done it and sent it before he could change his mind and it had felt good. It had felt like something monumental had happened and he felt lighter. He felt even better when Peter replied.

Pepper had been in contact with him following the events of Sokovia and she had been a big part in how quick the remodeling on the New York facility had gone. Tony had also managed to apologize properly and after learning that he was taking a step back Pepper had been more than happy to let their relationship pick up where it had left. She even moved back into the once again remodeled tower.

Pepper was one of the few people to understand how Tony still mourned for Jarvis and how it was hard for him to interact with Vision even if Vision sometimes showed up at the tower unannounced. Vision was still learning and picking up things about the world and sometimes he seemed Jarvis-like but at other times not at all. He was becoming something else.

Pepper even seemed to be glad whenever Tony went to visit the current Avengers in upstate New York. She didn’t even mind when some of them slept over at the tower after they showed up to visit with Tony. Somehow his friendships with them had gotten better since he’d retired.

They were happy. Until they weren’t.

Tony had just finished writing a letter to Peter to be inserted with his graduation card when Pepper arrived from a business trip. Tony didn’t really keep track of the business side of SI that Pepper was in charge of because he knew she would always do a far better job than Tony ever would.
“Peter seems really keen on getting a dog,” Tony said, “I was thinking that maybe for Christmas we could buy one for him.”

“I think that’s something you’d have to ask May about,” Pepper responded. “Are you ever going to ask about meeting him again? I think they might be up for it now. You’re not an Avenger anymore technically.”

Tony didn’t want to. At first when he had decided to step back Tony had been prepared to just demand that the Pakers let him meet Peter but after the letters between him and Peter began to pick up again Tony just didn’t know if he could handle that disappointment again. In a way he was also cognizant of the fact that Peter would never really see him as a father. He was young, there was no doubt, but he also already had a great father figure in his uncle Ben and Tony didn’t think that he could step into those shoes at all or really have Peter consider him more than just The Tony Stark and Iron Man.

“I don’t think Peter would be happy if we told him now,” Tony said. “I wouldn’t have been. And what if he hates me because I didn’t tell him all this time and then -- well, if he’s anything like me he would blame May and Ben too and he shouldn’t. I just--”

Pepper shook her head. “Honey, you’re a dad. You are such a dad when it comes to him and I think he will see that right away. He’s a smart kid and he’ll know that you’ve been wanting to tell him all this time.”

“I’m not going to pit him against his aunt and uncle,” Tony responded.

“Of course not,” Pepper said and reached for his hands, “I just want you to be able to have this because I know you want this. You want to be his dad. And it will take some time and some hard work but eventually he’ll be glad that you are.”

“Maybe I’m a little late with Peter,” Tony said. “I’ve been -- well, I never considered it before but I’m thinking about it now. I do want to be a dad. I think I could be good at it.”

The way that her eyes had widened in that moment and her hands pulled back from his should have been the indicator that she didn’t think it was a good idea, but Tony was too caught up in the fantasy.

“Ever since meeting Clint’s family I just know that it’s something I could do and we wouldn’t have to get a farm or anything but we could keep it a secret and I’m not an official Avenger anymore so it would be perfect. It just seems like the next natural step and--”

“Tony, stop,” Pepper said, then and she was shaking her head with tears in her eyes. “Tony, I don’t want that. I’ve never really -- I don’t want that life. I like this -- what we have now. I can’t--”

It took them a few more weeks. Tony couldn’t overlook the fact that they differed on something so fundamental and she didn’t seem to want to hold him back. Eventually there came a day when Pepper just left again but not before she begged him to reach out to May Parker and ask to meet Peter again. But Tony just couldn’t.

In the end, the company that Tony had inherited was her baby. She didn’t need a human one on top of that, didn’t have the need that Tony did. Tony could respect what she wanted and yet he knew that he would never stop asking or stop wanting to know what being a dad could be like. With Peter it just wasn’t enough and maybe it would be once the secret was out but Tony didn’t know when that would be. He expected that Peter would be an adult by the time the truth was out and he hated how much of that was his fault because he should have been able to try again but something was holding him back.
Tony was aware that he was likely never going to have a biological child other than Peter and he didn’t want to replace Peter, but adoption was an option he hadn’t considered in the past but viable for him. Tony didn’t even necessarily need the child to be a baby.

In some ways he was glad that he and Pepper were finally really over. It didn’t seem as difficult as the first time and not as painful either perhaps because he had known that it was going to happen sooner or later. For all that he loved Pepper, their love had never been enough, not in the way that mattered.

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Every time that Steve got his bag ready to get on his bike and drive into New York City, Natasha gave him the look. It was almost judging but mostly amused. Steve hated how easily she could read him. Ever since she had told him point blank that he had a crush on Tony, it was as if the floodgates had been opened because Natasha was right. He did have a crush on Tony and he didn’t know how long it had been there in his mind waiting for him to discover it. So when he started spending more time with Tony back at the tower she always seemed a bit amused. Natasha just didn’t seem to realize that for all that Steve loved spending time with Tony it wasn’t leading anywhere.

Pepper Potts seemed to always be in the tower while he was there and when she wasn’t, it was still obvious that she belonged there. Tony loved her. It was never not going to be Pepper and Tony. Sometimes it was a fact that irked him but other times Steve just loved how happy Tony seemed these days.

“I wasn’t expecting you today,” Tony said upon his arrival.

He looked odd. Sort of lost in a way, as if something unexpected had happened.

“There wasn’t much going on at the compound,” Steve answered. “Sam’s following a lead on Bucky again and I just didn’t want to sit around waiting for him to come back with nothing again.”

Tony nodded, still looking a bit distracted.

It had been easy, in the end, to tell Tony about Bucky being The Winter Soldier. Tony had understood immediately and then he too had started to search. Tony had narrowed down places where Bucky had been sighted multiple times but they were always just a little too late. At least it was nice to know that he was out there and not being used by Hydra. He just didn’t seem to want to be around anyone at all.

“Are you working on anything new?” Steve asked. He’d brought some of his sketching supplies so that he could entertain himself if Tony was too focused on his work.

“No,” Tony said, “not really. Do you want -- can we just watch a movie or something tonight? I don’t --”

Something was definitely wrong.

“What’s wrong? Is it Peter? Tony, what happened?”

It took Tony a long time to say it. “Pepper and I broke up. This time I think it’s really over.”

Steve had never allowed himself to hope for anything past friendship and he still didn’t, but a part of him was still a little happy about the development. Even then, he felt for Tony and how obviously it had hurt him.
“Tony, I’m so sorry.”

Tony shook his head, his smile tight. “It’s been coming for a while, I think. We both -- we were pretending that everything was alright when it wasn’t. We just want different things, is all.”

Tony took him to the den, then, and they settled in to watch a movie. Sometime around halfway through the first movie they ordered food and then they put on another and another until Steve felt Tony’s head fall onto his shoulder before he let out a snore and Steve just watched him. Tony was beautiful. He had almost flawless skin and his hair was soft and tickling Steve’s neck. Steve fought the urge to run his fingers through the hair and instead he watched him for a while and wished that things were different.

---

Tony shouldn’t have been surprised that post-break up, Steve was spending even more time at the tower. That was how he ended up having Steve draw Peter his graduation card. It was cute and funny and he hoped that Peter would like it. A part of him had wanted to go and give it to Peter in person, but instead he had gone to the ceremony -- even though a middle-school graduation really wasn’t much of a real graduation -- and hidden with Steve at his side in the last row. They had both worn disguises and somehow no one actually noticed them.

It was nice to have someone there. Once, he would have wanted it to be Pepper, but that just wasn’t going to happen, and Steve just seemed so willing to stick around that Tony couldn’t deny him. Not even he could have predicted the friendship they would form with each other.

“He looks like you,” Steve whispered. “You should go introduce yourself after this is over.”

“I don’t think this is the time or place.” Tony replied.

Steve had actually rolled his eyes. “If you keep waiting for the right moment for something you’ll never find it.”

He said it almost as if he were telling himself as well and Tony was too focused on watching Peter who looked a little bored to really make himself wonder what that was about. Steve was right about Peter looking like him. It made him oddly warm.

“I don’t get it,” Steve said a few weeks later. “I mean for years you’ve wanted nothing but to meet him and you just won’t now that it’s possible.”

Tony didn’t know how to explain it. How scared he was and how much he just couldn’t predict about what might happen when they met and when Peter knew the truth. So it was just better to stay away. Tony busied himself with building a few new suits and tech for the Avengers. He spent time with Steve and he slowly built his friendship with Pepper back up. He still kept tabs on Peter and their letters continued to the point where Tony had felt it necessary to share his personal e-mail address with him to make things easier. Tony just supposed that eventually the secret would have to come out, but for the time being he wanted to just enjoy the relationship he did have with Peter in which Peter wrote to him about almost anything and he could just respond and ask question and feel like he was an important part of Peter’s life.

When Peter’s birthday came around, Tony even managed to send him a present that Peter could open addressed from him and not through his aunt and uncle as in previous years and it was enough.

Chapter End Notes
So I actually had forgotten that I ended up bringing Pepper and Tony back together for a very short moment so that was kind of fun and I was greatly amused reading this back after watching Infinity War because Tony is just such a dad.

So at the end of this chapter we've made it to August 2015 and Peter's 14th birthday. Next one skips to November 2015.

Next chapter will probably be up tomorrow if I can find the time to post but more than likely it will actually be up on Friday. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

I will never cease to be amazed by the response to this fic. You guys are just wonderful. Thank you.

This chapter was one I was looking forward to writing from the start of this fic so I hope everyone likes it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It happened on a Tuesday. Field trips at Midtown High were the norm a few times a year and so it had been announced pretty early on that they were going to visit Oscorp. Peter hadn’t been too excited because he really would have rather a trip to Stark Industries, but he figured it was a learning experience. He also figured that they would get to something cool irregardless.

When he told Mr. Stark about the trip, Mr. Stark actually cleared up that there currently weren’t any tours available to Stark Tower due to all the remodeling that was still taking place. He did promise Peter to let him see the tower eventually.

He and Ned were at least together and Michelle Jones hovered around them too. She was a little weird, but Peter didn’t mind her being around seeing as she mostly kept to herself unless a snarky comment was warranted. Peter didn’t think she really had any friends which sort of made him feel bad for her, but then she would pick on him and Peter understood why she had no friends.

Despite it being Oscorp, they did have some interesting things going on and towards the end of the trip they wound up in a room full of spiders. Peter wasn’t too fond of spiders but he wasn’t afraid of them so he didn’t mind looking at them through some glass but even he was a little weirded out by having so many spiders in one place. Ned on the other hand didn’t want to approach them at all. He hated spiders.

“They’re just so creepy, Peter. Just look at how weird they move. And what if one of them escapes?”

“You’re weird, Leeds,” Michelle said from behind them but even she looked a little bit uncomfortable.

The whole spider presentation was a part of some experiment to try and create spider webbing. But they didn’t seem to know if it would be actually possible. It made Peter wonder if they were at the beginning of their research. It also made him wonder if that was the only thing they were doing because there were just too many spiders. It wasn’t like they would need to actually use the spiders to create the webbing.

While they listened to the presentation, Peter looked towards the displayed equations and work that someone had been doing on the webbing and he could tell almost at once what the problem was. They weren’t using the right polymers.

He moved closer to look at all that they had left up and was tempted for a moment to just fix it for them except that he didn’t know that he himself was right. Peter had been standing in front of it for no longer than a few minutes when Ned realized he had moved and made a big show of waving him
over and Peter just rolled his eyes because Ned really couldn’t ever be subtle. He got to glance at the board just for a longer moment and that’s when he saw that he hadn’t been wrong. They were doing other research on the spiders. There just wasn’t much on the board to tell him what and Peter wasn’t curious enough to try and figure it out.

Peter walked back when Ned waved him over again and he heard Michelle chuckle.

“We have about six thousand species of spiders in this room at the moment,” the scientists was saying. “You guys can take a look around. Some of them are pretty cool and you wouldn’t have seen them just wandering around outside. If anyone has any questions, I’ll be up here.”

Peter walked around with Ned for a while. Everyone seemed to be crowding around the bigger spiders that could have been classed as tarantulas. Some of the spiders were isolated into their own containment, but there were others that were together.

“I really don’t like this,” Ned said.

A group of five spiders were crawling and hanging off of webbing in one of the containers and Peter could admit that no one could pay him enough money to stick his hand inside that tank. They moved on to another one. Peter peered into the next tank but he just couldn’t find the spider inside. Maybe it was too small or hiding. They moved on to another one and this one was a light brown one that seemed intent on building a web in a corner.

Ned pulled him away as soon as they started to move on to another area of Oscorp’s labs. As they did, Peter tried to remember to write about the spider web and just the spiders in general to Mr. Stark the next time he sent him an e-mail.

The rest of the trip went by quick and before Peter knew it they were back on the bus and driving back to Midtown High.

“At least this trip didn’t end with everyone running for their lives,” Ned said as they got off the bus.

“True,” Peter said and rubbed at his forearm which was unusually itchy. He pulled up his sleeve and sure enough it was a little red.

Later, when Peter got home from school was when he started to feel a little odd. It came out of nowhere, but it started a bit like a cold. He felt a bit stuffy and his head hurt a little. It was like a cold that was coming on him fast as if the symptoms had accelerated. When Aunt May saw him, she sent him straight to bed and fussed over him without even asking him if he was feeling okay.

“Oh, Peter, you’re burning up,” she said when he entered his room and pressed his hand to his forehead. “Why didn’t you tell me you weren’t feeling well. You shouldn’t have gone on that trip.”

Sometime between May getting him to drink some cold medicine and starting up a movie for him, Peter just fell asleep. When he woke up, he was too warm and sticky and he felt strange. Not sick strange, but just as if he didn’t fit into his own skin. His left arm actually itched something awful to the point where it seemed almost painful. The room spun before his eyes and all the colors were just so vibrant and bright. The very bed sheets touching his skin felt scratchy and rough and he could hear his aunt cooking and he felt almost like he was right there in the kitchen because he could smell the food too. It wasn’t long before he was asleep again.

The next time he woke up, Peter could tell that it was late. He felt much better than before -- actually better than he had ever felt even if he still felt a little weird. He sat up and his body didn’t ache like he had expected it to from the cold and actually he didn’t feel like he had a cold at all. His sinuses
were clear and his throat wasn’t scratchy and his head felt normal. What he did feel was thirsty.

May had left him a couple of water bottles, gatorade, and a package of crackers so Peter reached for the bottle and he didn’t know how it happened but he didn’t just grab the bottle. He squeeze it, crushing it in his hand and the cap just popped off and hit the ceiling and the water spilled over his hand and over everything else and when Peter opened his hand the bottle didn’t fall but instead remained stuck to him.

“What the--” Peter whispered to himself and suddenly realized that he could hear Ben’s snoring as if the man were sleeping next to him. He could also hear cars driving out on the street below his window but not like he could normally hear them but in a more intense manner and now that he was concentrating on his hearing he could hear the people in the house next door having a conversation.

“Woah,” Peter said.

Peter set the bottle down carefully after grabbing a discarded t-shirt to pull it off with his other hand. It was as he wiped his wet hand on his sheets that he noticed that on his left forearm the bite had swelled into a red lump. He remembered scratching at the bite on the way back from Oscorp not thinking much of it even though it was November and mosquitos weren’t a problem. Clearly it was a problem. Peter just didn’t know if it was a good problem or a bad one.

Chapter End Notes

We have arrived at the spider bite. I really liked the prospect of getting to write this and not have to go off of canon which is why I love the chapters leading up to Civil War so much because this is where we have some heavy Peter stuff happening due to him gaining his powers and hence there are so many chapters in between Ultron and Civil War.

Going off how this week has gone work wise I can basically assume that this weekend will be the weekend from hell. Which is just the way retail is. So just due to that I probably won't be able to have the next chapter until Monday due to some editing that still needs to be done but it all really depends on how tomorrow goes and how much I can get done tonight.

thanks for reading!

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Still very much amazed by the response this fic is getting. I managed to get some editing time in last night so the chapter is coming in a little early. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steve was staying over almost every weekend which Tony had appreciated at first when it was happening right after he had broken things off with Pepper. But after a while, he just hadn’t known how to ask Steve why he was still doing it. It wasn’t like Tony minded exactly, because Steve was good company, it was just that Tony was getting attached.

Steve was just the perfect companion to have. He seemed to understand that Tony needed to work and would sometimes just sit in the workshop with his sketchpads. He was such a fixture there that Dum-E was often distracted enough by Steve that he didn’t bother Tony or try to make him un-drinkable smoothies.

When Tony wasn’t in the workshop, Steve would join him for meals or they would watch movies together. It was fun getting to re-watch movies that Steve hadn’t had a chance to see yet and experience them through Steve’s eyes. Tony also got to just know Steve better. Better even than when Steve had been living in the tower for the year or so they were searching for the scepter. Things back then had just been so much about the missions and Hydra that there hadn’t been any time. Sometimes Tony missed being on the team, though, especially when Steve was recounting stories about the current Avengers team.

“How’s Peter?” Steve asked on a Friday night when he’d arrived with four large pizza pies and brought them straight into the workshop.

“I think he’s alright,” Tony said recalling one of the latest e-mails he’d received from Peter.

*Hi Mr. Stark,*

*So I have a quick question. Do you think that spiders could become mutated? Or any bug really? And I don’t really mean in a survival way, although I guess that would kind of be the point. And if say a spider did get mutated somehow, would then the spider be contagious to other spiders or animals even? I wonder if someone could do this to a spider in a lab. Although, I guess evolution could play a role. The real thing I’m wondering about is if you’ve heard about anything weird going on with spiders?*

*Peter*

The email had been odd and Tony hadn’t known what to make of it exactly. Then, a few hours later there came another email.

*So, spider-webs are super strong, right? And they’re sticky and just it seems like they could be useful. Obviously we can’t take them from spiders, but it seemed like Oscorp was trying to make some kind of synthetic webbing. Wouldn’t that be cool? Lots of possibilities if they could make it. Do you think it’s actually possible? I mean it should be right?*
“He sent me some weird email about spiders the other day. Honestly, I don’t know if I regret giving him my e-mail or not because some days he’ll still write me like he used to and then other days he’s just sending me questions about Algebra which I know he’s more than capable of answering himself. And then there’s emails about spiders.”

“Is he interested in spiders?” Steve asked as he opened one of the pizza boxes. The smell was heavenly and Tony rolled his chair over to where Steve had set everything down.

“I don’t know. He’s never said so but it wasn’t just normal questions. He was wondering if spiders could be mutated or something along those lines. Then there was this other e-mail about Oscorp and spider webbing. It’s not exactly the science that I’m interested in. Bruce is the go to guy about stuff like that but he’s still off who knows where. But anyway, he sort of made me think about how spider webs are really strong. Might be something to consider developing as a synthetic. Might be useful medically at any rate.”

Steve had already polished off a few slices, so he wiped his mouth and laughed before he picked up yet another slice. “Maybe he’s just deep in project mode like his dad.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Maybe. I mean, if he develops some sort of synthetic spider web before me then he really will be running circles around me when he’s older.”

“You’re so proud of him,” Steve said and he smiled fondly at Tony.

“I am. I don’t think I could be prouder even if I had been a part of his life from the beginning. Well, maybe he wouldn’t have turned out this way if I was.”

Steve touched his elbow. “Don’t sell yourself short.”

They ate in silence after that and when Steve had finished almost two of the pies on his own, Tony reached for his tablet when he heard it ping. It was Peter. Unsurprisingly.

I was just wondering, and you don’t have to answer this, but it was on my mind today. Why didn’t you keep your identity secret when you became Iron Man?

The message was short and to the point and that’s how things had become of late. Tony didn’t know if he liked it or not yet. In some ways he appreciated that they could reach each other immediately but he also missed when Peter rambled before he got to the point. The question also made him wonder exactly what Peter might be working on.

Steve read it over his shoulder and he nodded. “Kid has a good point. Why didn’t you hide?”

Tony set the tablet aside to answer the email later. “It just felt right,” he said, “at the time when I was standing there in front of all those reporters I couldn’t lie even though Coulson had created a perfect alibi for me. It was a bit selfish because you know the kind of image I had then. People were sympathetic because I’d been kidnapped but everyone knew how I was and what my company had done. So that was a part of it. But I also knew that I wasn’t going to stop being Iron Man, not then. And I realized that I would have to constantly be on the lookout for someone finding out and they wanted me to say Iron Man was my bodyguard but not even I could make it so that Iron Man and I were at the same place at the same time. At the time I hadn’t really gotten to the point where Jarvis was controlling a suit remotely. It just didn’t seem feasible. I did regret it because of Peter. I think -- sometimes I think that if I had lied that I would have gotten to meet him back then. After I announced that to the world it closed that door to me.”

“It hasn’t closed that door for you,” Steve said pointedly. “Your son is so comfortable with you that
he’s emailing you homework questions. I mean, why else would he want to know about spiders. And maybe he’s in a science fair. Following in your footsteps. So why not meet him now?"

Tony sighed. “I don’t know. I just -- it’s hard.”

“You’ve done harder things.”

“Sure, but this one is more important than any of the others,” Tony said.

As Steve cleaned up a little, Tony answered Peter, and then he let Steve lead him back to the den for a movie.

“Hey, Steve,” Tony said, “I’m really glad you’re here. I’ve -- I really like that we’re doing this.”

“Me too,” Steve said and he seemed to want to say something more but then he stopped himself and shook his head and Tony didn’t know quite what to think about it.

“I mean it,” Tony said, “it’s nice having you around. It’s nice having you as a friend.”

Steve looked down and then back at Tony and he nodded with a tight smile.

They watched the movie mostly in silence and like always, Tony woke up much later, his head pressed against Steve’s shoulder with Steve’s arm around him while he too slept. Sometimes it felt like the budding of something new and yet Tony just couldn’t tell. He didn’t move away from Steve and instead pressed himself a little closer. Steve shifted, but brought Tony with him and Tony closed his eyes. In those moments he wasn’t worried about Peter or meeting him. He wasn’t worried about the paperwork he’d filed with an adoption agency. Instead, he felt at peace.

Chapter End Notes

I really love this chapter and how the aftermath of Peter getting the bite goes as far as Tony’s remote involvement and confusion because that was just a fun bit to think about. The next one goes hand in hand with this one as we get to see Peter on the other side of the email so to speak. I have most of it ready and it should be up tomorrow. Thanks for reading!

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Oh boy, oh boy, I forgot about how this chapter ends! I'm so excited for all of you to read it!
Thank you to everyone that is reading! Your kudos/comments and just overall interest in the story just feeds the writing!

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter had always been told that he was smart. He didn’t know if it was because he reminded his aunt and uncle of his mother who had been brilliant, or because he had always shown a certain aptitude for learning and noticing things, but it had always just been a fact. Peter was smart. So, it didn’t take him too long after finding the bite to realize that it had come from a spider.

Actually, he could have gotten it almost anywhere because New York wasn’t without its share of weird insects even if it was November but all the side effects pointed at it happening while he was at Oscorp because he didn’t imagine that there was anything out in the world biting people and giving them enhanced senses. The fact that he could stick to walls like spiders did made him even more sure of the fact. But he tried to verify it by asking Mr. Stark if he’d heard about anything weird going on with spiders and mutations but Mr. Stark had seemed more confused by the question than anything and not really given him much of an answer.

Peter,

What is that school of yours teaching you about? I don’t think I’ve heard of anyone mutating spiders deliberately. I also don’t really like spiders enough to care about them becoming scarier on their own? Have you developed arachnophobia? Or did that friend of yours make you watch something weird?

When Peter asked about the spider webbing and mentioned Oscorp, Mr. Stark had seemed even more confused.

Peter,

I asked Dr. Helen Cho about spider webs and medical uses of a material created to resemble spider webs and she informed me that she hadn’t heard about anyone that had created anything like it but that it was an area of interest for a friend of hers who might possibly work for Oscorp. She says that the possibility of creating something like spider webs is possible and that there would be many uses. Sealing wounds for one. Of course, Dr. Cho has her own technology that already does far more than the webbing could do. But, I will say that it would be handy thing to have out on the field or in an ambulance. Bruce Banner is more of an expert in bio-engineering so it kind of sucks that he’s still missing because I’d love to ask him for his thoughts on this. Good luck with whatever project you’re skirting about.

If this is the arachnophobia thing I mentioned last time, don’t worry about spider webs and spiders so much. That whole people eating spiders while they sleep thing is a lie.
So, in the end Mr. Stark wasn’t entirely helpful. He seemed more confused, amused, and perhaps even a little concerned that Peter had developed a fear of spiders which to be fair Peter thought that he was a little more scared of spiders than he had been before the trip to Oscorp.

Peter discovered that along with the sticking thing he had super strength. He found out when he almost broke his door off its hinges when pulling it open. After that, he was more careful. He picked everything up as if it were an egg or a delicate plate and hoped that he wouldn’t get stuck to it.

Other things had changed too like how suddenly he didn’t tire at all after any physical exertion. Peter had to start pretending that he was out of breath in gym class. He couldn’t fake sweat, but he had to make it seem like push ups or sit ups took a toll on him. None of it was normal. Inside he was freaking out and for all that the powers were really cool, Peter just didn’t know how to deal with them.

He was keeping all of it from May and Ben even if he had a huge pro and con list about telling Mr. Stark because out of everyone he knew, he was probably the only person that could actually help him. Peter knew that he was confusing Mr. Stark with his last few emails, but if he actually told him the truth then things would be different.

Peter just didn’t know how Mr. Stark would react or what kind of help he might offer and so Peter just kept quiet about it and he tried to test out his newly acquired powers when he could so he could see just what he was capable of. He could tell that Aunt May was getting suspicious, but at least Uncle Ben seemed to think it was because he was a teenager and going through puberty. Well, it was a kind of puberty. It just wasn’t one that anyone else had probably gone through. It was double puberty because the normal kind hadn’t been replaced by the spider one.

After the initial freak out had waned, however, Peter had started to think about the possibilities of what his powers offered mostly because it was amazing. It was like a fantasy coming true. He was like one of the heroes that he looked up to -- like Iron Man and Captain America and all of the other Avengers. Peter just didn’t know if that’s what he was supposed to do simply because he had the powers.

In the back of his mind he knew that it was what he wanted to do. But first, he needed to really make the whole spider thing complete and make himself some spider web, and then he would figure out if he could actually do it and maybe if he kept asking Mr. Stark questions then he wouldn’t have to actually say it and Mr. Stark could guess at why Peter was asking in the first place. After all, Tony Stark was supposed to be a genius.

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Peter’s behavior and changes was not unnoticed by May and Ben.

“He’s acting a little weird, Ben, this is not normal teenager behavior,” May said one night while cleaning up the kitchen after dinner. “Do you think he knows?”

Ben who was in the middle of checking his e-mail looked up. “You worry too much, May. Peter’s just entering a different phase in his life. He’s not a little kid anymore. This has nothing to do with that,” Ben said.

May turned away from the sink to glare at him. “Ben, I’m not worrying for nothing. I know our kid and this is not becoming a teenager behavior. I would know. I got up to a lot growing up, you know that. This is different. This is found out something and doesn’t know how to handle it different and there’s only one thing that could make him act this way.”
Ben stood up and he walked to stand next to her, reaching to grab her hand even if it was a little wet and covered in suds.

“Peter doesn’t usually stew on things,” Ben pointed out.

“Peter’s been staying in his room all the time or going to Ned’s and when he isn’t out he’s just so secretive. I just know something is wrong. If it isn’t about his dad, then maybe he’s getting bullied or he’s having a hard time at school. I just know that something is up,” May said, “and whatever it is, we have to be ready to deal with it even if we have to call--”

Ben pulled her closer and he pressed a kiss to May’s forehead. “Sweetheart, there is no way that Peter knows the truth about his father. You have always worried too much,” Ben said, “but I am sure that Peter is fine. And if that’s what’s bothering him he wouldn’t be keeping it to himself. He would have asked about it already. He’s not the most subtle of kids.”

May nodded and she sighed. “I just hope you’re right. But maybe it’s time that we tell him the truth. Before he finds out on his own--”

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Peter overheard a lot of things since he’d gained his powers. He didn’t mean to hear things, but sometimes he just did. It meant that he knew about things that he wasn’t supposed to know about like how the Calculus teacher was having an affair with the French teacher and how he knew that some of the seniors were planning some sort of prank that included forks. But finding out that Aunt May and Uncle Ben were hiding something from him just hadn’t been something he expected to overhear. Worse because it had something to do with his dad.

At first he had listened in because he wanted to know if Aunt May and Uncle Ben suspected anything, but their concern wasn’t over Peter’s new abilities. Instead, it was over something that Peter had never even considered. It was about his dad.

It left Peter sitting in his room confused and a little angry. A part of him just wanted to rush out there and demand to know what they were keeping from him because Uncle Ben was right, he didn’t like to just stew on things. Except that Peter couldn’t do that. It would have been different if he was normal and didn’t have to watch his every action closely, but he did, and Peter didn’t know how he might react to whatever they were hiding. He might break something or get stuck to something and then that secret would be out too.

So instead, he made himself stay in his room and he made himself think rationally. Whatever it was, they had kept it from him for a reason. No matter what it was, it wouldn’t change anything. Not when his father was dead.

Chapter End Notes

So I do want to make it clear that what Peter overhears he takes to be about Richard Parker and he can’t even imagine what it could be but just that it's something that's been kept from him so he wouldn't figure out the truth just from that. But Ben and May are obviously talking about Tony. I love the dramatic irony here.

Thanks for reading!
Might have the next one ready for tomorrow and if not then definitely Wednesday.
This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

The response is as amazing as ever. So thank you the old and new readers alike. You guys are wonderful.

A bit of a late post tonight but I spent all day painting first my deck and then a bookshelf that I ended up distressing but I did manage to this this one edited. This is a filler chapter. Mostly because Christmas had to happen. I'm not entirely fond of it, but enjoy.

Natasha was happy with how well the new recruits worked with the team. Rhodes and Wilson, she had expected to work well, but she just hadn’t known what to make of Vision or Wanda. The whole thing in Sokovia had been an all hands on deck situation and they were both powerful which made them dangerous. Wanda more so than Vision. Vision had a more logistical view of the world and he seemed intent on learning everything about it and yet he lacked experience. It had surprised Natasha a bit, but he reminded her of Tony sometimes which made her assume that it had more to do with how he had come from Jarvis. Or maybe it was because Tony had created him. Natasha tried not to notice when she saw bits of Bruce mixed in there too.

It was hard to know just how much Wanda could do with her powers. Wanda didn’t even seem to know and none of them really knew how to test her limits. All they could do is try and help her learn how to control them better. Natasha didn’t know for sure if she was doing better or not. She had nothing to go off of. All they really knew was that the powers had come from Vision’s stone.

In a way, she wished that Tony had stuck around to help them figure that out except that she knew that he was a little weird when it came to Wanda due to the nature of her powers. The person that Natasha really missed was actually Bruce. He would have known exactly what to do when it came to helping Wanda and measuring her abilities and seeing just how her powers worked but he had left in part to the guilt he felt for what Wanda had made him do so Natasha didn’t know how helpful he would be.

So far they hadn’t actually needed to go out as a team. Hydra, if there was even a Hydra left anymore since Ultron had killed Strucker, hadn’t reappeared. They all assumed that they were lying low so it was a matter of time.

In the meanwhile most of their resources were going towards looking for Bucky and tracking anything else that the scepter had affected which luckily didn’t seem to be much. Fury and Hill also had other things for them every once in a while and none of them had required the full team. Natasha was glad for the time that they had to train them and to get this new team to be as cohesive as the old one even if sometimes she wished that Clint, Tony, Bruce, and Thor were still a part of the team.

Clint was always in contact with them and he had visited with the whole family a couple of times, but he was still more than sure that the retirement was for him. Tony showed up sometimes too always with a bunch of new things for them to try. He had built Sam a drone falcon that was sometimes useful but also annoyed Natasha when he used it while they ran practice drills.

Steve was always in and out of the compound and Natasha knew he went to Stark Tower every time
he left. When Tony was at the compound he didn’t spend nearly as much time with anyone other than Steve and Natasha was amusedly fond of what she could see happening between them even if it had surprised her because she had never expected for Tony to see Steve that way and yet it was obvious that he did and she really should have remembered how Tony viewed sexuality.

Natasha was well aware that Pepper had moved to LA. From the few times that Natasha had been in contact with her, she knew that Pepper was doing well and that she and Tony still had some sort of friendship. It seemed like it was for the best.

On Christmas Eve, Tony showed up at the compound with presents for all of them.

“Just call me Santa,” he said and he was actually wearing a red Santa hat.

Christmas had never been huge with all of them mostly because there was always something more important to take care of, but everyone had always made the effort to buy each other presents. Tony always topped everyone though and not just because he was basically made of money, it was because he was good at picking out presents even though she supposed that Pepper would disagree. Natasha had received picture messages of the bunny that he’d gotten her the year that his house was blown up with the bunny inside it but Natasha knew that also inside the house had been a different present that Pepper probably would have loved if it hadn’t also been blown up.

Natasha was oddly touched by the set of knives Tony gave her. They had her initials engraved on them and they were pretty but still useful. She actually kissed his cheek as a thanks and he gasped in mock surprise.

Natasha didn’t know how he had figured out that Wanda was interested in the guitar, but he had known to get her one and she seemed surprised and confused as she looked at it. For Vision, Tony had brought something odd and technical that even Natasha couldn’t figure out and then for Sam he had new wings and a pile of books and then a file.

“I want you to look over that -- over the concept. It’s something I’ve been working on and anyway it’s to deal with getting over trauma so to speak. Usually I’d go to Bruce but--”

“Sure thing,” Sam said and opened up the file. His eyebrows raised in interest.

Tony grinned. “Just send me an e-mail.”

“Yeah, alright.”

“I would have thought that you’d want to maybe spend time with that kid of yours,” Natasha said.

“No can do on that front,” Tony said with a sigh. “I did try to get him a puppy, though, but his aunt shut me down. She really doesn’t want a dog which is too bad because I even had Friday find a good breeder.”

Steve must have heard about it already because he rolled his eyes. “And Tony is not going to take the puppy for himself either.”

Tony opened his mouth and Natasha could tell that he had a full fledged argument in there so she had to intervene because Tony really shouldn’t get a dog. A cat, maybe, but certainly not a dog that would need care and attention.

“You’re not really a dog person,” Natasha said, “a dog would chew up all your shoes.”

“Hmm, maybe,” Tony said and then shrugged his shoulders. “Well, it’s not like Peter was really
talking about the dog anymore anyway. I think he’s still working on something to do with spiders. I wonder if he would have wanted one. Hey, actually you might be amused by all this, Natasha.”

“I don’t think so,” Natasha said.

Tony explained about all the spider related questions and it was a little bit intriguing but Natasha really didn’t know what to make of it but it figured that Tony’s kid would be weird like that.

Natasha didn’t get to see what Tony gave to Steve because Tony actually took him to his gift and when Steve returned he didn’t say anything and just locked himself in his room and for the next few days he seemed a bit sad and solemn. Natasha didn’t even feel like asking him what had happened especially when that coming weekend Steve still left for Stark tower like normal and he didn’t act odd like that again.

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Peter had wanted to ask. It had been a few weeks since he’d overheard Aunt May and Uncle Ben talking and he had wanted to ask them about it and yet every time he tried, he just chickened out. Partly it was the powers, but then it was also because Peter didn’t know if he really did want to know.

So far things in his life were changing quick. He’d started high school, really upped his game on the whole writing to his hero thing, and then he’d gone and gained supernatural powers. So there was enough going on that Peter just didn’t know if adding more to it would be worth it especially if his aunt and uncle clearly didn’t want him to know and there had to be a reason for that.

So as the weeks went on, Peter just ignored it. He had almost forgotten about it in favor of really figuring out his powers. The rest of the time he was trying to figure out exactly how to make himself some spider webbing.

He went off of his memory of what the Oscorp lab had had and it was easy enough from there to theoretically come up with something. But then it was suddenly Christmas and he was out of school and unable to really try anything because he couldn’t get any of the ingredients from the chemistry lab.

Peter spent most of the winter break wondering if he should actually ask Aunt May about the secret, but eventually his curiosity was abated because it didn’t matter. May seemed to think that if Peter found out that he might be distraught or upset and so Peter just figured that maybe he didn’t need to know just yet, not when he had a million other things to worry about and when he still wasn’t entirely in control of his powers and he needed to keep them under wraps. So, even though it was still a thing hanging around him, Peter focused on the other things and he tried to enjoy Christmas instead.

Mr. Stark had even sent him a present and Peter loved it. It almost made him email Mr. Stark and tell him all about his powers because even though Mr. Stark knew nothing about them, he still had noticed that Peter needed information on spiders and then provided them.

Peter did send him a thank you email at May’s prompting but couldn’t get the words out to tell him anything else.

Chapter End Notes
Next chapter should be up on Thursday. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter Notes

Thank you all once more for reading/commenting/leaving kudos! You guys are fantastic.

I really enjoyed writing this chapter. It's one of my favorite Steve POVs. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You didn’t have to do any of this,” Steve said as he got into Tony’s car.

Tony grinned over at him. “I did,” he said. “It was come here and hang out with you guys or surprise the Bartons at the farm. I did send the kiddos some cool gifts, though, so Clint’s going to be a happy camper.”

“Of course you did,” Steve said, “and I think Clint would have appreciated a visit. I think he’s getting bored of the normal life.”

Tony laughed. “And now you all understand why I couldn’t retire the first time and even now I’m not completely retired. It’s not easy sitting anything out.”

Tony drove them out of the facility and Steve leaned back in his seat and watched him for a while. “I think,” he said, “you’re trying not to think about how this is another Christmas not spent with Peter.”

Tony didn’t deny it, but he didn’t answer for a long while. When he did, it was a red light and he actually turned his face to look at Steve. “I sent him a book on spiders since he seemed so interested. I think his interest in science might be taking a more biological basis. I guess he takes after his mother. He’s been a bit quieter lately when it comes to emails but I’m not too concerned.”

Steve nodded and just stared ahead as Tony drove them at a fast speed and didn’t take the usual turn to head into New York City. Tony seemed at peace. He was relaxed and happy and Steve wished for nothing else than for him to stay that way.

“Have you thought about trying to meet him?” Steve asked. “You wouldn’t have to tell him everything at first.”

Tony shook his head. “I don’t think that’d be fair to him. I’d have to tell him. I couldn’t -- it’s one thing to keep this lie alive when I only know him through email. But if I met him it would be different and I couldn’t form any kind of relationship with him if the lie stands.”

“I get it,” Steve said. “Or rather, I don’t, but you’ll have to face that soon. You can’t keep putting it off.”

“I know,” Tony said and smiled a little.

“Where are we going, anyway?” Steve asked, not sure that he recognized the road they were on.

Tony tapped his fingers on the steering wheel. “You do know I own a lot of property, right?”
Steve did know. He didn’t actually know how much Tony owned, but he knew that Tony had inherited quite a lot from Howard and then probably purchased newer property on his own too. Steve actually didn’t like to think about how much money Tony had because he knew that he would never be able to accept that someone could have that much wealth. At least Tony did a lot of good with it.

Tony took him to a large Victorian style house. It looked like it was in need of some repairs, but overall not a bad home.

“The last time I was here Edwin Jarvis was still alive and I was in the process of making Dum-E some friends,” Tony said as they pulled up.

“And why are we here?” Steve asked.

“Your present is here. I really should have come on my own and made sure it’s actually still here but I just -- I don’t know if I could have done it.”

He followed Tony to the door and watched as Tony fished out a key to open it. The door was a bit stuck and it creaked loudly when it finally opened.

“It’s the same exact door it’s always had,” he said to Steve as they walked inside, “which probably means it needs to be replaced.”

All the furniture inside was covered by sheets, but even then it didn’t seem to be dusty or in much disrepair which meant that someone regularly cleaned it or that Tony had made sure someone would clean it before they arrived. Past the foyer the first room Steve saw was a living room complete with a covered piano and Tony walked directly towards the piano. He lay his hands on it whispered something that even Steve didn’t catch.

“I grew up here,” Tony said. “My dad gave this house to my mom as a wedding gift. She loved interior design so everything in this house was chosen by her for some reason or another. I haven’t changed anything about it.”

Steve suddenly understood why it had been so hard for Tony to return to that house. Before he could say anything, Tony continued.

“I never really lived here. Howard sent me to boarding school by the time that he thought I was old enough and then later I was at MIT. Then, they died, and I couldn’t face coming back here again.”

It was hard to listen to Tony talk about his parents’ deaths without telling him that they hadn’t just died in a car crash but that their deaths had been ordered by Hydra. He was basically giving him an opening so that Steve could bring it up, except that he didn’t want to hurt Tony with that particular truth when there was nothing that they could do to change what had happened short of time travel.

“I had Jarvis pack the things he thought I would need and I went back to school and when I graduated I moved to California because it was just easier. I could never live in this house that was my mom’s more than anyone else’s.” Tony looked towards Steve then and Steve reached out, touching his shoulder.

“I get it,” Steve said, “my mom was a nurse and I lost her before the war. Seeing her get sick and watching her die was hard. Bucky was probably the only reason I survived and he just really took care of me afterwards even when I tried to push him away.”

Tony smiled a little. “That was Rhodey for me. He was my roommate at MIT and he was with me the entire time. He even made me stay with him at his parent’s house for a few weeks.”
They stood in silence for a long time over the piano and Tony seemed to be taking in the room, as if trying to picture all the memories he must have had from it. Eventually he sighed and shook his head.

“Well, I didn’t bring you here to be all sad and melancholy,” Tony said, “there’s actually a reason.”

Tony took him up to the second floor and after some hesitation into the last room at the end of the hall. Steve hadn’t expected to see what was at the other side, but of course he should have. It was something of a shrine to him. There were posters and news clippings and shelves that seemed to hold all those comics that had come out of his time in the war and just so much more.

“Coulson used to think that he had the largest Captain America collection, but actually I did. Well, Howard did and I inherited it, although these were the things that he always let me look at and that I really considered mine. I kind of figured you’d want to see it. To see what you’ve inspired. There’s also a real gift for later, but let’s just say that I used to dream about my dad finding you and you actually coming to see me here in this room. Your biggest fan. Well, when I wasn’t hating you because Howard seemed to think finding you was more important than being my dad.”

Steve took a look through everything carefully and he was amazed at how much there was and how much was just so wrong or got things strangely right. It was odd to see the comics and the way that the artists had imagined him. At one point when he was still skinny and sickly Steve’s aspirations had been to become a comic book artist. He had never intended to be the subject of so many of them.

There were other things too like posters and calendars and just so much that he couldn’t even wrap his mind around and Tony just smirked at him.

“This is actually kind of incredible, Tony,” Steve said.

Tony grinned at him. “Yeah, and it’s kind of worth it to trigger my daddy issues by coming here.”

“You didn’t have to,” Steve said.

Tony shook his head. “No, I did. I really didn’t know it could affect me this much even now.”

The guilt of knowing they hadn’t died in a car crash settled on Steve’s shoulders and he tried not show his discomfort even as Tony gave him a tour of the house and then actually took him down to the basement where his real gift was.

It turned out to be an old picture of him and the Howling Commandos. It wasn’t one that had been put out into the public like most of the pictures from back then and in it Steve had his arm thrown around Bucky and they were laughing. Peggy was off to the side and so was Howard and Steve just couldn’t remember when the picture had been taken.

“There’s a whole bunch of them and just other things that Howard saved. Actually, I think there’s some sketchbooks of yours in here too. Howard never really let me look at those so they never made it into the museums either.”

Tony dug around in some boxes and handed Steve things as he found them. He started making a pile for the things he actually wanted to take. Mostly pictures of his friends in the moments when they had been at their best.

“Aha!” Tony said.

“What?” Steve asked and moved closer.

“The sketchbooks. I knew they’d still be here,” Tony said and opened one and then he burst out
“Oh god,” Steve muttered and he grabbed the sketchbook out of Tony’s hands already feeling mortified because he knew what Tony had found. He couldn’t believe that Howard had kept them.

“You drew nudes,” Tony muttered after a while. “Steve Grant Rogers, you porn drawing deviant!”

Steve could feel himself turning red as Tony just kept staring at him and then he was grabbing the sketchbook and Steve couldn’t even stop him as he started to flip through the book. A part of him didn’t even seem to mind because Tony was so weirdly gleeful about it. He also seemed to actually appreciate the art.

“It’s good,” Tony said, “but I always thought it was only ever Peggy that you--”

“She was the only person I ever really cared for that way, yeah,” Steve said a little bit amused about how Tony didn’t seem too comfortable asking the question. “A lot of those are from my art classes. We had models come in -- volunteers. Then, when I was on the USO tour some of the girls let me draw them. Not all of them in the nude. Some of the guys too after I rescued Bucky and the others.”

“Oh,” Tony said and flipped through a few more pages.

Steve grinned. “There’s a beauty to the human form.”

“So should I ask to be drawn like one of your USO girls?” Tony asked with a glint in his eye.

Steve actually laughed, especially when Tony gave him a pose. “Titanic,” he said after a moment.

“I love that you get my references now,” Tony said and turned back to the sketchbook.

Later, as they were leaving, Steve could tell that Tony was still affected by being there from the way that he looked at certain rooms and how a picture of his mother in the hallway made him pause for a long moment. Steve felt horrible about not telling him. Maybe he needed to. Steve told himself that he would and yet he just couldn’t ruin the holiday with it and anyway he wasn’t sure that it would make things better for Tony to know it hadn’t been an accident. It might make things worse.

Chapter End Notes

Couple of canon notes: So the house that Steve and Tony visit is supposed to be the house that we see in Civil War when Tony is using BARF, but I realized after I wrote it that it couldn't be because they wouldn't have been in New York. They would have been living in Washington D.C. or the nearby area because Howard would have been involved in Shield and obviously the headquarters there. Also, Howard and Maria die on their way to Shield HQ (Tony says the Pentagon but obviously he didn't know the secret then). It didn't really work for me to move it out of New York but we can also assume that Howard did have a house in upstate New York.

Another note: according to any info I've found on when Peter started Spider-Man(ing) everyone thinks that Peter made the decision pretty quickly as in within a week of gaining his powers. I decided that it just wasn't feasible or possible so instead it's going to take him a few months to get there and to be noticed. This is why Tony wouldn't connect the dots between Peter's interest in spiders and Spider-Man. This is more of a
note for next chapter but I figured I'd add it before I forget to.

Next chapter will start us up in 2016. Not sure if I'll get the chance to post tomorrow but it will definitely be up by Saturday night.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys are amazing for sticking around, so thank you.

This chapter gets us back to Peter and I really do like where it ends.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2016

“Spider Man,” Peter mumbled, trying out the words.

On a sheet of paper in front of him he had written out every possible combination of name and that’s the one that really called to him. It just rolled off the tongue and in a way it reminded him a little bit of Iron Man which in some ways really made it the only possible name.

Peter hadn’t exactly decided that he needed to be out there fighting crime but he knew that it was his goal for what he might do eventually. After all, he was still in high school and while he had some pretty cool abilities, that wasn’t reason enough. He didn’t think he was anywhere near the level of The Avengers and Peter was also aware that he still didn’t know much about his powers. But that didn’t mean that he couldn’t have his fun.

He had joined the Academic Decathlon earlier in the year with Ned and they met once a week for practice, but Peter had told Aunt May that it was two times a week so he could have one day after school when he could just go off on his own and get some practice in using his powers. He would have opted for more days except that he was also in band and that also met once a week. He had only joined band because Ned begged him to but it was fun. Sometimes he did end up telling his aunt and uncle that he was going over to Ned’s when that just wasn’t the case. In a way, Peter didn’t even feel bad about the lying because he still knew that they were keeping something from him so he figured it evened out.

The first few times Peter had gone out to practice his powers, he’d tried to be careful, but eventually he got used to being able to scale up the side of buildings and being able to lift things that any normal person wouldn’t have been able to. Mr. Stark wouldn’t know it, but the book on spiders that he had sent him for Christmas had come in handy with figuring out how the whole spider aspect of it all worked. That’s how he figured out that he could jump abnormally high. He figured out that he’d become super flexible while jumping too. Peter could actually do a backflip now. It was crazy.

Peter had also had some success in making spider web fluid. It had meant sneaking into the Chemistry classroom and stealing some ingredients, but after a few tries he had gotten the formula right. It had taken a bit longer to build wristlets that he could use to shoot out the web fluid partially because Peter had had to gather materials from a combination of places that included the trash, the dollar store, and out of things from the house that he hoped Aunt May and Uncle Ben wouldn’t notice were missing.

The first time that he actually managed to get the web to make him swing from one building to another was also the first time that Peter got hurt during his exploits. The web had worked perfectly,
sticking to the building he was swinging from and holding up his weight without straining, but Peter just hadn’t planned ahead and when he let it go to jump off the web he hadn’t expected the roof on the lower building to be at a slant and due to inexperience more than anything else, he slid down it and couldn’t manage to get a hold of anything and then free fell until he could shoot out more web to attach to anything and while it did catch him, he swung hard against the side of the building against the sharp edge of a windowsill which cut into his left side.

Peter crawled down the side of the wall and tried not to wince at how the movement stretched the skin where his wound was. He jumped off when he was not too far from the ground and when he touched down he lifted his shirt and it came back wet with his blood. The skin around the cut was already bruising purple and green, but the cut was still bleeding.

He hurried home after the injury, hoping that he could take care of it without May or Ben noticing. Somehow he managed to sneak into the house without alerting them to his arrival and then he ran to the bathroom and locked the door behind him.

Peter was surprised when the wound didn’t pain him as much as it had before and then even more confused when he noticed that the bruising had intensified but the actual cut looked better than it had after it first happened.

Later that night, his side was aching a lot less. By the time he woke up the next morning there was nothing there.

“Woah,” Peter whispered. “That is so cool.”

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Keeping the secret about his powers became easier after a few months because Peter no longer feared breaking anything that he picked up. Sometimes he did get stuck to things when he didn’t mean to, but it was something that he was learning to control. He had gotten the hang of using the web to swing around like a spider and his body had become more agile and acrobatic. It had been weird the first time he noticed, but Peter had actual abs now and his arms and legs had become muscular. He wasn’t the scrawny skinny kid he used to be anymore.

Peter had gotten much better at using his powers but mostly he used them for fun. He loved how flexible and agile he was now and after getting the hang of it, Peter started recording himself doing a few stunts. He would set up his phone and record himself doing backflips or swinging from one building to the next. Watching it back later felt odd in a good way because Peter still couldn’t really believe that it was him doing all of those things.

At school, he tried to hide the new developments and since no one really paid him any attention it was easy to. Although sometimes he did wish that those Captain America PSA videos they watched in school could have helped him more with his new abilities instead of all the tiny small things that Captain America had obviously been forced to say like the ridiculous video about dental health or the one about tardiness.

He and Ned still hung out a lot and sometimes it was easier to just forget about it entirely when he was geeking out with Ned over The Force Awakens. They had gone to see it in theaters twice since its release and then they marathoned all the older ones once Ben had gotten wind of their interests. The two of them were obsessed and then Ned discovered all the Lego Star Wars sets and between the two of them they had a good collection going.

Through it all, Peter hadn’t forgotten that his aunt and uncle were keeping something from him. He hadn’t had the time to think on it, but he still had no idea what he was going to do about it.
Then, they started doing punnett squares and Peter realized that Richard Parker couldn’t possibly be his father.

It all had to do with blood types and because of Peter’s blood type -- and they had also done blood typing right in the classroom -- he knew that while his mother was really his mother there was no possible way for his father to be his father. Punnett squares didn’t lie.

“Peter, are you alright?” Ned asked, leaning over to look at his work.

“I don’t think -- I don’t think my dad is my dad,” Peter said. The words were hard to say, but Peter couldn’t ignore scientific evidence. He gulped after saying them and just looked at the chart in the text book hoping that he was wrong, but he hadn’t looked at it wrong.

Ned grabbed Peter’s paper and looked it over, as if looking for a mistake. “Are you sure you have the blood types right?”

Peter was sure. He had asked Uncle Ben for them and Uncle Ben had actually kept some of his parent’s health records which had actually had their blood types listed. He had happily given them to Peter. It was possible that the records didn’t have the right information, but Peter was betting that that wasn’t the case.

“I think I do,” Peter said.

“Maybe you want to just make sure,” Ned said with a shrug.

Peter nodded, but he didn’t think that there would be any other record of either of his parent’s blood type anywhere to compare it to and combined with the secret that May and Ben were keeping, Peter was more than sure that he was right and Richard Parker wasn’t his father. The question was: who was? And did May and Ben know who it was.

Peter couldn’t just let this go. It had been one thing when he had thought the secret they were keeping wouldn’t change things for him, but clearly it did. He would need to talk to them about it.

Chapter End Notes

So I really wanted this reveal to be scientific because this would be the way that Peter figures out that Richard isn't his father. And I really wanted him to get this reveal first before we get to the Tony aspect. So punnet squares happened and there will be more discussion on that in the next chapter. Thanks for reading.

Next chapter should be up sometimes between tomorrow and Tuesday. My schedule is kind of all over the place for the next few days.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys are the best and the reason that I spend so much time working on this so thanks.

Anyone that knows Spider-Man knows that this was going to happen sooner or later so here we are. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After finding out about his dad not being his real dad, Peter knew that he needed to ask Ben and May about it, but that afternoon he had band and then he had promised to go over to Ned’s and he felt bad cancelling when he was already spending less time with Ned these days, so instead Peter just decided that giving himself some time was probably for the best. He would just bring it up later.

When he got home later, Aunt May was still at work and Uncle Ben was in the middle of some work related phone calls that Peter couldn’t interrupt so the wait turned a bit longer until it was dinner time and Peter just didn’t bring it up.

That night in his bedroom Peter almost considered emailing Mr. Stark and asking for his advice on the whole matter, but just as the whole Spider-Man thing was hard to tell Mr. Stark about this was too and Peter just couldn’t get himself to type it. If he did then he would make it real and he would have to deal with the lie.

The next day was Saturday at least which meant no school and Peter resolved to bring it up over breakfast except that May was in a rush and Ben seemed to be trying to make things easy for her and then she was off and Peter knew that the conversation would have to be down to him and Uncle Ben and even then he felt awkward and strange trying to find a way to bring it up, so he buried his nose in the book Mr. Stark had sent him on spiders even if the words meant nothing to him no matter how many times he read them.

“Peter, want to come with me?” Ben asked after Peter had been hiding behind the book for the better part of an hour.

“Uh, sure,” Peter said and got up. “Where are we going?”

“Few errands to run. We can have lunch in the city too, if you want? It feels like I haven’t seen you in a while.”

“Sure. I’ll come,” Peter said.

Ben grinned at him and Peter couldn’t imagine that his uncle had hid it from him because he was doing for some malicious reason. Maybe he just hadn’t thought that it would matter because Richard Parker had wanted to be his father and had it not been for the accident would still be his father.

They went to the bank first, then they took the subway to Manhattan and to Uncle Ben’s office where they were dropping off something in a manila envelope. It was nice to see Avengers Tower up close, but no one seemed to be going in or out of the building at the moment even though Uncle
Ben saw Captain America around all the time some weeks.

Then they went to get lunch at a small restaurant that he, Ben, and May loved to stop by and it was fun to get to spend time with Uncle Ben again. It made him realize how busy he’d gotten with school and the clubs and his powers.

“So, what’s been going on lately?” Uncle Ben asked while they ate.

“Not much. School’s been keeping me busy.”

“Yeah, I know,” Ben said. “Your aunt says you have something going on with spiders?”

Peter didn’t know how to respond aside from laughing nervously. “Um, yeah, we were learning about them a bit. Remember when I went to Oscorp? There was a whole thing about them.”

Uncle Ben nodded along and when lunch was over Peter regretted not bringing up the Punnett Squares, but then they went to pick up something from a dry cleaners and Aunt May called to let them know she was going to be working late.

“Which means we have to add some shopping onto our list, Pete,” Uncle Ben said. “We’ll do that closer to home.”

First they went back to the house to drop off the clothes and they headed out again this time in the car and Peter swore that he would tell him he knew even if he had to do it piece by piece until he had gotten all of it out.

“We started working on the project in Biology,” Peter said as they headed to the store “it’s to do with punnett squares.”

“Oh,” Ben said, “I think I sort of remember what those were about. Something to do with traits? Like eye color and stuff?”

“Yeah, sort of. It’s about how genes pass on traits to offspring but it also deals with blood.”

Uncle Ben nodded and to Peter it seemed like he was only half paying attention as they walked into the store. “Right, right. We found your parents blood type.”

Peter felt like his heart was beating faster and faster as he was getting to the point. “Yeah,” he said, “so we also did blood typing.”

Uncle Ben picked up a gallon of milk and then a carton of eggs.

“What happened with the project?”

“Did you know that I have type O?” Peter asked.

Uncle Ben nodded. “Yeah,” he said, “I did. I think at some point when you were a kid we got you blood typed just in case. It’s a good thing to know in case of an accident.”

It wouldn’t really matter in his case with his faster healing, although Peter didn’t know how far that ability extended.

Peter nodded and braced himself because he was going to go for it. “Right,” he said, “so you told me that my mom was type A and that my dad was AB.”

Uncle Ben was distractedly looking through heads of lettuce, but he was still listening.
“It means that one of them isn’t my parent,” Peter continued, “likely my dad because blood type A could have a child with blood type O if the other parent is B or O but not with someone with AB.”

Uncle Ben froze and he turned to look at Peter with his eyes wide, his hands holding on to the romaine so hard that Peter thought he was bruising the leaves. “Peter--” he said.

Someone screamed, cutting off whatever Ben was going to say, but Peter didn’t care because it was probably someone just messing around. So Peter turned to Uncle Ben again.

“Did you know, Uncle Ben?” he asked.

Uncle Ben set down the lettuce and it didn’t seem like he knew what he wanted to say and Peter just wanted him to admit it and confirm it. It wouldn’t be real until Ben said that it was true and that his brother wasn’t Peter’s father -- that Ben wasn’t Peter’s real uncle.

“Uncle Ben, tell me,” he pressed, “is it true? Did you know that Richard Parker isn’t my father? Do you know who is?”

Someone screamed again and it seemed to set off more screams and running. Someone came rushing towards them and bumped into Peter as he ran and Peter fell into a shelf. Uncle Ben reached for him and pulled him up just as a shot rang out and more people were running and screaming. Peter’s blood ran cold and instinct told him to go help and yet when he looked towards his uncle who looked scared and was grabbing Peter’s arm, Peter knew he couldn’t leave him. Wouldn’t be able to explain it if he did.

“Come on, Pete, come on, we have to go,” Uncle Ben whispered and pulled him up and away and Peter didn’t fight him even though he knew that he could have done more to help and more to stop what must have been a robbery and hopefully only that and not some crazy person out to just shoot people for the hell of it.

They didn’t get too far because of the crowd that was trying to get out of the store in a panic and somehow they got separated and Peter couldn’t see Ben anywhere. The crowd pulled him in the direction of the exit, but then he stumbled towards one wall and suddenly someone screamed close to him and then there he was, the guy with the gun and he was running straight for Peter and Peter couldn’t move. Couldn’t react in the face of actual danger and an actual crime being committed. It didn’t matter that he had powers, he was still afraid. His webbing was back home, but Peter knew that he was stronger and more agile and he had the fast healing to go off and yet as he tried to move to stop him, the guy just ran past him without even glancing at him and moments later from outside he heard another shot. Then one more. Then a car beeped loudly and sped away and Peter could finally move.

There were still people everywhere and some of them were running back into the store as well as out and yet Ben was nowhere to be found. A crying woman bumped into Peter as he made his way outside, trying to listen out for Ben, but instead he heard sobbing and people talking and the parking lot was just flush with people. There was a crowd formed not too far from the doors and Peter heard someone breathing hard and painfully. He felt dread run through him as he approached. Uncle Ben wasn’t in the crowd. Then, he saw him through the crowd. He was on the ground, his chest stained red with his blood and gasping for air. Someone was at his side pressing their hands on Ben’s chest but the blood seemed to just keep coming and Peter could hear how slow his heartbeat was even before he pushed through the crowd.

His vision was blurry by the time he made it through and he fell to his knees. “Uncle Ben!” Peter cried out and Uncle Ben’s face turned towards him. Peter brushed away his tears and the person at Ben’s other side looked up at him but didn’t say anything.
“Pete,” Uncle Ben whispered and reached out to Peter weakly with his left hand.

The sound of police sirens came from afar and Peter could hear an ambulance too, but he didn’t know if they would make it on time because while he could hear them no one else seemed to and there was just so much blood and Ben’s hand was shaking and his face was pallid.

“Pete,” Ben whispered again and Peter’s eyes went from the wound still being covered by the stranger to Ben’s face. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry we kept it from you. I love you, Peter.”

“No, don’t say that...don’t say goodbye. I -- Uncle Ben, you can’t die, okay. You can’t. You can’t -- you can’t leave. Please. Please.”

Peter grabbed Ben’s hand and he could feel the weak pulse and the limpness of his hand and still Ben tried to wrap his hand around Peter’s.

“I love you, Peter,” Ben whispered. “Tell May I love her. Tell her she meant the world to me.”

“No,” Peter said shaking his head and his tears were salty when he tasted them on his lips. “You tell her yourself, Ben. You have to tell her.”

Ben’s eyes were filled with tears and his hand twitched in Peter’s and Peter just brought it to his lips even though it just wasn’t the kind of thing that Peter would have ever done except that this was Ben and he had been shot and Peter just didn’t know what to do.

“I’m sorry, Peter,” Ben whispered. “We thought -- we figured...for the best you didn’t --” his words were broken up by his heavy breathing and Peter wanted to tell him to stop. “Your father is--”

“That doesn’t matter right now,” Peter jumped in, because it didn’t. “You can tell me later. Uncle Ben, don’t leave me. Please don’t leave me.”

His vision was blurry and he felt like his chest was going to burst any moment as Uncle Ben’s eyes opened and closed and he didn’t say anything else as he took in a gulp of breath and coughed.

“Please, please,” Peter muttered. “NO, Uncle Ben, you can’t. You can’t -- I love you. Don’t leave me--”

Uncle Ben didn’t say anything else and his hand felt limp in Peter’s hand. He didn’t remember what happened next because it just blurred together into non-cohesion. The sirens were too loud, as if they were happening right in his ears and the pain in his chest just kept growing and it all felt like too much all at once. Light was in his eyes and it was an overwhelming mess that left his head pounding. His chest hurt and it was hard to breathe. He remembered someone moving him away from Ben and people talking around him and then not much else but buzzing and greyness and “I miss you”.

Chapter End Notes

So last chapter was actually supposed to end with a much shorter version of what became this chapter but during the editing I really didn't think I could just pass off Ben's death in a short little scene so it became this instead and we got to see Ben really shine and be with Peter for a while. But I did always intend for his death to happen right after Peter found out Richard isn't his father - yet another huge obstacle but one that needed to happen to make Peter who he is.
It was a hard one to write - especially the last bit of it, so I'm sure it was hard to read (especially after seeing Infinity War). :(

Next chapter will be up either tomorrow or Wednesday. Thanks for reading.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
I spent the whole day gardening today which was brutal because it was around 80 degrees if not more. But the front of my house is looking so much better now that the deck is painted and the weeds have been removed. I'm just waiting for my lilies to finally come out and greet me. So that's been my day and I was glad that I already had this chapter edited so I can just post it otherwise I wouldn't have been able to put it up until Thursday.

Thank you to everyone that's read this so far! I can't believe this story has over 1k kudos! That's crazy, but I'm so happy that people are reading and genuinely enjoying it. This is a slightly longer than usual chapter but I think it closes up a part of the story. There's still a chapter of two left in the pre-Civil War stuff, but that's basically looming over our heads now. Enjoy.

Pepper was almost a little surprised that Tony had kept her specific access code working on the workshop keypad except that she really wasn’t because Tony probably still considered her one of his best friends just as Pepper knew he held that title for her. Aside from going to the tower for SI business, she hadn’t entered the tower since the break up and definitely not the penthouse, and walking into it felt strange since Tony had remodeled it yet again and none of it looked like it did before. She also had to note that Tony had made things more to his liking rather than hers. It didn’t look bad. It reminded Pepper a little of the Malibu house.

The workshop was still mostly the same and when Pepper stepped inside, Butterfingers actually greeted her and the other two bots followed. She touched each of them and then looked towards Tony who wasn’t alone. She would have expected Bruce, but he was still nowhere to be found as far as Pepper knew, so instead it was Steve.

Steve had stood up from the futon that hadn’t been there the last time Pepper had been in the workshop. She suspected its addition had something to do with Steve’s presence.

“Good afternoon, Ms. Potts,” he said with an easy smile and a nod.

“I didn’t expect you here, Captain,” Pepper said but smiled at him nonetheless before she turned towards Tony who probably hadn’t even noticed that she was there.

“Just keeping Tony company,” Steve said and sat down again. He had a sketch pad in one hand and a tray with art supplies.

“That’s nice of you,” she offered and then walked towards Tony and touched his shoulder but he didn’t react and Pepper hadn’t expected him to.

“It has not even been an hour, Steve, no cheating,” Tony said after a moment proving to Pepper that Steve was probably spending a lot of time in the workshop with Tony. It was something to think on later, though, because that wasn’t why Pepper was there. She touched his shoulder again.
Tony turned. “Oh,” Tony said when he saw her and then dropped whatever tools he’d been using on the table and grabbed her into a hug. “Pep, what are you doing here? You didn’t tell me you were coming. I haven’t seen you in a while.”

Pepper let her arms fold around Tony. It felt good to know that Tony was over them and over their relationship enough to just welcome her back gladly. For a moment, she didn’t want to give him the news except that she had to because even Tony would notice that they were footing the bill on a funeral.

“I didn’t know I was until earlier today,” Pepper said as she pulled away from him.

Tony frowned at once. “What happened?” he asked.

Steve got up to join them and Pepper didn’t mind that Tony had his support. It was good. Tony would need it -- he needed someone that would stick around and that cared. Pepper took a deep breath.

“Peter’s uncle died yesterday. He was shot in the chest and didn’t make it to the hospital,” Pepper said and tried not to think about the phone call that she had received from May Parker who had told her through tears and sobs.

“Shit,” Tony said at the same time that Steve said, “how’s Peter?”

“May said that Peter was with him when it happened,” Pepper said. “He wasn’t hurt but he was with Ben when he died. May said he was distraught.”

“Damn,” Tony said, “he seems to have the worst luck in the world. Absent father, step-father dies, now his uncle dies. That aunt of his better stay in perfect health.”

Pepper could tell that it pained Tony to know that Peter was in pain and she watched as Steve reached out to Tony and placed his hand on Tony’s back and Tony just leaned into it before glancing towards Steve and giving him a soft and open look that made Pepper pause. This was not at all how they had interacted the last time she had been around the two of them.

“We have to -- we should send something. I don’t know flowers? Maybe food? And we have to cover all the bills. Everything. The funeral, whatever the ambulance and the hospital cost. They shouldn’t have to worry about any of that. I don’t even -- should I reach out to Peter? Will it matter?”

“Hey, hey, calm down,” Steve said and then turned towards Pepper as if waiting for her to make the decisions and she supposed that that usually did end up in her hands.

“Write to Peter but just don’t make it harder on him,” Pepper said, “I already told May not to worry about anything including the funeral.”

“This is why you’re the best, Pepper,” Tony said and smiled at her but she could tell that he was worried about Peter.

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The funeral felt like it was happening in some other plane, as if Peter were just viewing it from afar and not actually there are all. His mind kept wandering off to the day that Uncle Ben died, and he couldn’t get rid of the image in his mind of Ben on that cold hard asphalt and the blood everywhere.

Peter had come to at the hospital with a nurse hovering over him and telling him that he had suffered a panic attack. It had taken a long moment for Peter to ask after Uncle Ben and even longer for the
words “he died, there was too much blood loss, but we tried everything we could” to register.

He didn’t calm down until Aunt May arrived to get him and to hear the news for herself and Peter
didn’t even know how he could look at her, especially when he remembered that he could have
stopped the robber and that he had the means to stop him and just didn’t. Except that May just
hugged him tightly and let him cry and she cried too and when they headed home they didn’t say
anything and they stayed in the living room together for a long time just holding each other and Peter
almost let the guilt fade away.

The next day he woke up on the couch alone and he almost wanted to believe it was a nightmare,
except that Aunt May was crying in the kitchen.

“He said to tell you he loves you,” Peter said, then.

It set her off again, but she hugged him and Peter found himself crying too and somehow it felt good
to let it out.

At some point Ned and his mom appeared with food and flowers and hugs. Peter just didn’t know
what to say or how to act, so he just didn’t try. Ned just sat with him and it seemed to be enough.

Later that night he received a letter that someone must have personally dropped off.

Dear Peter,

I am so sorry. I don’t have the words to express how sorry I am that you are going through this
except to say that it is extremely unfair. From every story that you told me about your uncle, I know
that he was a good man and a man that loved and cherished you and that should have remained
with you longer. You know well, far better than most unfortunately, that loss is a part of life. It
doesn’t make it easier to accept. I know that no words will make a difference in this moment and I’m
sorry for that too because if I could I would make all of it better for you without much prompting but
that’s impossible.

People like to say that time will dull the pain and eventually it will become easier and in some ways
that is true. You know both of my parents are dead -- have been for a long while now and I still feel
sometimes like I missed out on a lot with them and that they should have been here for my
accomplishments and yet I was able to keep going and keep being me and doing everything I could
to not stagnate because they were gone. You need to grieve and to feel the loss, but do not let it
consume you. Be sad. Be angry. Be anything you want to be, but be you and be the person he
wanted you to be.

If you need anything, anything at all, I am here for you night and day whenever you need to talk or
to just scream into a void. Remember him fondly and remember he loved you because that is the best
and only thing left to do. He’s with you in all the ways that you are like him and in everything he’s
taught you. One day the pain won’t be so sharp and you’ll look fondly on the time you spent with
him.

Take care and give your aunt my condolences,

Tony Stark

Peter tried not to cry on the letter, but a few tears did fall on the paper. He just couldn’t help it, not
when Mr. Stark made him feel like he actually genuinely cared and understood.

May didn’t tell him that Mr. Stark had paid for the funeral and that he had been responsible for all the
other little things that made their life that much easier like all the meals that were delivered and the
woman that showed up to clean the house and even the planning of the funeral. She didn’t tell him until the day of the funeral when everything seemed just a little bit too expensive for them to have been able to afford and Peter had to ask about it because it was something he noticed in order not to focus on Ben.

As Uncle Ben was lowered into the ground, Peter tried not to cry. Aunt May’s hand was tight around his hand and Peter knew deep down that he could have prevented this. It was not only Uncle Ben that had been shot that day, either, and Peter could have stopped that guy. He could have made it harder for him to hurt anyone and not doing so made him just as guilty.

He and May stepped forward to pick up some of the dirt and throw it in over the casket and as Peter threw his fistful he swore to never not do his best to help anyone that needed it. He was going to become Spider-Man.

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Tony wore a disguise to the funeral and kept himself near the back. He wanted nothing else than to try and offer Peter any comfort that he could, but he also realized that he couldn’t and probably shouldn’t. Instead, he watched May hold his son’s hand and he tried not to dwell on how much his boy had already lost. Steve who had gone with him had held his hand instead and Tony couldn’t help but feel grateful to how much of a steady presence Steve had become.

Later, he was in the tower and Pepper who had stuck around for the funeral appeared in the kitchen while he prepared a cup of coffee.

“I don’t think this is the best time to tell Peter, but it might do him some good if he knew he had a living father.”

“He doesn’t need that on top of everything else;” Tony said, “maybe in a few months when Ben’s death isn’t as fresh. How’s May?”

“She’s doing as well as she can right now. I think having to be there for Peter is helping.” Pepper had reached out to May again a few times and would continue to do so because Tony just didn’t feel comfortable when he and May had never had the same rapport that May and Pepper did.

The next few weeks were odd. Tony hadn’t known Ben Parker personally, but he had essentially been his son’s father and raised him so in a way Tony felt a little bit like he too had lost someone important in his life. He definitely felt the pain for Peter too at losing someone so important in his life and it wasn’t too surprising when he didn’t receive any letter or email back from Peter. Eventually, it became something he didn’t dwell on too much because there were other things. Hydra was still active.

The Avengers were chasing leads on Hydra operatives and so Steve had gone on some mission chasing a lead. Tony was a little bit worried about it because he had only taken Sam with him.

So, Tony worked on B.A.R.F. It had been obvious to him after visiting the old house at Christmas that he wasn’t over the death of his parents or probably a number of other things that had happened when he was child and then Ben dying had truly reminded Tony of the fact. To try and re-imagine them felt like the best therapeutic way to deal that didn’t include finding a therapist that wouldn’t spill all of his secrets. Sam had been some help in looking over how Tony intended the project to work and adding his own input in what might actually make a difference from a psychological standpoint.

Tony planned on showing it off at the MIT presentation that he’d agreed to attend. He couldn’t remember the last time that he had actually gone back to his alma mater and he was looking forward
to giving back to those kids whose ideas would change the world. The September Foundation had been one of many charities that his mother had started and been chairman of and Tony was proud to keep them going. The foundation funded scholarships every year, but Tony was making one change this year and doing more than just scholarships because getting those brilliant kids through school wasn’t enough when they couldn’t find jobs or get the funding they needed for their ideas.

Pepper had even agreed to go with him and do her part in representing the business side of Stark Industries. They didn’t want to say it, but this was also a bit of a headhunting trip because they wanted to expand on a few fields mostly to do with medical equipment and there were some promising kids graduating soon that Tony had his eye on to snatch away from other competing companies.

Chapter End Notes

All I have to say at the end of this one is that I think I rewrote or added to that letter more than anything else in this fic so far. I really liked going back to a Pepper POV for a bit too and just having her around. This chapter leaves us probably three or so weeks after Ben’s death.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

As always, thank you for reading/commenting/leaving kudos. You are all wonderful.

This chapter eases us even closer to Civil War. It's also a bit lighter after the last two. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter found out pretty quickly that he was limited when it came to a costume but he made do with what he could find. Red and blue sweats and a mask because he wanted to keep his identity secret. After the first few times he went out, he even added goggles to his costume because it helped to focus him. He had never realized until that moment that part of the reason that he still made mistakes while using the web fluid was how much his senses took in, in particular his vision. The goggles changed things.

At first, Peter didn’t really know what he should be looking out for or what he should do when he did find something going wrong. The first time that he managed to stop someone from pickpocketing an old lady was great even if the guy got away. That was when he realized that his web fluid could be used to tie the bad guy up for the police to pick up. Some experimentation with the web fluid had given him an approximation for how long the fluid would take to dissolve. A couple of hours depending on how much he used.

He went out almost every day right after school and somehow the pain of no longer having Ben wasn’t as present when he was in the suit looking out for the people of Queens. It was only late at night when he was in his bedroom trying to pretend that he couldn’t hear Aunt May crying -- because he wouldn’t have been able to hear it if he wasn’t Spider-Man -- that he really felt surrounded by the pain and the guilt and just everything.

Peter hadn’t even been able to respond to Mr. Stark’s message. It was just so hard to speak of it and Peter didn’t know what else he could tell Mr. Stark that wasn’t about his grief or Spider-Man and those were things he didn’t really feel like writing about just yet.

Peter didn’t even think about the whole punnett square thing anymore because it didn’t matter. It didn’t matter that Uncle Ben and as such Aunt May knew that Peter wasn’t their nephew. With his last words Ben had tried to tell him about his father but it didn’t matter anymore because the only father figure that had ever mattered was Ben Parker and he was dead.

One afternoon, he stopped the robbery of a small corner store and Peter felt like his uncle would have been proud of him for it. He left the two guys tied upside down on a stop sign.

The more time he spent out with the mask on the easier it became to swing around from building to building and just enjoy his powers. He didn’t know if it was what Uncle Ben would have wanted for him, but Peter found some peace in being able to help others. He still felt the loss every day down to his bones especially when something reminded him of Ben, but slowly it was getting easier to just move past those moments and do the best he could as Spider-Man.

Then, he started to get noticed.
Peter hadn’t done it to be noticed, but someone had seen him stopping a car hijacker and then someone else had taken a video of him swinging across two buildings and one day when he arrived at school he found Ned at his locker.

“Do you think it’s real? The guy swinging around?” Ned asked and shoved his phone at Peter to show him what he was talking about.

There weren’t many videos and a lot of them were blurry, but it was definitely him and Peter felt oddly thrilled to see it and for Ned to be excited about it.

“I mean, look at the views! It would be crazy if this was a stunt but I guess it looks real. Someone in the comments said that he saved their grandma from being run over last week.”

Peter tried not to smile as his friend just kept gushing about it. Other people in school were talking about it too, even Michelle who thought the whole thing was a stunt of some kind. Flash Thompson kept trying to convince people that he knew who the guy was but without proof no one seemed to really believe him. It made Peter just a little happier to see him keep trying and getting nowhere because it was just what Flash deserved.

“Seems like it’s legit, Ned,” Peter said.

“Yeah,” Ned said with a grin. “I think so too. Hey, I wonder where this guy was when--” Ned trailed off and Peter tried to remind himself that it wasn’t his fault even though he could had done more to stop that guy from getting out of the store.

“I’m sorry,” Ned said quickly.

“It’s alright,” Peter said and shrugged.

Afterwards, Peter thought that it wouldn’t hurt if there were better videos of him. Videos that Peter himself could control. He wouldn’t put up many and he would only be able to put up things that he could film himself doing. There was no way he would be able to capture himself actually saving someone or anything like that, but there were other things.

---

Steve had a bruised eye and his left arm was also on the mend when he showed up at the tower. He had gone straight there instead of going to the compound because this was where he wanted to be. He didn’t want to be at the compound and Sam could do well enough without him to debrief. Steve just wanted a moment of rest before they had to leave again. He wanted to see Tony.

“Mr. Stark is in his bedroom,” Friday announced as Steve arrived at the penthouse.

“Oh,” Steve said, “is he sleeping?”

“No,” Friday said, “I’ll let him know you are here.”

“Thanks,” Steve muttered.

Steve walked towards the kitchen and searched the fridge for something to eat. There wasn’t much in there which shouldn’t have been a surprise to him because Tony rarely ate anything he himself prepared. He was all about ordering in. What Steve did find was some frozen fruit which he pulled out to make a smoothie. He was in the middle of getting the ingredients into the blender one handed when Tony arrived.
“Friday tells me I have an intruder in the kitchen eating my food,” Tony said and touched Steve’s hurt arm gently before pushing him aside and taking over. “A hurt one at that. Why didn’t you go to medical?”

“Because I’m already healing,” Steve said, “and because I didn’t want to get there only to come back here right after.”

Tony shot him a smile and then he finished preparing the smoothie and handed it to Steve. “You must be hungry,” he said, “you always did want a good meal after a mission.”

Steve shrugged and Tony rolled his eyes before having Friday order them burgers from his usual place.

“So,” Tony said, “how was the mission? Did you get those Hydra goons?”

“We took care of them,” Steve said, “but as it turns out Brock Rumlow is running around as some sort of terrorist.”

He seemed to have suffered some serious burns, but somehow he was still alive and he was dangerous.

“I thought he was dead,” Tony said with a frown and he led them out to the living room.

“So did we,” Steve said, “but he showed up and he got away. I guess he’s acting on his own. Natasha and Sam are trying to figure out where he’s going or what he’s trying to plan. He’s dangerous and whatever he’s planning isn’t good.”

Tony nodded. “And I hope you take the full team this time.”

“I think Wanda might be ready. Either way, it might do her some good to actually be on the field. Vision is too -- he stands out.”

Even though they were discussing the mission and Rumlow, Steve found some peace in doing it with Tony. Tony just always had something to offer. He wasn’t a genius for nothing and for all that Steve was good at tactics and planning, Tony had always been able to see things that Steve didn’t. He missed having him on the team even when he went off book and ignored every order that Steve gave him.

“That he does,” Tony said, “I wonder if he could wear a mask or something. He keeps emailing me about human things that he doesn’t understand. He also seems a little too interested in Wanda. Do you think that’s to do with the stone? Her powers do come from it. Speaking of, any word from Thor?”

Steve hadn’t really thought about Thor too much because Thor had never really stuck around, not even when he was on Earth. He was always off with Jane or in space so it wasn’t that unusual that they hadn’t heard from him. The longest that he had lasted with them had been the time they were searching for the scepter and even then he often disappeared without notice to see Jane.

“None,” Steve said. “Should we be concerned?”

“I don’t know,” Tony said, “but maybe it means that he hasn’t found anything alarming yet. Or that he’s busy somewhere. I’m still a little concerned about Bruce since there hasn’t been any sighting of the quinjet and I’ve had Friday searching. It’s as if it disappeared entirely.”

“Natasha’s convinced he crashed it and died,” Steve said.
He really didn’t understand why Natasha had convinced herself that Bruce not reaching out to them meant that he was dead. Maybe it was easier to deal with that than with the prospect of knowing that Bruce just didn’t want to reach out to them.

“I don’t believe he did,” Tony said, “I would have been notified if the quinjet was destroyed.”

Steve nodded. “So I guess that means that he just abandoned it somewhere, then.”

“Sure.”

When the food arrived, they settled in to watch the latest thing on Steve’s list. This time it was Game of Thrones which Tony had been hyping up the last time he was there. Steve just couldn’t understand how Tony managed to watch so many things and still do all the work he did. That’s probably why he didn’t really sleep much and tended to fall asleep on Steve while they watched things.

So, sure enough, Tony fell asleep when they had gotten to the second episode and Steve had to admit that it was a really good show. He thought that Sam and Clint had mentioned it to him in the past too. He found it a bit amusing that it followed a family named Stark.

“It’s because Starks are awesome in any universe,” Tony had said with a grin.

Tony’s weight settled on Steve and Steve shifted into a position that allowed Tony to be more comfortable and he tried to keep his attention on the show and not Tony’s peaceful face except that it was difficult.

“One day I’m going to tell you how I really feel,” Steve whispered, “even if it changes everything.”

Chapter End Notes

Not much to say on this one except that I really loved writing Peter’s exploration of being Spider-Man. The next one should be the last chapter before the Civil War chapters begin. It should be up probably Saturday or Sunday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading/commenting and just sticking around for this. You guys are fantastic! Thank you so much!

So I edited this one last night because I wasn't entirely happy with the middle scene of the chapter which just meant that the middle scene of the chapter got edited and super-extended to become its own chapter. This chapter. It was originally bracketed by two Peter POV scenes that I will now be moving into the next chapter. I think it makes more sense this way anyway. Originally it was broken up this way because I hadn't cut it into chapters yet so I needed a buffer between the last Steve/Tony scene and this one so it works alright now but do keep in mind that there is about a two week gap between this and last chapter. This chapter is still a bit longer than usual but I really like what the scene turned into so much more than what it used to be and I hope you guys like it as well. Hope everyone likes it. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Steve watched Tony as he put away the B.A.R.F. technology and all the components. It was finally all ready and he was prepared to show it off. Pepper and the SI board members had been blown away by it when he showed it to them. They were excited to see the new direction that they could be taking Stark Industries. Tony didn’t tell them outright that he had created it to deal with his own issues, but he was sure that some of them could probably infer. The next step would be presenting it at MIT.

“You’ll have to try it out, Cap,” Tony said, “it could help you deal with some of your demons. Or at the very least you can get a look at your past.”

“Not sure if I really want to go there,” Steve said. “But, I think it could have the use of showing us our mistakes when we’re out on a mission.”

“Yet another reason why this thing is genius,” Tony said.

“You created it, didn’t you? Shouldn’t that say enough?” Steve asked.

Sometimes the way that Steve looked at him made Tony feel a little weird because he seemed to bring out almost every emotion out of Steve. He seemed awed of Tony at times but far more than usual in a fond and surprised way that just didn’t make sense. Other times he looked wistful and sort of sad and there seemed to be something at the tip of his tongue that he just couldn’t get out. Tony didn’t know what to make of it all.

“I’m a little upset that I’m not getting to come to MIT to watch you present this thing.” Steve said.

Tony was a little upset too because it was something they had planned ever since Tony had told him about the presentation. It was odd in some ways how Steve just seemed to always want to be there for everything. Tony appreciated it, but this was the first time in his life that someone wanted to be present. Rhodey had always tried, but he was living his own busy life. Pepper had been that person for him when she was his assistant, but not as much as his girlfriend because she was also the CEO.
of Stark Industries and that meant that the company had to come first sometimes. Tony had always understood that.

“I think Pepper will be there,” Tony said.

Sometimes Steve seemed to pull back into himself when Pepper was mentioned and Tony didn’t understand what that was about either. He watched Steve as he shuffled his feet and stuffed his hands in his pockets.

Tony was just about to ask what was wrong when Steve spoke instead. “Did you ever run that whole farm thing by her?”

Tony laughed, remembering how much Clint and his hidden family had almost made him want to get himself a farm. But of course, Tony would have never been happy living that life. He was a city mouse. Although, he supposed that there was probably an appeal to being away from people. It was one of the things that had drawn his dad into buying the house in Upstate New York, it was relatively secluded.

“Sort of,” Tony said with a shrug. “I guess you’re not the only one that doesn’t want to settle down with some kiddos. I don’t really blame you. I think it’s one of those things that comes with age. Or, I don’t know--”

“Is that why you haven’t gotten back together?” Steve said and the question was a little odd. It was straight to be point which was very like Steve -- but it was a line of questioning that Tony would have expected from Clint or maybe even Natasha but not Steve.

“Yes,” Tony said. “Pepper’s a career woman and she’s great and strong for it and I admire everything that she is but she doesn’t want to be -- well, she doesn’t want to be a mom. She doesn’t want to be tied down that way which is understandable. And I guess it’s made me wonder if it’s even something that I want if or it’s another pipe dream.”

Steve had moved closer at some point, up from the futon to lean against one of the tables with his arms crossed on his chest putting his muscles on display in a way that Tony didn’t think was fair.

“You still want that.” Steve said knowingly with a small smile. “If you didn’t you’d already be back on The Avengers. I’m actually a little impressed that you’ve managed to stay out of the suit for this long. What’s it been almost a year already?”

Tony sighed. He closed the case with the B.A.R.F tech inside and turned so he could look directly at Steve.

“Maybe I do. I don’t know. But I’ve realized recently that I made a mistake letting Mary and later May and Ben cut me out of Peter’s life. I should have fought harder or insisted I be in his life, I don’t know, I just wish I had done more. I’ve missed out on a huge part of my son’s life and while I don’t want to replace him, as if I ever could, I do want to be a father. I think that I can do it and not screw it up like Howard did. I wanted that with Pepper, I’ll admit it, but not exclusively. And since it’s not what she wants it’s easier to stop pretending we can stay together and be happy when we want different things. One day, I think you’ll feel the same, Cap. You’ll want the quiet life and you’ll want to put down that shield. Or maybe you won’t.”

Steve looked pensive for a while, frowning a little.

“Does it have to be one or the other?” Steve asked. “Can’t you have both?”

Tony shrugged. “I think Pepper made it seem like it had to be a choice but I guess not. But I just -- I
thought that maybe because of Peter I should just stay -- try the normal life.

“I don’t think normal is in your wheelhouse,” Steve said with a small smile. Still he nodded and seemed to understand and yet there was a nervous energy about him that Tony didn’t know what to make of, especially when Steve pushed away from the table.

He didn’t move towards Tony but began to pace instead. It wasn’t usual Steve behavior, so Tony watched him. Not sure of what was coming next.

“There’s something I’ve wanted to tell you,” Steve said.

“Okay,” Tony said.

Steve stopped pacing and walked to stand in front of Tony and he took a deep breath. “You’re wrong, you know. I don’t think it’s because of Peter that you’ve stopped being Iron Man.”

Tony hadn’t expected that. He didn’t know what he expected. He just knew that it was really unfair that Steve looked that good. His blue eyes were gorgeous in the light of the lab and so full of emotion that Tony couldn’t distinguish.

“I think you’re still blaming yourself for what happened with Ultron,” Steve said. “It wasn’t all your fault, Tony. We all know that.”

“I pushed Bruce into it and it was my idea and--”

Steve shook his head and he reached towards Tony but didn’t touch him, his hands falling down to his sides instead. “An idea that came from your nightmares and from what Wanda showed you. Tony, there’s very little that can be done against a threat that isn’t already known.”

“It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t prepare. It doesn’t mean that something might be coming. I saw -- the Chitauri, all those ships in space. Steve, there’s so much out there we don’t know about that--”

“That we don’t know to be the enemy or to be coming for Earth. That was all Loki. And if you are right, then there is every reason for you to be back on the team.”

Tony laughed. “I guess that means you miss me, huh,” he said. “But what about Peter and -- I think I’m ready to meet him.”

“But that’s what I’m saying, Tony, you don’t have to not be Iron Man to be his father. All of this one or the other and your life being dangerous. It’s going to be dangerous no matter what. Just like -- like you keep saying I don’t understand about wanting to get a farm, I guess, because I do. I really do. I think about it all the time.”

Tony stared at him, not quite understanding it all. “You want to get a farm?” He asked.

“No, I don’t.” Steve said with a sigh. “But I can’t stop thinking about it, this life that you want so badly and not because I want that specifically but because if it’s what you want I want you to have it. And--”

“Steve what--”

“--and I want to be at your side for as long as you want me to be.”

It didn’t make sense and yet it did and Tony didn’t know what he was supposed to do or say or how he was supposed to take it because Steve was being vague in some ways and Tony didn’t want to
take it the wrong way.

“-- Steve what do you mean?” Tony managed to ask.

Steve stepped closer, right into Tony’s space. He was nervous, but he seemed to be steeling himself.

Steve gulped. “If this sounds crazy to you or if you don’t -- if you don’t feel this way we won’t -- I won’t bring it up again,” Steve said. “But I can’t hold this in any longer.”

“What do you -- Steve--”

“I don’t know how you don’t already know,” Steve said. “I’ve been really obvious. Natasha figured it out before I did and Sam probably knows too which means Wanda does too. Everyone but you.”

Tony didn’t want to jump to any conclusions, but Steve was looking at him with a soft and open expression that gave him room to hope. Except that this was Steve and Tony would have sooner said that magic was real than consider that Steve might have any kind of feelings towards him.

Steve had moved even closer. Close enough that Tony could hear his heart beats. It wasn’t unusual to be so close to Steve and yet there was something new there. Tension and intimacy and Tony liked it. He liked the way that Steve looked at him almost half expectant, his lips turned up into a small smile. Tony was used to this. He was used to attraction and being so close to another person that it easy to read body language and determine how the next hour would go, but it was different with Steve. The stakes were higher and they were both dancing around each other and yet Tony knew what to do.

He surged up, hands reaching up to grab Steve’s face. His right hand travelled back over his ear, touching Steve’s hair at the nape of his neck until he could pull Steve closer and press their lips together in a way that Tony had imagined but never expected to be real.

Steve’s lips were warm and soft and he didn’t waste time in kissing Tony back and he was a fantastic kisser. Steve’s arms wrapped around him, pressing their torsos together as their kiss turned hot and hard and Tony could hardly believe it was happening or how good it felt to kiss Steve and to know that Steve wanted to kiss him back.

When it was over and Tony needed to catch his breath, they stayed there together and there could be no words because the moment couldn’t be broken. He loved him. Tony hadn’t known the extent of his feelings, not until then, but he loved him. The feeling was there sitting just within his reach and it was true and Tony couldn’t believe that he hadn’t figured that out earlier. When he took Steve in again, Steve’s cheeks were tinged pink and his eyes gleamed.

“Tony, I--”

Tony grinned. “Yeah,” he breathed.

Steve kissed him again instead of saying anything else and that was a slower kiss, but just as amazing and breathtaking. Tony let himself lean on Steve and relish in feeling ecstatically happy. For a futurist, this had really caught him off guard in the best way possible.

The moment was broken, finally, minutes later when Steve’s phone rang with the tone that meant it was important. Steve reached for the phone but didn’t move away so Tony stole one more kiss, keeping it short but sweet with the promise that it wouldn’t be the last.

“I have to--” Steve said, glancing at his phone screen.
“I know,” Tony said. “I guess we can discuss all of this later. When I’m back from MIT. Go, your team needs you.”

Steve grinned and he leaned in and kissed Tony as if he couldn’t help doing it now that they’d started. “We’ll talk about it as soon as we’re back,” he said after he pulled away, walking away as soon as he did.

Tony watched him as he walked away and he leaned back against the worktable. “Friday, that did happen, right?”

“Yes, sir, you and Captain Rogers made out like a couple of teenagers. That did indeed occur.”

“Don’t give me that sass, Fri,” Tony said and he reached up to touch his lips. He really did feel like a teenager. Maybe it was something to do with how Tony had first discovered he liked boys and girls when he realized it wasn’t just the heroics that attracted him to Captain America. This was his teenage fantasy come true, but it was also his adult fantasy come true. His fingers touched his lips swollen just a little from the enthusiastic kisses and he grinned to himself. This really was not how he’d expected his day to go.

Chapter End Notes

It's happening, guys, the Stony is finally happening. I really wanted this scene to be a bit on the unusual side. I didn't want to play with any trope for this relationship and I like what it made this into because it ended up being quite them.

The next chapter is likely to be up tomorrow assuming I can get it all edited together tonight. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys are amazing!

Last chapter really brought us closer to Civil War and this one really gets us right to the end of the pre-Civil War chapters. I rather like what happens in this one and it's a bit longer than usual too. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spider-Man started to be mentioned more and more mostly online never really by name because no one seemed to know what to call him just yet, but with variations of descriptors. Peter didn’t know if he was glad to get the recognition or not. On the one hand he really liked the feeling he got when he heard someone talking about him, but on the other he had afraid that someone was going to find out who he was. In the end, he decided it didn’t really matter because the whole point of it was to help and save people. It did turn out to be hard work, but Peter loved it. He loved being Spider-Man even if it meant that he was sneaking out of his bedroom window and that he was lying to Aunt May. He didn’t think he would have gotten away with it if Uncle Ben had still been around. Aunt May wouldn’t have been as distracted by her grief. She just wasn’t as alert as she used to be. Peter could admit to himself, though, that juggling everything wasn’t always easy.

“Are you alright?” Ned asked as they were leaving their class for the day.

He asked all the time when he remembered about Ben and how it might be affecting Peter. Peter didn’t blame him for forgetting and he actually didn’t like talking about it, but he still appreciated that Ned cared.

“I’m okay,” he said.

“Are you sure?”

Peter nodded and he tried not to seem to impatient. He wanted to go out to patrol and Ned was holding him up, but he couldn’t just brush off his friend.

“Do you want to come over?” Ned asked.

“I can’t,” Peter said, “but maybe another day? I just have to get home. See you tomorrow.”

He walked off before Ned could say anything else and almost ran Michelle over. She slapped his arm and gave him a glare as he passed with something muttered that Peter didn’t even catch. Once he was outside, he rushed away and as soon as he could find a good spot, he changed into his Spider-Man outfit. One day he would make it a lot cooler than just sweats and a mask with goggles. There were ideas that he’d actually written down about it’. He just didn’t have the means to fix it just yet especially since Peter couldn’t really sew.

He climbed up to the top of a building to find a good perch from where to look for anything going wrong and when he didn’t find anything immediately he decided to take a few videos of himself as Spider-Man. Peter had been planning on putting a few of them online under a username that couldn’t
be traced back to him. He could go on and name himself while he was at it too and make the videos that were circulating the internet just a little better.

At first, he just did a few backflips and jumps and then he swung on the web for a moment before landing in front of his phone. Then he heard someone scream.

Peter jumped up and ran to the edge of the building. A woman’s purse had been snatched and the guy was getting away, but Peter jumped off the roof and swung into the scene and caught the guy, sticking him to the nearest wall. He returned the purse quickly and then swung away again back to the roof. He sat on the edge of a roof for a while until something else caught his attention which turned out to just be a kid screaming at his mother because she wouldn’t buy him an ice cream and she was refusing.

Peter decided to save his eardrums and go elsewhere for a while which was how he managed to spot the car flying down a street it was going so fast which he just knew was going to be trouble.

Peter didn’t know how he pulled it off. He didn’t know how he managed to have such good timing, but somehow he did. One moment he had just been trying to figure out how to stop the car or get people away from the danger and the next he had seen the bus and known that it would be disaster for the car driver, the people on the bus, and the people walking around who didn’t even seem to notice what was happening except for a few here or there who were yelling or staring in open shock.

He was swinging towards the car, but he wasn’t fast enough to stop the car, not until it was almost at the bus, which was how he ended up throwing himself between them, falling right where the collision was about to take place to stop the car, absorbing the hit in a way that didn’t impact the bus but also stopped the car from causing damage to the driver and passenger who looked shaken. The car actually came off the ground at the back and Peter had to set it down gently, glad that he had the strength to actually hold it for a moment.

As everything settled down for him, Peter could see that people had their phones out and that he was their main interest. Peter didn’t waste a moment in jumping onto the hood of the car and swinging away as people looked on.

Peter was a little shaken, if he were going to be honest, mostly because he had almost narrowly missed stopping that car and injuring not just himself but other people in the vicinity, in the car, and inside the bus. It had been a close one, but he had stopped all catastrophe and he had to give himself props for that.

He landed on a rooftop and breathed a sigh of relief for everything that had gone right and then he flopped onto his back because he couldn’t believe his luck. Had any one thing gone wrong or his timing been off anything could have happened, Peter knew that, and yet he felt so proud for what he had done.

He stayed on the empty roof for a while until his phone notified him of a text from Ned and even then he ignored it for a while because Ned was probably only asking something about homework or Star Wars and Peter really didn’t care to answer. Later, as the afternoon got tinged orange and red as the sun started to go down he finally checked.

Ned: Peter, you’re never going to believe it. Go on youtube. Spiderman just stopped a car from crashing into a bus and it’s all over the internet.

Ned: Omg! Buzzfeed wrote an article about it. This is so cool, Peter! Tell me you saw it.

There was also one from May.
May: Kiddo, pick up a sandwich or something from Delmars. I’m going to work late tonight. Be safe.

He didn’t respond to either immediately just because he wanted to just lay there for a while, but eventually he got up and sent May a thumbs up emoji just because she hated when he didn’t give her any kind of answer. It had become increasingly obvious that May felt like they were going to start struggling for money. Uncle Ben didn’t have any kind of life insurance and even though all funeral costs had been covered by Mr. Stark, even if Peter still didn’t necessarily understand why, it didn’t change that Uncle Ben had had the higher paying job and that his income was gone. They lived in New York. It was Queens, but it was still New York City and Peter knew things were expensive.

May was probably also worried because she’d been out from work without pay for a good while after Ben died. Her bosses had understood her need for time off, but not enough to pay her for the entirety of it. It left Peter feeling a little bit like he should be trying to get himself a part time job to help her out and yet it would leave even less time for other pursuits like Spider-Man so he hoped it wouldn’t come to that. May probably wouldn’t go for it anyway even if he didn’t have Spider-Man.

He patrolled for a little bit longer before grabbing a sandwich as suggested by May and heading home and checking out the links that Ned had sent him to YouTube videos that had thousands upon thousands of views and were all of him from different angles stopping the accident. It was crazy and Peter couldn’t believe it. The comments section was a whole thing altogether and Peter only read a few comments before he gave up and moved on to the next video and then the next.

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Back in the old days any time that Tony had to fly anywhere, he would make it a point to have strippers and plenty to drink aboard the jet. Times had changed and instead, Tony spent the rather short flight to MIT looking over Peter things. His grades, his club involvements at school and anything else that might have come up. This was how Spider-Man got on his radar because it was all that anyone from Peter’s school could apparently talk about on social media so naturally Friday picked up on it. Queens has its own superhero and from what Tony could make out, it wasn’t more than just a kid going by how thin and how short the new hero was unless it was a woman but Tony doubted that. There were YouTube videos up that showed him in action and Tony was impressed especially since they all seemed mostly candid and unedited.

The latest one had him stopping a car crashing into a bus and Tony could just tell that whoever was under the mask had to be special which meant they needed to be watched.

“Hey, Friday,” Tony said, “can we figure out who this masked hero is. Could be a good addition to The Avengers.”

“Should I send the info to Captain Rogers?”

“No, I’ll deal with this personally. I just hope that whoever it is they aren’t bringing trouble into Queens. It’s the last thing Peter and May need.”

“Well, it looks like Spider-Man has decreased some of the crime in Queens since his appearance,” Friday said.

“Yeah, but it will attract trouble too and I don’t want either of them near it.”

Tony spent most of the trip trying not to think about Steve which was why he was trying to keep himself busy. It was hard, though, after every surprising aspect of that morning. The last year had taught him that he and Steve got along well once they stopped fighting and that Tony liked the
company that Steve offered but he had never imagined that it would ever be more than a friendship. The friendship had often seemed like it was already enough that it almost felt like a dream to get to have more than that. Tony wanted to just fast forward the next few days until he could see him again.

Tony made himself focus on the new hero. The more he looked at the videos on YouTube, the more that Tony thought about all the ways that the young hero could be improved on starting with the homemade suit. Tony was also particularly interested in the webs he seemed to be capable of shooting out of his wrist. They reminded him -- Peter had been asking about spider webbing.

Could Peter know the masked hero? Or had he come across the webbing somehow and gotten curious? Tony didn’t like it. He wanted Peter as far away from the masked Spider-Man as possible and the easiest way to do it was to get Spider-Man out of Queens. Maybe an invitation to join The Avengers would do that.

Tony wrote down his ideas on a possible suit for Spider-Man including the use of the red and blue he seemed to prefer. From just what he going see from the videos the hero was acrobatic, could stick to walls somehow even through his clothes, and he was super strong. It was the webbing that he needed to figure out. Was Spider-Man a mutant of some kind or an experiment gone wrong? Either way, the webbing couldn’t be organic. It couldn’t come from him because there was no way that anything inside him could create it unless Tony was wrong because weird things happened all the time. A couple more watches of a few of the more trick related videos gave away the device that Spider-Man had on his wrists and Tony knew he could improve upon that too. Spider-Man needed a whole new upgrade.

“Save my notes, Fri,” Tony said, “it will be something to work on when I’m back home.”

For the last leg of the trip, Tony checked his email. The first one to stand out was from Pepper and recently arrived.

Tony,

I am so sorry but I won’t make MIT. You’ll have to present without me.

Pepper

Tony really should have expected that. He shrugged it off and moved on to the rest of his email. He erased a bunch until one from Maria Hill stood out to him.

Stark,

We have been following a few things closely as concerning Bruce Banner. Recently there have been some proving questions about his whereabouts. We believe they come from the new Secretary of State, Thaddeus Ross, as they have some history you are aware of.

As I have touched on in the past, the political landscape right now does not fare well for us. Ever since Shield fell there have been more and more voices critiquing the methods that The Avengers have taken. The events of Sokovia did not help and it’s likely that the inhuman problem is also to blame. Too many untrustworthy people with new and unexpected powers are worrisome even to us even if we have someone working on the issue. I have been advised that the UN is also working on something.

We’re going to need you on this, Stark. Whatever is coming, you’re best equipped to deal with it.

-Hill
Tony was used to getting emails from Maria Hill. It was easier to hear things from her when it came to the less exciting aspects of The Avengers especially when it came in email form. It was especially nice because Hill never tried to shy away from saying what she needed to say. Tony had actually forgotten all about the inhuman stuff that had been going on with the contamination of fish oil pills. Hill and Fury had been insistent that someone was dealing with it so Tony was leaving it all alone. It made him wonder if Spider-Man was one of those inhumans. It would make some sense if he was.

The next email that caught his eye was one from Peter. Finally.

Hey, Mr. Stark,

I know I haven’t written much lately but you know why I haven’t. It’s been a lot to really get used to because I keep thinking he’ll just be there at the breakfast table and then he’s not and his favorite mug is just sitting in the cupboard like he left it. I guess I’m still getting used to it.

Thank you so much for paying for everything. You didn’t have to! But I’m so thankful you did. It was one less thing to worry about. And thank you for the letter. It meant everything to hear those words and it’s made a big difference to me. Thank you so so much.

Peter

Tony decided he would answer it later, so he moved on and found a welcome email from MIT and Tony ignored it in favor of looking out the window for a while and trying not to think about Steve who had probably already arrived in Lagos with the team. Only Vision and Rhodey were staying behind at the compound even though Tony would have preferred that they went as well. Tony just hoped that it all went well.

Chapter End Notes

The scenes in this chapter are some of my favorites and this is really where Civil War starts up even though I know some of you aren't ready. I'm actually not ready either - as in I haven't edited any of those chapters at all, but I'm working on it.

Next chapter will probably be up Wednesday or Thursday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

Once again thank you to everyone reading! You guys are the best and I honestly wouldn't be able to do such quick updates without you guys. (Motivation really matters!)

We've made it to the beginning of May 2016 and now we're really in Civil War which is super exciting and just as equally worrisome. I ended up being able to edit this chapter last night so early posting since I didn't think I'd be able to get it out until tomorrow night.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tony heard about it all later, after he was trying to calm down from having the picture of a dead boy shoved under his nose by an angry mother. All of it had taken him unawares and yet Tony felt the grief in her stare and her anger and the guilt settled over him the more he thought about it and the more that he realized her child could have been his. Peter was brilliantly smart and he could go anywhere or be anywhere and it might mean that one day he could be in danger for no other reason than because things just happened. This boy was dead and no one had been placed before a court of law or admitted any guilt. So, when hearing about Lagos in the immediate aftermath of having to face his own mistakes, Tony knew that something had to be done. He just didn’t know what.

Once, Tony had been presented with the problem that his company and the weapons they manufactured had made and he had made it better. This was a similar problem and Tony knew there had to be a solution. Steve had told him that he wouldn’t be able to stay away and he was right, because he needed to be a part of the solution.

The whole presentation at MIT had gone well aside from a few hiccups when the person in charge of the prompter hadn’t changed the introduction into Pepper’s bit which had made for an awkward pause before Tony could continue, unprompted.

At some point, he remembered telling Peter about the presentation at MIT and Peter had definitely been interested and Tony had wished that he could just whisk him away for things like this so he could be a part of it but he hadn’t been able to find an excuse to do so. He hoped that in the future he wouldn’t need to.

Giving all of those kids the funding they needed and just being able to be frank about his feelings when it came to the death of his parents had been nice because Tony just generally didn’t share that with anyone and yet it had seemed fitting to include it and truly show off the power that B.A.R.F had. It was also Tony’s way of letting the world see that it was helping him and that it was making a difference.

It was too bad that Tony didn’t get to enjoy any of the stuff after the presentation. Not only because of the picture shoved at him but because of Lagos. It meant that Tony had to excuse himself from a party and from a few other events going on at MIT. Instead of going back to his hotel room, Tony was back on the jet and on his way to New York. This was exactly the kind of thing that meant that
whatever Hill was warning about would be in play.

Sure enough, by the time he was back in New York, there were stirrings of it on the news but even more so elsewhere and Tony was surprised that Hill and Fury hadn’t contacted him already. President Ellis was being pressured not just by U.S. Citizens but the world at large because The Avengers were seen as a threat -- a dangerous weapon that went unchecked, or at least that’s what they were calling Wanda.

It took merely two days for The Sokovia Accords to be finished and for a copy to land on his desk. The UN had been working on it for over six months, a result of everything that happened in Sokovia, but the events of Lagos made them dust it off and bring it all forward. It wasn’t public knowledge yet but the leaders of 117 countries stood behind it and Tony could see that it was no coincidence that it was rushed forward and yet he couldn’t fault them. He couldn’t fault them when such loss of life should have never happened.

Tony spent the next few days reading over The Accords and he found that they made sense. Overview was what they needed. It was what the people wanted which meant that it was what needed to happen. He passed the document on to his team of lawyers and Pepper even though his mind was already made up and after they found nothing glaringly wrong with it, Tony signed on the dotted line and had it sent to the UN. After sending it in, he realized that not doing so would probably bring more problems than they needed. The Accords weren’t going to be optional.

“Although,” Pepper said through a video call, “I don’t know why you’re signing it at all. Aren’t you retired?”

Pepper was the first person that Tony was having direct contact with since he’d returned from MIT. There had been a few emails with Peter, sure, but Tony hadn’t even tried to get in contact with Steve even though he desperately wanted to talk to him.

“That isn’t exactly the point,” Tony said. “And I’m not really retired. I’ve tried it -- I don’t think it suits me. Pepper, I will always be available when Iron Man is needed and if I am needed then I need to work inside of the law. Not to mention that for this I think I’ll be needed and not just for the suit.”

“Steve’s not going to like it,” Pepper said.

Tony was well aware that he wasn’t going to like it. He had known Steve long enough to know where Steve might bring out his stubborn side. This would be a hard sale. Tony was aware of how the fall of Shield had affected Steve seeing as Steve had truly believed that Shield was doing some good. It had opened his eyes to how easily something could be corrupted.

“And since when have you colored inside the lines?” Pepper asked. She was splitting her attention between him and something else but it didn’t matter because she was Pepper and probably the only person that could actually multi-task properly.

“Since I’ve realized that we pose as much a threat to humanity as the bad guys.”

“Wanda--”

“Maybe we shouldn’t have let her on the team. I don’t know -- but they’re calling for her arrest and they don’t want to see that she’s a person. They see her as a weapon of mass destruction just waiting to go off and if we don’t step up and find a way to fix this who knows what will happen.”

Not just to Wanda, either, to anyone that might be in opposition. He could tell that it could become a bigger and more gruesome problem. The Accords themselves weren’t even all that bad. It was all
about respecting boundaries and working within some sort of rule of law and not whatever they thought was best. It would be almost like when they were a part of Shield and overlooked by Fury.

“What about Rhodey? Talk to him yet?” Pepper asked and tilted her head to the side.

“No. Rhodey already knows about it, I think, if he’s been in contact with any of his old friends lately. I don’t know about the rest of the team even if it’s all over the news.”

“You haven’t spoken to them?” Pepper asked, surprised.

“No,” Tony said and left it at that. He wanted to. He really did, except that they were all still in Lagos trying to help in the best way that they could and Tony couldn’t imagine telling them about The Accords over a phone call.

Tony also didn’t know if he could talk to Steve about it or anything else. It was just better to wait it out until they were back stateside and then he could do it in person. It was going to be any time now. Friday would alert him when they were on their way back.

“I thought you and Steve were better about the whole friendship thing,” Pepper said with a grin.

Tony had yet to tell Pepper about the kiss that he and Steve shared or all the feelings that were swirling around inside him about it. Telling her would truly make it more and Tony just wanted to keep it to himself for a moment longer so he could enjoy it.

“We are. Anyway, I did get a chance to scope out some possible candidates for SI to start wooing. I’ll send you a list—”

Later, when Tony received notice that The Avengers were heading home, Tony let out a sigh of relief because it was becoming clear that for the most part no one was happy with them. He wasn’t too surprised when Steve arrived at the tower looking down trodden in a way that Tony had only ever seen him after they failed to find Bucky once more. It was a search that had settled down some for the time being mostly because they all agreed that it was likely that Bucky actually had his right mind and he himself was staying away. Steve arrived long past midnight still in his uniform and entered from the terrace which told Tony enough about how he had arrived.

“Hey,” Tony said as Steve approached him.

Tony wanted to tell him about the accords and everything that was coming and yet the words didn’t want to come out, stuck in his throat like words never tended to be, because Steve just didn’t look like he was in the right mind to hear it. He was pallid, evidence of exhaustion all over him, and full of sadness and pain and Tony couldn’t add anything more to that.

“It was my fault,” Steve said and let out a long breath, his words coming out a bit raspy and full of emotion.

“What happened?”

“Rumlows. He mentioned Bucky and I just couldn’t think and couldn’t see.”

Steve’s eyes were blown, still surprised at what had occurred -- still beating himself up for it.

“And Wanda should have never had to get involved,” he let out breath and shook his head, keeping it bowed down. He closed his eyes tightly and Tony just had to approach him.

“And yet she had to because I -- and she just feels terrible. I can’t even — I don’t know what I’m
Tony opened his arms and Steve walked into them without another word, and it was so easy for him to just drop himself into Tony, press himself into Tony as if Tony and Tony alone could just hold him together and it was all that Tony wanted to do. His arms were wrapped around Steve tightly, his nose buried in Steve’s shoulder not caring that Steve smelled of sweat and dirt and smoke and maybe even blood. Not when Steve shuddered into Tony’s neck and his cold nose pressed into Tony’s neck.

“Do you need to go back to the compound?” Tony asked when they finally pulled away.

“I think Nat’s got it,” Steve said. “I just -- I wanted to see you. I needed to.”

“Yeah,” Tony said, “I can tell. I think this calls for some food and cuddling, but first you gotta shower.”

Steve laughed. They hadn’t stepped too far from each other, but Steve did then, looking down at himself. “You’re right. Order us something and I’ll be back in a bit.”

“Sure thing,” Tony said, “and I expect kisses too, you know, not just cuddling.”

Steve’s lips quirked up and he leaned forward to press their lips together in a quick chaste kiss, before he was walking off in the direction of the bedrooms in search of a shower. Tony really did love that man.

Chapter End Notes

Few notes on the timeline. This chapter starts off right around the time after the MIT presentation and after Lagos has happened. According to the timeline these events are happening pretty much simultaneously or at least around the same time so that when Tony gets handed the photo he doesn’t know what occurred in Lagos, but he does find out pretty much soon after. So we’re really in that very beginning. Another interesting thing to note is how quickly The Accords come in to play, as in how quickly Tony knows about it and signs. I’m still going off the Collider MCU timeline and they have Tony signing three days after Lagos happens which is extremely fast for something that important/meaningful and especially since Ross doesn’t go to The Avengers until about a month after Tony signs (and Tony had all that time to bring it up himself...but he didn’t...)

On another note it was kind of funny to see that big gap of time right at the beginning because of the promo for Civil War and the Christine Everhart news thing which I hope everyone’s seen because literally every character should have seen The Accords coming if they had just noticed the way that the media was already treating The Avengers even before Lagos happened. So it really shouldn’t have been that big a surprise to Steve and the others and why I decided to have Tony receive that letter from Maria Hill last chapter.

Next one could be up tomorrow night, but probably Thursday for sure. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.
This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
So I almost uploaded a chapter that was labeled chapter 30 but which is actually chapter 33 (which is what happens when everything is mislabeled and editing adds more chapters into the story. But that would have been a horrible mistake because spoilers but also because that chapter is not at all edited and a huge mess but I'm glad I caught myself.

Thank you once more to everyone reading. I cannot say it enough.

This one is a little late because I actually sort of injured my wrist at work yesterday. It's actually fine now but I couldn't really move it too much. I think spent today getting rid of grass and weeds in an area of my back yard for an above ground pool as well as adding some sand and only just finished that a couple of hours ago so I am crazy exhausted and glad I did manage to get this one edited the other day so I can post it tonight.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Dude, you’ll never guess what I just got in the mail,” Ned said, leaning against Peter’s locker before Peter could even open it.

“What?” Peter asked and shoved him gently out of the way. Ned moved away, but not going too far.

“New Lego set,” Ned responded with a grin. “Want to come over after decathlon and work on it? I didn’t even open it yet.”

Peter had been making more of an effort to spend more time with Ned so he nodded immediately. “That sounds awesome. Which set?”

“Millenium Falcon,” Ned said with a grin and Peter could hear him saying something else, but he was distracted, all of his senses focused elsewhere because Liz Allen was walking past.

Liz was perfect. She was tall and beautiful and from the moment that Peter had seen her he had known that he liked her even though she was a Junior and completely out of his league. Liz was in academic decathlon with him and Ned which was the only time that they ever interacted and Peter was smitten. Ned admitted to seeing the appeal when Peter pressed him about it, but Peter really was a goner for her. Liz was the only girl that had ever really caught his attention this way and Peter didn’t know what to do. He knew he had no chance with her -- even being Spider-Man -- and yet it was too easy to just pine from afar. The thing about Liz was that she wasn’t just pretty. She was actually a really nice and decent person as far as Peter could tell on top of being smart. Everyone said she was going to be captain of the decathlon team next year and she was running for Class President too. She was the epitome of the unattainable girl and Peter had a huge monstrous crush.

Ned nudged him. “Just keep on staring. It might make her notice you faster.”
Peter groaned and turned away from Liz and her friends as they turned a corner and Ned just laughed.

“Maybe try talking to her,” he said.

“Yeah, because that would go over well,” Peter said. “Have you met me? I’m a mess.”

“True. But maybe she’ll like that.”

Ned was the kind of friend that could encourage anyone into anything because he just believed in you and while Peter did appreciate his attitude, he also tended to be a little naive. It was why Peter had decided it was for the best to keep Spider-Man from Ned. He just didn’t know what Ned would do with the information.

“Just don’t forget about coming over,” Ned said.

“Sure,” Peter said. “I’ll text May and let her know. I think she’s working late anyway. It’s kind of the norm with her these days.”

Peter closed his locker after grabbing his books and they started walking down the hall.

“How is May?” Ned asked.

Peter shrugged his shoulders. “I think she’s doing alright.”

Grief was funny that way, in that it came in lows and highs. Months had passed since Ben died and for Peter it meant that some days all he did was miss Uncle Ben and days when he didn’t even think about Ben at all. He supposed that it was harder for May in some ways, but she was throwing herself into work and there were fewer and fewer nights when he would catch her crying in her room. Things were getting easier even if it was still weird to see his things sometimes scattered all over their house as if he were going to just pick them up one day. May kept saying she was going to put everything away but never seemed to make the time to do it. A part of Peter didn’t think she wanted to.

“She’s not really wearing black anymore at least,” Peter added as they entered their classroom.

“That’s a good sign,” Ned said.

“Although the other day she got really upset when that stuff about The Avengers and Lagos came on. I don’t think she’s as fond of them as I used to think.”

It had made Peter a little worried when May had started a mini-rant about the irresponsibility of The Avengers in letting what happened in Lagos happen. Peter didn’t really understand it, except that he knew the deaths could have been avoided if Scarlet Witch had been able to control her powers. Still, mistakes happened. He hoped that if May ever found out that he was Spider-Man that her reaction wouldn’t be to be horrified.

“I don’t think a lot of people are liking them right now,” Ned said. “Not easy being a superhero these days.”

Yeah, it was probably better that Ned didn’t know. But Peter was starting to wonder if he should just keep the secret to himself. He knew that telling May wasn’t an option, but keeping his identity a complete secret was probably a bad idea.

“Did you see what Tony Stark presented at MIT?” Ned asked when they got into the chemistry
classroom and headed towards their seats.

Peter had seen it. He had emailed Mr. Stark about it because he remembered that Mr. Stark had mentioned the presentation a while ago.

“He’s really a stand up guy,” Ned said.

Peter nodded just as their teacher entered the classroom.

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Everything happened fast.

One moment it felt like Steve was just sitting next to him on his couch watching Game of Thrones and the next Tony was being forced to meet up with Thaddeus Ross in D.C. and then he was arriving at the Avengers Facility in company of the new Secretary of State.

It had been about about a month since he signed The Sokovia Accords and the press just hadn’t let up on the coverage of Lagos which seemed to just fuel the fire of the public wanting something to be done. The support of Wakanda and King T’Chaka didn’t go unnoticed either due to the loss of their own people in one of the few instances where Wakandans were involved somewhere outside of their own country.

Tony didn’t actually believe that tragedies like what happened in Lagos could be stopped by signing a piece of paper, but he hoped that it would make a difference and that in having the UN oversee them that then the fault wouldn’t just be on his shoulders or those of the other Avengers but take into account the reason for why The Avengers were involved and the permissions that The Avengers had to act somewhere.

Nevertheless as Tony stepped out of the car and waited on Ross to follow, Tony wanted to go back to the week that he and Steve had been holed up in the tower and all their worries had been pushed to the side.

The first night, after Steve had showered, they had just spent on Tony’s couch watching Game of Thrones and cuddling. Then, the next morning Steve just didn’t leave and Tony didn’t mind that he didn’t. He preferred it.

It had taken them almost the entirety of the next day before they brought up anything serious.

“‘We have to talk about this eventually,’” Steve had said while they were waiting for popcorn to be popped in a proper popcorn maker because Tony didn’t really like the microwavable stuff. “Isn’t that what we said? That we would talk about it once we were back?” Steve grinned at Tony all boyish and happy.

Tony grinned back and then stepped into Steve’s space. “Okay, so I guess I should make it clear in that case that I’m in. This -- us -- I’m all in.”

Steve pulled him closer and looked down into Tony’s eyes. “Me too.”

“See,” Tony said, “simple.”

After that it had been more of the usual except that Steve liked to intertwine their hands and he seemed to be obsessed with just touching Tony. It didn’t matter how. They were already pretty adept at cuddling since it was the norm for their movie or tv-show nights but it had become more. Steve liked to hold Tony’s hands or he liked to reach up and trace Tony’s earlobes with his fingers. He
loved to touched Tony’s hair too and his facial hair. He was just tactile and Tony found that he didn’t mind it at all. It was the best kind of distraction, especially when it led to kissing because kissing Steve had to be Tony’s favorite thing to do.

Tony wasn’t used to the slow progression of a relationship because even with Pepper it had happened fast to the point where they had made it to Tony’s bed long before they even went on a proper date. Steve was different. He was hesitant and he seemed to just want to linger on the smaller things. But they slept together every night. Whether it was on the couch which resulted in some back aches for Tony and stiffness that Steve would massage away, or in Tony’s bed where their clothes stayed on the whole night but they were far more comfortable. Tony found that Steve ran just a touch too warm but that he didn’t mind it in the least because Steve was also a blanket hog so he made it up by keeping Tony warm with his own body warmth instead.

They had exchanged calls and texts since Steve had gone back to the compound and Tony had returned to his work, but Tony hadn’t seen Steve in person since no matter how often they tried to make it happen. Steve was just kept busy with Avengers things and Tony was called away to meetings that just couldn’t be avoided. Somehow, Tony didn’t manage to give Steve or the others any kind of warning about The Sokovia Accords and then it was too late.

“Secretary Ross, it might be best if I introduce them to the Sokovia Accords,” Tony said as they approached the entrance.

It rubbed Tony the wrong way to know that Ross was trying to get himself involved in anything to do with The Avengers and The Accords. The Accords were coming from the United Nations which was one of the reasons that Tony couldn’t actually find any fault in them. It wasn’t as if the U.S. Government had created them even if they were expected to enforce them.

“The President himself has asked that I oversee this,” Ross said, “I’m glad you’re in agreement of these measures, but I’d like to do this myself.”

Tony nodded. He wished that he had found a way to get Ross away from The Accords and the Avengers but Tony hadn’t expected Ross’ involvement and short of begging President Ellis himself to put someone else in charge, Tony hadn’t found a way and he was well aware of the pressure the president was under especially since the helicarriers and the disaster they caused due to the fall of Shield was still under clean-up which the media never seemed to stop pointing out to everyone. This was a PR mess, and having been a part of plenty PR messes, Tony knew that eventually it would go away but they had to play their cards right. Tony just hoped that the team would see it that way.

Chapter End Notes

I really love how this chapter ended up. But it left me wondering about one thing as I read over it because currently in the fic we're in 2016 which would have been a presidential election year. So the MCU's President Ellis has definitely been around since Iron Man 3 set in December 2012 which means that he would have been re-elected in the 2012 election since he was president that year and no one replaced him in 2013 seeing as he is still president in Civil War. What's interesting about this is that he wouldn't have been able to be re-elected once more in 2016 and so we don't know who the president is in Infinity War. Anyway, The Secretary of State was replaced seeing as Ross got the job in April/May 2016 and Ellis gave him the job so the other interesting about this is that he wouldn't continue to be Secretary of State come January 2017.
because whoever got elected would appoint a new one...so I just have to wonder about Ross’ involvement in Infinity War now when he shows up talking to Rhodey and giving him a court martial. (So yes, this has nothing to do with the chapter but I had a thought...)

On another note, aren't Peter and Ned the cutest? I just love their friendship.

Expecting to post the next one sometime Saturday or Sunday. Haven't edited any of it yet so it all depends on how much I do get done tomorrow night because tonight I'm in the mood for some writing and probably some reading.

Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading!

I really enjoyed writing this one because I finally got to write Natasha again and I really love the part she plays in Civil War. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Natasha had been expecting Tony to show up at the compound for a while -- especially once Steve fessed up that he and Tony were trying something out -- he had been entirely mum about why he’d been away for a whole week right after they returned from Lagos even if everyone knew he’d gone to Tony. So, it had surprised her a little when Tony didn’t just show up himself especially because Natasha suspected that the public outcry wouldn’t be falling on deaf ears. But the last thing she expected was for Tony to finally arrive and for him to bring the Secretary of State. It meant that something was up and that it couldn’t be good.

The Sokovia Accords, when it was finally presented to them, wasn’t entirely a shock to her and yet she was surprised that none of them had even heard whispers of this possibility. Natasha knew that Fury had to know. There was no way he didn’t and yet he didn’t warn them. Tony sitting to the side and letting Ross take the lead probably had known about it for long before this meeting too and Natasha hated him a little for it even if she could tell that he was hiding behind a mask and not opinionating like he usually did on everything. Tony couldn’t be pleased about how it was going, though, or maybe it was the betrayed look that Steve had given him that made him frown the way he did.

It was hard afterwards to have the discussion that followed with Steve and Sam so adamantly against it and just unwilling to really listen. Natasha could see why and yet this made sense. Lagos had been unfortunate and yet obviously the thing that the UN was reacting to along with everything else that had happened over the last few years. Some of it was still under reconstruction even and aside from a bit of help with clean up, The Avengers had never done much to make things better in the aftermath unless one counted all the money that Tony threw at things.

Natasha could tell that there was no way around The Accords even if they were all set dead against it and from what she had managed to skim of it, it didn’t seem all bad. Still, Steve would never see it that way and Sam’s own experience with the whole Shield thing probably had him questioning everything too not to mention his almost blind loyalty to Steve.

Natasha did understand where they were coming from, but she also knew that if they didn’t go along with it something worse could happen and if they weren’t involved from the beginning then their options would be limited or taken away. More important than anything was staying together. She had never known that she would ever care so much, but these people had gotten her there. They were her family and she loved them and she didn’t want anything to tear them apart.

Eventually, Steve got up and left after glancing at his phone and Natasha could tell that he had gotten some bad news even if he didn’t tell them all. Natasha watched as Tony seemed to hesitate for a long moment before he followed him out except that he stopped halfway out of the room when his phone chimed and then Tony just shook his head but he picked up his pace.
“What do you think that’s about?” Sam asked.

“Nothing good,” Natasha said. “So, what's going to happen with this? Tony’s already signed and so will I.”

“I'll sign too,” Rhodey said and Natasha had expected him to.

“I will also follow suit,” Vision said. “To do anything else would not seem right.”

Sam threw his hands up. “I don’t know,” he said. “I just don’t know if this is the right choice. I’ve heard about Ross, okay, and nothing good was ever said about that man.”

“But this is not coming from Ross. He didn’t sit down and write them, Sam. He's just here presenting this to us. We’re talking about the United Nations.”

Sam shook his head. “I just -- I don’t know.”

“Wanda?” Natasha asked.

After Lagos, Wanda had become a bit more withdrawn. Quieter and a little unsure of herself and her powers and Natasha could see the guilt of what happened over her face but also the unsurety. She and Steve had been trying to keep her from watching the news because of the focus on her and her powers, but she always seemed to try anyway.

“I don’t know,” Wanda said. “I -- I have to think about it, I think.”

Natasha nodded and took a look around at all of them. Her teammates and the people she considered family and she just hoped that she would still have them all in three days.

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Peggy was dead. Steve almost couldn’t believe it.

Somehow, even though he rationally knew that she was older and often forgetting everything and everyone, Steve had expected her to be there in that bed just within reach for a long time because if anyone could make death wait, it was Peggy. She had seemed like someone that death wouldn’t even dare touch.

He didn’t get very far from the others after walking out, not sure that he could keep himself together while they all discussed and argued over The Accords. He leaned his back into a wall and tried to keep his emotions at bay. There was just too much going on at once. It felt almost like the day he lost Bucky, watching him fall and being able to do nothing and then still having to be Captain America and still having to keep moving and going on because it was war and Steve was important in defeating Red Skull and Hydra. Now Peggy was gone and they were all talking about signing away their right to choose and act as needed and Steve couldn’t believe that it was an actual discussion and that Tony was set on the opposite side adamantly stubborn as ever.

Steve couldn’t even tell how long Tony had known about The Accords. He just knew that Tony had already signed on the dotted line and if he knew anything about Tony it was that The Accords had to have gone through Pepper and probably one or two of his lawyers for good measure. But even knowing that, Steve knew it was wrong and that it would be them tying their hands and letting others choose where they could and couldn’t go. A part of him was a little surprised that Tony hadn’t showed up alone to tell them about The Accords, but instead they’d had to listen to Ross and see exactly what Ross thought of them and that was a man that Tony was willing to work with.
“Steve,” Tony’s voice had something that sounded like desperation in it as he stepped around the corner and came a few feet short. “I just heard,” Tony said as he stepped closer.

His hands reached out for Steve’s face, cupping it gently, his thumbs sweeping under Steve’s eyes and gathering tears that Steve hadn’t known he’d cried. Steve couldn’t help but let himself lean into Tony’s touch. It was becoming all too familiar for Tony to just be there and be the one to hold him together.

“I can’t believe she’s gone,” Steve whispered.

“She was a tough one, alright,” Tony said and offered a sad smile, “but at least she was at peace.”

Steve leaned further into Tony’s space and Tony moved ever closer, his hands caressing the sides of his face until Steve just dropped his chin onto Tony’s shoulder and Tony’s fingers moved to Steve’s hair instead. His hands had always held some fascination for Steve because of how much they could create and do and to have them on him, fingers carding through his hair strong and comforting and just being everything let Steve relax some.

“It’s okay, hon,” Tony muttered and Steve tried not to actually start crying in earnest.

Steve clutched Tony tighter to him, grounding himself in Tony and Tony just held him back just as tight.

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Some days Peter didn’t do much while out patrolling just because there just wasn’t anything for him to do. It was a good thing in some ways, but Peter was always a bit paranoid that he’d missed or not heard someone needing his help. One day, he followed a young woman home because some creep seemed to also be following her and sure enough he tried to attack her. Peter acted then, dropping in and shooting web to catch the guy’s arm so he could pull him away and web him up against a wall.

On another day, he actually stopped a guy that was trying to steal a parked car. Then there were days when he actually ended up climbing a tree after a cat that had gotten stuck or helping someone with directions because they had gotten lost or helping a couple find their run-away dog. Over all, Peter loved being Spider-Man even on the days when he returned back home with a few scrapes or bruises that he had to hide from May.

May had stopped working a crazy amount of hours, so she was home more than usual and they were both learning that Aunt May really was not the best when it came to cooking. It wasn’t that she had never cooked in the past, but more that when she did cook it was usually limited to a few different meals that were mostly simple and foolproof. So most often than not their dinner was burnt or it was too salty or even undercooked. It just meant that they started eating out a lot more than they used to and while Peter didn’t mind, it did make him wonder about May’s previous monetary concerns. He didn’t bring it up because he knew that May wouldn’t like him to. Still, it seemed like things were getting back to something that could resemble normal and that was good.

“I’ll figure out the whole reading a recipe thing one day,” May promised one night after she hung up the phone from ordering pizza.

Peter laughed. “I don’t think you will. I might be able to, maybe.”

“Oh,” May said, “is that you offering to cook dinner tomorrow night, then? I’m game for that if you are.”

Peter didn’t know how well he would do in the kitchen but he shrugged. If worse came to worse
then he would just do what May did and get take out if he really screwed up. After all, cooking was just sort of like chemistry and Peter liked chemistry. It couldn’t be that hard.

“But,” Peter said, “if I do well, it doesn’t mean I’m in charge of dinner.”

May laughed. “I wouldn’t expect you to be,” she said.

Moments like that made it easier to see how life could continue on and not be full of grief all the time. Mr. Stark had been right in saying that it would take some time even if the loss never faded, things would get easier.

Later that night, Peter couldn’t sleep. He could hear May’s even breaths even in his room, but sleep just seemed to evade him. For a while he just fooled around on his phone, watching the presentation that Mr. Stark had given at MIT once more because it was just too cool. Watching him on the stage without any armor and just a regular tailored suit felt odd, but then Mr. Stark hadn’t been Iron Man in a little while ever since Sokovia and the crazy killer AI that Mr. Stark had built. Peter supposed it made sense to want a break after all that, but he couldn’t help but hope that the world would get to see Iron Man once more.

He sent Mr. Stark an email about the presentation and then tried to fall asleep again. When it didn’t happen he got out of bed and after getting into his costume he crawled out the window into the night.

Peter didn’t often go out late on school nights, but it was better to do something than lay in bed tossing and turning. The streets weren’t too quiet, but there didn’t seem to be much going on. He watched a group of college students walking down a street laughing and joking with each other with all the ease in the world and then found the homeless guy that usually slept in a shopping cart walking said cart.

Peter swung around for a while, keeping to the shadows and the high buildings until he spotted Michelle Jones and an older woman that had to be her mother. He was surprised to see her out so late, but then he thought that they must have been heading home.

He watched them for a while and followed at a close distance just because he could. Nothing went amiss on their trip home.

Eventually, he snuck back into his room through the window and changed back into pajamas and got into bed and for the first time in a while he let himself actually think on the discovery he’d made about his father. He didn’t know just what made him think about it -- maybe all his thoughts about Ben and being past some of the heavier parts of the grief -- but he was reminded of it and he just didn’t know what he was supposed to do with the information because whoever it was clearly didn’t know or just hadn’t been bothered with not being a part of Peter’s life not that it would matter because Peter didn’t think he could ever bring it up to May or that May had any idea who it was.

Chapter End Notes

Now we're really in the thick of it. Next one takes us to Peggy's funeral. Should be up on Monday.
Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.
This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading/commenting and just sticking around for this you guys are wonderful.

I really like how this chapter ended up. I did struggle with it a little bit while editing for some reason but I ended up with something I liked in the end. It also ended up a bit on the long side for me. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The funeral was planned for the day of the signing of The Accords and Steve just hadn’t had a chance to really think about The Accords or what it would mean if he went along with them so he just wasn’t going to sign. Peggy’s death had really come at a particularly bad time.

He knew that Tony would be annoyed with him over how adamant he was about not signing, but Steve didn’t care. He couldn’t make such an important decision just based off of how much he cared about Tony and he just hoped that Tony would understand that Steve needed more time to figure it out even if it might mean that Steve would still not take his side.

He flew in to London with Sam and Tony for the funeral. Tony had insisted on going and actually, he too had been invited, so Steve wouldn’t have been able to stop him from going if he’d even wanted to. Steve appreciated having Tony with him and the way that Tony just didn’t stray too far from him as if he were trying his best to make sure that Steve was held together. Steve had never been or felt dependent on anyone else, but with Tony it wasn’t dependency necessarily, but ease in knowing that Tony was there for whenever Steve needed him. It was different than anything that Steve had ever felt.

Tony had had Friday make hotel reservations for them, so they just took a car over to the church and Tony just held Steve’s hand the whole time. Before they got out of the car, Steve picked up their joint hands and pressed a kiss to the top of Tony’s and tried to avoid looking at Sam because he knew there would be a knowing and teasing look on his friend’s face.

It surprised Steve a little to see how many people showed up for the funeral, but then it was Peggy Carter and of course she had touched so many lives. It surprised him only a little more to see how many knew Tony personally and how many seemed to be genuinely pleased to see him. Most of them seemed to be directly related to Peggy and they actually pulled Tony into hugs or pressed kisses onto his cheeks and then turned to Steve and seemed to straighten a bit as they greeted him. Tony seemed entirely too amused by it when it happened.

“It’s so good to see you again, Stark,” a man that could only be Peggy’s son said and clapped Tony on the back. “I’m glad you stopped and saw mom again a few more times before--”

Steve was taken aback at hearing that, especially since Tony had never once offered to go with Steve when he went to see Peggy. He supposed that they had never really discussed her before her death. Steve hadn’t even known that Tony actually knew Peggy until recently.

“Sharon reminded me I hadn’t stopped by a while ago,” Tony admitted, “I think it was just hard to
see her that way but I’m glad I did. She was something else, that’s for sure. She gave me quite a
talking to about a few things.” He smiled in a fond way. It hit Steve then that Tony had known
Peggy for a lot longer than he had and in an entirely different way too.

Steve was pulled away from the conversation eventually because he had offered to be one of the
pallbearers. He touched Tony on the small of his back as he walked past him and Tony smiled a little
in his direction before he was pulled away to speak to someone else.

No one seemed to be too clearly upset about Peggy’s passing. Instead they seemed to be exchanging
stories about her or catching up. No one was happy, but not even Peggy’s children seemed too taken
with grief. He supposed that was a part of knowing that someone was going to die and it not
happening unexpectedly. Peggy had been sick for a long time. She had also lived a very full life.

Everyone grew more solemn as the service began and the casket was walked down the aisle towards
the front.

When the funeral was over, that’s when it felt a little weird. Peggy really was gone. He was never
going to see her again and this time it was for real. Tony squeezed his hand as everyone else started
to leave. Some looking more teary eyed than others. They stood up, but lingered in the aisle.

“I don’t have to go to the UN meeting,” Tony said after the church was almost empty. Even Sam had
walked out with Sharon. “I already signed so I really don’t need to be there. I just wish that you
would. I’m not lying when I say that this is the best course of action. We need this.”

In the front the blown up pictures of Peggy seemed to watch them.

“I can’t,” Steve said. “After Shield -- I can’t just do that. It’s not something I can compromise and I
think that if Peggy were still alive she would agree with me.”

Tony groaned. “I am going to have a serious talk with Sharon about that whole tree thing. But,
Steve, I don’t want to push you but I want you to really consider what your decision is saying to the
others and to the world. And what it’s doing to the team.”

Steve eyed him. “Did you come here just to try and convince me to sign that thing?”

Tony shook his head at once and he took a step back. “No. No, Steve, that’s not why I came. I
wanted to be here for you, alright? I know how hard this was and I hate that this is all happening all
at once but it is happening.”

Steve didn’t know what to say, but he could tell that Tony meant it and yet he also knew that Tony
wanted him to sign and Steve just couldn’t do it. If he did, he needed to be sure and at the moment he
just wasn’t. He was the opposite of sure.

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Tony didn’t realize how quickly everything could fall apart, but he really should have.

After the funeral, he had called Natasha to let her know he wouldn’t joining her in Vienna like
planned. They had gone with the rest of the Carter family to someone’s house because Tony had
promised to stop by. He hadn’t been around any of them for years and yet they all just seemed to
embrace him in a way that Tony hadn’t expected.

Peggy’s two kids Chris and Allison had almost been like cousins to Tony while growing up seeing
as they weren’t too far in age. Still, Tony had always been the youngest and the one that they always
teased despite how brilliant he was or perhaps even because. But catching up with them despite the
circumstances wasn’t all bad and Tony wished that that he had kept closer in touch with them.

Chris and Allie had their own children as well and then there was Sharon who had been a constant presence in Peggy’s house because her parents were always off on work trips. Sharon had always been Tony’s favorite in some ways. It probably had something to do with how she was younger than he was so the dynamic was slightly different. Either way, Tony had pulled away from them around the same time that his parents died. It had just felt easier than dealing with all the grief especially when not one of them showed up to the funeral. Looking back on that made Tony realize that it was probably Obadiah keeping them away to isolate him.

They didn’t stay long. Just long enough for Steve to get to meet Peggy’s family properly because Tony was aware that Steve had never gone looking for answers on that and he only knew them from pictures and stories from Peggy. He probably just hadn’t wanted to know when he was first out of the ice and the loss was clear as day. The only person that Steve knew was Sharon and that had been due to Shield. Agent 13, assigned to watch over Steve and posing as his neighbor.

Tony could tell that Steve was a little uncomfortable being there especially when the children of some of the Howling Commandos introduced themselves to Steve and he could have been their contemporary. Tony didn’t know all of them, but they were still probably more familiar to him than they could be to Steve.

“I never knew you were that close to her family,” Steve said as they were leaving and Sharon excused herself with them.

“He hasn’t been lately,” Sharon said. “He was always just too smart for the rest of us to keep up with and too busy with Stark Industries and then he was Iron Man. Excuses all around.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “In my defense, I was grieving and none of you came to that particular funeral. After that I became someone else and that person didn’t think that he needed anyone. I did reach out eventually, though, didn’t I?”

Sharon tilted her head to one side and she nodded. “You did do that.”

They drove back to their hotel and Sharon tagged along because she had a room there too which worked out for them. Tony excused himself when Pepper called as soon as they had arrived in the lobby. He watched Sharon and Steve stand by the elevator as he listened to Pepper and he was just a tad amused at the way that Sharon was looking at Steve because how more obvious could she be?

Pepper had only needed him to give his approval on a release date mostly because Tony hadn’t actually finished the prototype yet and production needed to start soon. He had given her the go ahead while not entire sure that he would get it done on time. He was hoping that he would, but even if he didn’t, it wasn’t a big deal. Pepper just hated that instead of working on it, he had spent some time building himself a few extra devices for when he was on the go and didn’t feel like he’d actually need the whole suit. With The Accords in place it had felt like the right way to go and actually, he was surprised that he hadn’t thought about making them earlier.

The first one was a watch that could turn into a gauntlet and Tony supposed that it would be pretty helpful in a pinch. He had it on at the moment and hadn’t had a reason to try it yet but he knew that if he did need it, it would do exactly what he wanted it to.

After he got off the phone with Pepper, Tony gave a quick glance at a few messages from Natasha letting him know everything was going well. He started walking towards Steve and Sharon that it happened and he knew because Friday sent him an alert to his phone. A bomb had gone off in Vienna and it had been aimed at the meeting in the UN. His immediate thought was Natasha and he
made the call quickly.

She picked up at once and Tony let out a sigh of relief.

“T’Chaka is dead.”

“I’m okay, Tony,” Natasha said and after a pause, “King T’Chaka is dead.”

“Shit,” Tony said.

“You said it,” Natasha said and then, “He’s not the only casualty. I’ll call later. This place is a mess right now. No one even knows what happened. How did you hear?”

“Friday,” Tony said and she hung up.

Sam appeared, then, rushing towards them. “Oh, good, you’re here,” he said. “Something happened in Vienna.”

They rushed up to his and Steve’s hotel room and sure enough they were already reporting on the bombing, but worse they had a suspect and it was Bucky. One look at Steve and Tony knew that it wasn’t going to go well.

Sharon had gotten on the phone immediately and Tony listened in as she took her orders. Tony was only a little surprised that she was with the Joint Terrorism Task Force since the last time he had spoken to her she had been based in the US with the CIA. He supposed that the skills she’d gotten from being an Agent of Shield had gotten her the promotion. But Tony was glad to have her there because Sharon they could trust.

“I have to go in to work,” Sharon said after she got off the phone.

“Take the quinjet,” Tony said at once, “it will get you there faster.”

“Thank you,” Sharon said.

“I’m going as well,” Steve said as Sharon left the room and he had his stubborn face on. He wasn’t going to back down.

Tony shook his head. “No, you’re not.”

“I have to, Tony, this is -- this is something I have to do.”

Sam at least had the decency to step aside and leave them to it.

“The Avengers have not been called into this for one thing,” Tony said, reaching for Steve’s forearm, “and for another you and Sam have not signed The Accords and as such you will be breaking the law. Any involvement from the two of you will make this worse. The task force -- Sharon -- will deal with this.”

“We’re talking about Bucky,” Steve said in a loud tone that almost made Tony flinch back and did make him drop his hand from Steve’s arm.

“I am the only one that could bring him in if he’s been brainwashed again,” Steve said and the look that he had on his face -- desperate and pained hurt. “He wouldn’t be in his right mind if he did this, Tony, you know that. Someone made him do this and he will kill anyone that tries to go after him.”

“Including you, I’d wager,” Tony said and he hated the thought of what might happen to Steve because the last time he had faced the Winter Soldier, Steve had ended up in a hospital and that was in spite of his healing factor.
Steve shook his head at once. “He wouldn’t. You know he wouldn’t. He brought me out of the Potomac -- he recognized me. He will again. Tony, I have to do this. You have to understand that I have to do this if not for Bucky then because we don’t need anyone else to get hurt.”

Tony didn’t know what to say because there wasn’t anything that would actually sway Steve and Tony understood where he was coming from because they had been looking for Bucky for years now and they had to believe that he was under someone else’s control because things would be different if they weren’t. Still, The Accords would make this difficult and short of knocking Steve -- and Sam -- out, Tony didn’t see a way of stopping him and Tony wouldn’t even be able to do that without the suit.

“Tony, I don’t want to argue,” Steve said and it was genuine.

“Sign The Accords,” Tony said, almost surprising himself by having thought of it. “Sign them and I can do everything in my power to make sure that when you bring Bucky in he is taken back home and given the care he needs.”

Chapter End Notes

So as I approached this part of Civil War I really wanted more involvement from Tony because he would be very involved if he were dating Steve. I also decided that Tony would definitely know Peggy's family. It's already been implied earlier in the fic that Tony and Sharon get along and know each other but it was fun to finally get them in a scene together. I actually really love Sharon and would have probably liked the Sharon/Steve stuff had there been any development at all in MCU and despite how weird it is for Steve to be interested in anyone related to Peggy...

On some canon changes: So I did end up removing Natasha from this and putting Tony in because she wouldn't have gone to see Steve if Tony were there to do it. (Also, I kept forgetting that Sam was present during all of this so poor Sam had to witness all the Stony) I found it very interesting that Tony wasn't at the signing of The Accords in the movie, actually. None of them are there but Natasha even though the only one that could have signed earlier is Tony. So when did Rhodey and Vision sign and why didn't Natasha do it with them? Or was she there representing the team? It just opens up some questions that don't really lead anywhere. So I did decide to give Tony a reason for not being there and tying it into the funeral.

Also, I really love the last scene and that last line because I forgot that's where I cut this chapter off.

Lastly on posting. So this week is going to be a bit on the hectic side for me. I work for Costco and from time to time we get visits from regional managers or higher all the way up to the CEO. We have one coming up this week on Thursday (which just means that our store has to be in tiptop shape and we're all going to be working like crazy) so unlike most weeks my days off will be Saturday and Sunday (not counting today because of the holiday) which changes when I'll have time to edit or write and I'm a little behind as it is. So this is just a warning that the next chapter possibly won't be up until Saturday (I will try and have one ready to post before that but no promises).

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.
This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much to everyone reading! I cannot say it enough. It's insane how many hits/kudos/comments/subscriptions/bookmarks this fic has!

This has been such a long week so far! it's what happens when I end up working every day during the week and the end of tomorrow's work day cannot come soon enough. But I managed to get this one earlier than expected.

I really love what this chapter became.
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steve felt like he was being backed up into a corner and there was no way out. He hated it, hated the way that Tony was looking at him with expectation as if he had found the perfect way to make this work but Steve knew that he couldn’t do it and go against everything he believed in. He couldn’t sign The Accords and go after Bucky because he just couldn’t know where that might lead or what they might want from him or Bucky and Tony was not in the know either, no matter how much he promised Steve.

Tony’s words were nice and they painted a nice picture of everything working out but they were just words and no matter Tony’s intentions, Steve just couldn’t trust that Bucky would be treated fairly. Steve just couldn’t gamble away Bucky’s life and freedom because it was Tony that was asking.

“I can’t,” he whispered and before Tony could respond pressed his lips hard against Tony’s, surprising him enough to make him back up a step and almost lose his balance, but Steve caught him in a quick motion and pulled him flush against him. Tony’s hands fell to his chest but didn’t push him away.

Tony didn’t fight the kiss. He kissed back just as hard as if it would convince Steve to change his mind, his arms wrapping around Steve’s neck. When Steve pulled back, Tony’s eyes fluttered open and he looked beautifully dazed and he let his hands hang over Steve’s shoulders.

“You can’t just--” Tony said.

Steve grinned a little and pecked Tony’s spit wet lips quickly before drawing him back into a kiss.

“I have to do things my way,” Steve whispered after the kiss was over.

Tony let his eyes close. “You are so frustrating, Rogers,” he muttered and then bit down on his lower lip in a way that seemed more inviting than anything before he opened his eyes again and just stared at Steve for a long moment before he dropped his face a little and sighed.

“Whatsoever you do, I’m not condoning it and I’m not happy about it but I can’t stop you,” Tony said. “I just -- I hope you know what you’re doing because the last thing I want is to lose you, Steve, not now, and there are a million ways that this can go wrong and I don’t know if I will--”

“If you’ll be able to help,” Steve finished for him and let the corners of his lips go up. He didn’t say
what he wanted to say about how this was exactly why The Accords would never be the right way of things. He didn’t want to argue again.

Tony kissed him, then, a mixture of hard and gentle as if he were trying to convey everything in that singular kiss and Steve just let Tony take the lead.

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On the afternoons when he went over to Ned’s house or had Ned came over, Peter always felt obligated to still go out patrolling after Ned left and he and May had finished dinner. He just felt weird not going out especially since it was getting darker later in the day.

May tended to go to bed on the early side, and even if she didn’t, she usually left Peter alone after he’d gone into his bedroom. So it meant that it was the perfect time to sneak out and do a quick patrol. Peter had gotten really good at getting out through the window. He tended to keep those patrols quick mostly because he did need to get some sleep before school the next morning and even though he was Spider-Man he definitely needed the sleep.

Taking his phone with him meant that he could also do minor homework or email Mr. Stark if the need arose. It really hadn’t in a while since Mr. Stark had still not answered his last email about the presentation and Peter hadn’t found any other reason to email him.

For a moment Peter had thought about asking him how to deal with finding out that his father wasn’t his father but he’d chickened out of sending that because he didn’t want to explain all of it to Mr. Stark or really anyone. Even talking to Ned who already knew about the punnett squares and the result that Peter had gotten was hard.

After he was sure that May was in bed that night, Peter snuck out and promised himself to return in an hour or two.

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Peter was sneaking out. May was well aware that Peter thought he was being careful and covering his tracks, but May had caught on ever since the night that she walked past his bedroom and the light was on but she didn’t hear any of the usual noises like Peter humming to whatever music he was listening to or the flip of the pages of his text books or whatever he was tinkering with. So she had checked in to see if he had fallen asleep and left his light on, but instead the window was open a crack and Peter was gone.

May had freaked out for a moment and her hand had been halfway to her phone to call the cops before she stopped herself not sure if the cops would even be able to do anything. She just couldn’t believe it. Peter sneaking out sounded crazy. Sure Peter was a teenager, but he was a trustworthy and dependable one. He was responsible and nothing like May had been at his age. Which was good. It meant that Peter couldn’t be getting into too much trouble.

Talking herself down took some time, but reminding herself of the things she had gotten up to at his age made her feel better because Peter was better than her. It was in these moments that she wished Ben was still at her side.

Ben would have known exactly what to do. He probably would have left the house to find Peter himself and then he wouldn’t have even yelled at Peter despite how angry and worried it would have made him. But May couldn’t do that. She would go out and probably have little luck in finding him and then wouldn’t even know what to do even if she did find him. So, instead she had stayed up listening for Peter to return and when he did, she breathed a sigh of relief.
It wasn’t fair. None of it was fair. Ben was gone and Peter was changing and May didn’t know what to make of it. Nothing was ever going to be the same and May was just waiting for the next time that Tony Stark asked to meet Peter because she knew she wouldn’t be able to keep him away. Peter was older and he probably needed Tony more than ever if he was sneaking out of the house in the middle of the night and May just couldn’t be in the way any longer even if it meant that Peter would find out the truth and be upset with her.

Every night she sat in her room and waited to hear Peter leave and return. Or to hopefully not hear it. After a few weeks of it she was growing tired of it and tired of how Peter seemed to be keeping something from her and not showing any sign that he would tell her or explain why leaving the house in the middle of the night was helping him.

She resolved to talk to him that night after he got back from Ned’s, but it went the same way as every night and so May decided she would do it the next day.

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Tony regretted letting Steve and Sam go with Sharon afterwards because the longer he thought about it the more combinations of how badly it could all go came to him and Tony just knew that things weren’t going to go well even if he had no way of knowing exactly how things would end. He didn’t know if Steve would get to Bucky first or what he might do if he did or didn’t. He didn’t know if Bucky was in his right mind and he didn’t even know what the Task Force had planned for Bucky if they did end up bringing him in or what Steve hoped to do if he got to Bucky first.

Tony didn’t leave London immediately, not sure where he would be needed. He hadn’t brought the Iron Man suit on the trip because he hadn’t presumed that he would need it but Tony didn’t want to fly back to New York just to then get called into Vienna or the Task Force Headquarters in Berlin. So, he figured he’d wait it out.

In the meanwhile he checked in with Vision who had stayed behind in part because he didn’t want to leave Wanda alone and also because they had all felt it was better that he not alarm the public with his presence even if he was getting better at making himself look less purple.

“We’re doing just fine, Tony,” Vision said and it still weirded Tony out when Vision used his first name because Jarvis never would have.

“I want you to do me a favor,” Tony said, thinking on the spot, “keep Wanda there at the compound. Things are -- they’re a little complicated right now and I would rather nothing else go wrong. I suppose you know what happened in Vienna, it means that things are delicate right now and she hasn’t signed The Accords and we still haven’t figured out that Visa problem.”

It had frustrated Tony to no end when immigration decided that they needed Wanda to jump through a million hoops to be able to stay and live in the United States. The fact that Sokovia was basically in ruins and that Wanda didn’t even have access to her own birth certificate had complicated matters even more to the point where some people were calling her presence in Lagos reason enough to not grant her any legal status because she had left the country without permission. It was a whole mess and Tony was sure that Wanda was not even aware of half of it because they hadn’t made it seem like a big deal to her and passed it on to lawyers that were supposed to fix the problem but just hadn’t been able to. It didn’t seem to matter that she was an Avenger.

“I suppose that would be best,” Vision said.

“Yes. Thank you. With her temperament it would also be best if she didn’t know you are keeping her there.”
“Yes,” Vision said.

Tony cut off the call and instead called Natasha again. She picked up after a few rings.

“How is it?” Tony asked.

“Bad,” Natasha said, “this place is chaos and now it looks like they’re saying that Bucky caused it. How’s Steve holding up? He’s probably a mess. Peggy dying and now this. It’s like his whole past is going up in flames.”

Tony let out a humorless laugh. “Yeah, you could say that. He’s heading to Vienna now, actually.”

Natasha cursed in Russian. “That is not going to help anything.”

“No,” Tony said, “but I couldn’t stop him and short of somehow knocking him out he was going to do this. It’s Bucky we’re talking about here.”

“More reason for him to stay away. He doesn’t think when it comes to Barnes.”

Tony let out a sigh. “Yeah. He doesn’t.”

“I gotta go, Tony.” Natasha said.

“Sure, sure,” Tony said.

Tony laid down on the bed and he tried to rub at his temples where a headache was starting to form. He didn’t know how long he laid there but at some point he must have just managed to fall asleep because the next thing he knew was his phone ringing again and it was dark out.

“Stark,” Natasha said, “it’s probably best if you get into Berlin. The Task Force is trying to bring Barnes in and that’s where they’ll be taking him when they catch him. Hopefully it’ll be alive because I don’t think they actually care as long as they catch him at this point. Steve and Sam are trying to get to him first, but who knows if they’ll succeed. I’m heading there now myself with Sharon but I figured you’d want to be there.”

“You figured correctly,” Tony said and rubbed a hand over his face. “I’ll see you there.”

He called for a car and freshened up a bit even if he didn’t change out of his black suit despite how wrinkled it had gotten. It was lucky that he had packed another suit for Vienna and it was still on it’s hanger and ready for Tony to take with him. He gathered his things and checked himself out as fast as he could and then had the driver take him to the London SI building.

Tony had never expected that he would ever actually need to use it, but he was glad that the helicopter at the London offices was still there and ready for him. It was just too bad that Tony had never equipped this particular one with an Iron Man suit like the one back in New York. He really was flying in without much to work with other than a watch and his brilliant intellect. Tony just hoped that it would be enough.

Flying by helicopter was not Tony’s favorite form of travel, but it was faster than getting on a commercial flight into Berlin. Not to mention that the helicopter could take him directly to the CIA task force headquarters without any trouble.

Chapter End Notes
A little note on timing which I've only noticed because I'm in the middle of editing. Basically everything is happening all at once. Remember how quickly things are going on. I mention this because Peter and May's part of the story sort of stops here for a couple of chapters because all the other things are happening during those scenes...so when we pick back up with them it almost felt a bit confusing to me while editing so it's something to keep in mind and that barely any time passes between this and those scenes later on. The pace for Civil War is so slow but feels fast because of how much has happened. It's one of the parts that made it a bit difficult to write because the pace for this fic earlier on was not this slow.

Next chapter will be up Saturday. I have it mostly ready.
Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Natasha felt strange not being able to go out and be in the middle of the action. Instead she found herself just watching and waiting. It was not that Natasha wasn’t used to stepping back but that in this case she felt a little left out mostly because it was bringing back memories of DC and running around with Steve and Sam while Shield fell apart.

When Tony finally arrived things got a little easier. He didn’t look particularly well and actually let Natasha hug him when she approached him before asking her to fill him in.

“There was a sighting in Bucharest,” Natasha told him, “it’s our best lead right now and I think Steve is aware. They’re still trying to figure out exactly where to find him but the strike teams are ready.”

Tony nodded along. “What has the UN council said about our involvement?”

“Actually, they wanted to call you in,” Natasha said, “except they remembered you’re not really part of the field team. They’ve decided to hold back and let the Task Force deal with it first. But Rhodey’s coming just in case.”

At some point, Tony had gone off to get a shower and redressed and when he returned he looked better. He still seemed worried though and Natasha could tell that it was due to Steve.

Nothing happened until it was late morning and waiting was worse than anything else. They followed along with what the Task Force had found. Tony had been trying to track Barnes with Friday and his satellites but Barnes had always been good at hiding even after being sighted and Natasha suspected that he was probably already trying to get as far away as possible.

When Barnes’ apartment was finally located Natasha felt Tony go tense. They still didn’t know where Steve and Sam were or how they might have gotten involved and the Swat team was being sent to Barnes’ place. That was around the time when Tony’s phone started ringing.

Natasha watched him pick up and how progressively more frustrated he became the longer he was on the phone.

“It’s Ross,” he explained after the phone call was over, “He wants Barnes brought back to the States. I don’t like this. He wants us to send in War Machine.”

Natasha had known that Ross wasn’t going to be good news for any of them. Any other Secretary of State would have left very well alone and let the UN deal with everything that was happening but not Ross. No, he wanted to have his say too and someone had given him the power to be able to do exactly what he felt like. They weren’t even on U.S. soil so his word should have meant nothing.
Rhodey got instructed to act in whatever form the Task Force wanted when he had almost reached headquarters. Tony was the one to make the call after the UN approved it and somehow Ross was more involved than ever. Tony didn’t understand it especially since none of this was happening on U.S. soil. Once it became clear that it wasn’t just Barnes that needed be brought it in Ross had gotten even worse. He wanted anything and everything done to bring them in. Tony supposed it was something to do with Steve and Sam being American citizens and as such the responsibility of the U.S., but Tony didn’t like the way that Ross was trying to handle things. He was acting as if Steve and Sam had gone on some murder spree.

Tony hated that he didn’t have a suit and that he couldn’t go out there and do the bringing in himself but at least it was Rhodey out there and Rhodey would do the right thing. In the meanwhile, Tony had gotten to know Everett Ross who was fast becoming his favorite Ross.

Everett Ross had some sort of moral backbone and not only that but he had some level of authority and so Tony had gotten him to agree that pending a psychological review Bucky would go back the U.S. to get rehabilitated and not to some prison with charges to his name. Everett Ross seemed to understand the whole brainwashed thing which was not something that the other Ross seemed to care for at all.

Either way Secretary Ross had lost some interest in Bucky once it was clear that Steve was out there acting of his own free will. He was far more concerned with bringing in Steve and Sam than Bucky. Tony didn’t like that interest because Ross refused to tell Tony exactly what he wanted to do with them aside from his insistence that they would face criminal charges. That’s why a part of Tony almost hoped for the three of them to get away except that he knew that it wouldn’t really do any good. It would keep them on the run forever if Ross had anything to say about it and Tony really didn’t want to never see his boyfriend ever again. It would be almost as bad as the fact that he had yet to actually meet his son.

When Rhodey finally called it in that he had them and also Prince T’Challa in custody Tony let out a sigh and he called it in to Thaddeus Ross at the last minute when they were already arriving, a little bit reluctantly, even as he was forming a plan. Everett Ross was more than willing to work with him and it was all that Tony needed for the moment.

The Shield and Sam’s wings were taken into custody. Tony made sure that it was Sharon that put them away just in case anyone thought they’d get to touch any of the tech in the wings, redwing, and even Steve’s uniform. Tony watched them as they entered. Getting to see Steve again allowed him to breathe again because he wasn’t hurt. He was okay. He was so close that Tony could touch him, but he stopped himself from doing so. Instead, he promised the two of them consequences. Something of a show because Tony was going to get them out of this mess. Sam and Steve couldn’t and shouldn’t be touched by Ross in any way.

Natasha made sure that he was the one that would get to talk to Steve first by going in to see Sam. They had discussed it in the time they were waiting for them to arrive. Their best option was getting them to sign. Tony would have an easier time of then getting all of the off relatively scott free if they did and Ross wouldn’t be able to touch Steve and Sam. Bucky was another problem. And it wasn’t until Rhody had informed them that he also had Prince T’Challa in custody that Tony had thought about it but if it wasn’t Ross trying to throw Bucky into jail, it would certainly be Prince T’Challa wanting to take Bucky back to Wakanda to answer for the death of King T’Chaka in whatever form the prince wanted. It seemed like things were getting complicated by the minute.

Steve looked a bit defeated when Tony finally saw him one-on-one. The man with the plan had been
replaced with the man that couldn’t see a way out. If Tony hadn’t felt the eyes of CIA and Task Force agents watching them he would have pulled Steve into his arms and found a way to keep him there forever. As it was, he had to restrain himself and press his nails into the palms of his hands to keep from reaching out to Steve.

“What’s going to happen?” Steve asked, straight to the point.

“They’re bringing in a psychiatrist to give Barnes a psychological examination. Although from the looks of it that seems more Bucky than Soldier.”

Steve gave a nod. “He didn’t do it.”

“Everything, even Friday says he did and I don’t know if him being lucidly more Bucky than Soldier will help.”

Steve gulped and he stared at the table for a long moment. “Tony, he didn’t do it.”

Tony couldn’t be sure. He just knew that even if Bucky hadn’t done it, he was still the main suspect. It would be hard to prove it hadn’t been him not with all the footage that showed him in the scene.

Tony brought out the slim box with the pens, settling them down on the table and sliding them towards Steve. He had brought them along on the trip on the slim chance that he could Steve to go with him to Vienna to sign and now he just hoped that Steve wouldn’t make this difficult when a fix for it was so easy.

“These pens, I brought them out of Howard’s archives. President Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Act in 1941 with them,” Tony said, sure that Steve would understand why they were so important.

“Some might say that brought us closer to war,” Steve said, lifting an eyebrow.

Tony gave a single nod. “Kind of made it possible for you to be here, I think.”

It was easy to fall into small talk in a weird way because neither of them wanted to really bring up the harder things -- the reasons for why they were in that small glass walled conference room. Everything felt harder and more difficult and Tony hated it. He hated the thick tension in the air that took away everything they had been not even a full day earlier.

“How’s Peter?” Steve asked suddenly, surprising Tony because there wasn’t much that Tony didn’t tell Steve when it came to Peter. Still, the way that Steve looked at him made Tony suspect that it was Steve’s way of trying to get Tony to see the bad sides of The Accords.

“I still haven’t met him,” Tony said, thinking about how much he wanted to desperately. “I guess I thought maybe I would have by now since I wasn’t really an Avenger for the last year or so but it just felt wrong to ask just after Ben died and now -- well, I guess I’m a little busy at the moment. Maybe I figured The Accords would make a difference on that front. Maybe May will think it less risky now with this.”

Steve tilted his head to the side and looked at Tony with an almost sad look. “Tony,” he said and it sounded almost like a plea.

Tony decided to just keep going. “I actually filled out adoption papers, you know, even though who knows if I would actually make a good father. My dad didn’t and mom wasn’t exactly much better but I don’t know maybe it’ll be different because I want it so much.”

Steve’s breath actually caught and he looked at Tony more than a little surprised. He didn’t even
seem to have words and there was an odd look to his eyes that made Tony wish that he hadn’t told him about the adoption papers. He had done all that when he had been single and thought that he would be staying that way and now there was Steve to consider and so many other things too and yet he still did want it.

“I for one am glad that Howard got married and had you,” Steve said at last, “I only knew him when he was young and single and I couldn’t picture that man as a father. You’re not him, Tony. You’d make a good father. You are a good father. I’ve -- I’ve told you that before.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t know if that’s going to work out any time soon,” Tony said and he hadn’t really thought about it until that moment. “I have all this to take care of who knows when I’ll—”

“I’m sorry,” Steve said and he did look sorry. “It’s just that when I see a situation pointed south I can’t ignore it. Sometimes I wish I could.”

“No you don’t,” Tony said at once.

Steve looked down to the desk and his lips turned up a bit. “No, I don’t,” he agreed. “Sometimes--”

“Sometimes I want to punch you in your perfect teeth,” Tony said even if it was mostly a lie because Tony loved how stubborn Steve could be. It was just that this time it had brought along such a huge mess.

“Tony,” Steve whispered.

“Steve, I don’t want to see you gone. I don’t -- I couldn’t do any of this --” Tony trailed off and he ran a hand over his face before he looked at Steve again. “So far nothing’s happened that can’t be undone, Steve. So just sign. Please sign.”

It was the plea from before back in the hotel room where Steve had looked at him and told him no and Tony just hoped that maybe Steve could see how him not signing would go. It was the only way that Tony could salvage this and then they could all just go home and forget that it happened and everything else would come later. The whole Wanda thing was with his lawyers and then there would be a lot of work to be done with Bucky but they would all be together and Tony knew that together they could figure out a way to get rid of Ross and probably even amend The Accords into something more palatable for Steve. Seeing Steve begin to go for the compromise and actually grab a pen made Tony feel one step closer to making things better.

“It’s possible. There would have to be safeguards,” Steve said, holding one of the pens between his fingers and Tony jumped on it his plans forming in his mind and leaving his mouth as quick as they came until--

“What about Wanda?”

Then, they were back to square one.

No, they were on a negative square because apparently making sure Wanda stayed put in a place she considered to be home was akin to sticking her in some looney bin and leaving her there to rot. Tony didn’t get it. He didn’t understand how they could go from polite and almost on the same page to Steve’s face twisting into a frown.

Steve didn’t back down, fighting back to anything that Tony might want to say or explain and not caring at all that Tony had done it primarily for Wanda’s own safety. The pen was suddenly back in it’s case and everything got ten times harder and Tony just couldn’t believe how little Steve seemed to want to give him the benefit of the doubt as if Tony was sitting there deliberately trying to put
them all in a cage.

The way that Steve looked at Tony made him feel like he had just been caught doing something horrendous and wrong. It was righteousness at its worst and Tony couldn’t believe that it was coming from Steve. It hurt, tore at him to not be able to agree. Steve just didn’t get it. Wanda wasn’t just a kid and Tony wasn’t stealing her rights like Steve seemed to think he was doing. The truth of it was that Wanda had no rights to begin with and Tony just wanted her to be safe until everything calmed down, the dust settled, and they could figure everything out. But Steve didn’t see things in the way Tony did, thinking a few steps ahead. He saw what was happening immediately and that was all that mattered.

After that, things just got worse.

Chapter End Notes

One of the most annoying scenes to write was the last one of this chapter. I think I rewatched the scene in the movie a bunch of times while writing it which just made it take longer than it needed to and you'll find some familiar lines in there but the reason I kept it is the changes that I was able to add. I also really wanted to play with the tension between Steve and Tony in comparison to that scene from last chapter.

I will hopefully have the next chapter up tomorrow night. But I think it's likely it won't be up until Monday depending on how much time I have tomorrow. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading!

I figured I would post this chapter now since I have the time. Having this weekend off of work has been amazing! I've just had time to do all the little things I didn't have any time for including some work on this fic and finally opening up the document for my finished book (although figuring out what I'm going to do as far as publishing it is difficult)

This one continues where the last left off. Enjoy.

Steve hated it. He hated what the last twenty four hours had been like. Peggy’s funeral had been hard enough without everything else falling apart. It was as if everything from his past was trying to be destroyed all at once. He and Sam found Bucky relatively fast with the information that Sharon passed along but so had the Swat team and then it had become a chase and Bucky -- because he was Bucky and not the Soldier -- he didn’t want his or Sam’s help. He wanted to get away and leave them behind and Steve had known as the chase intensified that none of this would be good.

A part of him had been a little surprised when it wasn’t Tony that showed up to finally stop them but Rhodey instead, but then he supposed that it made sense. In some ways he was glad it wasn’t Tony and that they weren’t somehow facing off against each other. Steve didn’t put up much of a fight as they were put into a car with the unmasked Prince of Wakanda. At least Bucky was safe. That mattered more. He was safe and he was Bucky and Steve had to believe that they would find a way to show that Bucky wasn’t to blame.

Still, they were being overly cautious with the way they brought Bucky in, keeping him strapped to a chair inside of bulletproof reinforced glass.

Then there was Natasha, looking disappointed in them. Steve almost didn’t expect to see Tony there, but he was waiting for them and looking like everything was taking a toll on him. Steve hated it. He hated the way that Tony had known this would happen and how Steve had no clue what would happen next. Aside from a quip about consequences aimed at him and Sam, Tony didn’t say much as they walked past with Natasha. Tony was too busy on the phone, a frown prominent on his face.

He was led into a conference room while Natasha took Sam elsewhere. At least he could see everything from there and watch as Sharon and the rest of the Task Force worked. There was a screen that showed Bucky, kept away from all of them in one of the lower levels and still in his small prison. Steve took a seat for lack of anything better to do and was only a little surprised when it was Tony that entered and not the man that had met them -- Sharon’s boss.

Tony was gorgeous even with the serious look on his face and Steve hated how neither of them really seemed to know where they stood or what would come next. And more than anything he hated the distance that had suddenly appeared between them. It was necessary in some ways because no one needed to know how close they were and yet it was more than just the physical. Tony seemed to be holding himself back emotionally too in an odd way.
That’s why Steve asked about Peter, needing things to be normal.

The news about the adoption papers shocked him a little in how Tony just seemed to say it as if he were just talking about the weather. It felt like something that should have come up earlier like other things. The Accords for one.

Steve couldn’t be upset about it though not with the insecurity clear in Tony’s eyes and the way that Tony seemed so sure that there was no point to what he wanted. And then, Steve could picture it because it was so easy to see Tony as a father and Steve would be right there next to him. He just didn’t know how possible that would be with the way that things were going and with he and Tony standing on opposite sides of this because even as Tony seemed to beg him to sign, Steve just didn’t know if he could.

His reservations were just too present within his mind and yet Tony was right because he had been brought in like a criminal with the very real possibility of facing charges for everything that had happened. And he trusted Tony. He trusted that Tony would take his ideas and thoughts into consideration in the changes that Tony was sure could be made.

But then Wanda was apparently being held against her will back at the compound on Tony’s orders and Steve knew that he couldn’t do it. He couldn’t sign because loving Tony didn’t blind him and this was wrong. It was wrong and Wanda was just a kid who had made a mistake and didn’t deserve that treatment and neither did anyone else.

Tony left, taking the pens with him when Steve told him he couldn’t break up the set and Steve knew that he had hurt Tony a little with his refusal but he had to know that Steve was only following what he believed to be right. He just wasn’t too happy with how stressed Tony looked throughout their conversation but this was just how things were going to be.

---

Natasha didn’t even bother to ask Tony how it had gone and Tony knew she could see it on his face even as Tony tried to hide it. All of them were distracted by the arrival of the psychiatrist. Tony was still holding out hope on the results of Barnes’ evaluation and so it seemed was everyone else seeing as everyone was watching and Tony was very interested in how it would go. He knew Steve would be watching too even if he couldn’t hear anything and if he weren’t mad at him for continuing to be more stubborn than anyone Tony had ever met he would have left the sound on for him in the conference room.

Then, the power was suddenly out and one moment Tony was trying to figure out what had happened through Friday and the next he turned around and Steve and Sam were gone. The next hour was long. They had tried to go after Barnes once it was clear that he was free. No one had seen Steve or Sam, but they spotted Bucky and somehow he, Natasha, and Sharon went after him but Steve had gotten one thing right, no one would be able to bring Bucky in. He didn’t seem to be stronger than Steve, but he certainly wouldn’t hold back from hurting anyone. Barnes was like a caged animal that had found a way out and he was feral. It reminded Tony a little bit of the Hulk and how Bruce had described feeling like he had been taken over and pushed aside in his own mind when the Hulk took over.

The moment that Barnes almost shot him left Tony shaken. If it hadn’t been for the watch gauntlet...well, Tony didn’t really want to think about it.

Natasha and Sharon were taken down too, as he had expected, and then Tony saw T’Challa run after Barnes as well. T’Challa was impressive from the little that Tony saw of him and he was reminded that the man had his own suit likely made from vibranium. Tony wished that it was the time and
In the end, none of it mattered because Bucky got away and so did Sam and Steve and Tony knew that Thaddeus Ross would hear soon and call them to yell at Tony as if Tony himself had been the one to let them go. It was all just going to get worse from there. Steve didn’t understand just how bad things could get and how much Tony had been trying to stave off all of that. It would have been one thing if it was just Steve refusing to sign The Accords but this was actively going against them and refusing to abide by the law. Tony never thought there would be the day when he was staunchly behind the law and Steve wasn’t but that’s where they stood. He didn’t know if he could look at Steve without being angry because there was being stubborn and then there was taking it to a level that they couldn’t turn back from.

“The Secretary of State is coming in,” Everett Ross told Tony in passing once they were back in the main office. This Ross seemed almost apologetic.

Tony let out a low curse. Things really were going from bad to worse. Natasha somehow managed to get him a cup of coffee and she handed it to him with a tight smile.

“Thanks,” Tony muttered and Natasha pressed her hands onto his shoulders in some sort of solidarity.

Tony was really grateful for Natasha. He hadn’t expected her to side with him on this. Especially not when it was going against Steve seeing as it had always felt like the two of them were closer. They had gotten even closer still after Tony and Clint left the team. Still, Tony could appreciate that Natasha didn’t follow blindly like it sometimes seemed that Sam did. Although in this case, Tony didn’t think it was just blind loyalty.

Later, after Ross arrived, Tony felt like any control he and Natasha had had of the situation slipped through their fingers. Ross wanted things done his way and he seemed so intent on it that he didn’t care how Steve and Sam and Bucky were brought in.

There would be no negotiating any kind of deal for the three of them or anyone else that got involved now that things had gotten to this point and Tony hated it. He hated the possibility of losing Steve. So he jumped at being the one to bring him in because he didn’t trust Ross and he didn’t trust whoever Ross would send out to bring them in and because maybe he could still find a way to make this better. The only problem was that they really didn’t have much to work with. Rhodey could only do so much with him and Nat to bring in two super soldiers and Sam and whoever else they got involved in the fight because if he knew Steve then he would try and get help. Tony didn’t really want to call Vision in either because he needed him to keep an eye on Wanda, but then it seemed like they were going to need him more. But it created the problem of what to do with Wanda because she was the last person that could get involved.

Natasha seemed to have someone in mind to help them out and Tony suddenly realized that he did as well. He had to go back to New York anyway to get a suit and he could afford to take a detour. This wasn’t how he had planned to do this, but he really had no other choice.

Chapter End Notes

We've made it to the beginning of Tony figuring out who Spider-Man is. The next few chapters really will pick up when it comes to this and I just love what I've edited so far and I hope everyone will as well.
Next chapter could be up tomorrow if I call out of work and take an extra day off and give myself 4 days off work (because I have almost 60 hours of sick time that I haven't used), otherwise Tuesday for sure. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading!

This chapter is really the beginning of everything everyone's been waiting for and I'm so excited that we're at this moment now. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ned hadn’t been in school because he was out with a cold which meant that Peter spent most of his day on his own. Ned really was his only real friend because even though Peter didn’t have bad interactions with his other classmates, the rest of them just seemed to ignore him and Ned unless it was MJ, but then MJ seemed to be hypervigilant of everyone. Flash just liked to tease anyone that he could and Peter was one of his favorites to bother and Peter was pretty sure it was because Peter tended to get better grades than him and because Flash hadn’t even made it onto the decathlon team. Still, it had never made much sense to Peter that Flash thought the best insult was to change his name from Peter to Penis. It was embarrassing sure when he shouted it in the hallways or out on the street, but Peter just didn’t understand where it came from.

None of it really bothered Peter too much, anyway, but somehow being in school without Ned felt strange. He sat on his own at lunch with just MJ a few spots away with her nose in a book not quite sitting with him. The highlight of his day was when he received an email from Mr. Stark.

Hey Peter,

It’s been a crazy few days on my end lately but I’m glad you enjoyed my presentation. It would have probably been more interesting if you had actually been there to see it, but the technology of today really is amazing in how far reaching things are. I’ve been finding some interesting things on the web myself lately.

How’s school? I haven’t asked that in a while.

Tony Stark

Their emails had finally started to pick up again since Peter had reached out to thank Mr. Stark for the note he’d sent when Ben died. The only problem with them was that Peter was more tempted than ever to tell Mr. Stark about being Spider-Man and he’d had to stop himself from just writing him about it multiple times already. Then there was also the other thing that he’d been a little worried about which was his father and finding out who it was because Peter supposed that the only person he knew that had the resources to actually figure it out was probably Tony Stark. Peter just didn’t know if he actually wanted to know.

He didn’t have time to reply to the email during lunch and after school Peter wanted to see if he could find anything useful in other people’s trash. It was becoming a bit of a habit for him on his walk home and it was fun because the old stuff was still useful if Peter managed to fix it and if not, then the parts were. It was Uncle Ben that had shown him how useful someone else’s junk could be and Peter loved being able to fix or build something out of scraps. Some of it was even helpful when it came to Spider-Man.
Sam didn’t know quite what to make of Steve after they had found a place to hideout -- namely an abandoned warehouse. Barnes was handcuffed so he wouldn’t try anything and Steve looked like the whole weight of the world was on his shoulders.

Back at the Task Force Headquarters Sam had almost expected for Steve to just go along with whatever Tony wanted. He could tell that a part of Steve wanted to do that -- to keep the peace and make things easier. Not as complicated. Sam had known that he would follow Steve’s lead even if he had his reservations mostly because they were in a tight spot. They were the ones that had been brought in for breaking the law -- they were on the other side of things and options were limited.

But when things started to go wrong and in mere minutes Barnes had become The Soldier, the doctor turned out to be the bad guy, and they were on the run again.

This time they managed to get away, hiding out in an abandoned warehouse with a heavy, wet, and very knocked out Barnes. They put his arm -- the metal one -- in a machine to hold him in place and then they waited even while the Task Force searched for them.

“This really puts us on a whole other level of breaking the law,” Sam pointed out to Steve.

They didn’t even have their things. No Captain America suit and no wings. It didn’t mean that they couldn’t do anything -- but it left them in a tight spot. Especially him, because he didn’t have anything super powered about him. He was still sore from the way that Barnes had just thrown him aside earlier.

After Barnes woke up and had regained his mind they started to piece things together and Sam was starting to think that there was more to the bombing in Vienna. Someone -- this guy that had posed as the doctor -- they had wanted to draw Barnes out and get the information about Siberia and those other Soldiers.

“This would have been easier a week ago,” Sam said, thinking about how much had happened in just the space of days.

It was one thing after another and The Accords were right there in the middle of it all complicating everything and splitting up The Avengers. Splitting up Tony and Steve who had been so very much together and Sam could see the toll that it was taking on Steve. How gaining all this information and not being able to call Tony and tell him hurt. But they couldn’t. Even if Tony believed them -- and actually if it came from Steve of course he would believe it -- there was probably very little he could do about it. They were on their own which wasn’t exactly promising.

Sam remembered suddenly that there was someone else that could be persuaded to help them. Ant-Man. Sam had gone searching for him back after the whole thing with the guy just showing up at The Compound because he figured it was best to know who had been behind that mask for if the need ever arose to ask for help. That need was arising.

“There’s also Wanda,” Steve said.

“You think she’ll be on our side?”

Steve nodded. “I know she will. And anyway, it’s not like Tony will go looking for her help. We’ll just have to find a way to get her out of The Compound.”

Learning that Tony had been having Vision keep her there was not too surprising. Sam could even see why he might want to. Steve seemed to think it was a bigger deal. It was as if he had forgotten
how much Wanda’s involvement in the team and her mistakes had played a part in where they were currently.

“Could your guy help us out?” Steve asked.

“Probably. But he won’t be able to do it alone. Is there anyone—”

“Clint,” Steve said.

Sam nodded. They were going to need all the help they could get if they were going to be facing Soldiers like Barnes. This really was not the time for the team to be a splintered mess.

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During the entire flight back to New York, Tony had Friday track down Spider-Man. He hadn’t already done it mostly because he had wanted to discuss it with Steve and the others before they tried to recruit the new hero, but things had changed and Tony needed all the help he could get.

The other thing he did while in the air was pull up all the notes he’d had on a preliminary suit and he began to really get working on it. By the time that he made it back to the tower he would already have most of it in construction. Things like the mask and the web shooters would need some more work but he needed more information on Spider-Man and how his powers worked before he figured out those features.

It was as they were nearing New York that Friday finally finished her search.

“Mr. Stark,” Friday said, “it appears that Spider-Man climbed into Peter Parker’s window early this morning.”

It felt like everything stopped. Tony’s heart skipped a beat and time seemed to go on forever because Tony’s mind had always worked faster than most and he didn’t want to draw the most likely conclusion.

“How...how often is Spider-Man near the Parker’s home?” Tony managed to ask, hoping against hope that this was some sort of isolated incident and that this was all some kind of coincidence.

Friday took a moment to answer and it felt like the longest moment in Tony’s life. “It appears to be quite often, sir,” Friday said, “it may be possible that Peter Parker is Spider-Man.”

No. It couldn’t be. It couldn’t be Peter could it? His Peter.

Then, Tony remembered all those questions about spiders and the spider webbing and Tony couldn’t deny it. He couldn’t push aside all the evidence, not when it was so glaringly obvious because unless May Parker was Spider-Man and Tony highly doubted that, then it was Peter. His son was Spider-Man. He was Queens’ own superhero.

He felt warm and cold all over, his breathing coming out hard and everything was too much. He couldn’t hear very well and his heartbeat just seemed to intensify and everything felt like it was too fast and too slow.

“Mr. Stark, you have to breathe,” Friday said and Tony somehow heard her. He tried to slow his breathing down and calm down but it was hard.

This wasn’t supposed to happen. Peter wasn’t supposed to be...
“Shall I call Ms. Potts?” Friday asked.

Tony couldn’t answer. He was trying to calm down, sure that this was the start of panic attack. One that he really couldn’t afford to have. There was no time for it and yet his entire body seemed to want to rebel because his son was Spider-Man. He had been out there for months swinging around on some spider web and throwing himself in front of cars and probably all other kinds of dangerous things and Tony just -- he hadn’t known and he should have. Even if May didn’t, he should have.

And now it left him unsure. What was he supposed to do now?

Did he involve Peter in this? Bring him in to help with catching Steve and the others? Even though he was just a kid. Did Tony dare do that, bring his own son into this?

He hated not having a sounding board. Not having Steve to fall back on because his judgement has always been — well, maybe it wasn’t always perfect. Still, he would have been the one Tony asked because he already knew Pepper would tell him to leave Peter out of it. The thing was that if they didn’t bring in Cap and Sam and Bucky that things were only going to get worse. Like his boyfriend being killed by whatever strike team Ross would send out bad.

The anxiety started up again and this time it seemed worse somehow because it was Peter and it was Steve and it was the team -- his family.

“Sir, are you alright?” Friday asked.

They were landing and Tony had to shake himself off. If Peter was anything like him there was nothing that would stop him from going out as Spider-Man even in his odd onesie. Tony needed to see him and speak to him and maybe then he could decide. This was just one more thing -- but suddenly it was the most important thing.

Chapter End Notes

Couple of notes:
The email that Peter receives was probably written by Tony during his flight from London to Berlin to join the task force.

This was the first time I wrote Sam's POV and it was just so weird to do so since he's not a character I've really connected well with. Also when it comes to timing - When Sam is looking for Ant-Man in the Ant-Man post-credit scene there is a reference to Spider-Man but the timing is very off. So I did decide that Sam must have been looking for him a lot earlier and just kept in contact and that Spider-Man just wasn't mentioned at the time.

I really loved writing that last scene! I just love a panicked and surprised Tony.

Next chapter will probably be up on Thursday.
Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 37

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys are amazing!

So this chapter was originally not a chapter. It's one of those that got added in because of the word lengths of the scene in this chapter and the other scene that the other chapter makes up. But I really do like what came of this. I think it's the longest May POV I've had in this fic and I really did enjoy writing it. Also keep in mind that this is taking place following on that last May POV when she figures out that Peter's been sneaking out. Enjoy.

May never got to talk to Peter about the sneaking out the next morning because she somehow managed to sleep past her alarm and by the time that she was up Peter just wasn’t there anymore. At least there were signs that he had been there for breakfast which meant that he was okay. May figured that knowing that was enough to keep her sane. Still, she resolved to bring it up the moment he got home from school because enough was enough. Peter was only fourteen. There was no reason for this behavior.

May had even wanted to text him to make sure he came home straight away instead of running off with Ned. She didn’t only because it felt overbearing and Peter didn’t need that.

Either way, it didn’t end up mattering because instead her doorbell rang changing all of her plans. May didn’t know what to think when she opened the door and Tony Stark stood there looking oddly like he didn’t know what he was doing there.

May had never actually met Tony Stark, but there was no denying that he was something to behold. He was handsome and good looking in a way that only someone famous could be which was a little infuriating if May were to be honest. May didn’t know if she would have been able to tell that Peter was his son just from looking at him but there was definitely a resemblance.

“Hi, Mrs. Parker,” Tony said with a charming smile, “Or should I call you May? That might be better, actually. And of course you know who I am but Tony Stark. It's nice to finally meet you.” He extended his hand out to her and it took May a moment to reach out and shake it.

“Come in,” she said and stepped back.

Tony followed her inside and seemed to look around the place with some interest. May was glad that she had spent the morning doing some cleaning as she closed the door and saw Tony look around. His eyes didn’t seem to settle on one single thing.

“I know I’m just showing up which isn’t — is Peter home?” Tony said, his face turning away from a picture on a small round table.

“Not yet,” May said. “He’s probably only just getting out of school now. Should be here soon. I’m not entirely sure that you should be here when he does get home. Mr. Stark, why are you here?”
Tony let out a breath. He seemed nervous, even though he was trying to hide it which was oddly satisfying to see because this was not a man that should ever be nervous and yet he was. "Well the truth is that I think it is time I meet Peter. And there’s this scholarship kind of like an internship that I think he is the perfect fit for."

May didn’t know what to think. "And it will mean that he will spend time with you," May said and let out a sigh.

She lead him towards the living room and Tony sat without being prompted. He folded his hands over his legs and he didn’t seem to know how to sit still. He was like nothing that May had ever expected and yet she could see the good in him too. The reasons for why so many people looked up to him.

Tony nodded. "Yes. I haven’t mentioned it to him because things just tend to fall through for us but--"

May had to take a moment. She walked towards the kitchen and pulled out some of the date loaf that she had baked the other day and warmed it up. Just last night she had been thinking that Peter might need to finally meet Tony and here he was offering her a way and giving her a way to keep Peter busy. It might mean that the whole sneaking out conversation wouldn’t need to happen. But then, another conversation might. She didn’t know what Tony intended, exactly, but if they did meet then who Tony was to Peter -- that secret would be revealed sooner or later.

"Would you like some tea?" May asked, poking her head out of the kitchen.

"Sure," Tony said, "this is a lovely home, you know, and I have to say that I will always be grateful for you taking Peter in as you did. From his letters alone I can tell that he’s gotten exactly what he’s needed."

May brought out tea and the date loaf, setting the tray down on the coffee table.

"I don’t think he could be the kid he is without you," Tony said and reached for a piece of the date loaf.

"I really don’t know what to say. It’s unfair to take all the credit when Mary and Richard loved him so much. Ben, too. It wasn’t just me. It couldn’t be just me -- and it’s more than just nurture. He’s -- he has your genes too. I wish Ben had gotten a chance to meet you."

May had sat down on the same couch as Tony and he reached out and pat her knee in some sort of comforting way when Ben’s name came up. She was reminded of how much Tony had done for them when Ben died. From the house cleaners, to the funeral, and even just the letter he’d written to Peter. It was money, she knew, but there was some thought behind it -- and Tony did care. She could see it in the way that he couldn’t quite hide how nervous he was and how Tony had never once tried to overstep. In a way May admired that in him -- admired that he could do boundaries.

"Peter really looks up to you," May said, "and it’s hard to not say that it has influenced him. Probably more than most because he takes after you. The question is, how are we going to handle telling him that you’re his father?"

Tony looked unsure, as if he didn’t know exactly what he wanted to do. May didn’t know what she wanted either. No, what she wanted was for Peter to be safe and happy and it didn’t seem like keeping him from Tony would accomplish those things anymore.

"I don’t -- I don’t want to lie to him," Tony said. "But I think that at the moment the internship will
May nodded. She supposed that it was for the best to let Tony make that decision on his own. Maybe he felt he had to know Peter a little better before the truth was out and May didn’t think she had a place to say when Peter should learn the truth anymore. That was up to Tony to tell Peter and May would stay out of that decision just like Tony had taken a step back every time that she and Ben didn’t allow a meeting to happen.

While they waited for Peter, May asked after Pepper and she could tell from the way that Tony spoke about her that they were no longer together. Somehow they had managed to keep that out of the press and May was impressed because it always seemed like everything Tony did was reported on. Although, she supposed that lately he had been keeping his nose to the ground. He didn’t even really seem to be a part of The Avengers seeing as he hadn’t been present in Lagos. His meeting Peter now was probably the best time.

For a good while they made small talk and Tony drank tea and took small bites of the date loaf. May really had forgotten how awful it had come out. At least Tony seemed to want to be polite about it.

Eventually they heard the key at the door and May saw the way that Tony almost seemed to freeze as the door swung open and Peter entered holding some sort of junk and with his headphones in his ears so distracted that he actually walked past them without even taking notice of his surroundings all the while talking about a car outside and then he stopped---

It was almost comical how alike the expressions on their faces were. Upon a close look at them together she could see the resemblance. They had the same eyes and a similar way of being expressive. Tony covered up his shock with a smile, but Peter’s mouth still hung open a little. He pulled the headphones out one at a time and his eyes never ceased to be blown wide as he looked at them. It was as if he feared blinking because it might mean that Tony Stark would disappear.

“Mr. Stark,” Peter said, his voice a little higher than normal, and Tony laughed.

“Hey, kid,” Tony said and May was afraid for a moment that Peter was going to just pass out from the shock but he seemed to get ahold of himself.

“What are you — how are you —”

“Mr. Stark is here about a scholarship,” May said.

Peter frowned, looking more confused than ever and May didn’t blame him. They really were springing this on him. But it needed to happen. They needed to know each other and Peter needed to know the truth whenever Tony wanted to tell him.

“Yeah,” Tony said and seemed to be finding his footing again. “The September Foundation. But, hey, May, mind if I talk to him alone?’’

May nodded almost at once and Peter just seemed a little too dazed to know what to say even as Tony stood up, walked towards him and placed a hand on Peter’s shoulder almost with a little hesitation. Peter looked up at him and May could see how nervous he was. She could also see how much they really were father and son.

“So your room? Come on, we can discuss all the details.”

“Uh -- sure,” Peter stuttered out.
I really love what this chapter turned into because originally it was a tiny scene but I really wanted to explore the May and Tony dynamic for the purposes of this fic a bit more and so this came of it. Thanks to everyone reading.

Next chapter is the one you've all been waiting for. I think I will try to post Saturday but it might not happen because I'm going to a concert that night and I'm not sure what my morning/day plans are like. So it will probably most likely be up Sunday night.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 38

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading/commenting! You guys are the best!

This is one of my favorites and the one you have all been waiting for. It's even on the longer side! Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony was freaking out. Seeing Peter for the first time in person had been nothing short of amazing. He couldn’t believe that this boy who was only just shy of his height and who looked all lean and skinny was his son. Having him in front of him made Tony wonder if Peter was actually Spider-Man. He was just so little.

After getting him alone, Tony didn’t know what to say so he started looking through Peter’s things instead. Out in the living room there had been pictures to look at. Peter looking much younger with May and Ben. A picture of Mary and the man that Tony supposed was Richard. Inside Peter’s room there were no pictures out or hung on the walls. Instead there were other things.

He had a lot of old tech on his desk and books including the ones Tony had sent him about spiders and a mess of other junk that Peter seemed to be fixing up. It made Tony just a little bit proud because Tony had been the same at MIT and even before hand. But this wasn’t why he was here. Aside from a few odds and ends, Peter seemed to have the room of a regular teenager. Tony would never have suspected that he was Spider-Man and yet he was.

“So,” Tony said.

“I didn’t know you were doing a scholarship thing with the September Foundation,” Peter said. He was standing just inside the room, looking oddly like he didn’t know if he should be there in his own bedroom.

“I’m not,” Tony said and stared at Peter who seemed incapable of staying still under Tony’s stare. “Although there is a division of the Maria Stark Foundation that takes care of scholarship related things but that isn’t why I’m here.”

“Then, why are you here?” Peter asked and glanced around as if trying to physically find words in the air. “I mean, you’re here in my bedroom. This is insane.”

Tony chuckled. This was his son and he was perfect. Tony couldn’t believe it. For years and years he had thought about Peter and wondered how their first meeting would go. He had never imagined this -- or imagined him like this.

“Well, I suppose it is. It’s almost as insane as,” and he pulled out his phone and had the videos pop out into holograms, “well that is you isn’t it?” Tony glanced back at Peter and away from the video.

Peter’s eyes seemed to widen comically. “No,” he spluttered. “No, not those are -- you found those on youtube so they’re...clearly they’re altered like...”

It was cute the way he was flustered and still trying to deny everything even though he had to know
that Tony wasn’t going to buy it. Then, he seemed to just give up on denying it just as Tony spotted the hatch on the ceiling and he had to just push it up for the makeshift suit to fall out and Peter dove for it, throwing it into his closet as if Tony hadn’t already gotten to see it. He looked flustered and unsure when he turned back to look at Tony.


Peter seemed to deflate a little and Tony wanted to just take away the doubt and the worry that seemed to be clouding him despite how much fun he was having with this. A part of him hadn’t expected for Peter to try and hide it even from him.

“I’m -- I’m Spider-Man,” Peter finally said and lifted his gaze to meet Tony’s and yeah, this was definitely his son.

“Not in that onesie,” Tony said mostly because he couldn’t help himself and Peter looked a little offended.

“It’s not a onesie,” Peter muttered.

“Hmm, I guess not. And you didn’t think that maybe the superhero you’ve been pen-paling with for years now wouldn’t be the perfect person to tell? Peter, what gives?”

Peter let out a breath. “I don’t know,” he mumbled, “I wanted to tell you. I think I would have eventually. I just -- I guess I didn’t know how.” He moved away from the closet towards his desk and Tony just watched him for a moment as he moved some things around probably as a way to stall trying to explain.

“And your aunt out there, does she know?” Tony asked.

“No,” Peter said at once and snapped his head up to look at Tony, “and we’re not telling her. Do you know how much she would freak out? And then I would freak out and it just -- it wouldn’t go well”

Tony didn’t imagine that it would. May would probably do everything in her power to stop Peter from being Spider-Man and Tony thought that he probably should do the same except that he also knew that there would be no stopping Peter. There was also of course the fact that Tony needed Peter’s help. Tony hated it -- hated that he would need to involve him -- but it was necessary.

He walked towards Peter’s closet and reached over to grab the suit that Peter had thrown inside it and went for the web-shooters which were mostly held up with black duct tape. With a bit of fishing he got the bottle that contained fluid that had to create the webbing.

“Now this,” Tony said, “this is cool. I’ve never seen anything like it. At first I thought it might be organic. Except that I do recall some odd emails a few months back asking me about spider webs and if anyone I knew had managed to recreate something like it. It didn’t seem like a bad idea but I never got around to really working on it. Anyway, this is cool. The tensile strength is off the charts. So who manufactured this?”

“I did,” Peter admitted and there was a glint in eyes that told Tony that he was proud of having done it himself. Tony was proud too.

“So you can stick to walls and you’re using this to swing around like a spider and clearly you’re managing well despite these things,” Tony said and lifted the face mask portion of the suit, “can you even see in these?”

Peter snatched the suit away. “I can,” he said.
He looked smaller again, defensive, as if he were waiting for Tony to put him down or tell him to stop being Spider-Man. Peter was waiting for Tony to take on the role of the responsible adult, but Tony knew that it wasn’t his role to play at the moment.

“What happened? How is this possible?”

It had been worrying him. All the different possibilities to how Peter had ended up with powers as well as the possible side effects. He needed to know that Peter was alright.

“I think it was a spider. It bit me and the next thing I knew I was sticking to things and I was faster and stronger and I need those goggles because my focus is everywhere. My senses are dialled up to eleven. It’s worse when I’m in motion but even now I can hear things happening in other rooms and outside and I’m strong. I’ve had to be so careful—”

Peter looked relieved to get all that out and he looked at Tony as if Tony had all the answers in the world. Tony knew then that he was the only one that knew. Peter hadn’t told anyone. He had kept it all to himself and decided that he could deal with it and he reminded him so much of himself that Tony felt floored. This really was his kid. Yet despite the relief of having the secret out, Peter seemed unsure. He sat down on his bed, a little hunched over and Tony felt the overwhelming need to hug him. Tony had never been much of a hugger but with Peter -- even knowing him for all of ten minutes -- it made Tony different. Maybe paternal was the best way to describe it, but Tony just hadn’t expected it.

Tony walked over and Peter looked up at him confused. He was cute. He was a teenager and yet he was cute and Tony never expected to think that of anyone. And the funny part was that Tony had seen pictures of Peter for years and he had never stopped to think of Peter as cute. But seeing him in person and he was still so young, it was something else. Peter was throwing his entire world on its axis and Tony found that he didn’t mind in the least.

“Come on, move that leg,” Tony said and motioned for Peter to move. “I’m going to sit there.”

Peter moved at once.

Tony found it surreal to be sitting on his son’s bed. It almost felt like he was about to have a father and son talk, the kind that he had never once had with Howard. It made him nervous because what if he said the wrong thing? He supposed that being so unsure came with the territory. He just had to hope for the best.

“I don’t think anyone should go through any of this alone,” Tony said, “least of all someone as young as you are. You’re only what --” Tony paused to do the math “fourteen, right?”

“Yeah,” Peter said with a slight frown and Tony saw his blunder. He shouldn’t have just known off the top of his head how old Peter was. He couldn’t remember if they had ever discussed his age in their emails.

“The point is,” Tony said, “that you are very young and this is hard on anyone at any age but it must be harder on you now and it makes me wonder if you should even be doing this. Why are you doing this?”

It had been the burning question on his mind ever since he had figured out it was Peter behind the mask and he was hoping that Peter gave him an answer that wasn’t just superficial otherwise it was all ending here. Tony would find a way to make him stop even if he had to physically follow Peter everywhere to do so and there would be no taking Peter to help him out with Cap and the others.
Peter stared out in front of him for a long time and then he turned and faced Tony and he gulped. “Do you know I was there the night Uncle Ben died?”

“I did,” Tony said and Peter looked taken aback. “You do remember I paid for the funeral? I spoke to your aunt then and she mentioned it.”

Peter nodded slowly, thinking. “Are you this interested in all of your fans? Like -- do you follow up when you correspond with other fans?”

Tony chuckled. Really, it was surprising that Peter hadn’t questioned that earlier. “Kiddo, you’re a special case, alright,” he said. “Don’t ask me why -- not yet. It’s -- I will tell you about that one day. Anyway, go on.”

Peter looked unsure for a moment and then he sighed right before standing up. “When you can do the things I can, but you don’t, and then the bad things happen then -- then they happen because of you.”

He said it as if he didn’t know if he could say it in any other way because it would hurt to say anything different and anything less roundabout and Tony could read between the lines. Peter blamed himself for his uncle’s murder. He paced in front of Tony for a moment, pace uneven.

“You can’t control everything,” Tony said.

Peter stopped and shook his head a few times before looking back to Tony. “No, I can’t. No one can. But if I do nothing that’s just as bad. Mr. Stark, I can’t stop being Spider-Man. It’s who I am. You said time and time again that quitting never worked for you. I don’t think I could do it either.”

Peter was definitely his son. Tony almost wanted to laugh because genetics really were something, weren’t they. Tony was aware that he had influenced Peter by being a public figure, but the way that Peter was couldn’t have come from just that. No, there was more there. Genetics played some role and of course he also had Mary to thank for that. Mary who Tony remembered as loving science because of all the good she could do with it. Tony hadn’t thought about her much over the years but he could see her in Peter and it was such a shame that Peter would never really know her.

“I’ve just -- I’ve been me my whole life and you’ve known me a bit so you know who I am, I think. I read books and I build computers and I’ve...well, I’d love to play football or soccer, but I couldn’t then so I shouldn’t now.” Peter said it while looking away.

“Sure,” Tony said, “and I guess I mostly thought you weren’t interested in athletic sport.”

“I’m not,” Peter said and he was back to looking at Tony, “but I couldn’t even consider it before and now I just shouldn’t even though I could and I can’t exactly tell anybody and--”

“Because you’re different now,” Tony said with a nod and watched him because Peter didn’t seem to know what to say.

“That,” Peter said, “but because these abilities can’t just be in my benefit, not when there’s a greater purpose and I can stop -- I can stop bad things from happening.”

He seemed to be waiting for the other shoe to drop, so unsure and conflicted and expecting Tony to just shut him down and make him stop. Tony couldn’t understand how someone so pure could have come from any part of him. “I don’t think I would be able to ask you to stop,” Tony said, “not when you’re putting it like that. And anyway, I came to ask for your help.”

“My help,” Peter said, frowning in confusion. “Um, how? I mean -- what?”
Peter dropped down onto the bed and Tony reached over and placed a hand on his shoulder and even to him it felt a little on the awkward side, but Peter didn’t seem to notice that.

Tony couldn’t help but grin a little. “Got a passport?”

Peter looked startled. “No, I don’t. I don’t even have a driver’s license,” he said.

Tony did know that. It was a little jarring to remember that Peter was still so young.

“You ever been to Germany?” Tony asked even though he already knew that Peter hadn’t. It was just fun to see how his eyes widened.

“No.”

“You’re going to love it,” Tony said and grinned at him again.

Peter started to shake his head. “I can’t go to Germany!”

“Why not?”

“I -- I got homework,” Peter said and he really was just so young and innocent and Tony loved him.

It was different to know that he loved Peter -- because Tony had known that for a long while now -- but it was a whole other thing to actually see him and meet him and be within touching distance that made that intensify. It made him want to protect and care and just love Peter without asking or wanting anything in return. It was different than anything else that Tony had ever felt for another person. He had never loved anyone like this -- entirely consumed and without an inch of doubt.

“Alright,” Tony said in order to keep his composure, “I’m going to pretend that you didn’t say that.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope everyone liked this chapter. I never expected for their meeting to follow canon. I really didn’t want it to, but the meeting just truly could not fit anywhere else. I did try to keep some of the canon from the scene but I did try to make it my own as well.

I'm not sure how posting will work for the next week. I'm a little behind on the editing so it really does matter on how much I get done tonight and tomorrow. I'm hoping I can get the next chapter up Tuesday. At the latest it will be Thursday because I'm going into NYC Wednesday to see a Broadway show.

Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Thank you to everyone reading, you guys are amazing! I really cannot believe the number of kudos this fic has, to thank you!

We're finally getting some of Peter's perspective on the meeting in this one. Enjoy.

(and btw for those interested, I had an amazing time yesterday seeing The Cursed Child on Broadway. If anyone's an HP fan and has an option to go see it, I would definitely recommend it)

Peter watched as Tony Stark, who was in his room and in his and May’s house and actually talking to him about Spider-Man, picked up his mask again and looked at it for a long moment. Something must have been going through his mind as he looked at it but Peter just couldn’t have known what.

Peter didn’t know what to say. He thought that he had done a decent job at trying not to embarrass himself and yet there had been some moments when Peter just hadn’t been able to help it. He was a mess. And this was Tony Stark in his room and not only that but he knew that Peter was Spider-Man.

“I’m not kidding about Germany,” Mr. Stark said and he was standing by Peter’s bedroom door. Peter hadn’t even noticed him moving. “Might be a little dangerous but then what can you do.” He reached for the doorknob and Peter just reacted.

He had the webbing that Mr. Stark had thrown at him earlier within reach and he shot out a string of it and it hit Mr. Stark’s hand on the doorknob.

“You can’t tell Aunt May,” Peter said quickly.

“Woah,” Mr. Stark said, his attention focused on the webbing before he looked to Peter again and Peter felt a feeling of warmth wash over him because Mr. Stark seemed proud and impressed and it reminded him of Ben a little and how he used to look at him sometimes.

“I wasn’t planning to, Spiderling,” Mr. Stark said and Peter let out a sigh of relief.

Peter was still trying to wrap his mind around everything that had happened. He had just been having a normal day and it was a normal day no longer. Not since Peter walked into the house and found Mr. Stark was having tea with his aunt. Then, of course, it turned out that somehow Mr. Stark had figured out that he was Spider-Man and he was asking for his help — asking for his help in Germany. Peter’s mind was sort of blown.

“So, uh, can you take care of this?” Mr. Stark asked.

“Oh,” Peter said and jumped up to help get him off the door.

At least Peter had gotten practiced at getting the spider webbing to dissolve. He was still rather impressed that May hadn’t noticed any residual leftovers from the time that he had been trying to
really get the web fluid perfected. It still probably needed some work and now that Mr. Stark knew about the whole thing maybe Peter could get him to look at his formula and help him make it better.

Mr. Stark was silent while Peter got his hand off the door knob, but Peter felt flustered because he could feel his eyes on him as he worked. It was a little odd, the way he looked at him, because sometimes Mr. Stark seemed surprised that Peter was in front of him even though it had been Mr. Stark that had come looking for Peter.

“I have a few things to do still,” Mr. Stark said, “but be ready in a few hours and Happy will pick you up. I--” He stopped and stared at Peter for a long moment, lingering by his door, “--it’s been lovely to meet you at long last.”

Peter didn’t know how to respond, but in the end he didn’t need to because Mr. Stark just opened the door and left and Peter didn’t know if he was supposed to follow or not and then he just lingered behind and he heard Mr. Stark and May talking and when Peter did poke his head out it was to see the door open and close and then Mr. Stark was gone.

“Mr. Stark said you’re going on a little trip with him,” May said.

“Yeah,” Peter said, “for the internship. There’s a thing he invited me along to.”

She nodded with an odd smile as she stepped into his room and grabbed a bag out of his closet and just began to pack for him wordlessly. Peter didn’t know what to say or do, instead he just watched her because it was easier and when May was done she kissed Peter’s cheek and fixed his hair.

“Go and get ready, Pete, I think his driver is picking you up soon. You’re a last minute addition it seems.”

“Yeah,” Peter said, “I guess I am.”

He was only a little surprised by how quick May was to just let him go. Peter didn’t know what Mr. Stark had told her or how long he had told her that he was going to be away, but even for May she was being calm.

Later, someone rang their doorbell and it turned out to be Happy, Mr. Stark’s driver. May gave him a quick goodbye, kissing him and telling him to be good all in front of Happy who looked a little bit amused even as he held Peter’s bag that May had just passed on to him.

Peter felt a little bit bad for lying to May as she pressed a kiss to his cheek one last time and yet he knew that she couldn’t find out the truth. May would flip if she ever knew about Spider-Man. It was better this way, even if the lie was becoming bigger and bigger. It wasn’t just sneaking out the window at night anymore. It was leaving the country without May knowing on some false trip for a fake internship.

Happy, as it turned out, wasn’t very happy. He was grumpy and a little weird and he didn’t seem to like Peter too much or maybe he wasn’t too thrilled that Mr. Stark had made him pick up Peter and then escort him to Germany but Peter didn’t really care. Because once he got past thinking about May and the lie, Peter was too excited and nervous. The easiest way to ease his nerves was to just go with the moment and have fun.

On the drive over to the airport, Peter spent filming on his phone, having fun with the idea of making some sort of vlog of the trip even if it was just for his own personal enjoyment. Happy didn’t seem too thrilled with the idea.

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Tony had wanted to pick Peter up and fly out with him himself but things had gotten a bit complicated because Clint had broken into the Avengers facility and taken Wanda with him and Tony just knew that they were enroute to meet up with Steve, Bucky, and Sam. Vision had been visibly upset when Tony saw him and Tony hadn’t been sure how to deal with it in the face of all the other things that he was dealing with, except to have him call Natasha so they could figure out what they were going to do.

Tony had made work of creating Peter’s suit in the meanwhile, adding in additional things like the training wheels protocol and a parachute and a tracker and anything else that came to mind in order to protect Peter. He had never intended for any of that to become necessary but ever since learning it would be Peter in the suit, Tony had known to add all the possible protection that he could give him. He used one of his unnamed AIs in the suit, one that he had made for Peter even before he knew about him being Spider-Man. In his head he had always known he modelled her after Mary and perhaps even his own mother but he didn’t want to name the AI after either of them -- he wanted Peter to have that option.

Artificial intelligence was actually banned by The Accords, but then no one really knew about Tony’s own AIs. And technically they couldn’t even be considered artificial intelligence because they couldn’t think for themselves like Ultron. Jarvis out of all of them had come closest but even then there had been limitations and either way, Jarvis was gone. Friday had a few more restrictions than Jarvis did and Peter’s AI even more. After Ultron, Tony had learned to be more cautious not because he feared what his own work might turn into but because he didn’t trust that it couldn’t be manipulated or used by something or someone else.

He was done relatively quickly mostly because Friday had already done a lot of the work for him. He had even stolen some of Peter’s webbing back in his room and put it into the new suit. Tony had been looking forward to seeing Peter’s reaction to the suit, but instead he had to send Happy to get Peter and take him on the private plane. Happy had probably been less thrilled than Tony about it and it reminded Tony that Happy didn’t actually know about Peter being his son. He knew that Tony had a son, sure, but Tony had never given him specifics. So Happy probably thought it was just some kid and that Tony was crazy for involving him.

It was on his own flight over that Tony actually got to think about Peter’s involvement. He didn’t like that Wanda had been pulled into it. Hated how much that would hurt what Tony had been trying to do for her but even more than that he knew she was dangerous. Too powerful and still not fully in control. That Clint -- who had told them all he really was sticking to the retirement -- had been the one to get her out bothered him even more because Clint had kids and a wife and he was just going to get himself into trouble and Tony didn’t know what he was going to be able to do to get them all out of it and to get Clint back with his family.

The only thing that Tony could really do at the moment is make sure that Clint’s farm and his family was kept off the radar and that no one ever found out about it. It was lucky that Fury had kept the secret even from Shield.

He was sort of rethinking bringing Peter into it. The whole thing was becoming more dangerous than it ever needed to and he just hoped that things wouldn’t get out of hand. After all, the plan was to not go at them full force. But there was another thing that had begun to bother him.

The more he thought about it, the more that The Accords concerned him when it came to Peter. Peter hadn’t signed them and Tony hadn’t presented them or asked him sign. He hadn’t even thought about it until he was back at the tower and working on the Spider-Man suit and then it had dawned on him that he couldn’t have Peter sign. Not only would it mean that Peter would need to disclose his identity to the UN -- and he had to face it, Ross as well -- but also the origin of his powers would be
in question and then there was the biometrics and DNA. Peter was a kid. He was underage for one and for another he was Tony’s son and any information on Peter needed to be kept as quiet as possible especially from Thaddeus Ross because who knew what that man would want with Peter if Peter was ever on his radar. It made Tony wish that he didn’t need Peter as much as he did for what hopefully would be a quick capture.

Tony did finally get to see Peter a few minutes before everything went down at the airport. He saw him from afar first and he made a picture in his new suit. He even had the mask on.

“Thanks, Happy,” Tony said as he approached. Happy nodded before he turned and walked away.

Tony could hear the airport speakers telling people to evacuate and knew that Natasha had done her part. He was hoping that it was only a precaution and that things didn’t go too badly.

“Now, you have one job here, Peter,” Tony said.

“Yeah, Mr. Stark, but what are we doing here?” Peter asked.

“Well, we’re here to bring in Cap and his team.”

At that Peter frowned. “But aren’t you both on the same side? He’s -- Captain America is a good guy.”

Tony hadn’t foreseen this part of bringing Peter in. He sighed. They really didn’t have time for that.

“We’ve had a disagreement,” Tony said. “Currently he’s a fugitive and we have to bring him in. His -- he’s wrong, but he thinks he’s right. It makes him dangerous, kid, and the last thing we want is for anyone else to get hurt. Alright. So, as I was saying, you have one job. You’re my element of surprise here so I want you to just come in and take Cap’s shield and web him up. If it breaks into a fight then just web them up. We’re just here to capture them and I hope that’s all this turns to. We don’t need anyone to be injured, alright?”

“Got it,” Peter said and gave him a thumbs up while nodding. “Thanks for the suit, Mr. Stark. It’s awesome.”

Tony grinned. “Just stay out of sight, alright, but come on.”

After that things just got out of hand. Peter did as he was told, but there was no stopping Steve and the rest of them once they appeared and Tony found that he was angry enough at him that he could fight him and he didn’t even care that Steve seemed to have something to tell them because that didn’t matter when Tony was running out of time and Ross would send someone even worse after them. Tony needed to bring them in and then work on making everything like it used to be. Everything else including a heavy amendment of The Accords would come later.

Chapter End Notes

The one thing I wanted to note on is Tony's view of The Accords after meeting Peter and realizing that they're not the best thing. I really wanted Peter to have an impact on this for Tony. It does make me wonder if Peter did sign them in the MCU canon since I don't think that's been made clear but could relate to him being underage.

Not entirely sure when the next chapter will be up. I expect for it to happen sometime
this weekend. Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 40

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone reading! You guys are simply the best.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It shouldn’t have come to this. Steve hated it. He hated how relentless Tony was and how he didn’t even want to try and hear Steve out and he wondered if he and Sam had been wrong in not trying to explain everything earlier. It had just felt like Tony wouldn’t listen and Steve had just known that Tony wouldn’t be able to help them because of The Accords. Maybe he should have called anyway. It could have made things easier.

Now, he didn’t want to hear Steve out. He didn’t want to know about Bucky being innocent and he seemed so entirely sure that he needed to take them in to save the team and there was no changing his mind. Tony didn’t seem to see that it was The Accords that had broken up the team.

Seeing Tony with his black eye and the weariness that seemed to have become a part of him of late bothered him and Steve wished that he could just take it all away but there were more important things to worry about. There were soldiers that could be woken up at any moment and then The Accords wouldn’t matter if that did happen because who knew what they could be instructed to do. That’s what Tony and the others didn’t get. They weren’t just trying to get away to save themselves - it was bigger than them.

It wasn’t even about Bucky’s innocence, it was about stopping something worse from happening. They needed to get to the quinjet and they needed to go even if it meant that they had to fight their friends to do it.

Looking at Tony hurt the most because Steve couldn’t handle him being so far away and just out of reach. He had never once imagined that they would ever be on opposite sides and he hated it. Things had changed so much in just the course of days and it had happened so fast that Steve hadn’t had much of a moment to think about any of it or consider how they might make things better without all the fighting.

Steve didn’t know what to make of the new guy Tony had brought with him.. He was strong and agile and Steve was impressed because he could hold his own against Steve and all of the others too. Whoever he was, this guy was the real deal even if he seemed too young. Steve just had to believe that Tony knew what he was doing involving him.

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Everything was crazy. Peter felt sore all over and he felt more tired than he ever remembered being even before he got his powers. The whole thing had been more insane than anything that Peter could have imagined. He had fought Captain America and a bunch of other heroes. Peter could hardly believe that any of that had happened or that he had managed to help to take down the guy that got super big with an idea from Star Wars. For a moment, Peter thought that he had been close to passing out and then someone grabbed his arm and for a moment he thought it was someone trying to attack
him but it was just Mr. Stark and he looked concerned.

“You’re done, kid,” he said.

Peter shook his head, ready to stand back up.

“Nope. You’re done. You have to go home now or I’ll tell your aunt.”

He was too tired to argue and he really didn’t know if he could actually manage to do anything more so instead he fell back down on his back and he closed his eyes. He could hear Iron Man’s repulsors and the comms were still on too so he could hear that too but it didn’t really register with him.

Sometime later Black Widow was getting him to stand up.

“Happy’s here for you,” she said looking serious and worried and Peter didn’t know how to ask what happened.

“What--”

“You have to go,” she said. “Tony said to thank you. He’s -- he just wants to make sure you get back to the hotel.” Black Widow finished it at that and Peter could tell that he wasn’t going to get much more from her.

Peter let Happy take him to the car and when he looked back it seemed that everyone that had been on Cap’s side was getting arrested which meant that some of the people they were after had been caught but Captain America and his friend had still gotten away. Still, watching Hawkeye and the others in handcuffs felt wrong.

Happy took him back to the hotel. Peter looked through some of the footage from the fight on his phone and he was glad that Happy didn’t say anything on the way back. He was already starting to feel better by the time they arrived back.

“If you’re hungry just get room service. Don’t worry about the cost, alright. And don’t leave your room. We’re leaving early tomorrow.” Happy even wagged his finger at Peter as some sort of warning. “I’m serious,” Happy said and then watched Peter go into his room.

---

Natasha was on the lam and Rhodey was likely to never walk again and Ross had been blowing up Tony’s phone even despite how Tony had gotten the rest of team Cap arrested. He supposed that Ross saw bringing Cap and Bucky in as more important than the rest of them. To him it was also more important than anything else that happened like Rhodey falling out of the sky. To Ross that was second to getting Steve and Bucky. But Rhodey was a priority, so much so that he didn’t try to react to Natasha’s actions because at least she helped with the arrests and with Peter. And that was another thing, Tony hadn’t had a chance to call Happy to check in. Everything was all a mess. Still, Natasha was gone, now, and Tony was left with Vision.

T’Challa had disappeared too and he had been the one to tattle on Natasha to Ross so Tony knew that he was bound to be trying to figure out where Cap and Bucky had disappeared to which wasn’t a good thing necessarily.. Tony wanted to know where they were going himself because some of it just didn’t add up.

Cap would never have left everyone else behind...but then again there was a lot that Tony hadn’t expected Steve to do and it all went back to Bucky. It made Tony wonder if there was more there than Steve had ever let on about. But Tony didn’t think so.
Either way, Tony supposed that it really was over -- whatever it was that had barely started between them. It hurt and Tony felt it worse than even when things had ended with Pepper. He had just been all in when it came to Steve and never expected for something to tear them apart like this.

When Friday alerted him to the body found in the hotel room -- the body that belonged to the real therapist that should have seen Bucky, Tony knew that Steve hadn’t been lying when he said that Bucky wasn’t at fault. Tony just wished that he had let him know what he knew sooner or that better yet he had just signed The Accords and made this easier on all of them. Running away just made everything much harder than it needed to be and now getting any help to Steve would go against the law if Tony could even find a way to help him and Tony didn’t even know if he should except that they had been played and Tony needed to know why.

Tony hadn’t asked where Ross was taking Sam, Clint, Wanda, and Scott. He hadn’t had the time or cared because Rhodey mattered more in that moment, but he asked now and he didn’t like the response. He was starting to really think that The Accords were a huge mistake. Things had just never been meant to get to this point and no one was supposed to be imprisoned without a trial. He had been assured that things would never go that far. This wasn’t how the UN was supposed to work but Ross had had a hand in this and Tony didn’t know how he was supposed to counter it. Where was the other Ross when he needed him? And with Natasha gone Tony really had very little in the form of resources to help him. These were the moments when he wished that Bruce had returned.

Tony called Happy as he left the hospital and Rhodey in the capable hands of the doctors. “How’s the kid?”

“He’s fine. Bit noisy and hyper but he’s alright. He ate a lot.”

“Good,” Tony said, “make sure he stays at the hotel.”

“Will do boss,” Happy said.

Then he got a good look at everything that Friday had found and he had Friday send it to both Thaddeus Ross and Everett Ross. He didn’t know how it would help when it came to the Secretary of State but it was worth a shot if it meant that Tony could somehow get him to stop trying to pursue Barnes with the intent to kill.

**Chapter End Notes**

This was a chapter to really set up Siberia so that's coming up in the next one starting with a Bucky pov. Not sure when that one will be up yet as my schedule for the next week is a bit of a mess. Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 41

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys are the best.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bucky had always known that eventually someone was going to find him, it was just a matter of time. He just hadn’t known who would find him. He was well aware that Steve and The Avengers had been searching for him for a while but Bucky had just known that he couldn’t face that yet.

For the first time in a while he was managing to be a person and not a controlled weapon and there was peace in staying away. Bucky also knew that anyone left in Hydra that knew about him would be searching too. None of that had really mattered in some ways, though, because Bucky was good at hiding. He was good at keeping a low profile and blending in and for a while it had worked. It didn’t mean that Bucky relaxed any, but it did mean that he allowed himself a few moments of peace. He tried not to fall into routine and moved from place to place more often than not, but Bucky went out and he walked the streets and he interacted with people and he tried to act normal even as he had to always keep gloves and long sleeves on. Life was simple for once. Until it wasn’t and Steve Rogers was barging into his apartment and telling him that he was in danger as if Bucky hadn’t already been aware of it.

Steve was hard to look at, especially in the uniform. Bucky remembered him well and it pained him a little to know that he wouldn’t ever be the Bucky that Steve was searching for because memories didn’t do enough to reform him into that man when so much else had happened in the middle. So much that he had done. So much that had been done to him.

Then, there was some other guy after him and he was strong and he had claws and Bucky had only been trying to get some plums. He hadn’t expected for his face to be everywhere and for some random person to recognize him when a million others didn’t even spare him a glance. It didn’t take Bucky long to figure out why everyone was after him.

Steve tried to help, but they were just causing a scene and Bucky had known that they would end up captured and that he would end up blamed for some crime he hadn’t committed even though there were plenty of crimes that he had definitely been involved in most of which Bucky didn’t even really remember.

By the time that the words had been uttered and then Steve had managed to get him back to himself, Bucky didn’t know what to expect or what might come next. He just knew that he needed to trust Steve and that it was the only way forward. He couldn’t keep running from him because Steve would chase after him and that wouldn’t lead them anywhere.

The whole of it was messy and just kept getting worse and worse and yet it became clear that someone was using them and trying to play some sort of long game. Bucky only knew that if it was to do with the other soldiers being awakened that things would just get much much worse. It was imperative that they stop it and Bucky supposed that after all of that was done that he would find a way to just leave again and hide himself away because he couldn’t let anyone use him again. No
matter what Steve said, Bucky didn’t have a place at his side anymore. He was too much of a risk if triggering him into becoming The Soldier was so easy.

By the time that they were at the airport and the remaining of Steve’s team was trying to capture them, Bucky just knew that too much trouble had gone into something that could have been avoided if Steve wasn’t as stubborn as he was. He fought them anyway because stopping the other soldiers was more important than anything that might happen at the airport. They just needed to get away and on their way to Siberia and fast. Somehow they managed it with the help of one of Steve’s friends and yet when he looked at Steve he could tell that it was a bittersweet victory.

“What’s going to happen to your friends?” Bucky asked.

“Whatever it is, I’ll deal with it,” Steve said.

Bucky could hear it in his voice, how broken up about it Steve seemed to be and yet Bucky hadn’t detected any of that when the others were telling them that they would need to lose the fight in order for him and Steve to get away. It was something else.

“I don’t know if I’m worth all this to you,” Bucky said because it was true. He didn’t need Steve to throw everything away for him when he knew that their friendship could never be the same and that Bucky wasn’t going to be sticking around. He needed to know that Steve would have his friends back.

“What you did all those years -- it wasn’t you. You didn’t have a choice,” Steve said and he still didn’t really seem too keen on turning to look at Bucky even though the plane seemed to be mostly flying itself.

“I know,” Bucky responded, “but I did it.”

He didn’t think that Steve would ever understand that it didn’t matter that he hadn’t been in his right mind because it was his hands that had pulled the trigger or that had literally wrapped themselves around countless of throats and extinguished life without care. Bucky couldn’t remember everything -- not really -- but it was still there and he still knew he had done it and he didn’t even know how many people had died at his hands or how much else he had done but he couldn’t just push that guilt away just because he had been but a tool at someone else’s hand.

“I don’t know what’s going to happen,” Steve said, “but I lost you once and I don’t think I could do that again. Sam understands that and even Tony knows. I just -- I just don’t know if he’ll--”

Bucky didn’t know what to say. Steve had mentioned Tony Stark once when talking about him with Sam and how he wished that Stark might be able to help them. He had also mentioned him later right before the whole airport thing happened and it had been with some frustration and annoyance but not an ounce of hate and Steve almost seemed torn about Stark in a way that didn’t quite make sense.

It made sense later when they had arrived in Siberia and entered the base and it hadn’t been more than a few minutes before Iron Man appeared and Steve just seemed to lower his shield as Stark’s face came into view and it almost seemed to Bucky like Steve wanted to run to Stark’s side.

“You seem a little defensive,” Stark said.

“It’s been a long day,” Steve quipped back and his shield just went lower and he walked down the steps towards Stark until they were within reach of each other and Bucky didn’t know what to do because it hadn’t been too long since the fight and this man had been their opponent then.

“Tony, why are you here?”
Stark didn’t answer. Instead he was looking at Bucky. “At ease, Soldier,” he said, “I’m not currently after you.”

Bucky could see that. It was just hard to not be on the defensive. Steve nodded at him and he lowered the borrowed weapon down some but he was still cautious.

“Why are you here?” Steve asked again.

“Maybe your story is not so crazy,” Stark said and Bucky could hardly believe it because this man had changed his opinion somehow between the airport and now and Bucky didn’t know what to think or what to make of him.

“I was a bit hasty to not see that,” Stark said, “to not trust that this was bigger than just about The Accords.”

“Tony--I--”

Stark shook his head. “I think that’s for later, don’t you? Anyway, Ross doesn’t know that I’m here. I’d like to keep it that way. Otherwise I have to arrest myself.” He said it kind of off hand, as if it weren’t important when it actually really really was.

Bucky could tell that Steve was trying not to smile. “Well that sounds like a lot of paperwork,” Steve said instead.

Bucky didn’t get it. None of it was computing for him especially not when Stark reached out for Steve with his gauntlet covered hand and Steve just took it. It took Bucky back to that moment when they had gone to pick up the gear from that agent that was helping them and she had stepped into Steve’s space seemingly to kiss him and Steve had stumbled back so fast that it was a surprise to Bucky that he managed to stay on his feet as he apologized and turned red while the girl’s blush grew. Now, he was leaning into Stark’s space and Steve’s hand landed on Stark’s armor covered shoulder and he moved even closer to him which Stark didn’t seem to mind at all. Bucky wondered if this meeting would have gone differently if he wasn’t there watching it happen.

“It’s good to see you, Tony,” Steve said.

Bucky could see them stare at each other for a long moment before Stark finally responded.

“Yeah,” Stark said, “me too. So what’s the plan here?”

“I guess we have to see what we’re facing,” Steve said and Bucky didn’t know what he was supposed to do in the face of this.

Stark nodded. “Right,” he said, “and we’ll do this together.” He looked towards Bucky then and shook his head. “Now, seriously, this is a truce happening here. You can drop it.”

Bucky had almost forgotten how his weapon was held and he brought it down and Stark nodded and Bucky couldn’t believe that somehow Steve had the kind of friends that would show up and help despite everything. He supposed that it probably had something to do with how they didn’t seem to just be friends.

Chapter End Notes
I really loved writing this chapter because I hadn't gotten to write a Bucky POV for this fic and I do love Bucky. He was a fun one to write and I really liked his perspective on Steve and Tony as well especially at this point.

I'm not entirely sure when the next chapter will be up but I'm thinking this weekend -- at the latest Monday night.

thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
The whole base looked and felt abandoned, as if no one had even stepped foot inside the place in years but despite all the cobwebs there were clearly signs that Hydra had used this place. Tony felt slightly odd walking with Steve. They hadn’t gone out on a mission together since Ultron and Tony had only had to suit up because of all the trouble with the other man walking with them. Bucky Barnes was impressive to look at. His arm was more than what Tony had expected it to be considering its age, but then he couldn’t deny that Hydra clearly had some amazing scientific minds behind everything they’d done. Bucky was also quite a bit intimidating and while Tony had seen him fight first hand at the airport, it was different when he was just a few feet away and holding one of Natasha’s guns.

“So,” Tony said, “this Zemo guy, what’s his deal?”

In the couple of minutes that Tony had had to talk to Sam without Ross listening in he had gotten only a brief explanation to Steve and Bucky heading after Zemo at a Siberia abandoned Hydra bunker.

“Bucky’s not the only super soldier,” Steve said.

Tony should have known. It always went back to recreating a soldier -- recreating Steve. Bucky wasn’t exactly a failed experiment so it was only natural that they had tried it again. Tony just had to wonder about where they had gotten the serum because as far as he knew no one had been able to replicate it or the conditions necessary to truly make a super soldier.

“They’re worse than him according to Bucky. It would be -- can you imagine what would happen--”

Tony could. He knew the kind of damage that Bucky alone could do. He had faced it himself recently enough and there were more.

“We think that’s what Zemo’s after. He wants to use them for whatever it is he actually wants. That’s why -- Tony, that’s the reason we had to to take the quinjet. It doesn’t matter what The Accords mean or any of that, not in the face of this. And you have to realize that the UN would never act this quickly to let us stop something like this.”

Tony didn’t really want to discuss The Accords. He knew now how flawed the whole thing was and yet Tony also understood that for something like this the UN would have no choice but to allow them to take matters into their hands.

“I don’t want to fight,” Tony said. “I came as a friend and because I didn’t want--”
Steve nodded.

Barnes hadn’t said much since Tony had arrived and as they kept walking through the abandoned bunker. A part of Tony wanted to say something to him maybe to apologize for the way that his history as The Winter Soldier had been pulled out to frame him, but Tony couldn’t get the words out. Instead, he spoke to Steve.

“I’m sorry,” Tony said after a while. “This -- all of it -- it hasn’t gone the way it should have.”

“Not much we could have helped,” Steve said. “I know I didn’t make it easier.”

Eventually, Friday had a reading for a body signature which could only mean that they were getting closer to Zemo and he was right. But just like everything else that happened that had clearly been well orchestrated by Helmut Zemo, nothing was like they expected. Zemo had killed the soldiers. There were gunshots through each of the cryo tanks. So if he had wanted to get rid of them, then what was the point? Tony just -- he didn’t get it. This guy had come out of nowhere and started playing some sort of game with them and Tony didn’t like it. It had been planned out too well as if they guy somehow knew exactly what they were going to do before they did anything.

Steve moved forward first as the lights came on and Zemo spoke about not wanting more soldiers. That was obvious. What wasn’t obvious was what Zemo might be after.

“What the hell,” Bucky muttered and Tony agreed.

As they stepped further in more lights came on and Tony lifted his hand, ready to shoot.

“I’m grateful to them though, they brought you here,” Zemo said.

Steve threw the shield in his direction but it only hit steel and came back to Steve undamaged aside from the marks that T’Challa had left on it.

“Please, Captain. The Soviets built this chamber to withstand the launch of a blast of a few 100 rockets.”

“I’m betting I can beat that,” Tony said.

“Oh, I’m sure you could, Mr. Stark. Given time. But then you’ll never know why you came.”

That gave all of them a bit of pause because wasn’t that the whole point of them being there? Except that Zemo had surprised them once more with his motives and it seemed more important to just stop him and keep him from whatever it was that he was actually trying to accomplish. Steve moved even closer and a part of Tony wanted to stop him because all of this felt like they were walking into some sort of trap or rather taken Zemo’s bait like children drawn away from parents at a playground for the promise of sweets.

“You killed innocent people in Vienna just to bring us here,” Steve said.

And it made him dangerous, Tony knew, because a man that killed innocents would do anything and had nothing to lose.

Zemo and Steve continued talking and Tony tried to get a read on everything around them but it didn’t seem like Zemo had done anything else aside from killing the soldiers. Still, he didn’t like this. He was uneasy about the whole thing and Bucky standing close to his side seemed to be in agreement.
“I’ve lost everyone,” Zemo said after Steve had figured out that he was Sokovian and of course he was. Sokovia seemed to be the event that would haunt them forever and Tony was directly to blame. “And so will you,” Zemo said.

Tony felt a chill wash over him. He moved closer to Steve, not sure if it was because he wanted to reassure Steve that everything that had happened so far wouldn’t break them apart or because he needed the reassurance himself and Steve glanced back at him and his eyes told Tony how much he cared for him. It was enough to know that because it meant that they could get through anything. The Sokovia Accords, whatever Ross was trying to do, Zemo, and whatever else would come their way.

A screen next to Steve turned on and it seemed like this was exactly what Zemo had been waiting for. A part of Tony wanted to rebel and refuse to watch and not give Zemo what he wanted, but the grainy image drew him in.

“An empire toppled by its enemies can rise again. But one which crumbles from within...that’s dead forever,” Zemo said.

The words didn’t even register for Tony. They didn’t need to.

Tony moved closer and yeah, it really was a familiar road. There was a date like those from a security feed. December 16, 1991 and Tony knew. He knew but he didn’t know.

“I know that road.” Tony said and then when there was no answer, he looked towards Zemo. “What is this?”

His eyes caught sight of the date on the tape. It was in Russian, but he had already connected the dots on the date. Still, it was too much. He glanced towards Steve who seemed frozen, eyes stuck on the screen. Bucky didn’t say or react either even though he couldn’t even see what was happening and Zemo didn’t answer. He just watched them. Then a car suddenly appeared and Tony knew even through the black and white what car it was and who was driving it. It slammed straight into a tree and Tony hated it. Hated that this moment had been captured and yet he just didn’t understand the point.

So this was how Howard and Maria Stark died. So what -- car crashes happened all the time. There had to be more to this. There was.

A motorcycle drove into the frame and parked near the car. Tony’s heart was beating fast. If he weren’t so frozen in front of the screen, he was sure he would have reached out to Steve even despite their audience, but as it was Tony felt completely frozen. It was an out of body experience and he didn’t know how to handle it.

Howard got out of the car. He was asking for help, begging from the ground where he had fallen and the man was -- it was Bucky. Bucky was --

“...Sergeant Barnes,” Howard said with some surprise in the moments before Bucky picked him up by the back of the neck and just started punching his face with the metal arm.

Tony winced and he tried and failed to look away. He could feel Steve standing behind him, close enough but not touching him and Tony was -- he couldn’t believe it. His mind had always been quick to process most things but this one was hard.

Barnes put Howard back inside the car and rounded it to his mother. Maria. She was crying out for
Howard. Tony couldn’t see her clearly, but he could hear her voice and he saw Barnes over the hood of the car and he knew -- he knew that Barnes was killing Maria Stark. He was killing his mom.

Tony couldn’t turn to look at Steve even as Steve grabbed his shoulder and tried to say something that Tony didn’t hear because Barnes was right there. The man that killed Howard and Maria was right there.

Tony acted impulsively, trying to lunge towards Barnes, but Steve grabbed his arm.

“Tony! Tony!” Steve yelled, as if yelling his name could bring Tony back to his senses or something along those lines.

Tony didn’t care. He wanted to go after Barnes -- after the man that had killed his parents and staged a car crash. Done it so well that no one had wondered if the accident hadn’t been an accident. Aunt Peggy hadn’t even wondered.

When he looked towards Steve, Tony didn’t know what to make of the fear in Steve’s eyes. He wasn’t unaffected by the video, Tony could see that, but he didn’t seem. Steve wasn’t surprised. Tony’s world stopped once more because--

“Did you know?” Tony demanded.

Steve didn’t answer at once, but Tony stared him down and he knew the answer before Steve gave it. “I didn’t know it was him,” Steve said and Tony went cold.

Tony couldn’t move -- couldn’t do anything as the words washed over him. He was frozen, his mind and body not sure what they could do and Steve pulled him into a hug despite the suit which made it a bit awkward, but Tony found that in this instance he didn’t want that. He didn’t need that -- the comfort and love and support and whatever else Steve should have been offering instead of admitting to knowing. It was -- Tony couldn’t wrap his mind around it. Steve had known and he had never told him.

Steve’s gloved hands tried to cup his face, but Tony pulled away. He was angry and hurt and Steve was a part of it. He had -- Tony pushed Steve off of him, shooting him with a repulsor blast for good measure and then he turned towards Barnes who was still only feet away but only stood still for a moment more, but it was a long enough moment for Steve to get back up and then Tony knew that he needed to follow his instinct because it was the only thing that made sense and his instinct told him that he had the man that killed his parents in front of him and he had to do something about it.

Chapter End Notes

I love what this chapter became and I think I just rewatched the Siberia scene another ten times writing it. One thing to point out which I found interesting while watching it is that Tony doesn’t actually see his mom die. We see it because we get to see a flashback. Tony sees a grainy low quality security video and his mom is in the car so Tony never sees her and actually he shouldn't be able to hear her either because I would assume that the security video wouldn't pick up sound. Bucky kills her while she's seated in the car and Tony can only imagine how he kills her. He does see Howard die because that happens directly in front of the camera. I did decide that Tony gets to hear them to add to the impact it makes on Tony.
One other thing to point out is that Steve is just as shocked by this moment because while he knows Hydra killed Howard and Maria - Howard was his friend and it must affect him a little to see Bucky kill him and not just because he's watching Bucky kill someone and it's someone they know -- but because Steve had no idea that Bucky was involved in their deaths until that moment. (This is something that people like to forget about this moment).

Thanks for reading.

Next chapter will hopefully be up Tuesday? (latest Thursday) It really depends on if I get it done because it's not actually ready after I had to make this chapter happen and the World Cup is on which is taking me away from writing.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
Bucky killed Tony’s parents. It was -- why hadn’t he seen that coming? Why hadn’t he even considered that it was a possibility? Steve had just known that it was Hydra and it had never clicked that of course Hydra would use Bucky to do it and really they had probably loved making Bucky kill Howard who while not a friend to Bucky had definitely been at least an acquaintance. Everyone had known that Howard knew Steve and Bucky and the rest of the Howling Commandos. Howard had probably even bragged about it within Shield to the very people that would arrange for him to be killed. It was -- it felt like losing Peggy all over again because even though Howard had been gone longer and Steve had accepted that he was gone now the grief hit him again and Bucky was the cause of it. Except that he wasn’t.

The Winter Soldier controlled by Hydra had done this. Not Bucky. To Tony that distinction didn’t matter.

“You knew,” Tony whispered as he turned away from Steve, as if that were just clicking for him.

“I’m so -- I knew, alright, I knew but I didn’t--”

The despair in Tony’s eyes was enough to tear Steve apart and it was there in part because of him, because he had been so stupid to think that in not telling Tony that he was protecting him. Tony was past discussing anything and he seemed to start walking away before he turned again and just punched Steve, surprising him with the blow. He heard Tony move towards Bucky as he scrambled to his feet to try to stop him and yet Tony managed to grab Bucky and throw him on the ground.

“Stop! Tony, stop. Don’t do this,” Steve yelled, but it was falling on deaf ears and Bucky wasn’t going to just let Tony beat on him either.

He was fighting back and the two of them tumbled together, destroying things left and right as they fought. Steve could tell that Bucky was trying to hold back, but he really couldn’t when Tony was all in and Steve didn’t know what to do. He needed to stop it. Tony couldn’t -- he couldn’t let Tony hurt Bucky and he really didn’t want Tony to get hurt either because that would be the outcome and all because of Zemo.

“Tony! Tony! You have to -- he didn’t. Hydra was controlling his mind. Please, you have to listen--”

Steve managed to catch up to them and he got in between Tony and Bucky. He was trying to catch Tony and get him to see sense, but Tony seemed to only be thinking about revenge and he didn’t
seem to care that some of his hits were landing on Steve and not Bucky. There was only one thing for it. He told Bucky to go. It was the best way to deal with it. Bucky would be out of harm’s reach and Steve could try and talk sense into Tony.

“Move,” Tony said and his voice was harsh and hard even as he tried to physically make Steve move.

“It wasn’t him,” Steve tried again but it was futile. Tony wasn’t listening. He dodged Tony’s hits but didn’t hit back, hoping to give Bucky some time to get away if he could just distract Tony long enough.

Steve wasn’t sure that he could make Tony stop -- not when Tony was dead set on going after Bucky -- but he hoped that if the target were removed he might calm down enough to listen to Steve and to rationalize everything. Tony didn’t even seem to care that Bucky had already done some damage to the suit in his fight against Tony. That was secondary to getting to Bucky and Steve hated how much all of this was his fault.

Steve had kept the truth from Tony thinking that it would be better for Tony if he didn’t know and didn’t have to deal with the accident becoming something more. He already had enough pain associated with his parents’ deaths. Instead, Steve’s lack of thought had given Zemo an opening to strike against them and they had all just let him. And the thing of it was that it had been hard to watch Bucky kill one of his friends -- to watch Howard recognize Bucky right before his life was taken.

Steve couldn’t really believe it -- he couldn’t accept it even though he had seen it with his own eyes and he knew that it was ten times harder for Tony and as Tony landed a hard blow and threw him aside with another repulsor blast, Steve knew that none of it was simple.

Bucky hadn’t gotten too far, climbing up towards an exit. Tony was flying with only half his fight system, but he was trying to make do to go after him and Steve had to follow -- wanted to just wrap his arms around Tony and keep him from going anywhere, but Tony was relentless and it made a difference that while he was trying to get a hold of Tony, Tony didn’t care if he hurt Steve, Bucky, or even himself.

Bucky had no option but to fight Tony as Tony reached him and took away his chance of getting out and Steve was sickened by the thought that Tony might actually mean to kill Bucky and it wasn’t simply about injuring him. Steve followed after them faster and when he got a chance he just threw himself at Tony to stop him and they both fell away and so did Steve’s shield but that didn’t matter. Making contact with the ground hurt and he couldn’t imagine that Tony was much better but at least Steve had managed to keep them apart.

He stood up, tried to shake it off and looked towards Tony who was back on his feet as well and there was not even an ounce of hesitation in him as he moved.

“Tony, please,” Steve said, “please, please listen to me. I am so sorry. This isn’t going to change what happened. You’re not thinking logically, Tones. Please.”

“I don’t care,” Tony gritted out. “He killed my mom.”

Steve heard it in his words, the devastation and agony, and the loss and Steve could never imagine feeling what Tony was feeling. He had known that the death of his parents was a sore subject. Had known it long before Tony had gone and built himself a machine to deal with the trauma of their deaths and it was all being brought back right to the forefront. For Tony it didn’t matter that it was The Winter Soldier who had killed them and not Bucky. He wasn’t thinking logically and he really did see Bucky as the killer. But more than that Tony didn’t care about consequences or what might
happen after -- he was focusing on the present moment and his emotions The Accords and everything else be damned and it hit Steve then that a singular mind focus like his has been from the moment that Bucky’s name was uttered was dangerous.

“Don’t kill my friend,” Steve said.

But Tony didn’t turn around and go towards where Bucky must have fallen. No, he jumped down to punch Steve and having the ire turned on him was good and bad all at once because fighting Tony was the last thing that Steve wanted. He cursed himself for getting them into this situation and yet he was at fault so he didn’t put up much of a fight. Steve could handle this and more and it didn’t matter because he deserved it too. Tony threw him to the ground and shot at him from his gauntlets and then punched him and Steve stood up and let him keep hitting him some more.

But then, Bucky rejoined the fight, bringing the shield with him and Steve wanted to yell at him because he should have been getting away or if not that then leaving them to it, but Bucky jumped in front of Steve to take a blow meant for him and it was as if Tony remembered about Bucky again because Steve was ignored as Tony shoved him away and kept him away with a repulsor to the chest and when he looked up Bucky was fighting Tony with Steve’s shield and then he had Tony pressed into one of the walls.

“Stop, stop. Don’t--”

Neither Bucky or Tony seemed to care that Steve was yelling at them.

Bucky’s metal hand was reaching for the reactor and Steve couldn’t breathe. These were the two most important people in his life and they were trying to kill each other.

“Don’t! Bucky stop, stop!” Steve thought that he was crying. His chest was tight and he rushed forward.

“He’s not going to stop,” Bucky said and his fingers were digging into the armor -- into Tony’s armor.

Steve had to remind himself that the reactor wasn’t imbedded into Tony’s chest anymore and yet that didn’t make it any less horrible. He rushed forward and pulled at Bucky. Bucky fell at Tony’s feet and Tony didn’t waste any time both of his hands coming up together and--

Tony blew Bucky’s arm off. The shock of it threw Bucky back some feet and he screamed, but Tony didn’t stop. He hit Bucky and then kicked him away before his head lifted towards Steve and he half-heartedly shot Steve with a repulsor blast again. Steve didn’t even fall down from it and instead he moved closer, dropping the shield away because he didn’t need it.

Tony hit him and kept hitting and Steve tried to dodge or catch his fists when he could but otherwise he let Tony just do it and hoped that the anger and the pain would leave him with every hit.

“Think about your son,” Steve said after a while, not sure if anything else would resonate. “Think about Peter. He can’t lose you. I can’t lose you. I’m sorry.”

Tony hit him with a repulsor and he went flying against a wall.

“Don’t talk about him,” Tony growled.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry but I couldn’t let you -- I can’t--”

Tony didn’t respond. Instead he came at Steve again and it was getting tiring. If Steve felt this way
he could only imagine Tony inside of the suit. It really had been a long day and more fighting than any of them needed. When Tony came at him again, Steve was faster and he grabbed him instead, holding on hard.

“Stop. Tony, stop. I’m sorry and I shouldn’t have kept it from you--”

“No, you shouldn’t have,” Tony said and he pulled out of the hold but he still didn’t take the faceplate off and Steve couldn’t tell what he was thinking with it still on.

“You need to get past this, Tony, if not for yourself then for Peter. Please, Tony, please…”

Tony turned and looked towards Bucky and then back at Steve before he lifted an arm towards Bucky and shot him with a repulsor again and Steve grabbed his arm pulling him back.

“Tony!”

Tony didn’t put up a fight, dropping his arm and he seemed to shrug as he turned back and the faceplate finally came down. “Had to get that last one in.” The humor wasn’t there. Tony was dead serious and he had a black eye and blood running down his cheek and his eyes were hard and even then Steve could see all the pent up emotion.

Steve reached out, wiping away blood with his gloved hand but it didn’t matter because Tony flinched away and even he seemed surprised at his motion.

“Steve, I --” Tony ducked his head and when he looked back up Bucky groaned from behind them and Steve thought that Tony was a second away from jumping back into a fight but he stayed put and Steve didn’t drop his hands away from Tony’s suit covered arm and he thought that Tony seemed to relax under his grip.

“It’s alright,” Steve whispered. “This -- it’s alright.”

Tony shook his head, but Steve didn’t know what he meant by it. Bucky groaned again, but Steve knew that Bucky would be okay. Physically there was little that could hurt him and Tony was -- it was precarious with Tony.

Chapter End Notes

I hope everyone enjoyed the changes here. Most of it comes down to Steve and his motives and just how he handles this fight. I tried to follow some of the canon fight so most of it when it comes to Bucky and Tony does happen the same way but Steve is definitely holding back considerably especially once it comes to just him and Tony on their own and he's more trying to stop the fight altogether rather than trying to join in.

The next one will conclude the Siberia part of this fic and should be up this weekend.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumblr where you can also come and talk to me.
“Do you even remember them?” Stark had asked.

The question kept ringing in his head as he lay on the cold ground and his shoulder screamed at him in red hot flaring pain that throbbed down into his back. Things were fuzzy, a little disjointed and yet he heard the question again and again.

He did remember them. Bucky remembered most of his victims if not because he had a solid memory of every crime that he had ever committed, then because he had spent plenty of time researching all of the missions that he’d been sent on. There were hundreds.

Bucky remembered seeing Howard Stark, how much older the man had looked from the man that Bucky recalled from the war. He remembered the fear in his eyes and how he was begging for someone to help his wife because in that moment Maria’s life had mattered more to Howard Stark than his own.

Some of the missions had been difficult -- had left him in need of reprogramming. This one -- Bucky remembered a moment where he had almost managed to not go through with it and to convince himself that he didn’t have to and yet the little voice in the back of his head just hadn’t been enough.

Bucky remembered clearly the way that Maria had looked at him, her blond hair in that perfect bun and her face already bleeding from the crash. She was crying and yet her deep brown eyes -- Tony Stark’s eyes -- had bore into him with fear and pain and the knowledge that she was about to die and Bucky’s hands had wrapped around that neck and squeezed the life from her as he had done to so many others.

Tony had looked at him the same way when he was clawing at the arc reactor because Bucky knew it would stop him if the powersource stopped working. And yet -- maybe he had underestimated how much Steve wouldn’t like him injuring the man he loved or even his suit of armor.

---

Steve wanted to check on Bucky, but he didn’t know what doing that would do to Tony who still looked a little unstable even though he’d moved a little closer to Steve. Steve didn’t know what came next or what would happen between them and it hurt like a deep ache in his chest because he couldn’t imagine that things would just return to normal. He wouldn’t blame Tony if he wanted them to put some sort of stop or pause to the relationship that had been forming between them as much as
it would pain him. He just hoped that things wouldn’t head in that direction.

“Tony,” Steve whispered and Tony turned to look at him.

He looked exhausted more than anything else and yet there were clearly still traces of the fight and of the pain that ran deep in him.

“I really -- I’m --”

Tony lifted a hand and Steve had to stop and then Tony didn’t say anything and neither of them could when suddenly T’Challa appeared. He wore his suit again and he looked impressive as he moved, surveying all of them and Steve had to wonder about how long he had been there.

“It is a good thing I was following you, Stark,” T’Challa said. “Otherwise, I might not have learned the truth.”

“Your highness,” Steve said.

T’Challa nodded at him and moved closer, standing just next to where Bucky still lay.

“I’ve taken care of Zemo,” T’Challa said, “since you were all a bit distracted.

Tony made a noise, but he didn’t correct T’Challa. Instead he cleared his throat. “Take care of as in-”

T’Challa shook his head. “He’s not dead. He is merely in my custody. I think it’s become clear that I did not do the right thing -- the thing my father would have done. I’ve allowed my grief and my pain and my need for revenge cloud me.” He looked directly at Tony as he spoke.

Tony nodded slowly, but he didn’t say anything.

“Our only problem now is that for all the proof that we have it does not mean that you have not committed a crime, Captain. The UN does not look upon you favorably. Neither you or your friend.”

T’Challa motioned towards Bucky.

“He’s right,” Tony said. “There’s nothing I can do. The others they’re -- Ross put them in The Raft, I didn’t think he would. They’re--”

Steve reached up to take the cowl off. He had never thought past getting to Siberia and taking care of the soldiers because that had always been more important. Turned out that it wasn’t as important as Steve had feared it would be. It had put them in a different situation entirely and somehow everything was still just as messy in the worst way because nothing really was ever going to be the same. Steve couldn’t go home. He couldn’t go back to New York and the compound or even the tower. He was a wanted man.

“You are welcome to come to Wakanda,” T’Challa said, breaking into Steve’s thoughts. “I fear that my involvement has made this situation worse. We might be able to help your friend, too,” He motioned towards Bucky again.

“Yes,” Steve said at once. “Thank you.”

T’Challa gave a nod.

Bucky was awake and starting to get up and T’Challa headed over towards him looking concerned. He seemed to be made to be a leader.
Wakanda was probably the best option for the moment if only so they could regroup. He wondered if Tony might go with them -- stick with him for just a little longer because Steve couldn’t imagine just parting ways not when everything was still such a mess between them. When he turned to Tony, Tony looked like he was trying to figure something out.

“Tony, I--”

Tony shook his head. “This is exactly the kind of thing I wanted to avoid,” Tony said and Steve knew that. He knew that so well.

“I know,” he muttered.

Tony pursed his lips. “It’s different now. I’m not in a position where I can change anything now. I don’t trust Ross and I don’t like what he’s done and Natasha is -- well, I don’t know where she is. This is such a huge mess and -- no, I guess you better go with them.” He seemed to be measuring his words not sure about what he could say and holding back as much emotion as he could.

Steve wanted to beg him to come with them. They could figure everything out from The Accords to Ross to The Raft and their friends locked up. Together they could resolve everything and make it better and...No, they really really couldn’t, could they? Not without Tony getting himself into just as much trouble as Steve and possibly making things worse. And there was Peter to think of -- Tony might not have met him yet but he would never abandon the chance.

“I don’t have to go to Wakanda,” Steve whispered.

Tony shook his head, looking a little amused. “You’re not the guy that shrinks, Steve, whoever that was. I can’t just hide you in my pocket or something. This is -- it shouldn’t have--” His words were full of emotion and he gulped as he trailed off.

Tony didn’t say it, but Steve could read between the lines. This wouldn’t have happened if Steve had just signed and listened to Tony and stayed at his side instead of arguing every counterpoint and Tony didn’t want to call him out on it directly.

Steve couldn’t help it but reach out towards Tony. He was almost acting on instinct and he hoped that Tony wouldn’t pull back this time. It didn’t matter that T’Challa and Bucky were there in the background. To Steve’s surprise, Tony let him in his space and leaned into his touch even. His eyes fluttered closed as Steve’s thumb brushed gently across the bruise under his eye and Steve just leaned in, pressing their lips together first into just a quick sweep of his lips over Tony’s and then pressing a bit harder. Tony went with it, giving as good as he got and seemingly putting everything in it.

It was awkward to kiss him while Tony was in the suit which put the two of them at the same height and also added a bulkiness to it that Steve was unused to. That didn’t matter. Tony didn’t seem to be fazed by it either not when they both knew it was going to be the last kiss in a long while. Steve poured his all into it. An apology and a declaration of love all at once in the form of a kiss that went from hard to sweet and lingering and then back again because neither of them wanted to forget this and what it felt like.

And Steve was amazed -- amazed that they could have this moment and share this kiss despite every single moment of conflict and disagreement. But then, none of it had ever had to do with this -- with them and with everything they shared.

When it was over, and Tony had to pull away for air, breathing a little harder than normal, Tony leaned his head against Steve’s and Steve wanted to keep him as close as possible for as long as he could even if that was only a few minutes. He tried to imagine that this wasn’t some sort of goodbye,
but it was hard not to.

“We have to go, Captain,” T’Challa said eventually. “I hate to break up the moment, but it is time.”

T’Challa turned away and headed back the way he came and when Steve looked around Bucky was already gone. It left them alone for a moment longer and Steve just pressed himself against the Iron Man suit harder.

Tony pulled back reluctantly and Steve almost wanted to just grab him and take him with them but he knew he couldn’t. Instead he touched Tony’s cheek.

“I...”

Tony shook his head. “Don’t say it.” When he looked at Steve there was pain mixed with regret and sorrow.

“Okay,” Steve whispered. “But not saying it doesn’t change anything.”

The corner of Tony’s lips quirked up. “I know.”

Chapter End Notes

We are not quite done with Civil War just yet. Soooo much still happens in the post-Siberia time which I really didn't expect.

So I did heavily debate having Steve go with Tony but I realized fairly quickly that it would just lead to more trouble and also he has to go get the others out of The Raft so there's also that. This does not mean that Steve and Tony won't see each other again or communicate. I kind of wanted to put a small sort of pause on that aspect of the story in a way because we have to get back to Peter and that side of the plot which I'm really excited for. Thanks to everyone reading.

Next chapter will probably be up on Wednesday seeing as I am working until Wednesday and won't have any time at all before then to post.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 45

Chapter Notes

Happy 100th birthday to Steve Rogers. I figure that's really the holiday worth celebrating this 4th of July...

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys are the best. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony felt like he had been halved. Like someone had cut out his heart and thrown Cap’s shield on it edge first. And then because that wasn’t enough, it had also been thrown into oncoming traffic, run over, and then scrapped off only to be stomped on. It wasn’t even just a metaphorical pain but physical. His chest was tight and his head was pounding.

Maria Stark had been something else. Tony had never really thought about his mother as formidable, but she had to have been to deal with Howard. She hadn’t been the housewife that everyone thought her to be and aside from being in charge of numerous charitable foundations, she had been brilliant in her own ways and free in her own ways. Somehow, she had loved Howard. But more importantly, she had loved Tony and Tony had adored her.

Tony grew up fast, partly due to his genius but mostly because Howard pushed him to and Maria just thought that maybe Howard knew best when it came to her brilliant child. Tony didn’t resent Maria for boarding school or for all the grades he skipped and entering MIT at the tender age of fifteen which was crazy to think about because his own son wasn’t even fifteen yet. He felt the way she cared with every touch and every phone call and every visit home and when they died it was her death he mourned. She was his mom.

Their deaths had lingered for him for so long that Tony never thought that grief would ever leave and it was a wound that Tony had tried to fill up with parties and drinking and sex but mostly with avoidance. Eventually things had gotten better -- it had become an ache that hid away until there was something to remind him of it. Lately, B.A.R.F had made a difference and Tony had started to move past it. It was twenty steps back now. All that work had fallen by the wayside with the grainy video and Bucky — Steve’s Bucky -- had done it. Logically he could tell himself that it was Hydra but that was a hard thing to conform to because he had seen it. He had seen that man kill both his father and mother with his own eyes and that wasn’t something that could be scrubbed away.

Tony didn’t regret going after a fight. He didn’t regret his reaction because it was justified even if it was thoughtless. He was also still fairly upset with Steve because even if he hadn’t known that Barnes was to blame, he had known Hydra was and he never planned on letting Tony know. Not even after they had started whatever it was they had started. Tony didn’t know if he regretted the kiss they’d shared when it was all over and the fight had been drawn away from him or not. He supposed that maybe he didn’t because even this lie and this betrayal did nothing to take away his feelings for Steve even if he was still hurt and angry.

Tony had let them leave first, lingering inside the bunker while they did because he didn’t know if he could see Barnes again. Or for that matter watch Steve leave with no idea as to when he would see him again.
“We will find a way to fix this,” T’Challa had said after Steve walked out, returning because he’d left something behind but maybe because he wanted to talk to Tony alone. “The Accords were not meant to harm good men and women and my grief blinded me a bit on that. I think you can agree.”

“You could say that,” Tony said.

“I want to know that we can try and do something to change it,” T’Challa said. “This has not gone the way any of us wanted it to. We’ll meet again, Tony Stark. You’re a good man. And it went for you too, you are welcome in Wakanda any time.”

Tony nodded. He didn’t know if he would take him up on visiting Wakanda knowing that Barnes would probably be there but Tony knew they’d be in contact soon. In the end, none of what happened in Siberia would make him forget that he had one more important priority than anything else and a huge problem to deal with. It seemed that things would never slow down for him.

Tony called Happy on the flight back to Berlin, back in the quinjet that Steve and Barnes had taken and then left for him.

“Hey, how’s the kid doing?”

“He’s alright,” Happy said, “you know this really isn’t part of the job description.”

“I’ll be there in the morning and take him home personally,” Tony said because he wanted to keep the conversation short.

“Sure thing, boss. But I do have to--”

“I’ll talk to you later, Happy,” Tony said and hung up before Happy could respond.

He sank back into the seat of the quinjet and let out a long breath. A part of him wanted to just run and hide. He wanted to fly directly to New York and go to the tower and lock himself in the workshop. It would have been the easier thing to do especially since even he couldn’t know if his intention had been to kill Barnes like Steve clearly thought it was. He had just known that he had to do something and that Barnes killed his parents. Killed his mom.

It was painful to think about and even worse because Steve should have told him about Hydra’s involvement in their deaths and instead he had kept quiet. Tony believed him when he said that he hadn’t known it was Barnes that did it, but he had still kept it from Tony and Tony couldn’t look past that. Maybe he would have felt different if he and Steve weren’t together in a romantic sense, but Tony just couldn’t be sure.

It was only thinking of Peter and Rhodey that made him hold on and not fall apart immediately. After all, they were both still in Berlin. Tony had already called in Dr. Cho to take care of Rhodey along with her team and he hoped that they’d be able to transfer him back to the states soon. He also didn’t want to just leave Peter to Happy. Not when he could tell that Happy wasn’t exactly thrilled to be looking after a teenager. He probably thought it was below him and that he had better things to do back in New York even if he had started asking for more responsibility. The thing of it was that Tony just didn’t have need for a driver or for a bodyguard but even though Happy had become head of security for SI, he always fell back on those positions and Tony just couldn’t change that. He also did consider Happy a friend and he wanted to keep him around even if sometimes Happy tended to get a bit intense. Maybe Tony would need to find something else for him to do.

Either way, even if Happy had been happy to look after Peter, Tony wanted to be the one to take Peter back home if only because he wanted to be completely sure that Peter was alright and because
he wanted to take any moment he had with Peter and treasure it.

The meeting that Tony had always wanted hadn’t gone in any way how Tony expected or wanted it to, but it happened and Tony loved his kid. He loved everything about him, even his superhero tendencies, and Tony couldn’t wait to see him again.

When he arrived in Berlin he headed to the hospital first. It was just after midnight and Happy had messaged him with an update on Peter so Tony wasn’t worried. If there was one thing he could trust it was that Happy did take his tasks seriously. Still, he was eager to see Peter so his stop at the hospital wasn’t going to be long. He just needed to check in.

Rhodey was asleep when Tony stopped by his room and Vision sat in a chair next to the bed looking pensive.

“He’s the same,” Vision said.

Tony had expected as much. Spine injuries were not something that could just be fixed or reversed. The only option would be some sort of prosthetic or exoskeleton. Rhodey would have options, Tony would make sure of that.

“I realize now that it is emotion that has gotten the best of me,” Vision said. “I was distracted by Wanda.”

“Oh,” Tony said. He didn’t know if had expected Vision to actually voice that or not.

“I thought the connection I had with her was just to do with her powers and the stone but it is more than that. I -- I wish things had ended differently.”

“So do I, Viz, so do I,” Tony said.

“Would you -- should someone take a look at your injuries?”

His arm ached something fierce. They had put it in a sling earlier and Tony was sure that he had probably injured it even more in the fight with Bucky, but the physical pain was nothing to the rest and even Tony could tell that his arm wasn’t broken. He had a black eye, he knew, and his ribs on his right side felt sore but he’d had worse and survived.

“No, no, I’m fine,” Tony said and moved closer to Rhodey.

The nurse had told him that Rhodey wouldn’t be walking up until morning so Tony just leaned over him and pressed a kiss to his forehead and whispered an apology.

“Contact me if anything happens -- have him call me when he wakes up.”

Vision nodded.

Chapter End Notes

We will be getting back into more Peter related things in the next chapter which I know you’ve all been waiting for. I think the next chapter will be up this coming weekend.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.
Come like/reblog [this chapter](#) and the [masterpost](#) on my tumblr.
Chapter 46

Chapter Notes

Thank you once more to everyone reading. It's insane the response this fic gets from kudos and comments. You are all wonderful.

I wrote something I really didn't like in Peter's POV for this chapter originally and rewrote it and still didn't like it and then it just felt right for it to be a Tony POV instead and I really love what came of that. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When Tony arrived at the hotel, he regretted not getting himself a room earlier. As it turned out some sort of conference had all the rooms booked up. So instead, he wound up asking for a copy of Peter's room key. Figuring that Happy and Peter were both asleep, Tony figured he'd just go and sit in Peter's room mostly because he didn't want to deal with Happy but also because Tony didn't think he would actually manage to sleep. No, what he needed was to sit and figure out exactly what came next.

Apparently he was facing his first problem the moment he walked into Peter's hotel room. Tony had been feeling a little paternal perhaps when he walked in and decided to check on Peter. He hadn't expected to almost have a heart attack because Peter was nowhere to be found. The bed was unmade and it was clear that Peter had been enjoying his night there going by the candy wrappers left on the bed. Tony was glad that at least it wasn't the mini bar that had caught Peter's attention but he had still left the hotel room and from the looks of it he had left through the window and another glance around the room told Tony that he had probably been dressed as Spider-Man when he did leave. And Happy was none the wiser.

Tony had never expected to be in this situation even though he was the father of a teenager. It just had never seemed likely and Peter just hadn't seemed the type. Except that his son was Spider-Man and obviously he had been sneaking out of his Aunt's house probably every single night since he'd decided to use his powers so maybe it shouldn't have been too far fetched. Still, Tony had thought that he had more sense than to just take off into the night when in another country.

“Friday, has anyone seen him?”

It took her a moment and Tony sank down into the unmade bed. He had cleaned himself up some back on the quinjet before going to the hospital but that didn't take away any of his pains and aches or everything else that was becoming more and more clear as time went on. Trying not to freak out about Peter's whereabouts was not helping.

“It looks like Spider-Man was sighted earlier. He saved the chancellor. There's pictures on the internet already but no sighting since.” Friday said.

His child was really going to be the cause of his early death. Didn't he have more sense to keep a low profile?

“Right,” Tony said, “make sure the name Spider-Man doesn't appear anywhere even if we have to pay someone off. I don't want Ross getting wind of him being here.”
“Sure thing, Boss,” Friday said.

Tony didn’t know what he was supposed to do. If he went out looking for Peter in the Iron Man suit he would surely be noticed and then so would Peter and that just wasn’t an option. It would be a recipe for disaster instead if Ross had anything to say about it. But then if he didn’t go out looking for him he didn’t know what kind of trouble Peter was likely to get into.

“Peter’s tracker is online” Friday said, “it looks like Peter is on a roof a few blocks away.”

Tony had forgotten about the tracker in the suit, the tracker that he had added last minute when it turned out that Peter was Spider-Man. He blamed everything that had happened over the last few hours on his poor memory. He pulled up the map into a hologram off the screen of his watch and sure enough Peter wasn’t too far. It lessened some of the worry, but not all. Peter seemed to be staying put too because after watching his GPS location for almost ten minutes he didn’t move. Maybe Tony could just go and pick him up.

“Friday, what’s happening on that roof?”

“It seems to be a rave,” Friday said.

Tony laughed. His son was at a rave. His fourteen year old son was at a rave in Berlin dressed up like a superhero. It was as if the universe itself was telling him that Peter was most definitely his son. Tony didn’t know if he should be amused or worried. Both. He could be both.

“It does seem he takes after you,” Friday said.

“I was hoping it wouldn’t be the bad traits,” Tony said. “Can you get his comms on in the suit?”

“I believe I can,” Friday said.

Short of going to the rave himself and fetching Peter, it might actually be easier to just get him to come to the hotel on his own. The less attention that they grabbed from any of this the better. At least all of this had offered Tony enough distraction to keep his thoughts about Barnes and Steve to a minimum.

“Comms are up,” Friday said.

Tony took a breath before he spoke. “Spiderling, wonders will never cease. Imagine my surprise when I found your hotel room empty.”

Peter gasped and he didn’t speak for a long moment.

“Uh, Mr. Stark?” Peter said. “Oh god, I’m sorry. I -- how did -- did Happy call you?”

“Happy is not aware you’ve skipped out, kid, which just means he is not good at the whole babysitting thing. Now can you do me a favor and get back here? Good little spiders are supposed to be tucked into bed and sleeping.”

“I’m not a child,” Peter said if only a tad petulant.

Tony chuckled. “Saying that just speaks volumes. I expect you here in the next ten minutes. I know you’re not far.”

“You’re tracking me,” Peter said.

“If I wasn’t, you’d be in a lot more trouble right now.”
“Don’t tell Aunt May,” Peter said at once.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Just get back here, kid.”

Tony kicked off his shoes and he laid down on the bed trying to figure out just what he was going to say to Peter when he got there because he needed to say something. In the meanwhile he tried not to think about how sore his shoulders were and how all of the injuries from the airport and Siberia were all just collecting on his body. He was going to be sore for days from all of this. Maybe he really should have let them check him out at the hospital.

It didn’t take Peter long to arrive, entering through the window in a way that told Tony that he was accustomed to entering a room in such a fashion. He didn’t even make any noise and he landed on his feet next to the window.

Tony sat up to watch him and Peter took off the mask once he was standing and he looked exactly like the kid that had been caught with his hands in the cookie jar. Worried and with a guilty look on his face.

“I’m sorry,” Peter said at once, “Mr. Stark, I’m so sorry that I just took off but I was -- I was bored and I just needed some air and things kind of just spiraled from there.”

“And you ended up at a rave as Spider-Man. This is the most thoughtless thing I ever imagined you doing. And my next question is, do you frequent raves often in New York?”

Peter shook his head and he shuffled his feet. “No,” he muttered. “I’ve never been to one before tonight.”

Tony sighed. It hurt a little to see Peter like that -- so clearly aware that he had done something wrong -- and Tony just, he loved him so much.

“I know we didn’t have much time to explain everything to you, Peter, but I thought I made it clear that things are changing for superpowered people. Do you want to end up like Captain America labelled a fugitive and with a bounty on your head? Because that’s not what I want for you, Peter, and I regret bringing you here and getting you involved in all of this. I should have -- I should have just let you be.”

“No, no,” Peter said at once and he moved forward, head no longer bowed to. “No, Mr. Stark. I was glad to help. I didn’t -- I didn’t know--”

Tony let out a breath. Peter was clearly freaking out. His eyes were blown wide and he looked nervous and jittery and he didn’t seem to even know what to say or how to handle it and Tony didn’t really know either.

“You didn’t,” Tony said, “and Happy should have minded you a bit closer. We’re lucky nothing bad happened. But you have to know that it could have.”

Peter nodded quickly and he looked like he was ready to burst into more apologies, but Tony lifted a hand to stop him.

“I have never doubted that you’d a good kid, in all my time knowing you even if it was only through letters,” Tony said. “Right now you’re my responsibility and, kid, I thought you were smarter than this.”

Peter didn’t seem to know how to respond aside from nodding but Tony could see how wet his eyes were and he hated all of this a little bit because for Peter this was just Tony Stark talking to him --
someone he looked up to sure, but not someone he knew. But Tony loved him -- Tony was his father and he loved him but Peter had no idea.

Chapter End Notes

I really wanted to have some coverage of what Peter gets up to in Berlin as seen in his video diary which if any of you haven't seen it should really check out. It's very cute. In the canon Tony is not as involved with what Peter gets up to and it's Happy dealing with it but I wanted Tony's involvement. I just really loved the idea of him just becoming such a dad immediately.

Unsure about when the next chapter will be, but Thursday at the latest I think.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 47

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! You guys definitely give me the inspiration to keep working on this!

I really love this chapter and the direction is takes us and I'm sure everyone reading will feel the same way. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“He’s my friend,” Steve said and he lifted his shield and hit Tony’s chest sending him back against a wall.

Barnes appeared then, his arm gleaming. “I killed them,” he said as he came after Tony. “I remember all of them.”

Barnes’ hand pressed into his chest and his fingers tried to get at the arc reactor and Steve just watched and suddenly Tony wasn’t in the suit and it was Obadiah taking the arc reactor out of his chest and Tony was on the ground and he couldn’t breathe. Yinsen appeared here and there out of focus. “You are a man that has nothing.”

“Tony, he didn’t do it,” Steve said in the background.

“I don’t care,” Tony said and then he was on the road but his feet seemed to be stuck to the pavement and Barnes was walking around the car. Tony screamed and then he was falling as if the ground had opened up but everything was black and--

He was in the dark of space and the Chitauri were all around him. When he looked down he could see Steve and Barnes and Peter. They were all--

“Mr. Stark! Mr. Stark!”

His body shook and he jerked up as his eyes opened and found Peter leaning over him, one of his hands on Tony’s shoulder, frowning worriedly.

“You had a nightmare,” Peter said and he pulled his hand away.

Tony sat up slowly and he tried to calm his breathing, very conscious of the fact that Peter was standing at his bedside watching him.

“Are you alright?” Peter asked.

“Yes,” Tony managed. “Yes, I’ll be okay.”

Peter nodded. “Can I get you anything?” he asked.

“No, no, don’t worry about it,” Tony said. “I think I’ll just go take a shower. No use trying to sleep now. Thank you, Peter.”
“Are you sure?” Peter asked.

“Yeah, kiddo. Thanks. Glad you were here to wake me.”

Peter didn’t say anything for a moment.

“Just go back and get some more sleep. We’re leaving in a few hours.”

Peter nodded again and Tony could feel his eyes on him as he got up feeling more sore and stiff than he had expected. A hot shower would definitely help with all of that. It wouldn’t make him stop thinking about Barnes or Steve or the nightmare but it would help. He heard Peter leave the room slowly and Tony just continued towards the bathroom, taking small strides.

---

They arrived in Wakanda after a detour to Berlin to drop off Zemo in Everett Ross’ hands and Steve was not too far gone into his thoughts to not take a moment to admire the place because it was simply amazing and no one knew it was there. It was an honor, he knew, to be allowed inside and even though there would be safety in staying there, Steve knew that he couldn’t just hide out. It wasn’t in his nature. He had never been one to stay idle and this was really not the time to do so. Not when his team had been taken and put into cells and he was really the only one that could get them out of it. It was also his fault that they were there in the first place so he really did need to get them out.

Steve was aware that Tony would want to help them get out of The Raft but his hands were tied. There wasn’t much that he could do without getting into trouble. Actually, Steve wasn’t sure if Tony wouldn’t be in trouble with Ross and The Accords without even trying to get the others of of The Raft. Everything really was a mess. Steve needed to figure out what he might be able to do.

T’Challa gave them the resources that he could which turned out to be more than Steve could have expected it. It was how Steve managed to get in contact with Sharon who gave him as much info on The Raft as she had available and then promised to get back to him with more as soon as she was able. But what Sharon could give him was enough for Shuri to help Steve with tracking The Raft down.

Steve didn’t know quite what to make of Shuri except that she was amazing. Amazing and brilliant and so young. He wished that Tony could meet her because he just knew that they would have conversations that went over his head but also that he would just love her and see the future in her. He missed Tony. It was an ache deep inside him that wouldn’t go away mostly because Steve was well aware that he couldn’t yet know if or when he would be able to see Tony again. Or, if Tony would want to see him. Steve was not deluding himself into thinking that everything was okay between them and he hated it -- hated that he couldn’t even do anything to fix it either.

---

Ms. Parker,

Peter is wonderful. I am in awe of him and I have loved every second I have spent with him even if there were other pressing things happening. It just makes me want to spend more time with him. And it makes me want to tell him the secret. I think it is better told now than later. This is not asking for permission, I think we are past that. I intend to tell him before I return him to you tomorrow night. I just wanted you to be prepared.

Tony Stark

Tony sent the email while they were in the air. Tony had decided that they might as well take the quinjet back to New York. Happy had been against the idea, mostly because he didn’t really like
flying, but Tony didn’t mind that Happy preferred to take the private plane back because it gave him more alone time with Peter even if Happy had made the attempt at making Peter go with him. Happy could be a little dramatic.

In some ways, Tony understood where Happy was coming from. He was protective and wasn’t too fond of Tony involving new people in his life because everyone was a possible danger. It had been so clear throughout breakfast that morning when Happy had been prepared to stand between Peter and Tony no matter where they went. At first it had been a little amusing but then it had gotten tiring. But to add to that, Tony was also left wondering about what Happy would have said to Peter about how the German papers were calling him “sticky-boy” if Tony hadn’t been there. There had been a very specific look in Happy’s eyes when he’d seen the headline right on the front page of their morning paper. Tony wasn’t exactly thrilled with it either, but it the picture wasn’t good quality and actually looked a bit grainy and Friday had certainly done her job by keeping the moniker, Spider-Man, out of the papers. So, it didn’t really matter much. Happy was just a drama queen and Tony had begun to understand why Peter had left via window the night before because if Happy had been acting like that the entire trip then he probably would have left too. Tony might have been tempted to escape too. It brought Tony back to Happy’s days as the head of security as SI and how paranoid he’d become when it came to badges.

So, letting Happy go home in the comfort of the private jet meant that his friend would calm down some and that Tony was finally getting some unsupervised time with Peter. Ever since waking up from the nightmare that morning Tony had been left feeling a bit shaken, but having Peter around was helping and making things better probably due to how amazed Peter was by everything.

The whole drive to the airport, Tony had spent it watching Peter and enjoying how he just stared out the window. It almost made Tony wish that they were staying there a bit longer so he could really show Peter all the sights. He promised himself that one day in the future they would do it and it wouldn’t just be Berlin. It would be anywhere that Peter even had the slightest interest in.

Peter had been amazed when first getting onto the quinjet, too. His eyes had traced everything and his hands twitched to touch things. Tony had loved every second of it. Peter was just -- he was so new to everything.

“This is amazing,” Peter had said at one point. “I just can’t believe it. And it’s super fast, right? Like, faster than normal planes?”

“Yes,” Tony said.

“So cool,” Peter said in a low tone.

The excitement faded eventually after he’d gotten to explore the whole thing including all the different weapon compartments and gear. Eventually he just settled down in the seat next to Tony up at the front where he curled up and fell asleep halfway back to New York. It was in that moment, watching Peter’s eyes flutter close and the peaceful way that Peter slept that Tony knew that he had to tell him. He had to tell him because Tony knew what a secret could do. He had experienced first hand how a secret could be used against you and the last thing he wanted was for this one to get out of hand and bring along a rift between him and Peter or Peter and May.

So, while Peter slept, he wrote to May and he felt justified in saying that he had made the decision. It was like all those times that May and Ben had made the decisions without his say. This time it was his turn. Peter shifted in his sleep and hair fell over his forehead. He was just so young and in many ways innocent. Tony didn’t want to change a thing about him.
I really love that we finally got to this part of the fic. I'm super excited what it brings us to and I'm sure the rest of you are as well. Next chapter should be up on Saturday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 48

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading!
As always, you guys are fantastic and really do inspire me to keep working on this.

Managed to get this one ready a bit earlier than expected so I figured I might as well post it tonight instead of waiting for tomorrow. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tony flew straight to the tower and tried not to let his nerves get the best of him as they landed. Even then, he took his time before he shook Peter’s shoulder to wake him. It was just so mesmerizing, in a way, to be able to just watch Peter because for so long it had been an unattainable thing and pictures just weren’t the same thing at all.

“Come on, kid,” Tony said.

“What -- where are we?” Peter asked, groggily. He rubbed his eyes and stretched out his arms over his head.

“We’re at the tower. Come on, you’re not due at home until tomorrow night and you’ve always wanted to see the tower.”

At that, Peter properly woke and his eyes widened. “Oh my god, Mr. Stark, I can’t believe it! Are you serious?” He jumped out of the seat and followed him off the quinjet.

Tony smiled to himself as Peter didn’t pause to follow him inside even though he seemed to be trying to take everything in. When he glanced at him he found that Peter seemed to not know what to look at and they hadn’t even really seen anything yet.

“Good afternoon, Sir, Mr. Parker,” Friday said as they stepped inside.

“Who -- what?” Peter said and looked around.

“That’s Friday,” Tony said. “I told you about her.”

Peter nodded quickly, his jaw open a little in surprise. “Yeah,” he said in a whisper, “you did. I -- I remember that. I just didn’t expect--”

“It’s good to finally meet you, Peter,” Friday said.

“Um -- yeah, yeah, you too,” Peter said, staring up at the ceiling as if he were going to somehow find Friday there. It was reminiscent of Steve’s first introduction to Jarvis.

Tony showed Peter around for about an hour. He took him through the main rooms of the penthouse and then they went to Bruce’s lab. It hadn’t been used much of late by anyone other than Tony -- but even that was rare. In all actuality, not even Bruce had used this lab seeing as it was a reconstruction of the old lab that Ultron had gone and destroyed. Tony’s workshop had been rebuilt and remodeled too from that particular incident, but it was obviously put to a lot more use. It was there that they
“This place is amazing,” Peter said and Tony could tell that he was a little overwhelmed by everything he had seen so far. “I can’t believe I’m here.” Then, Peter spotted the Iron-Man suits and his eyes widened even more.

“Go on, take a closer look,” Tony said.

Peter didn’t need to be told twice and he spent some time looking at each of the displayed suits. It was a while before anything else caught his attention and then it wasn’t long before Peter noticed that Tony had actually left the work he’d done on Peter’s suit out on an open file on one of the holographic tables.

“You can look through that if you want,” Tony offered. “There’s a lot more to that suit than you might expect.”

“I can tell. Well, sort of,” Peter said and glanced back for a quick second before his eyes went back to the hologram file. “Are there really that many web combinations?”

Tony chuckled. “Yup. Once I figured out exactly how the web fluid worked it made sense to make it easier for you to use it and I’m sure you have plenty of uses for it.”

“That is so cool,” Peter whispered and Tony could tell that he was itching to actually practice the different combinations and options that he suddenly had.

“You can try them out later,” Tony said. “There’s a lot of features I added in that we’ll have to go over. For now I think that we both need to get some food. I think you mentioned needing more calories than normal people.”

Peter nodded and he launched into an explanation and Tony found himself missing Bruce who would have enjoyed watching Peter explain what he’d managed to figure out about his body’s needs when it came to food. Peter hadn’t yet broken it down to the number of calories that he should be eating, but Tony was sure that he would if the information ever became necessary to him. For the moment he seemed to be going off of his instincts and that didn’t seem to have failed him yet. Tony still figured that eventually they would need to get a real measure on that. It also made him wonder about other things that had to be abnormal about Peter. What he wouldn’t do to have Bruce there. Maybe he could get Helen Cho to give Peter a look over.

Tony had Friday order them food because there just wasn’t anything to eat at the tower, making sure that the order was similar enough to what he ordered when Steve was over. Then he spent some time showing Peter a few of the prototypes he was working on for SI while they waited for it to arrive.

“I never thought I’d ever get to see any of this,” Peter said with a bit of awe after a while, head turning to look at Tony.

Tony grinned. “Kid, didn’t we already agree that you were going to work here one day?”

“Yeah,” Peter said with a small grin that turned bigger. “You meant that, Mr. Stark? It wasn’t you just humorizing me.”

Tony dropped a hand to Peter’s shoulder and he knew that there was no other time but the present. He had planned to do it after they ate, but he couldn’t hold on to it any longer and Tony knew that if he didn’t say it he would find an excuse and stop himself from saying anything later. Peter had given him an excellent opening and Tony just had to take it.
“Well,” Tony said and tried to weight his words, “the thing is, Peter, that you’re not just going to work for SI. This company -- hell, this tower, it’ll all be yours one day.”

Peter stared at him wordlessly for a long moment in confusion and Tony could tell that he didn’t know quite what to say but that he also wasn’t really getting it which was Tony’s fault because he wasn’t being entirely clear.

The silence seemed to drag on for a while before Peter spoke again.

“Mr. Stark, are we having a Willy Wonka moment?” Peter asked.

Tony stared at him incredulously and Peter just stared back at him, waiting for an answer and Tony was amazed because only Peter could pull out a reference like that. Not only was it witty, but it was avoidance in a too similar manner to Tony’s own use of it. This boy was definitely his son.

“I guess it’s sort of like that,” Tony said and then shook his head because what was he saying?

“Actually, it’s not like that at all. I -- this is really hard to do. I didn’t think it--”

“Mr. Stark?” Peter asked and his brows were furrowed.

Tony took a breath. “Why don’t we go out to the den. More comfortable and I think this is going to be a long conversation. Or maybe it won’t be -- I don’t know.”

Peter nodded. He looked confused and a little worried, but he followed Tony and then sat down when Tony motioned him to and then Tony just stared at him and at the way that Peter just trusted him and looked up to him. Tony could only hope that after all was said and done that he would still be there and still look at Tony the same way.

“I knew your mother,” Tony said, figuring it was the right way to start. “You know this. She used to work for me and I liked her a lot. We were friends and she sort of reached a part of me that very few people could in those days. I think it was partly because she was brilliant and because she didn’t bore me like most people did. I didn’t love her -- not like that, but I cherished her friendship.”

Tony could still remember long days in one of the labs at SI with Mary at his side. Jokes and banter mixed in with the science. He had never noticed her before that Christmas party, but Mary had never been like anyone else. She was special and Tony had seen that and appreciated that. More than anything, he had appreciated how Mary never wanted anything from him. They had only slept together once not because Tony had been unwilling for it to be more but because their working relationship and their friendship had meant more despite where it had started.

“Mr. Stark why are you telling me--”

Tony shook off his thoughts and he sat down in the armchair across from where Peter was sitting in. He looked down at his hands before speaking again.

“She left when she found out she was pregnant,” Tony said and had to glance up, “and didn’t even bother to tell me about it.”

Chapter End Notes

Couple of notes:
I once responded to a reader that loved a Titanic reference and I told them there was a reference I was really proud of during the reveal and that no it wasn't Star Wars. So if you're still reading, I hope you enjoyed Peter asking Tony if they're having a Willy Wonka moment. Which was a line that I wrote before seeing Infinity War and which I really loved after Peter just kept referencing movies within IW seeing as it truly validated his reaction here for me.

As I said, the reveal/reaction takes a few chapters so more Peter and Tony coming on the next chapter. Not sure when it will be up. Next week is a bit nuts for me because we have Inventory at work next Saturday so things are going to be a little crazy.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

This fic has a masterpost over at my tumbl where you can also come and talk to me.
Chapter 49

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading. Everyone's response to last chapter was amazing and made such a difference to my weekend (which was so very very long) and even into the week. I've been absolutely exhausted from work this week and today was the first day that I actually had the energy to sit down and write and I got two chapters written this morning. I'll probably start on another one once I post this.

I love how this chapter came out. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter knew, then, what Mr. Stark had been trying to say because it was obvious. It was so obvious that Peter didn’t know how he hadn’t figured it out before and he didn’t know what to say or what to think and Mr. Stark was just watching him and Peter just -- what was he supposed to do? This was never supposed to be a thing that he dealt with. And Mr. Stark was looking at him and there was still bruising around his right eye and a deep weariness but beyond that it might have been fear or just something that Peter couldn’t figure out. Something that seemed like unease. Mr. Stark didn’t know how to do this either.

Mr. Stark gulped and then he must have decided that he might as well keep on explaining. “She was dating Richard. Must have told me at some point but I don’t know, I can’t remember. Anyway, he was more of a father than I could have been, then, and it made sense. I’m -- I didn’t fight the decision once I found out. Mostly, well, I thought it was for the best because who would want me to be a father. I wasn’t -- I wouldn’t have been a good one back then.”

“Mr. Stark--”

Peter didn’t even know what he wanted to say. His world was slowly changing, falling apart. This couldn’t be -- there was no way and yet--

His ears were full of noise and everything was just too much. It was overwhelmingly too much and Peter couldn’t find a way to calm down. He could hear his own heart beating faster and faster and even the smallest noise coming in from outside of the tower seemed amplified. The light was harsh on his eyes and he had to duck his head, press it against his knees and try to breath.

Mr. Stark’s footsteps seemed to resonate. A hand was on his back, hesitant and gentle and easy to feel. Peter could focus on the warmth and gentleness of the hand including the soothing way it moved over his back in a circle. It was something different and external and not from within himself and it helped. The warmth seeping from the hand to his back was a focus point and after a while all the noise filtered out and he could hear Mr. Stark.

“Breathe, Peter. In and out, okay. Just breathe. Match it to my own, okay? Can you do that?”

Mr. Stark’s breaths were even. Delieverate and Peter could hear them perfectly. He tried to nod. He didn’t know if he managed to, but he listened to Mr. Stark’s breaths and tried to copy, already feeling the panic inside him subside. But it was still just there within the surface and when Peter opened his eyes and moved his head up, Mr. Stark was sitting next to him on the sofa, peering at him with
something that looked like worry in his eyes. But despite the worry, he was soft and calm and Peter let himself relax.

“I’m sorry,” Mr. Stark said.

That was his father!

“I’m sorry if I--”

It was too much. Peter didn’t know what to do or what to think. His senses were coming back to normal, but that just meant that Peter could finally really take the information in. Tony Stark was his father. He was his father and he had known since before Peter was even born and it was only now that he was bothering to tell Peter even though they’d been emailing and writing letters for years -- and well, that explained everything. It was the reason there had been letters in the first place among other things like how the funeral had been paid for by Mr. Stark and who knows what else. How many other things had happened in his life that were a direct result of who his father was.

“I don’t--”

The hand on Peter’s back fell away and Peter found he missed it -- missed the comfort.

“It’s a lot, I know,” Mr. Stark said and he smiled tightly. “It was different when I didn’t -- when I hadn’t met you, I guess. Or maybe, I don’t know, but I couldn’t just say it over an email either. This had to be an in-person type of thing and I couldn’t keep this from you any longer, not now I know you. I know first hand the kind of damage secrets can have. Maybe I should have told you before Berlin. Maybe it would have helped, I don’t know. I just -- I didn’t want to distract you or anything...”

Mr. Stark trailed off and he stood up from the sofa. Lingering for a moment next to Peter before he moved back to his original chair. Things had been getting easier for Peter when it came to interacting with Mr. Stark, but this was like laying down a new blanket of awkwardness between them.

Peter didn’t know what to say or do even if he knew that there were things that needed to be asked and cleared up. It was a lot. So much more than Peter could have expected since finding Mr. Stark in his living room with Aunt May. His mind was just too preoccupied because Tony Stark was his biological father and Peter almost didn’t believe it. Couldn’t allow himself to believe it. It felt like he was having a crazy dream where unexpected things happened.

It felt like an age had passed until Peter finally looked at Mr. Stark again. Mr. Stark had sat down right at the edge of his seat, his hands pressed together on his knees. It was a nervous look on him, unsure. But he wasn’t pushing and there was no expectation there.

“I just -- you’re my-- Tony Stark is my father. And I -- I just -- that’s insane. Did they know -- does May know? I can’t -- this is crazy…”

Mr. Stark inhaled and exhaled. This was probably just as nerve racking from his point of view as it was from Peter’s.

---

Maybe he had been wrong to tell him. Or he’d gone about it the wrong way with not being direct and clear. Either way, Tony should have figured out a way to make it so that Peter didn’t have a panic attack upon figuring out what Tony was trying to get at. This definitely wasn’t a good starting point. He really wasn’t having a good go at the whole father thing. It hadn’t even been a full two days and Tony had managed to take his kid straight into danger and then that same kid had gone and
just split from the hotel room in a foreign city, and then Tony had made him have a panic attack when telling him that he was actually his father. All of it was a mess.

At one point he had considered asking for Pepper’s advice on telling Peter, but Tony had rethought that because he figured there wasn’t a right way to do it. But maybe his take on it just hadn’t been the best way. Or it didn’t matter how he told him -- maybe Peter would have reacted that way no matter how he got the information.

“It doesn’t have to change anything,” Tony offered to Peter’s broken up words. It hurt a little to offer that because he didn’t know what Peter might want. “This -- it doesn’t have to change a thing. It’s just something you needed to know because secrets have a way of getting the best of us.”

Peter nodded shakily and they lapsed into silence again. It was becoming all too common. Peter seemed to be mulling it over which just made the silence feel longer. Tony was about to speak again when Peter beat him to it.

“Why now? Why not before?” Peter asked, his voice just higher than a whisper and shaky. Somehow, he still managed to meet Tony’s eyes.

Tony sighed. This was where things got hard. How did he explain to Peter that Tony was a giant mess and that once he did want Peter to know it had been obstacle after obstacle stopping it from happening? That this was the first time that things had finally lined up so this could happen.

“Mr. Stark?” Peter asked.

“I guess because we always thought that if you knew that it would put you in danger. We -- I didn’t want anything to happen to you because of me. It just seemed like the right thing to do. And after meeting you after all this time, I couldn’t not tell you.”

“Right,” Peter said and Tony could tell that he was thinking it all over.

Maybe it was all a huge mistake. Tony didn’t feel better for having told Peter the truth. No, instead he felt like a bunch of other new problems had arisen to take that one’s place.

He couldn’t tell what Peter was thinking or how he was really taking everything, but at least he hadn’t tried to run off or anything so it couldn’t be too bad, panic attack aside.

“I just -- I wasn’t expecting this,” Peter mumbled.

Tony nodded but didn’t say anything. It was only then that he realized that while Peter had freaked out a bit when finding out that Tony was his father he hadn’t been too surprised to find out that Richard wasn’t his dad. It made Tony wonder if Peter had known about that already -- if he had somehow been aware of that lie if nothing else. Maybe Peter had been trying to figure it out, even, who his father was. And Tony had never been a possibility because why would he be? It was on the tip of his tongue to just ask Peter but he decided it was probably better not to bring it up at all just yet. He settled for watching Peter instead and letting him have a moment to soak everything in. It seemed to be what he needed.

Chapter End Notes

So that was Peter's initial reaction. And we still have a few more chapters of dealing
with the reveal coming. Next one will start off with a May POV.

I'm hoping to get a chapter up soon, Tuesday being the latest that it will be. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 50

May was panicking.

The house had felt empty without Peter there, but not having Peter around and knowing that Peter wasn’t going to just show up meant that May had the time to really do some deep cleaning without any interruptions. Some of that meant putting more of Ben’s things away and figuring out what she should even keep, give away, or just throw out because Ben had always been a pack rat. Some of Ben’s things she also knew that Peter would need to be consulted on.

So between cleaning, a few tears when she found something with sentimental value or connected to one memory or another, May didn’t really keep an eye on her phone. She also didn’t really want to keep track of time because she didn’t want to keep any kind of countdown until Peter returned. Just going to bed and knowing that he wasn’t in his room was bad enough without counting down until Peter returned. That was how she missed the email from Tony at first.

It wasn’t until she had stopped cleaning in order to get a late lunch that May saw it and she almost choked. She read it over twice before looking at the time stamp. It had been sent early which meant that Peter probably already knew the truth if Tony had gone through with it. There was nothing to be done and May didn’t think that she would have put a stop to it if she could. It really was about time that Peter knew.

This was exactly the type of thing that she had expected would happen now that they had met, she just hadn’t expected for it to happen so quickly. In a way, she supposed that it was probably for the best. It didn’t make her panic or worry subside because Peter was going to have a reaction to this no matter what.

There was just no telling what Peter might do or how he would react because he had been acting odd for a while now, even before Ben died. He had actually gotten weirder and weirder since and there was the whole sneaking out thing to consider too and May really didn’t know how she was going to deal with that. May knew that some of this came with the territory of growing up, after all she still remembered her own rebellious teenage years, but Peter was only fourteen and he still had plenty of growing to do. She just hoped that learning that Tony Stark was his father wouldn’t upset or hurt him too badly. May had to have faith in Peter and his good nature. It didn’t keep her from worrying, but then that came with the territory of being a parent.
“You were supposed to be here for this,” May told a picture of Ben. “You were supposed to help him through this.”

She tried not to cry but it was hard. And yet because Peter wasn’t home she could really just let herself break down and miss him and let her sobs turn ugly and harsh and it didn’t matter. May hadn’t cried like this since it had happened and hadn’t really let herself miss him this much since around then either.

---

It was a relief when their food arrived. Peter was glad for the distraction it offered because he just didn’t know how much longer Mr. Stark would hold out before starting to talk to him again and Peter needed a moment.

It was just -- it was so hard to wrap his mind around. Tony Stark was his father. He was his father and he’d known all along and decided that Peter was better off without him and Peter just didn’t know how to take that because it had to mean that Mr. Stark hadn’t wanted to be his father and that was -- it was harder to wrap his mind around that.

Peter did get it. He understood that Mr. Stark hadn’t known at first and then just followed his mom’s wishes. The thing was -- well, Mr. Stark hadn’t fought her or probably even tried after she died and he became Peter’s only living parent. Peter didn’t know what to make of that because on the one hand this man was his idol and Peter looked up to him and had hero-worshipped him for a long time and yet he was the father he didn’t know he had. The father that had never intended to be his dad.

They ate in silence and Peter almost wanted to ask if he could just go home, but it felt rude and ungrateful and it left him wondering if he would even know that Mr. Stark was his father if it hadn’t been for Spider-Man and Mr. Stark needing his help. He thought that he probably wouldn’t. After all, hadn’t Mr. Stark himself admitted that he’d never brought it up because he was afraid of how much danger Peter could find himself in. It was a valid reason, Peter knew, and the same one that kept Peter from telling May about Spider-Man and yet he didn’t have to like it.

When he glanced towards Mr. Stark, Peter couldn’t help but search for himself in his features and there were similarities. They weren’t completely obvious but they were there and it made everything feel real. Unmistakable proof.

As he was finishing up his food, a little while later, Peter suddenly remembered what Mr. Stark had said in the workshop about everything being his. It was one of those things that he had heard but hadn’t processed and that was insane to think about.

“My, Mr. Stark, you said the company and the tower -- you said it’d be mine.”

Mr. Stark nodded with a small smile. “Yeah, Peter, you’re going to inherit quite a lot once I’m gone. You’re already inheriting this family’s very messed up father-son relationships so we can only make it better with money and property. You’ll get your trust fund first, though. I had it set up when I found out about you. Not to be touched until you’re eighteen. Then there’s the 529 savings account too but that’s the college fund and--”

Peter’s mouth fell open. Trust fund. College fund. This was definitely not the direction that Peter had expected the conversation to go when he’d first asked that question. A simple confirmation was all he was after so that he could freak out internally some more. Now he was freaking out and trying his hardest to not do outwardly as well as internally.

“Are you -- kid, are you alright?”
Peter coughed a few times and Mr. Stark moved his water glass closer to him. “I’m -- this is -- this is a lot.”

“It is,” Mr. Stark said as Peter picked up the glass. “I’m sorry that it’s -- I guess I could have started a bit small.”

He looked so unsure, and a little like he was debating on what to say next so Peter just waited and tried to not think about things like a trust fund and a college fund. Peter had always known that May and Ben always had enough money and yet he had also always known that they didn’t have nearly as much as everyone else seemed to. All of his classmates save for probably Michelle came from well off families. They showed off with parties at their big houses or the car that their parents got them as well as where they went on vacation down even to what shoes they were wearing. To suddenly be told that he was part of that crowd in some way felt weird and Peter didn’t particularly like it or want to take advantage of it.

“If you -- well, you aunt isn’t expecting you until tomorrow but I can take you back early if you want. I didn’t want her to notice any of your bruises, but if you want to go home then--”

Peter actually didn’t have much bruising left. It was Mr. Stark that still looked injured. His eye was looking slightly better but there was still bruising and Peter had noticed that his left arm seemed to be bothering him.

“No,” Peter said and shook his head. “No, no. I can’t see May right now. She’ll want to talk and I can’t -- I couldn’t tell her about Germany and this is just --”

“Okay,” Mr. Stark said.

They lapsed into an awkward silence which felt odd because Peter had never expected that if he ever got time to spend with Tony Stark that he would spend it mostly freaking out and not blathering on.

“Well, there are plenty of guest rooms here,” Mr. Stark said after a long moment. “Or go crazy with the tv and the video games in here. There’s plenty and Friday can show you how. I--”

Peter didn’t know how to respond because he just didn’t get him. He didn’t understand Mr. Stark and the weirdly calm sort of way that he spoke even though he was clearly unsure about all of it too. He just made it seem like everything was normal even though it wasn’t.

“I have a few things to get done in the workshop,” Mr. Stark said, when Peter hadn’t responded. “If you need anything just come and get me or have Friday tell me.”

Peter watched him go and wished that he could open his mouth and actually say something to him, but somehow he just couldn’t.

A part of him was glad to be alone but another part wanted Mr. Stark to come back. Peter didn’t know what he wanted, really. He should have been happy to find his father and happier still that it was someone he respected and looked up to and yet it was marred by the whole thing being a secret and by how Mr. Stark had stayed out of his life for so long until it somehow became convenient to tell Peter. Although, that was wrong too, wasn’t it because Mr. Stark had responded to his letters and kept up a correspondence and he seemed to care.

Chapter End Notes
I really do like how the Peter pov in particular went for this chapter. One thing I wanted to note as far as small changes. It seemed to me that between Civil War and Homecoming that Peter and May move to perhaps something smaller/more affordable. So early on one of the things that Tony did for the Parkers was pay off their mortgage on a home. Possibly an actual house in Queens. I've been very vague on Peter's living space mostly because I really didn't know if it would be an apartment or house but since Peter mentions money in this chapter I felt like mentioning just because Peter is just so unaware of just how much Tony has actually impacted his life without him knowing it and yet now he's seeing things like trust funds and college funds and that's blowing his mind.

Next chapter should be up likely tomorrow at some point. It's going to be a Tony POV. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 51

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading as always.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tony had imagined things going much worse than they currently were and yet the relief at getting the secret out didn’t feel all that great because now he didn’t know where he and Peter stood. Not that he had known before, exactly, but it had been easier to be a sort of mentor than his father. Peter had accepted that readily and with excitement but this had shook him and made him quieter and awkward and unsure. Tony didn’t know how he was supposed to handle it.

As he stepped into the workshop, it occurred to Tony that he didn’t actually have any specific thing to work on. He’d just wanted to give Peter some time to really take it all in. When his eyes landed on the futon, he felt that weariness from earlier return. He remembered the day he ordered it, thinking only of Steve and how he needed somewhere to sit while he visited because for the first few times he would just jump on one of the work tables and spend hours at a time just sketching away and so it had felt necessary. Now it would be empty for who knew how long. Tony didn’t really want to think about it.

Either way, there were other things to worry about. Pressing things. He reached up to rub his left shoulder where it felt stiff and pained.

“Fri, we have any pain meds around here?”

“We do, boss. Drawer by the sink.”

He took some meds hoping they would work but didn’t follow the rest of the instructions Friday was trying to give him about keeping his arm from moving too much.

“Friday, catch me up. Anything interesting happen?”

“General Ross is still trying to find Steve Rogers,” Friday said, “and Zemo has been delivered to the Task Force.”

“So just as we left it, then,” Tony said. “There must be something to be done about The Raft. If I know Steve, he’s going to try and break them out which is just as well because my hands are tied. I really don’t like this, Fri, I’m going to have to find a way to fix this.”

Tony walked around the workshop as he talked.

“I’m sure you’ll find a way, boss,” Friday responded.

The truth of it was -- the truth that Tony had refused to see because he was too stubborn to see -- that The Accords weren’t perfect. Had never been perfect. And yet Tony had accepted that and accepted that for the good parts to work that others might not. He just -- he had never expected for any of The Avengers to oppose them to the point where the UN would need to enforce the parts of The Accords
that spoke about a lack of trial and imprisonment that Tony had overlooked because he never expected it to be an issue. Of course when he signed, Ross hadn’t been an issue either. All of it meant that Tony had to figure out a way to change them and get rid of Ross. But, priority number one was keeping Peter off his radar.

Tony walked over the futon and sat down. It wasn’t uncomfortable, but it felt weird to sit there because it wasn’t really his place. This was Steve’s place.

“Call Pepper,” Tony said and he heard Friday initiate the call.

“Tony,” she said, appearing on a screen. She looked put together as always but her forehead was creased which meant she was worried. “I -- what happened? I get busy with some shareholders and suddenly everything is falling apart. I heard -- is Rhodey alright? And what’s this about Steve being a fugitive?”

Tony didn’t really want to talk about that. It wasn’t why he’d called Pepper, so he decided to ignore her questions.

“I told Peter the truth,” Tony said instead and braced himself.

“Oh my god,” Pepper said complete with a gasp. Her eyes even widened and then narrowed. “Tony, how is that possible? Weren’t you just in Germany dealing with everything else? What happened?”

Tony debated not telling her that Peter was Spider-Man for a long second, but he knew that it was probably easier to just tell her because Pepper would find out anyway and then that would be a whole other thing to deal with and Tony really had about enough when it came to secrets. This wasn’t even his secret to tell but someone other than him needed to know just in case.

“So, the thing is that superheroing runs in the family,” Tony said and waited.

“What do you mean?” Pepper asked slowly.

“Friday, send Pepper the videos,” Tony said and then to Pepper, “check those out. Probably easier if you see them yourself. You’ll never guess who’s under the mask.”

He was trying to hold it together. It had been different when Peter was in front of him because Tony had known that he couldn’t let all of that come out, not when Peter was having so much information dropped on him. It was just that so much had happened in the last forty eight hours and Tony wasn’t entirely sure what would come next. There was Rhodey to think about as well as Peter and The Accords and Ross and Steve.

“Oh, Tony,” Pepper said, breaking Tony out of his thoughts. “That’s not Peter. Tell me that’s not him.”

“I can’t,” Tony said and shrugged because there was nothing to be done about that. It was the reality and Tony couldn’t say he was thrilled, but he could accept it.

“Does May know?” Pepper asked and she was moving, taking a seat at her desk and he saw the moment that her computer picked up the call from her phone because it was less shaky from Pepper’s movements.

“Nope,” Tony said. “He really doesn’t want her to know, actually, which is probably a mistake except that I don’t think she would take it very well.”

“You don’t say,” Pepper said. “Tony, what did you do?”
Tony should have expected for Pepper to catch on. After all, it was Pepper and she was brilliant and she had always been able to tell when Tony was feeling guilty.

“T​ony, I needed help,” Tony said. “I didn’t know it was him, not until I was trying to find him and things were -- well, you’ve seen what he can do.”

Pepper didn’t say anything, but she was sort of squinting her eyes at him which meant that she wasn’t exactly happy with him. Tony had always hated that look on her but it was a part of life -- unavoidable. It was probably a part of why they hadn’t worked out.

“I took him to Germany with me, I figured he would make a difference. I guess it didn’t really matter because Natasha decided to let them go…” Tony coughed. “Anyway, we got back to New York and it just made sense that he should know the truth. Can’t keep lying to him.”

“Oh, Tony,” Pepper said. “How did it go?”

“Could have been better. Could have been worse. I think he’s processing. Also, I’m pretty sure he already knew that Richard Parker wasn’t his father. That part didn’t surprise him much. I just -- he’s my kid and he’s somewhere in the tower--”

“The den,” Friday supplied.

“--and he’s so close and yet it feels like he’s further away than ever before. I guess -- well, I guess I’m processing too. I just want. I love him so much, Pep, when I met him I just had never felt anything like that before and he’s here and he knows and I--”

Peter was in the tower! It was crazy to think about because for so long Tony had wanted this and it was finally happening and there were a million things to go over yet but this was everything even if things weren’t perfect. Nothing ever really was. At least Peter had decided to stick around instead of running off or taking Tony on the offer to go home a little early. He was still there just rooms away.

“Do you want me to come by?” Pepper asked.

“No, no. I’m not sure that would help.”

Pepper nodded. “But I do want to meet him soon. I’ve known about this boy his whole life and never seen him in person.”

It had been easy to forget how much Pepper had been involved from the beginning. From her friendship with Mary to breaking her confidence to let Tony know that he had a son. There was also no denying how much Pepper had tried time and time again to get them to meet because for a long time it was she and she alone who knew how much Tony cared about Peter and wanted to be in his life.

“He’d probably be happy to meet you,” Tony said.

Pepper smiled. “Tony, things can only get better from here. You’re doing well so far.”

“Thanks,” Tony said. “He’d needed to hear that mostly because he was still so unsure and he didn’t know what was going to happen when Peter and he continued their conversation.

“Anything else going on, Tony?” Pepper asked.

“Actually, there is,” Tony said. “We have to start working on changing The Accords. None of that was a good idea. I figure you’re probably the best way to start on that.”
Pepper laughed. “I am already running your company,” she said.

“Hmm, yes, but you're the best, Pepper, and I need your help. This -- it could hurt Peter if we don’t get on this.”

Tony got up from the futon, walking towards one of the work tables. There was one thing that he could actually get working on. The Spider-Man suit wasn’t in need of repairs exactly, but Tony hadn’t had nearly enough time to really give it all the precautions that it might need. Tony also hated to think about it, but parental controls would be necessary too. Some of the coding in the suit had been meant for someone that wasn’t his child and Peter just wasn’t ready for some of them.

“What do you want me to do, then?” Pepper asked.

Chapter End Notes

I really loved having this moment for Tony on his own and also getting to include Pepper again. Next chapter will probably be up on Saturday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.

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Chapter 52

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading.

I really like this chapter and I hope everyone else does too.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There seemed to be a lot going on inside Tony Stark’s workshop when Peter was allowed inside by Friday. There was music blaring -- something loud and hard that Peter was sure Uncle Ben had listened to and that made Peter wince because it was so loud. Thinking about Uncle Ben hurt a little, especially in light of Tony Stark being his father because Uncle Ben ad tried to tell him with his last words and when Peter didn’t let him he had never expected to ever find his father or even get to know him.

Mr. Stark was working on something to do with the Spider-Man suit, Peter realized as he stepped further inside. He was too busy to notice that Peter had entered but one of the bots did and wheeled over to him and Peter laughed because it was just a robot but it was cute and Peter reached out to touch it and then it was gone again and Peter watched as it grabbed what looked to be a blender cup and wheeled towards Mr. Stark.

“Dum-E, I am not hungry,” Mr. Stark said without even looking up, “put that back before I donate you to charity. Not sure any will take you, but there is a chance.”

Dum-E beeped and Peter thought the robot sounded a little sad as he rolled to set the blender cup down elsewhere. Whatever was inside didn’t really look appetizing so Peter understood why Mr. Stark didn’t want it.

“Mr. Stark,” Peter said, stepping closer.

Mr. Stark didn’t seem to hear him and Peter could tell that the man was in his element so Peter figured it was probably better to just let him work. Instead he looked around the workshop a little more. It really was an amazing space.

Peter didn’t know if Mr. Stark had gone to bed at all the night before since he never saw or heard him leave the workshop. But, then, Peter had actually fallen asleep in the living room until he woke up in the middle of the night and Friday led him to one of the bedrooms and the most comfortable bed that Peter had ever slept on. Peter had woken up there a little confused just a few minutes earlier, but everything had flooded in and Peter found that he was feeling a little bit better about everything. He just still needed some more time to figure out what would come next. He pressed his hands against his ears as he walked around the workshop and wondered if Friday would lower the volume if he asked.

He ended up not having to ask because suddenly the music died down and Mr. Stark was looking up at a screen and a woman that Peter recognized as Pepper Potts appeared there. She wore a business suit, had her hair tied back and more put together than anyone that Peter had ever seen before.

“Hey, Pep, what’s going on?” Mr. Stark asked.
“I did a bit of digging around. I’ll send you everything I managed to find on The Raft. I just don’t know how that’ll come in handy to you because you can’t do the rescuing yourself and currently we’re not going to get anywhere even if we get all of the SI lawyers on this.”

Mr. Stark sighed. “I think Steve will take care of the rescuing for us. I just hope that Ross isn’t trying to use The Raft as bait. I’ll have to get some of this to Steve and offer as much help as we can. I know where he is so I’ll find a way.”

“That sounds like you’ve thought this through. How are you with that? Are you--”

Mr. Stark cut her off. “I’m fine. I’m more than fine. Have you heard from Fury yet? He’s not returning my calls and Hill hasn’t answered my emails which is typical.”

Ms. Potts didn’t seem to care that Mr. Stark was brushing off her first question. “Maybe they’re more on Steve’s side than yours,” Ms. Potts said.

Mr. Stark laughed. “Wouldn’t put it past them, but we’ll need their help if we’re going to try and work around this mess. I did hear from Helen Cho. There’s really nothing more they can do. She’s going to personally oversee his transfer.”

Peter didn’t want to interrupt the conversation, but he felt bad about listening in on Mr. Stark’s conversation. It was just hard to move and try to get a word in to make Mr. Stark notice that he was there.

“I’m sorry, Tony,” Ms. Potts said.

“It shouldn’t have come to that,” Mr. Stark said and shook his head. “It just means I’ll have to fix it.”

“Have you spoken to Rhodey?”

“Not really. I don’t know what I would say--”

“And how’s Peter?” Ms. Potts asked.

Peter’s head snapped up at the sound of his name. He hadn’t expected for Mr. Stark to tell anyone about him. It made him wonder about who else might know. Did The Avengers know?

“According to Friday he’s fine. Slept well enough last night even though some of it was on a couch. I really -- I don’t know what I’m doing here. But, he’s great, Pep, he’s just so great. I always knew that but it’s different now I know him.”

“You’ll figure it out,” Ms. Potts said. “You always do and anyway, I think you’re doing well so far. I’ll call if I have anything else to add and keep me updated on Rhodey. Also, Peter’s just behind you so that seems like a good sign.” Then Ms. Potts was gone and Mr. Stark turned around, looking surprised.

“Um, I’m sorry,” Peter said at once. “Friday let me in and then the music was too loud but you said I could come in here and--”

Mr. Stark grinned at him. “Don’t worry about it. You’re welcome in here any time unless it’s on lockdown. Anyway, Friday could have told me you were here when you walked in and she didn’t so really it’s on her.”

“Right,” Peter said and let out a breath. He had never felt so awkward in his life.
“I’ve been working on a few updates for your suit,” Tony said, turning back to his work.

“Oh,” Peter said.

It was mostly precautions. Protocols to protect Peter in any circumstance that Tony could think of because a part of him wanted to just take the suit away and tell Peter that he couldn’t go out as Spider-Man anymore. But Tony knew that it would be a contradictory message after taking him to Germany. In part, Tony could admit that it wasn’t even the dangerous aspect of what Peter did that was bothering him -- he was well aware of how capable Peter was and what his powers gave him -- it was that Tony wasn’t sure how low a profile Peter could keep.

“Does that mean -- am I keeping the suit?”

“Of course you’re keeping the suit,” Tony said and turned to look at him. “Kid, I made this for you. As much for my own peace of mind as it is because you’re not especially talented with a needle.”

“I tried my best,” Peter said.

Tony let himself smile a little. “Yeah, you probably did and I can admit that you weren’t doing too badly for yourself.” He stared at Peter for a long moment and frowned. “Did you have breakfast yet?”

“No. Just woke up,” Peter said and before he lost the courage to: “I think I’m ready to talk about--” he waved his hands “--everything.”

“Sure, sure,” Tony said.

Peter took a deep breath. He didn’t really know how to explain himself. “I don’t -- I don’t really know what this means. I don’t know what you want from me, I guess? I wasn’t looking for my father. We were doing this project in school. Blood typing and punnett squares and I figured it out -- there was no way Richard Parker could be my father. I never thought I would ever figure out who it was and you’re the last person I thought it might be and now…”

Tony could see how nervous and unsure Peter was and yet he was trying not to let that show. Tony was a little surprised about the whole punnett square thing but then again Peter would be smart enough to figure it out that way. Tony was sure that if Peter had actually suspected that Tony and he were related that he would have also found a way to get Tony’s DNA and test it.

Peter seemed to be waiting for him to speak and Tony knew that he had to take everything a bit slower. Maybe he had thrown too much at Peter.

“I wanted you to know, Peter, because I didn’t want to keep that secret from you now that we’ve met,” Tony said and it hurt a little to not just shove all his emotion out at Peter and yet he was realizing that maybe Peter wasn’t ready to know the extent to which Tony cared for him.

“Okay,” Peter said and nodded.

Tony smiled at him. “I’ve wanted to meet you for a long time but it never worked out. Part of it was me being who I am -- being Iron Man. Your Uncle came up with the idea of the letters as a way to make it so we could have some contact with each other. He was a good man, Peter, and he always wanted the best for you.”

“He came up with the idea,” Peter whispered, surprised. “But that was years ago. Why couldn’t--”
“Peter, the circumstances made it very difficult and we didn’t want -- we didn’t want to tell you the truth if you and I couldn’t meet in person. Anyway, that was then and I’ve finally met you and you know the truth.”

“Yeah,” Peter said, but he was frowning a little and Tony didn’t know what to make of that, but he decided that he might as well finish with what he wanted to say.

“I know you’re not sure where this leaves us and I’m not much better. I don’t want to add any pressure on you. It’s the last thing you need on top of Spider-Man and everything else and I do understand that, Peter, and you can have as long as you want to decide what you want here -- if you want me in your life as more than just a weird eccentric mentor. But I want you to know I’m here for anything. It doesn’t matter the time, the place, or anything else, I’m here. For you, I will always be here whether it be Peter problems or Spider-Man problems. I just wanted you to know and it’s shocking and strange but it’s the truth and I’m game for whatever you want this to mean.”

“I don’t know what to say,” Peter said after a long silence.

“You don’t have to say anything,” Tony said and decided that it was probably better to just change the subject and let Peter think on all of that. “Now come on, you have to explain to me about why you thought it was smart to email me questions about spiders? I’ve been meaning to ask.”

Peter actually laughed and some of the worry seemed to fall off his shoulders. “I didn’t know who else to ask,” Peter said. “Also, I kind of wanted you to figure it out, I think, and anyway the idea came from Oscorp because they were working on it and they showed us a bit of it on that field trip and I would have asked even if I didn’t get bitten by a spider.”

“But you did get bitten and decided that you would still ask,” Tony said with a grin. This kid really was something else.

Peter shrugged.

Tony also suddenly realized that he had never looked into the whole spider bite thing. He hadn’t questioned Peter further on it or tried to make sure that he really was alright and that he wasn’t going to end up with some weird side effects.

“Mr. Stark?” Peter asked.

Tony shook his head. That would be something for later. “It did help,” Tony said, “once I was trying to figure out who Spider-Man was. I thought maybe you had found the webbing or seen Spider-Man. Bit of a surprise when it turned out that my son was Spider-Man, but I guess we’re not so different after all.”

Peter looked unsure again, but then he seemed to push past it. “My aunt always said that I was a lot like my father. I took it to be Richard but she knew he wasn’t my father so she was talking about you. She knew it was you.”

It felt almost like Peter was trying get confirmation that May and Ben did know -- although it had all been implied already -- and Tony figured it wouldn’t hurt to give it to him.

“They knew,” Tony said, “your mother must have told them. Mary made them your guardians in case anything happened to her and Richard and she must have told them about me as well at some point.”

“Oh,” Peter said. “She didn’t think you’d want to take me in if-- when they died?”
Tony shrugged. “I was a completely different person when your mother knew me. I wouldn’t have been good for you or any kid back then. I was a mess.”

“Right,” Peter nodded, and Tony hoped that Peter would never understand the extent to the mess that Tony had been back then.

“Anyway. Breakfast, come on. You’re a growing spider-boy.”

Chapter End Notes

So we finally have them sort of communicate better. And yet they’re both still so unsure but we’re in a good place now that Peter has had a night to sleep on it and Tony has tinkered in the lab for a good while.

Next up we get into the very beginning of Homecoming and Peter being taken home. Should have that next chapter up on Tuesday or Wednesday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 53

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading. I am still so so surprised by the response this fic is getting.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was awkward. That was the thing about knowing that Tony Stark was his father that Peter just couldn’t shake because somehow it had been easier when he had shown up at his house and basically invited himself into Peter’s bedroom and just told him that he knew he was Spider-Man. Things hadn’t been simple then, but they had been simpler. Now it was as if this whole father thing had thrown some sort of shadow over everything and Peter felt like he was reevaluating the entire insane way that he had been basically obsessed with Tony Stark and Iron Man because he wasn’t just that hero anymore. He was Peter’s father. It was crazy to even think of it like that. His entire world had changed. Peter couldn’t even begin to deal with it. So he tried not to think on it too much. Instead he tried to focus on just how crazy it was to actually be in Avengers Tower and to be with Mr. Stark -- who despite being his father was still Tony freaking Stark.

Spending the day with Tony Stark while they just ignored the whole father and son thing was fun. Mr. Stark showed him a bit about the things he was adding to the suit and the other features that Peter had been unaware it even had.

“There’s also one more thing,” Mr. Stark said after he’d showed Peter how to put in a new parachute into the suit.

“What is it?” Peter asked.

“The suit is not fully activated. I didn’t want all of it to overwhelm you so it’s currently set for training. I want to keep it that way. You need to really know how to use this suit and really know how to integrate your powers with it and when you are ready some of those features will begin to appear. The suit itself is programmed to do so.”

Peter was excited for the features that Mr. Stark was talking about. He couldn’t begin to guess some of them but he supposed he would know eventually. It amazed him how much work Mr. Stark had put in the suit.

By the time that Mr. Stark remembered that he had to return Peter to his aunt, Peter had almost gotten comfortable with how they just ignored the whole issue altogether and Mr. Stark ranted at him about random things like a new project on prosthetics and then Mr. Stark even showed him some things about the Iron Man suit that blew Peter’s mind.

“May probably wouldn’t be happy if I brought you home late,” Mr. Stark told him as they got into the car.

It was dark out as they set out and Peter really had lost track of time. It had been funny when they were headed down to the garage and Happy jumped at the chance to drive them even though he looked tired from just getting into New York City. Still, he eyed Peter warily and it dawned on Peter
then that Happy must not have known that Peter was Mr. Stark’s son.

“No, I got this, Hap,” Mr. Stark said and then pulled Peter towards a sleek looking car. The same one that had been parked outside the house the day that Mr. Stark came to see him.

Peter couldn’t believe that he was going to get to be in it. He must have looked excited because Mr. Stark laughed.

“Don’t worry, kid, you’re inheriting the cars too.”

“Why do you keep thinking that I’m waiting for you to die or something? I’m not -- I didn’t look up to you because of the money. Anyway, I can’t even drive.”

Mr. Stark stopped to stare at him for a long moment. “I guess I just want you to get used to the fact that you’re my heir, kid. But I can guarantee that you won’t be driving any of my babies for at least a year after you do get your license.”

Peter stared at him, a little surprised, but Mr. Stark just grinned. “Kidding. Sort of -- some of these are one of a kind. Anyway, come on, get in. I don’t want May to worry about you.”

Peter nodded and for a little bit he was distracted by how cool the inside of the car was and didn’t think about May and how much he wasn’t really looking forward to talking to her because May would want to talk. She wouldn’t leave well enough alone and Peter usually didn’t dislike that about her but this time -- this time he couldn’t help but not want to talk for a bit longer. It didn’t help that Tony had confirmed to him that Ben and May had known all this time that Tony Stark was his father without once trying to tell him the truth except for when Peter had confronted Ben and he’d tried to say it before he died.

Tony drove fast. He didn’t seem to care that they were in the city and that even though it was late, there were still plenty of cars out on the street but Peter didn’t even mind it because there was a thrill to it.

“I really don’t want those emails to stop, Peter,” Tony said eventually, “especially now that there’s whole other thing that we need to keep in contact for.”

“Because you happen to be my father,” Peter said.

“No, because you happen to be swinging around Queens in a suit I built you myself,” Mr. Stark said and smirked at him. “But that other thing too.”

“Oh,” Peter said.

“There are things happening that have happened because I allowed them to even though I don’t think any of it would have slowed down any even if I said no and sided with Cap,” Mr. Stark said and not all of it really made sense to Peter. “The point is, you’re a minor which I hope is enough for the UN to leave you alone and not pressure you into signing The Accords.”

Mr. Stark paused a moment and didn’t speak until they were at a stop light and then he actually looked at Peter.

“I hate to say that Steve was right. I don’t think his approach was the best, anyway, but The Accords aren’t what I wanted them to be. It didn’t -- I didn’t realize this until it was too late. Figuring out that my son is Spider-Man changed things. What I’m trying to say is that you must be careful, Peter. You must keep a low profile. I’m not saying that you have to stop being Spider-Man, just that you should stick to being the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.”
“But what if you need help. I mean after Germany can’t I…”

“Do you know how much — no, no, if we need you I’ll let you know. But I need you to also know that I’m here if you ever need help because I don’t want you in over your head. And, Peter, I do want to see you even when you’re not in the suit.”

Peter nodded. He still might not know exactly what would come in terms of his relationship with Mr. Stark, but that didn’t stop Peter from wanting to spend time with the man that had for so long been the person that Peter most looked up to.

When they arrived back at his house, Peter felt odd. So much had happened and changed in course of mere days ever since he had arrived home from school the other day and suddenly he was back to where he started and Peter couldn’t imagine things staying the same as before.

“Give me your phone,” Mr. Stark said after he parked the car. “I’m adding my direct number and also a way for you to contact Pepper if I don’t answer. She’s pretty great and will do anything for you.”

Peter handed it over wordlessly because he couldn’t believe it. Email had been one thing, but it was another entirely to have a direct line of contact in the form of a phone number.

“So text me. Email me. Call me. I’m here, Peter, even though I know I haven’t always been. And that’s not entirely my fault but…”

Peter watched as Mr. Stark actually called his own phone from Peter’s before he handed it back.

“I’m a little appalled that you’re using an iphone,” Mr. Stark said with a small grin.

“I--”

“We’ll fix that problem soon enough. Anyway, I guess this is it, kid. I’ll walk you up.”

Peter hadn’t expected that. A part of him had just expected for Mr. Stark to just drop him off outside, but he nodded and got out of the car and grabbed his bag and was already walking towards the door, but Mr. Stark wasn’t following. When he turned, he found him at the trunk of the car and then the case with the Spider-Man suit was in Mr. Stark’s hand.

“I -- I get to keep it?”

“I thought I made that clear already, didn’t I?” Mr. Stark said and Peter could tell that he was amused.

Peter didn’t know what he had expected — maybe for Mr. Stark to let him use it only when he wanted to. It would have been an easy way to have Peter coming and going from the tower, but then maybe Mr. Stark didn’t want that to give him any unwanted attention if Spider-Man was leaving from the tower all the time. After all, it seemed like he really wanted Peter to go unnoticed at least while he was Spider-Man.

May was waiting for them in the living room and she jumped up to pull Peter into a hug the moment he walked inside and Peter hadn’t realized how much he’d missed her. Still, Peter was also a little upset with her for hiding the secret.

“Can I get you anything, Mr. Stark?” May asked after Peter pulled away.

“Oh, no. I’ll be out of here soon.”
Peter went to drop off his bag in his room and he took the case from Mr. Stark as well before May noticed it and asked about it. He listened to them from his room.

“You told him,” May said. “He seems to have taken it well.”

“Better than I expected,” Mr. Stark said. “But it will still be quite a long way away for him to take it all in.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t know if I said the other day. Ben and I -- we wanted what was best for Peter and every time it just seemed riskier and riskier and he was so young that I didn’t know what would happen. I do regret it sometimes that he didn’t get to have you in his life earlier. But he knows now and you’ll make up for the lost time.”

Peter froze just inside his room. It was one thing to know that his aunt and uncle had known that his father was Tony Stark, but it was another to know that they had also made it so that Peter not only didn’t know about Mr. Stark being his father but also kept him from finding out earlier. Peter had heard the implication in Mr. Stark’s words earlier in the day, the way that he spoke about things being out of his control and how he had tried to meet Peter earlier. Peter just hadn’t realized that he meant multiple times and that multiple times they had found a reason for it to not happen and if May was apologizing then it had been her and Ben keeping them apart and Peter just -- it wasn’t fair.

“I’ll go say goodbye to Peter and get out of your hair,” Mr. Stark said and Peter moved away from the door. He resolved to try and stow away the suit because he knew May would probably go into the case if she saw it.

Mr. Stark knocked on his door.

“Come in,” Peter said.

The door opened, but didn’t close and Mr. Stark waited until Peter turned. He found him leaning against the doorframe.

“I’m going to head out and I know you have homework to do,” Mr. Stark said and smiled a little, “but like I said, keep me up to date on all the extra curricular activities.”

“Thank you,” Peter said. “And I will keep in touch about...about everything.”

Mr. Stark nodded and then he reached out and put his hand on Peter’s shoulder, giving it a squeeze before he turned and left and Peter was left feeling warm and cold and confused and he didn’t know what to do with any of it.

Chapter End Notes

I really love this chapter. It was certainly a fun one to write and I really loved getting to do a version of the scene of Peter getting back home. Although this is the start of Homecoming the movie actually skips a few months from here to when we see Peter next and he's back at school so there's a few more things that need to happen before we continue on with Homecoming. We have a Rhodey POV coming up in the next chapter and we'll be getting back to Steve soon as well.

Next chapter will be up at the latest Saturday.
This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 54

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading.

This is a little bit of a filler chapter but we had to touch back on Rhodey a bit as well as set up. More notes at the bottom.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There were about five different missed calls from Ross that Tony didn’t even consider responding to. It was fun to imagine The Secretary of State frustrated at a lack of answer from Tony especially after Tony had been playing along with him for a good while. Tony just had more important things to worry about like finally being able to get a few prototypes for a few different robotic exoskeletons for Rhodey. He didn’t know exactly what would suit Rhodey best, but with the right device and a good amount of physical therapy, Tony expected that Rhodey wouldn’t be bound to a chair forever.

Rhodey was being transferred to the states in the matter of days and since Rhodey essentially lived at the compound that’s where Dr. Cho was taking him and Tony was making preparations so he could be a bit closer to help Rhodey out. He didn’t really like the idea of being too far from Peter by staring at the compound too often -- especially since he was now running around Queens in a suit of Tony’s own creation -- but Rhodey couldn’t very well move into the tower and Tony still felt the guilt of what happened to his best friend gnawing at him.

Being busy helped with the whole not thinking about the Steve thing too, even if at night -- on the nights when Tony decided that he actually needed to get some sleep -- Steve was all that he thought about. Time had made Tony less upset about the whole thing because logic had stepped in, but there was still disappointment there in Steve and the trust that Tony had thought to count on. In a way, though, Tony knew better than most how some secrets developed and had to be kept up. He hated being logical about it.

Other things that kept Tony busy included trying to find some way to help get Sam, Clint, Wanda, and Scott out of The Raft. It was just that not even Maria Hill seemed to have a way to get them out and Tony just didn’t know if Steve would actually be able to pull it off if he did attempt it and Tony was sure that he would with Bucky one arm short at his side and Tony hated that he himself couldn’t be.

If it wasn’t for Peter and a million other reasons, Tony probably would have thrown caution to the wind and figured out a way to help with whatever plan Steve had, but he just knew he couldn’t.

Then he got a call from Sharon. It was a little unexpected because he hadn’t heard from her since seeing her in Berlin at the taskforce headquarters and since he and Natasha had figured out that she was the only one that could have gotten their belongings back to Steve and Sam. Tony hadn’t expected to hear from her any time soon.

“If it isn’t Agent 13,” Tony said.

“It was a nice way to keep everyone from asking about being a Carter,” Sharon responded, “but that isn’t why I called.”
“So, why did you?” Tony asked and walked over to the futon.

“I need everything you know about The Raft,” Sharon said without preamble.

“Helping Steve out again are we?” Tony asked and found that he was happy that she called. He hadn’t expected to be given a way to help.

“If you must know, yes,” Sharon said, “does that change anything for you? After all, you two were at each other’s throats the last time I saw you.”

It sounded as if there was judgement in her voice and Tony was almost a little amused. He had thought it was funny how Sharon flirted with Steve back after the funeral, but he hadn’t known that her devotion went this far.

“I have to say that you made things a little difficult when you stole their gear and went out to give it to them,” Tony said. “We could have avoided some things had you not done that. But that’s a matter of the past, now. There’s other things to deal with, clearly. I’ll send you everything I have on it. They’ll have to act soon but I can try to remotely access security and make it easier to break in. Ross should be back in the States by now or soon -- I’m not too sure on all that. From what I hear President Ellis isn’t entirely happy with everything that happened.”

As he spoke, Tony pulled a tablet over and started looking through everything he’d found out about The Raft and what Pepper had given him too and he sent it to Sharon’s private email. It made him feel a bit lighter to be able to help them out in this way.

“Thank you,” Sharon said. “I didn’t think you’d want to help. I didn’t know where you and the rest of The Avengers stood.”

“They’re my team, Sharon, and I’ve been trying to figure out a way to get them out of The Raft on my own for a few days now. Although I always expected Steve to take care of it on his own. I’m glad Steve’s on it. I miss him a lot, you know, more than I ever thought I would.”

“Oh,” Sharon said. “So you’re good then? No hard feelings?”

Tony sighed. “I’m not -- there are things I’m still mad about, but they’re things that can be overcome.”

“I have to go, Tony,” Sharon said, “do you want me to let him know you gave me all the info?”


---

Tony had always had a way of being a worrier while pretending that he wasn’t. Back when they were at MIT, Rhodey remembered when he’d caught a cold. The kind that went past just having a stuffy nose to a sore throat, headache, fever, and even a bit of vomiting. Tony had fretted and worried and tried to pretend that he was doing so because Rhodey’s cold inconvenienced him and whatever he was in the middle of building, but Rhodey had seen through it when Tony brought him medicine, soup, a few boxes of tissues, a giant bag of cough drops, and even a steaming cup of tea.

So, it was a little surprising for Tony to not have been present at the hospital in Germany the entire time that Rhodey was there, fussing over him and trying to build him new legs or whatever. Vision had told him that Tony had been there when he was first brought in, but he’d gone off after Steve and Barnes. The rest of the team, he learned then, had been taken in. It was a small win and yet it wasn’t because they were apparently imprisoned in The Raft which just hadn’t been the point at all.
Vision wasn’t sure what happened to Tony after he left the hospital since he’d been intent on staying there and even Rhodey could see the guilt that he clearly felt over the whole incident. He was told that Tony had stopped by for a short visit at another point, but Rhodey had been under pain meds and fast asleep. So, it wasn’t until he arrived back in the States with Dr. Cho and Vision, that Rhodey finally got to get a full picture of what happened while he was in the hospital.

Tony met them at the airport and then they drove to the Avengers compound and Tony just rambled on about how he was working on a fix for his legs. Some sort of exoskeleton prosthetic that Dr. Cho thought would work. Tony also seemed intent on wanting to make sure that it would link in to the War Machine suit and for that Rhodey loved him because a part of him had been mourning the loss of being able to be War Machine and an Avenger but of course Tony understood that he had to find a way to make sure that Rhodey wasn’t losing much with his injury.

“Tony, what happened?” Rhodey asked on the drive.

“A lot,” Tony said. “Turns out that Steve was right. Barnes didn’t do it. He was framed by Helmut Zemo who’s now in custody of the Task Force. Of course, none of that matters to Secretary Ross because I’m pretty sure his aim in capturing those two was the super soldier serum which has really been biting us in the ass lately.”

Rhodey could tell that Tony was keeping something back, but he could also tell that Tony wasn’t going to talk about it just then. That would come later.

“He has Wanda, Sam, Clint, and Scott in The Raft but he’s been busy so at least they’ve been left alone in their cells as far as I know, but that’s not how this was supposed to work.”

No. It wasn’t. Bringing them in had never been about putting any of them in a prison and especially not one like The Raft. The UN couldn’t have been alright with that or had that in mind for them. This was all Ross and it was quite something.

“So we have to get them out,” Rhodey said.

“That is already being taken care of,” Tony said and smirked. “They’ll be fugitives, but they’ll be safe.”

“Good,” Rhodey said.

“Either way, Sugarplum, it’s not as if you’re going to be going on any rescue missions.”

“Right,” Rhodey said. “So what else in new?”

Tony smiled a little and after a small moment of hesitation. “I met Peter,” he said, “and he knows who I am -- he knows I’m his father.”

Rhodey had almost expected for that to never happen. There had always been some sort of obstacle or reason so for it to finally happen was surprising and Rhodey was glad and he could see how happy Tony was at all of that finally happening. Except that it didn’t make sense because too much had happened and Tony couldn’t have had the time unless that explained his absence from Rhodey’s side at the hospital.

“How does that fit in with everything else?”

Tony gulped and Rhodey knew that he probably wasn’t going to like this. “So, you remember Spider-Man?”
“Yeah, the kid that thinks Star Wars is an old movie?”

Rhodey was still a little hazy on the involvement of the kid. He did remember that he couldn’t shut up on the comms or in the middle of fighting.

Tony laughed. “He’s a huge Star Wars fan actually. I think he was trying to sound cool with that line. Anyway, that’s him. That’s Peter.”

Rhodey didn’t know how to react. It made sense, though looking back and yet he couldn’t believe that Tony had gone and brought his son along to fight against Captain America. How he would have thought that a good idea, Rhodey just didn’t know. Yet the hardest part to really wrap his mind around was that Peter was Spider-Man -- he had superpowers.

“I can’t believe your son is Spider-Man,” Rhodey settled on.

Tony laughed. “Tell me about it.”

Chapter End Notes

So after the boatload of Peter and Tony chapters we just had we’re going to touch upon the post-Civil War things that are happening with other characters which started off here with a little bit on Rhodey. This chapter takes place over a couple of days after Tony drops off Peter. The next three chapters will be heavy on Steve because we have a raft breakout to take care of among other things.

Next chapter will probably be up on Sunday.
Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.

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After the initial contact with Sharon, it didn’t take long for her to get back to them and this time she had the exact information that Steve needed to really plan out the rescue. She had the guard schedules, info on the security codes and more importantly when Secretary Ross wouldn’t be there. It made it so that their rescue couldn’t happen for a few more days, but it meant they had time to plan it out well.

“I’m glad we were able to find them,” T’Challa said when he saw their plans coming together, “this was not how The Accords were supposed to operate. Their intention is still right and I think maybe you’ll figure out that there’s a merit to what we wanted. I do understand your side of things, Captain, but The Accords are in place for a reason.”

“I understand,” Steve said, “and I can see why you and Tony support them or at least the intentions that they have. I wish that things were different and that something like The Accords wouldn’t be a weapon in the wrong hands.”

T’Challa nodded. “The same can be said about just anything, Captain. Anything is a weapon if one wants it to be and sometimes it doesn’t matter what your intention is -- bad things can still happen.”

In the short time that Steve had been in Wakanda wandering around the place because it was too gorgeous not to, he had had time to really think. There were a lot of things that Steve would have done differently. A lot of things that he would have reconsidered and maybe reacted to differently. It wasn’t even about the death of Howard and Maria at the hands of Hydra and Bucky, but all the other things that he’d done wrong like not trying to work with Tony before things could truly get out of hand even in spite of everything else that was going on.

“I really wish that things hadn’t happened so fast. We might have resolved all of this before it got to this point,” Steve said.

T’Challa nodded and Steve was reminded that T’Challa had lost his father and that he too had been driven by grief. The coronation was going to happen soon and Steve was a little curious as to what it would entail mostly because Wakanda seemed to be a mixture of the future and old tradition in a way that he had never experienced before. It opened his eyes up to what colonization had done to huge parts of the world. He imagined that a lot of places would be different and perhaps more like Wakanda as far as the culture aspect went, had they been left alone to grow and flourish in their own right.
Once the plan was ready there wasn’t much else to do. T’Challa had taken off to find someone he wanted present at his coronation and so that left Steve and Bucky in the hands of Shuri who had taken Steve’s shield and made a face at the patriotic look to it. She had still gone on to fix the scratches on it and then promised to make him something new as well because Steve really couldn’t be out there using that shield if he wanted to keep his identity hidden. He supposed that he might just go without a shield all together for a while.

“I have given you everything I think you’ll require,” she said one day while they ate lunch. “Is there anything else I can help with?”

Steve had seen the way that Bucky reacted to that question, looking at Steve with an almost guilty look on his face and yet he didn’t speak out. He left that to Steve.

“Is there any way I can send a letter? To make sure it’s not traced back to me?”

He had been mulling the idea over for a little while. He wanted to reach out to Tony -- he just didn’t know if it would be a good idea if the letter was somehow traced back to Wakanda. Steve just didn’t want anyone else in any kind of trouble least of all T’Challa or even Tony.

“Child’s play,” Shuri said. “And do you want to contact this person also untraced? Something faster than the mail?”

Steve nodded at once. “Can I do that?” He wiped his mouth with a napkin and looked back up at Shuri who had a glint in her eye.

“Who’s the girl?” Shuri asked, but glanced at Bucky instead of Steve.

Bucky laughed and smirked at Steve before responding. “Boy. It’s Tony Stark.”

Shuri seemed taken aback for a moment but the moment passed quickly and she perked up and got out of her seat with a glint in her eyes. She looked strangely gleeful.

“I have something that will work. Untraceable. Unhackable. Just the right thing.” Shuri rubbed her hands together and Steve was suddenly reminded of her age. “But go on write him that love letter and I’ll get this all set up.”

Steve spent most of the day after lunch trying to get the letter just right. He hated wasting paper, but he needed to get something to Tony. Part explanation and part apology. Steve knew that Tony would read it, but he hoped that Tony would also understand his side of things. But more importantly, now that Shuri was giving him the option, he needed for Tony to keep in contact with him because he didn’t know how he was going to manage being away from him. It was late afternoon when he finally wrote something that almost felt right. He knew he wouldn’t be able to do much better.

Shuri presented him with two very different phones later that evening.

“Alright, here they are. I hope you finished that letter. I want you to send this one with it.” She waved the one in her left hand.

Steve was surprised that it was a flip phone because even he was aware of how weird it was for anyone to still use one of those. He actually didn’t think that he had ever seen anyone use one ever.

“Why is that one a flip phone?” Steve asked.

Shuri smirked in a way that Steve was beginning to realize meant mischief. “Because it will remind him of you and because it’s hilarious. Just think about it! Tony Stark using a flip phone? It’s
madness. But, he will. He will if he likes you at all as you like him.”

Despite her youth and her penchant for jokes and silliness, Steve had to remind himself that Shuri was a genius and that she could understand and read people well.

“Isn’t that an idea,” Bucky said with a grin and a nudge.

The other phone was more like a regular smartphone and that one was supposed to be Steve’s. He would keep it with him always and hope that Tony would reach out to him through it.

They packed up the phone and Steve’s letter and Shuri took care of sending it off, promising that it would arrive within the next two days.

Sooner than expected, Steve and Bucky were also setting off to rescue the others from The Raft. Shuri saw them off on a borrowed jet.

“That place is insane,” Bucky said as they flew out. “And to think that it’s hidden away from the entire world.”

“Yeah,” Steve said, “we always thought that my shield was made of the last of the vibranium but it turned out that the world just didn’t know there was more. There was this guy -- this arms dealer that had some. That’s how Ultron created Vision’s body. Still, I don’t think any of us actually realized how it could be used or what it could do. Seems like they’ve done well by staying in the dark. Imagine any of this getting into the wrong hands.”

“It’s not just weapons,” Bucky said and there was awe in his voice. He didn’t say anything for a while, but Steve could tell he wanted to and that Steve might not like what he had to say.

Being in Wakanda had really been beneficial to Bucky. Steve had been stuck in his own head and then planning out getting Sam, Clint, Wanda, and Scott out of The Raft that he hadn’t really thought about Bucky much. He didn’t really need to, not when Bucky was right there next to him. But he had noticed that Bucky had started to relax some. He seemed calmer and less paranoid and yet Steve knew Bucky and as such he knew that his friend hadn’t ceased to worry about the brainwashing.

There had been moments here and there where Bucky had drifted off with Shuri or one of the many people that Shuri had working in her labs and Steve hadn’t thought much of it because Bucky had always been curious and interested in science. It was a shame in some ways that he and Tony hadn’t gotten to meet in a different way because Steve suspected that they would have actually gotten on well.

“I spoke to Shuri,” Bucky said at long last. “I -- I will never not be compromised. I’m a risk no matter where I am or who I am with because that book and those words exist and my mind isn’t my own.” He paused to look at Steve and there was a sorrow to his eyes that Steve hated seeing.

“Buck, we can figure something out,” Steve said.

Bucky shook his head. “I was going to go off on my own again,” he admitted. “Kind of a risk but I did well enough for myself before.”

Steve opened his mouth but Bucky waved him off.

“No, let me finish,” Bucky said. “No matter what this is going to be difficult. I spoke to Shuri about it. She’s just such a smart kid. She thinks there’s a way to fix it -- fix me.”

This was exactly what he wanted for Bucky. Bucky had become more and more himself since Steve
had found him again and yet there was an edge to him and that paranoia that seemed to be a constant with him. He was different, and Steve knew that taking away the brainwashing wouldn’t fix everything, but it would change some things. Might make him freer.

“I’d have to go in the ice again,” Bucky continued, “but it would be worth it no matter how long it takes if I can be me again.” His lips turned up a little but Steve could tell that Bucky wasn’t letting himself hope for the best result. It made Steve wonder if Bucky would ever be anything like the man he used to know.

“Just so we’re clear, I wouldn’t have let you leave,” Steve said.

Bucky let out a laugh. “You could have tried, Stevie, but the truth is that you love Tony Stark and your stubborn need to come after me hurt that -- hurt him. It took you almost seven hours to write him a letter. I won’t be your weakness or part of the reason you . If I stay in Wakanda and let Shuri try to heal me I won’t be. It’s better this way.”

It also almost made it feel like none of it had been worth it. Like finding Bucky and fighting for Bucky had been for nothing because despite how T’Challa had allowed them into Wakanda, Steve wouldn’t be able to stay there. He wouldn’t put T’Challa in that position and Steve knew that getting the others out of The Raft was just the starting point to whatever came next. He couldn’t even begin to guess to what would come next but he knew himself well enough to know that he would never be fine just hiding out somewhere not doing anything. He wouldn’t be able to just stay somewhere -- not even a place as lovely as Wakanda -- without some sort of purpose. At least now he would know where Bucky was and he could go and visit.

“I guess this is the way it’s going to be,” Steve said and smiled at Bucky.

Bucky nodded.

Chapter End Notes

I really really loved Black Panther (like everyone else) so when I got to this part of the fic I did have to just include Shuri because she’s just fantastic and I really really wanted to write the scene where the phone comes into play on Steve's side. As to the letter. Shuri says it will arrive in two days. Steve and Bucky leave for the raft and do the rescue on the same day as the letter is due to arrive. On another note, T’Challa does leave before Steve and Bucky do to go find Nadia because Black Panther happens basically a week or two after Civil War.

Lastly, I started writing ch. 86 earlier today and am very close to the end of Homecoming. Things are going well and I really love how everything is just falling into place. Thanks for reading.

Probably posting the next on on Monday or Tuesday.

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Chapter 56

Chapter Notes

Thanks as always to everyone reading! You guys are the best.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the end, the rescue wasn’t too difficult. From Sharon’s info they knew not to expect Secretary Ross to be there and while Steve hadn’t doubted the intel, he was cautiously optimistic that she was right. Getting onto The Raft wasn’t too much of a problem either due to Shuri’s tech and then Steve took out the guards. Bucky was still one arm short but that didn’t mean he was useless. Between the two of them they got all of the cells open and everyone out and onto the jet within just twenty minutes of getting on The Raft. It had almost seemed a little too easy.

Steve didn’t like the conditions that he found his team in. Wanda was strapped in a white straight jacket which kept her uncomfortable and seemed to have not only affected her physically but mentally as well. The others weren’t much better but at least their hands were free. They all looked exhausted and worn out as if they hadn’t slept even in a wink since arriving in their cells.

Steve had to remind himself that Tony had come to see them and seen them like this and been unable to help them partly because he’d been trying to get to Steve and Bucky and that was his main priority at the time, but also because he just couldn’t do anything without ending in one of the cells himself. Steve didn’t know if he would have been able to handle seeing Tony in one of those cells probably strapped in like Wanda because everyone knew that Tony could make a weapon out of anything.

“Where to now?” Sam asked after they were all in the jet and had flown away from The Raft.

“That’s up to you guys,” Steve said. “I mean, we’re fugitives now and that’s what we’ve signed up for. Can’t change that now. Ross and the UN -- they’ll be after us.”

Sam nodded thoughtfully.

This wasn’t going to be about what any of them wanted, really. It was about survival and staying off the radar and Steve hated that he had been the one to bring them into this. He hated that the only thing he really wanted to do was to be back at the tower with Tony in his arms and yet it was the one single thing that was impossible and that Steve couldn’t imagine having again any time soon. It made him clench his jaw.

“You know I’m sticking with you,” Sam said and clapped his shoulder.

None of them asked about Siberia or Tony and Steve was glad. He knew the questions would come later because Sam wasn’t likely to let it go. Even Bucky had been oddly silent about it so far, but then he had been present and he probably knew that Steve didn’t want to talk about it yet. But Steve was sure that it would come up eventually. Things always did with Bucky.

“I —me too,” Wanda said and pursed her lips. Steve didn’t really know where else she might go. Sokovia -- what was left of it -- hadn’t been her home for a long time and her other home, the
compound, wasn’t available to her anymore. Steve didn’t really want to think about how he had been the one to take it away. Things could have been so different.

“An empire toppled by its enemies can rise again,” Zemo had said, “but one which crumbles from within. That’s dead.” Steve couldn’t believe that he was right. Couldn’t let himself imagine that they had truly torn themselves apart. It was going to make them stronger -- they would come back together because this couldn’t be the worst thing to come back from.

“I think I have to go see Laura,” Clint said, interrupting Steve’s thoughts.

Clint looked horrible. He was stubbly which made his face look older and none of that was helped by the prison uniform or how pallid he’d become.

“She probably hates what I’ve done but I have to try,” Clint finished. He looked serious.

Steve nodded. He remembered Laura who had been so sweet and understanding the last time he saw her in person. And then the kids -- three of them now. God, what had Steve done in getting Clint involved and pulling him away from his family? He just hoped that Laura would be understanding of this.

“Is that safe?” Scott asked. “I mean won’t they be looking for you there?”

“No one knows about the farm,” Clint said.

“Tony does,” Sam said.

Clint paused and his jaw tightened.

“He wouldn’t have told anyone,” Steve said and he was sure of it “He never wanted any of this to happen. He would never give up your kids like that. You know he wouldn’t.”

Clint seemed to be hesitating on agreeing but eventually he nodded. “Yeah. I think it’ll be safe.”

“Can I come with you?” Scott asked. “I don’t regret this -- any of this, but I have a daughter too and I should contact her mom and stepfather.”

Steve was reminded yet again how little he knew about Scott. He had just been happy to have that extra helping hand that he hadn’t even had the chance to really talk to him or get to know him. Sam probably knew a little bit more about him, but even Sam looked surprised to hear about Scott’s daughter. But Tony would have known. If Scott had ended up getting recruited by Tony, Tony would have known everything about him down to how he drank his coffee and ate his eggs.

“If either of you need help don’t hesitate to call us,” Steve told them.

“You too,” Clint said.

They flew to the farm and a few hours later had dropped off Clint and Scott. Nothing about the farm had suggested that there was any trouble until they were just about to get back on the jet and Natasha appeared out of the bushes. She had changed into civilian clothing, carried a bag slung around her shoulder and had even had time for a haircut.

“Care to give a lady a lift?”

Sam laughed. “What are you even doing here?”

“Safe house,” she said with a shrug. “It’s like you guys don’t know what that means. And anyway, I
had to calm Laura down a bit. I figured Clint would come straight here and some things were better coming from me. Didn’t really expect you lot here, but I guess it’s my lucky day. What’s the plan anyway?”

Steve really shouldn’t have been surprised that Natasha had known Clint would get out of prison.

“Bucky’s going back into cryo in Wakanda. That’s first. The rest, that comes after.” Steve said.

Bucky squeezed his shoulder and Steve shot him a smile.

---

Dear Tony,

There are many things that need to be said. A lot of which I can’t even find the words for. This is -- I don’t know how many versions of this I’ve written already. I guess, all I really know is that I love you, Tony, and that I hurt you. I guess I thought -- by not telling you about your parents that I was sparing you from feeling their loss again, but I was wrong. I can see now that I was just a coward and I just wish I had been strong enough to realize that you needed to know seeing as I had so many chances to tell you and didn’t. I guess I just -- I didn’t trust in you like I should have. I hope one day you can understand why I did that and why I found it so hard to tell you.

I don’t like the idea of not being around and you being alone in that tower, so I hope you won’t be. It was the first time in this century that I began to fit in while I was with you in your workshop. I don’t think even The Avengers made sense to me without you, because they are yours, maybe more so than they were ever mine. I’ve been on my own since I was 18 and I never really fit in anywhere -- even in the Army -- but I always fit in with you. My faith has always been in people, I guess. Individuals. You. I’m happy to say that for the most part, no one has let me down. Not even you. Which is why I can’t let them down either. Locks can be replaced, but maybe they shouldn’t. I think you agree with me on that.

I wish that we agreed on the Accords, I really do, because I hate not being on the same page with you. I know you only did what you believed was right and that’s all any of us can do, it’s all any of us should do. It’s not something that will get in between us again, I think, and no matter what happens I will come if you need me no matter the consequences.

For now, it will be hard to stay away. It will be hard to love you from afar, but I will. Never doubt that, Tony. I will always be yours.

Love,

Steve

Tony read the letter three times after it arrived and clutched the flip phone in one hand, hating that Steve had gone and found the most infuriating way of communication. He supposed that it was better than a beeper or something.

He had been surprised when the package arrived, not having expected contact from Steve so soon especially since his focus should have been on breaking everyone out of The Raft. Nevertheless, Tony was sure that King T’Challa had made it possible seeing as Steve had to have gotten the phone from somewhere and from just a small glance at it, Tony knew that it wasn’t just a simple flip phone. Tony just hated that he would have to keep it a flip phone.

There was only one number programmed to the phone, as expected, and Tony was tempted to call it right away but he just didn’t know what he would say.
Tony wasn’t all that angry anymore. He even sort of understood why Steve had done what he did and he could look at the whole thing and realize his own mistakes but that didn’t make any of it easier. It didn’t erase how hurt Tony was about the lie and even about seeing how his parents died with his own eyes on a grainy video.

Either way, he was supposed to be helping Rhodey out with his physical therapy which had been going well enough. The exoskeleton was making a big difference, but Tony could see some ways to improve upon it and make them even better. It was just a matter of implementing all the notes he’d taken so far. Rhodey had shot down any of his ideas that included extremis and Tony didn’t think that he’d actually need it seeing as the exoskeleton on its own seemed to be making a huge difference. Tony intended to start a whole department at SI to create all the designs that he’d made because there were plenty of people in need of the help. He wished that that he had thought about getting into that field earlier but Tony had just never been interested enough. Pepper was over the moon about the idea, even as she fretted over Rhodcy any time she saw him even if it was just over a video call most of the time.

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone liked this one. I really love how the letter ended up and reaching this point of the fic. Next one is another Steve chapter but after that we get back to Peter. Should be up Thursday or Friday.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 57

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading. You guys are the best.

I really love this chapter most of which I did not plan to write. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steve hadn’t known how T’Challa would feel about him bringing Sam, Wanda, and Natasha into Wakanda considering that he had just broken them out of The Raft, but he had promised Bucky that he would take him back to Wakanda, so he left the three of them in France with the promise to meet back up soon. Returning without Bucky wasn’t a prospect that he was looking forward to.

“I feel like I got you back just to lose you again,” Steve said as they flew away from them.

“You’re not losing me. I’ll be back out of the ice in no time and this time you know where I am. I won’t be running away from you. You have bigger things to worry about.”

“I guess I do,” Steve said. “I never thought I’d be on the run, though.”

“It’s not so bad,” Bucky said with a grin. “I just hope that you and Stark can mend things up. I don’t like that I was even a little responsible for breaking the two of you apart. Steve, you’ve never really had anyone like that. There was Peggy, of course, but you went in the ice and she moved on and you didn’t look at Peggy the way you look at Stark.”

Bucky would be the one to pick up on that. The thing of it was that Steve had been a different person back then and while he had loved Peggy, Steve had always felt a little bit undeserving of Peggy because Peggy had always seemed to be something greater. With Tony it was different — they weren’t similar necessarily, but certainly more equal. But Steve had gone and ruined that and discovered in the process that maybe he didn’t deserve Tony either.

“I love him,” Steve said.

Bucky smiled at him. “I know. And you know, I’m glad that I can go in the ice and know you aren’t alone. You have people that care about you.”

When they arrived in Wakanda they were greeted by T’Challa and Shuri.

“I hope the break out went well,” T’Challa said but Steve could tell that T’Challa already knew all about it. There was no doubt that someone had contacted him to let him know it occurred if nothing else. Tony probably also knew about it too.

“Yes, it did,” Steve said. “We really do appreciate all the help you have given us.”

The coronation still hadn’t taken place, Steve found out as they walked down to Shuri’s lab. T’Challa had only just gotten back, but it was all planned to occur soon.

“I’ve been working on a few things to help with your problem,” Shuri said to Bucky, “but I think it’s best if you’re in cryo.”
Steve had been avoiding saying goodbye to Bucky the entire flight to Wakanda, but he knew that he’d have to now and he didn’t really have the words. This was his oldest friend, the friend that Steve had thought he’d lost once for seemingly forever. Yet, he’d been found again even if it hadn’t been until recently that Steve had gotten to finally spend any length of time with him and this goodbye wasn’t going to be forever. They would see each other again.

Shuri had Bucky sitting on a table with an IV, down to his undershirt, and still without one arm. It was an odd look to him.

“Are you sure?” Steve asked.

“I don’t know my own mind,” Bucky said, saying it, Steve thought, almost because he needed Steve to see that and believe that. “So until they figure out how to get that stuff out of my head I think going back under is the best thing. For everybody.” He gave him a pointed look and Steve was sure that Bucky was thinking about Tony.

“Okay,” Steve said and he dropped a hand to Bucky’s shoulder and gave it a squeeze and Bucky smiled.

“It won’t be forever,” Bucky added as he stepped into the cryo chamber.

The process was quick after that. Shuri and her team began the freezing process and Steve watched. It seemed almost instantaneous.

“We’ll keep in contact, Captain,” Shuri said after it was all done. “I’ll let you know when he is well.”

“Thank you,” Steve said and she nodded at him.

He met with T’Challa before heading out and was glad to note that T’Challa felt some sort of duty to protect Bucky in some part because of how he had pursued him, but also because T’Challa was exactly what a King and leader should be. Steve didn’t think he would ever not respect him.

“You are welcome here anytime, Captain,” T’Challa said.

“Thank you,” Steve said and he was even more thankful when T’Challa let him keep the jet.

He flew back to meet up with the others at one of Natasha’s safe houses in a small village in France where they were trying to decide their next course of action. He had to park the jet a few miles away from the house, but because it was Wakandan it was easily shielded and hidden. No one would see it.

It was as he was walking back and trying to keep from being noticed, that Steve heard the phone ring and his breath caught. He fumbled with getting it out of his pocket. He had hoped -- of course he had hoped that Tony would call but he’d never expected it to happen this soon.

“Tony?” He asked.

“Hey, Cap,” Tony said.

“I guess you got my letter,” Steve said. “How -- how are you?”

He couldn’t believe he was getting to talk to Tony, that he was getting to hear his voice. It had been a few weeks, but Steve missed him desperately.

“I’m -- I guess I could be better. How are the others?”
“Happy to be out of there. Wanda was in a straight jacket, there was no reason for her to be--”

“I did try to prevent that,” Tony interjected, but then: “It was pretty horrible to see.”

“I know you did,” Steve said.

They were keeping their conversation light, off of them and all of that, and Steve didn’t even care because Tony had called him and that spoke volumes. It gave Steve room to hope.

“I hope you’re not in any trouble over all of this,” Steve said, “that’s why I didn’t try to get your help breaking them out.”

Tony laughed. “Who do you think made it possible? Sharon called me. And now I’m getting calls from Secretary Ross every other hour, but I warned him I was going to put him on hold. Anyway, he has his own problems to deal with. I wanted them out of there just as much as you did.”

“You didn’t have to--”

Steve stopped when he came upon a tree and leaned against it away from view.

“I wanted to. They’re my friends too, you know, and this wasn’t how it was supposed to go. It was never supposed to get to that point but that’s on Ross. I’m sure Clint’s still mad at me. I wouldn’t be surprised if Wanda was too.”

He heard resignation in Tony’s voice.

“I don’t think that will last, Tony. How’s Rhodes?”

“Learning to walk. He’s getting better.”

None of this was supposed to turn out this way with Rhodes injured and all of them split apart.

“Good. That’s good. And what about that kid -- he was pretty impressive. Where’d you find him?”

Tony let out a laugh. “Oh, you wouldn’t believe me.”

“I know he’s from Queens,” Steve said and remembered suddenly that Tony’s son also lived in Queens. “Like Peter.”

He heard Tony shift the phone. “Exactly like Peter,” he said.

“What does that--”

No. It couldn’t be.

“It was Peter,” Tony cut in.

Steve didn’t know what to say. Peter — as in Tony’s son Peter had been at the airport fight. Steve had thrown a truck at him! This was — Steve couldn’t believe it. He had thrown a truck at him! Oh, god, he had -- Tony’s son could have gotten hurt or worse but no, Steve had known even before he threw it that the kid wouldn’t be injured by it. It just changed things in his mind a little to think about it being Peter. Peter who Tony had finally met.

“I know, I know, I shouldn’t have brought him along but he was never supposed to be that involved in the fight and things just got away from us. He’s -- he’s perfectly okay. I think he’s as strong as you are and he can heal fast. He’s amazing, Steve, and I couldn’t not tell him not when secrets are--”
Steve felt the guilt of the secret he’d kept from Tony and it was hard to face even as he heard Tony cough which meant that he probably didn’t really want to talk about it either.

“He knows,” Steve breathed out. So much had happened and he hadn’t been there for any of it. He could only imagine how much Tony had been freaking out over it.

“Yeah,” Tony said. “He, um, I think he’s taking it well. I haven’t actually heard from him since I dropped him off at home but he’s probably just processing.”

“Wow,” Steve said. He really had not expected that. But he was glad. “I’m so happy you finally met him.”

“Me too,” Tony said. “I can’t wait for you to meet him properly. He’s -- you’d like him a lot.”

“I’m sure,” Steve said.

They spoke for a little longer. Steve told him about Bucky going back into the ice, and how Clint and Scott were in the US. He knew that the others probably wouldn’t like that Steve was just telling Tony everything, but Steve trusted him and he knew that Tony wanted the best for all of them. He also knew that it was probably better if Tony remained well informed.

Tony told him about the new division he was forming as SI to do with prosthetics and robotic exoskeletons. It was inspired by Rhodey but it was going to do the world a load of good.

“I just -- Steve, I’m worried about him. Peter. He’s going to be Spider-Man no matter what I do. He’s just -- it’s not stubbornness. He thinks it’s his responsibility because he has those abilities and I can’t fault him for that.”

“Doesn’t stop you from worrying,” Steve said.

“I’m sort of starting to understand how Pepper felt about me being Iron Man, but I have to let him do this, you know?”

Steve could just chuckle. It was just that there was an irony to Tony having to deal with this. Still he felt for Tony because he knew how big Tony’s heart was and how much he cared about Peter.

“Just -- I guess you have to just watch from afar and be there when he gets in too deep. But he’s a smart kid, so I don’t think he’d go looking for trouble that he won’t be able to handle. He’s quite impressive.”

“Not too concerned about that. It’s the trouble that will come looking for him,” Tony said.

Steve smiled to himself. “I’m sure you’ll be there to fix that problem if it ever comes up. But don’t worry too much, Tony. He’ll be just fine.”

“I hope so,” Tony said.

They finished their conversation with promises to call each other soon and while Tony complained about how hard texting on that flip phone would be, Steve just smiled and knew that Tony would text him anyway.

As Steve continued his walk, he felt a little lighter. They may not have touched upon the bigger issues but things were going to be okay.
So after last chapter I knew what was coming for Steve and Tony in this one so I was super amused by some of the comments on them talking again knowing that they would be literally a chapter later.

We'll be geting back to Peter with the next chapter. I'm so super excited for everything to come. At this point I've finished writing Homecoming and I have a lot to edit seeing as this is the last chapter I had edited since I was focusing on writing. I'm hoping to have the next chapter ready by Saturday or Sunday.

Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 58

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading.

So this chapter does take place about two weeks after the last time we saw Peter but we get a flashback to what happens after Tony left. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Getting back to normal life after the crazy time in Germany with Mr. Stark and then the days spent at Avengers Tower made everything feel like a dream. Except that he now had a father and he had a suit that surpassed anything he could have ever come up with on his own even if he’d had the money to develop it. He was also sort of upset at May and that just wasn’t ever fun.

After Mr. Stark left, Peter had avoided having a conversation with May for about five minutes before she showed up at his door and he had known that he wouldn’t be able to avoid dealing with it.

“So, you know the truth now,” she said, not bothering to dance around the topic.

Peter nodded and couldn’t make himself look at her.

“Are you okay?”

May moved closer and lifted his chin up so that he would look at her. There was a concerned frown on her face, the kind that she usually wore when Peter was sick or not feeling well. It almost made Peter less angry except that how could she ask that when Peter clearly couldn’t be okay. He wouldn’t be okay for a little while at least while he was still trying to process everything.

“No, May, I don’t think I am,” Peter said, voice louder than usual and May took a step back.

The more he had thought about it in the time between leaving the tower and Mr. Stark leaving his room, Peter had realized that there was something extremely important that May and Ben had taken from him. It didn’t diminish that they were his parents in a lot of ways, but he could have had more. He could have had his father alive and well and had more than a few letters with Mr. Stark over the years. He would have had more than just a hero that he could admire from afar. All that time was lost to them now with no way of getting it back.

“We were protecting you,” May said. “It’s all Ben and I wanted -- to keep you safe.”

Peter closed his eyes. He didn’t want to fight and he just hadn’t realized how much it had actually hurt him because it wasn’t just anger. May had lied to him. He guessed that in the moment it hadn’t felt like that, at least not until he came to the realization that Mr. Stark hadn’t just swept his existence under a rug to be forgotten but had had to do that in part because of who he was, but also because his aunt and uncle hadn’t wanted him to be in Peter’s life. To think about Uncle Ben as this barrier between him and his father was painful, but Peter couldn’t ignore it.

“You could have found a way to tell me even if I didn’t get to meet him right away,” Peter said and he turned away from May.
“Peter, I’m--”

“May, can we not talk about this right now?”

May sighed and nodded and yet she still walked towards him and kissed the top of his head.

“I love you, Peter. I know this is hard, but that’s the truth.”

A part of Peter hated her a little bit for saying that because it made him feel like the bad guy getting upset because May and Ben just cared for him and wanted what was best for him and somehow to them him meeting Mr. Stark back then hadn’t been the best thing.

Trying to write to Mr. Stark after everything that happened was hard too. Difficult in a way that it had never been before because this Peter just didn’t know what to write because suddenly everything seemed too boring to write to Mr. Stark about. It also seemed weird to reach out to him now that the whole thing with him being Peter’s father was sort of hanging over his head.

Going out as Spider-Man seemed like the best escape and it was enough to just get the new suit on and swing around Queens. He hadn’t run into any kind of trouble lately either, which meant that he just got a chance to really get to know his new suit a little better and it was as amazing as any Stark tech could be. Everything felt better when he was Spider-Man. He didn’t have to deal with the sad looks that May gave him or try to come up with a reason to contact Mr. Stark and Peter rather liked the lack of pressure and how free he felt while in the suit.

It was a couple of weeks after the whole airport thing and finding out Tony Stark was his father — did that make him Peter Stark? — when Mr. Stark finally reached out to him.

Peter, I am your father: hey, kiddo, just checking in since I haven’t heard from you in a bit. How’s the spider thing going?

Peter hadn’t looked at the contact name that Mr. Stark had put himself under just because the easiest thing for him to do was avoid facing it especially after the number of hours that he probably lost just staring at Mr. Stark’s email, so he burst out laughing when he read it and somehow all the pressure that he’d been putting on himself over it fell away.

Peter: going well. Not much to report on.

Mr. Stark was quick to respond.

Peter, I am your father: hmm...well you’ve been all over Queens lately. I was just...

Peter, I am your father: I figured I’d check and see how it’s going.

Peter, I am your father: And hey, that’s an idea, how about we do some daily reports when you go out as Spider-Man? Remember we talked about low profiles.

Peter, I am your father: I suppose it could even give Happy something to do so you can send them to him if you want. Or me. Whatever -- whatever you want to do.

Mr. Stark texted fast. Faster than anyone Peter had ever texted before. Peter had barely tried to get a word typed in before another text of his came in followed by another before Peter had even finished reading the last.

Peter: That sounds like a good idea
---

May didn’t know what to do. She wished more than ever that Ben were at her side dealing with it all too, because she just couldn’t do it. She couldn’t handle Peter being upset with her and the way that he was still sneaking out and rarely ever home.

Worse was not knowing exactly what Peter was thinking or how he was dealing with such a huge change in his life because he wouldn’t talk to her. At least Tony Stark had left them both alone for the time being but it wasn’t going to be for long if the whole internship thing panned out and May was sure that it would because Tony wanted to spend time with Peter and he would find a way and that was currently the easiest one and May didn’t think that Peter would protest spending time with Tony.

Tony was his hero after all -- and after all that time that Peter had spent looking up to him this was more than he could have expected or hoped for.

May had considered reaching out to Pepper and finding out what had happened from her, but it had felt just a little too pushy and May had never wanted to be that parent. Her own parents had been too nosy and always in her business, never content with what May wanted to share and too quick to take issue with her choices. Knowing who Peter was and how sweet and smart her boy was made her believe that Peter would be alright and that he would talk about it all with her when he was ready to. Still, she couldn’t help but worry. That was just what being a parent meant.

May tried not to think too hard on it, especially since she knew that Peter wouldn’t stay too angry or silent on the matter for very long. It wasn’t in his nature. She just hoped that he would listen and understand their reasoning behind keeping the secret.

---

Tony eventually did have to take Ross’ calls. He had been putting him on hold every time he called or transferring him over to Friday who would then claim that Tony was out. It was fun, especially since Tony’s voicemail always seemed to be mysteriously full when Ross tried to leave a message.

But, he had always known that his fun wasn’t going to last.

Pepper and his lawyers had made sure to make it clear to Ross that what he’d done in putting Sam, Clint, Scott, and Wanda in The Raft was unconstitutional and that it was a human rights violation. The UN council that was set up to oversee The Accords agreed with that assessment and because the public was entirely unaware of most of what happened since The Accords were ratified, Ross really had no leg to stand on. But, that didn’t make them any less fugitives because they had all still broken the law -- multiple laws and gone against The Accords directly. The UN was still trying to figure out what the right way to go about bringing them in and putting charges on them which meant that there were long meetings happening and no one was in pursuit.

The UN was talking about putting each of them on trial for their crimes, but Tony suspected that a trial against Captain America and the others wouldn’t go the way that anyone asking for them to answer for their crimes would want it to go. They had all done too much good to be chastised like criminals. It was just a matter of letting the matter lie and letting some time pass before they reappeared by which point Tony hoped to have The Accords looking entirely different and more accommodating to Steve and the others.

Barnes was a whole other issue. Tony didn’t even want to touch all that there would be to deal with there because just thinking about the other man made him remember how he killed his mom. Tony still had nightmares about it and sometimes when they were really bad even Steve made it into them
and he stood to the side of that car telling Tony that it wasn’t Bucky. Those were the nights when Tony rushed to the workshop and tried to fix or create something.

On the afternoon when he finally picked up Secretary Ross’ call, Tony had been working on a brand new suit. One whose idea had made itself known to him in the middle of the night after waking up screaming.

“Oh, Secretary Ross, I am so sorry for all those times I never picked the phone up, but I’m a very busy man, you see, and I have no real team to speak of at the moment so I…”

“Cut the shit, Stark, you know where they are. Tell me where they are.”

Tony had known that’s where it was going to go.

“I’m going to prove you had something to do with them escaping,” Ross pressed.

“Tut, tut, Ross, my best friend was shot down from the air and he’s learning to walk again which is currently my main concern so I don’t really care where they are. I’ve been busy with that and trying to figure out if Vision and I are enough protection against any alien threats because I rather think not, but the rest of the Earth’s defenders are in hiding because you chased them away and didn’t listen to me when I brought evidence about the real culprit of the bombing. It is not my fault that the UN has taken you off the council due to your poor leadership. I have not been in contact with any of them.”

“Not even Barton,” Ross said.

Tony didn’t like that particular line of questioning because he knew where Clint was supposed to be which was the farm. A safehouse that no one knew about and that no one could know about. He had to wonder about Ross asking after Clint specifically.

“No, not even Barton.”

No one knew about his wife and kids either, so at least Ross wouldn’t have a way to use them as collateral. Ideally, if Clint decided that he would go back into retirement he would be the easiest to clear of all charges and then Ross really wouldn’t be able to touch him.

“Hmm. You really are no help, Stark, not even when you do pick up the damned phone.”

“I do try,” Tony said and then hung up.

The thing about Thaddeus Ross was that he was a man that wouldn’t give up. Tony didn’t trust that he would ever stop looking for Steve and Bucky and the others, but Tony wasn’t going to let him find anything. More importantly, he was not going to let Ross figure out that Tony had a son and that said son was running around Queens in a suit of Tony’s making with actual superpowers.

Chapter End Notes

I really love this chapter and what it does for us when it comes to May and Peter. Also, someone once asked if there would ever be a Star Wars reference when it came to Peter finding out about Tony being his father and I thought it would be hilarious if Tony would use that as his contact name in Peter’s phone.

I’m going to try and have the next chapter up tomorrow -- but it will definitely be up by
Tuesday. I just need to edit it.
Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 59

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading.

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was a screen in the workshop solely dedicated to telling Tony where Peter was. It was only ever activated when Peter was in the suit, but Tony supposed that those were the moments when Peter was in most danger. He had alerts set up to his phone, to the suit, and most definitely to Friday for any signs of distress from Peter and it was the only way that he could have peace of mind while knowing that his son was out there being some sort of superhero.

Having Peter send in daily reports about his days as Spider-Man helped too and Tony was happy to note that Peter seemed to be doing the whole friendly neighborhood Spider-Man thing in the way that Tony wanted him to. He was keeping his nose to the ground and going unnoticed and Tony hoped that things would stay that way.

Tony was also extremely happy that Peter sent those reports to him directly and not to Happy. He had yet to reach out for any other reason but Tony figured that that would come later. He was hoping that if given enough time Peter would reach out without prompting. But if he didn’t, then Tony would.

He was actually a little surprised that May hadn’t called him or Pepper about any of it so that was probably a good thing because Tony was hoping that the secret coming out hadn’t hurt hers and Peter’s relationship. Peter didn’t seem to kind to hold grudges or be upset for very long and Tony didn’t really want to pry. He wanted to give them just a bit more time before he even tried to ask any questions.

In the meanwhile Tony was keeping himself busy. Bringing a whole new division to SI with the prosthetics and robotic exoskeletons meant that Tony had quite a bit of work on his hands but it was good -- it was good to have something to do and focus on because then his mind was busy. It didn’t focus on Peter, or worse Steve, or even worse Barnes.

In a way the whole Steve aspect of things was much or less resolved in that Tony could never stop loving him even despite everything because at the end of the day, Tony knew that Steve had never meant to hurt him and that it had been Tony that had led them to the physical fight in Siberia. Tony couldn’t deny that it still hurt -- especially when he thought about his parents -- but these days he just missed Steve in a way that Tony hadn’t expected and all he wanted was to have him at his side again.

The screen turned on suddenly and Tony’s head shot up. Peter was in Queens near his house and Tony watched his dot move away from the house. He wasn’t moving too fast, but Tony watched for a moment until Peter seemed to just stop a few blocks away.

“Where is he, Fri?”
“Looks like just an apartment building. He might be on the roof,” Friday said.

Tony got back to his work. He was a bit distracted and had to keep glancing back up every once in a while, but Peter didn’t leave that spot for the better part of an hour. Then, his phone started ringing.

“It’s Peter, Boss,” Friday said.

Tony glanced at the map again but Peter was still on that building so Tony calmed down the worry about him being in trouble. He still didn’t rule it out as he picked up his phone -- his regular phone, not the monstrosity that Steve had sent him.

“Hey, Peter,” he said.

---

It took Shuri less than a month to have Bucky out of the cryostasis, his brainwashing gone. Steve was beyond impressed and surprised when he received the call from Shuri.

“He’s doing great, Captain,” Shuri said after delivering the news.

Steve had not expected to hear from Shuri so soon or to hear that Bucky was already better and already out of the ice, but he really shouldn’t have been too surprised.

“What will happen with him now?” Steve asked.

“He’ll remain here. It’s what he wants and he is welcome to stay. We just wanted you to know since I did promise an update.”

Steve couldn’t help but wonder about why Bucky hadn’t contacted him himself to tell him the news.

“Anyway,” Shuri said, “I don’t know where you’re hiding since you’re a fugitive and all but my brother said you’re welcome to come visit. I’m sure it will make Sergeant Barnes happy to see you.”

Steve promised to visit soon, not sure exactly when he might be able to go, but hoping that Natasha didn’t have anything planned for them so he could get away. Ever since he had rejoined the team, they had tried to keep a low profile and hide away but none of them were the types to really sit around not doing anything so between Natasha and her contacts and Sharon’s intel they had started to go after any bad guys they could find -- mostly illegal arm dealers that were passing weapons on to terrorists and the like. It was even better when they could go after someone that the government couldn’t touch for some reason or another. Those were the days when Steve felt better about the whole fugitive thing even though being on the run just wasn’t great.

Natasha had a few places where they could stay from time to time, but for the most part they wound up at small mostly run down hotels. It had made it necessary for them to actually change up their appearance a little. Natasha had bleached her hair. It didn’t look bad per say, but it just wasn’t her and Steve didn’t really like it too much. Steve had declined her offer to change his hair color too and instead just stopped shaving. It felt weird to not be clean shaven anymore and even weirder because he was just letting his hair grow out but Sam and Wanda told him that the new look was working on keeping his identity hidden. Steve just knew that Bucky would take one look at him and laugh and yet Steve couldn’t wait to see him again.

“Who was that?” Sam asked after Steve had gotten off the phone.

“Shuri,” Steve said. “Bucky’s awake. He’s -- he’s doing good.”
Sam grinned. “That’s great, man.”

“Yeah,” Steve said. “I’m thinking I’ll go visit him as soon as I can. Assuming Natasha’s returned yet.”

“No word yet,” Sam said and he stretched his arms out. He turned the tv on and flipped through a few channels.

“I guess we’ll see her tomorrow, then, she did say three days.”

The worst part about it all was that they really didn’t have a secure way to contact each other. Burner phones could only do so much for them and Steve didn’t want to compromise his only way to communicate with Tony and Shuri. He wished that Shuri had given them just one more secure phone, but it seemed a bit presumptuous to ask after everything that she had already done for them and either way for the most part they didn’t tend to go too far on their own. Only Wanda seemed keen on the idea of going on her own, but they all knew that was to do with Vision.

“How long do you think it’s going to go this way?” Sam asked.

“The whole fugitive thing? Could be a while. Maybe until we’re needed again and can prove our usefulness.”

Sam laughed. “Not really something to wish for, is it?”

“I suppose not,” Steve said.

Sam turned on the tv and there was a news report on. The anchor was talking about The Accords and naturally Tony’s name came up.

“Although Tony Stark was the first to offer support for The Accords, it seems that he is now the first to want to add changes. The Sokovia Accords of course came about a way to regulate the superpowered among us but with Captain America standing against it The Avengers roster has changed considerably. Perhaps Stark is trying to attract new members or bring his old teammates back into the fold. Either way, we have learned that he and his lawyers have been working on amendments to the original Accords.”

None of them asked about Tony directly, but Steve had always been able to tell when Sam was holding back. But even Natasha didn’t bring it up he knew that they were doing it because they wanted to spare his feelings. Steve liked it better that way. He didn’t have to explain his own wrongdoing or how he missed Tony desperately or even how he had found a way to stay in contact with Tony despite everything.

“Wow,” Sam said. “What do you think he’s trying to do there?”

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “We’ll have to wait and see.”

Chapter End Notes

Timing wise it's been maybe about a month - maybe a little over since Peter found out about Tony being his dad at this point. The events of Black Panther have also already taken place by this point hence we have Bucky awake and well. Next few chapters we get back to some Peter and Tony. It will likely be up by Thursday. Thanks for reading.
This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 60

Chapter Notes

Thanks for reading everyone.
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It took Peter a little over a month before he finally decided that he needed to see Mr. Stark -- his father -- again. He had been building up towards it for a while, but it had all felt a little odd. Odd because he just didn’t know if he could just ask to see him and then even odder because aside from a few texts here or there, there was no real communication between them. Peter always sent some sort of report about his time out as Spider-Man, but that was never too personal. It felt safe and normal and didn’t touch on all the other things.

In a way he appreciated how little Mr. Stark reached out. It made it easier to just contemplate on the information. Past knowing that he was going to inherit a legacy and all of that, Peter had to come to the terms of what he wanted this all to mean because it had become very clear to him that Mr. Stark was leaving all of it up to him. A part of Peter loved that and yet also hated it because it meant that he didn’t know what Mr. Stark would prefer and that was somehow harder.

Did he want Peter to be his son -- as in everything the word entailed? Did he want for Peter to just be his heir and maybe just work with him or learn from him? Did he have a preference? Peter just didn’t know, but he wanted to find out because he couldn’t force Mr. Stark to be anything he didn’t want to be for him and Peter knew at least one thing -- he wanted Mr. Stark to be in his life. The last time he saw him, Mr. Stark had said something about how he would be there for Peter and Peter wanted to take him up on that.

It was the lack of emails and contact that had done it for him because Peter missed it. He missed getting emails and sending emails and logically he knew that if he had written that Mr. Stark would probably answer, but while everything was still hanging over his head, Peter just didn’t know if he could try to make things normal again.

So on a Saturday afternoon after spending some time on homework and getting to hang out with Ned, Peter hadn’t had much else to do and that had given him some time to think. It had also given him some time to consider his relationship with May which was still strained. Ever since school had let out Peter had started feeling even stranger about it because he saw more of her and he could tell that May was itching to bring it up and just discuss every part of it. Peter wanted it badly, but he was still just so angry and he didn’t know how to handle that anger.

It had been tempting to tell Ned about everything, except that Ned didn’t know about Spider-Man or about Peter and Mr. Stark’s emails and Peter didn’t know how he could explain it all without adding more lies into the mix or having Ned freak out more than even Peter was because Ned tended to be a little on the dramatic side.

Instead, Peter went out after telling May that he was going for a walk, but changing into the Spider-Man suit once he was in an alley. His stuff he left hidden and webbed up on the corner of a brick wall. He really needed to get a new way of doing things when it came to that because Peter had been losing things left and right since becoming a masked hero. Maybe Mr. Stark would have a good idea.
He wandered around for a while and managed to scare a weird looking guy that looked like he was trying to follow a couple of teenagers and then stopped a mugging near a subway station and then he went and sat atop a tall building for a while, thinking and trying to talk himself into reaching out to Mr. Stark. Emailing would be easy and quick, but Peter wanted to be braver. Texting seemed much the same so Peter pulled the mask off and hit the call button instead. The phone rang a few times, making Peter worry that he was calling at a bad time and pulling Mr. Stark from something important, but then he picked up.

“Hey, Peter,” Mr. Stark said.

“Hi,” Peter said and swallowed. “I just -- this is kind of stupid maybe, I don’t know. I’ve been -- I’ve been thinking about everything.”

“Hmm,” Mr. Stark said.

Peter paced around the roof. “I still don’t -- I don’t know what I...I guess I still don’t know what it all means. But would it -- I don’t know, I think maybe we can get to know each other? Is that -- is that okay?”

Mr. Stark seemed to take his time answering. Then, “yeah, Peter, that’s -- I’d like that. As long as your aunt doesn’t mind, I wouldn’t mind spending time with you. You’re out of school now, right?”

“Yup,” Peter said and he couldn’t believe that this was so oddly easy. “And I don’t really think she has a say on this anymore, Mr. Stark. She can’t keep me from -- well, from my father.”

Peter heard Mr. Stark fumble with the phone and then a cough. “Peter, I never meant for any of this to strain your relationship with your aunt. I don’t want to come between you.”

Peter walked towards the edge of the building and he sat down, dangling his legs over it. This would have scared him once, but then he had never really had any trouble with heights. He had gotten even better with them after his powers.

“I’m not going to be mad at her forever,” Peter said because he knew it was true. “But that’s between me and May, alright.”

“Sure, kid. I just don’t want you to make a mistake here over something that we can’t change. But, moving on, how about you come over tomorrow? I think I said I’d go to some meeting with Pepper tomorrow but that’s boring anyway and she’ll understand if I have a good reason to skip. I’ll send Happy to fetch you around noon? How does that sound?”

“Good -- yeah, that’s, that works,” Peter said.

Mr. Stark chuckled. “Alright, kiddo, see you tomorrow then.”

“See you,” Peter mumbled as the call ended and Peter felt lighter and excited and just -- yeah this felt right.

---

Tony couldn’t get any more work done after that. Peter had called him of his own free will and to ask if they could spend time together and Tony couldn’t believe it. This was everything -- it was more than what Tony could have expected and yet he should have known that Peter was going to surprise him like this because that’s who his kid was.

The one thing that had surprised him was that Peter seemed to be having some issue with May about
the whole thing. Tony understood the reasoning behind it, but he didn’t really like it. He didn’t want to be the cause of some sort of rift forming between May and Peter because he had seen with his own eyes how those two cared for each other. He supposed that eventually they would get past it. He would definitely try to push Peter in the right direction if he could.

“This might make it a good time to get something to eat, sir,” Friday said.

Tony watched the screen with Peter’s GPS signal. Peter was heading back home it appeared. He waited until the tracker went off line before he got up and left the workshop. He picked up a tablet on his way out and called Rhodey.

“What’s up, Tony?” Rhodey asked.

He looked a little sweaty and Tony should have remembered that his best friend was probably in the middle of some physical therapy. It was all he really did these days even though Dr. Cho kept telling him to not overdo it. In the time since Rhodey had returned to the states he had been getting better and better. It meant that Tony could stop worrying so much, but that Rhodey insisted he go back to the tower. Tony was trying to persuade him to move to the tower too, but Rhodey wanted to stay at the compound for the time being even though he was basically on his own with Vision because everyone else just worked there and went home at the end of the day.

“Doesn’t look like I’ll be coming up tomorrow,” Tony said. “I’ll try for the day after but I’m not sure if Pepper will let me off the hook when I skip that board meeting tomorrow.”

Rhodey laughed. “Just have Pep come see me so we can talk about you behind your back. But what’s up? Did you somehow figure out how to get together with Steve or something?”

Tony rolled his eyes. Pepper and Rhodey -- actually no one -- knew the full story about what went down in Siberia and Tony wanted to keep it that way. It was enough to know that T’Challa knew about it. But because they didn’t know, they both weren’t out for blood when it came to Steve and instead they wanted for Tony to find a way to get to see Steve.

“No. Don’t think that’s happening any time soon. Ross is still trying to find him and he will have someone follow me no matter where I go.”

“Not Wakanda,” Rhodey was quick to point out. “Because despite King T’Challa wanting to get rid of their isolation they’re still very secretive and not exactly inviting everyone right through their borders.”

Tony rolled his eyes, “Which you see as an invitation for me.”

“I don’t see it as not an invitation. I know you want to see him. He probably wants to see you too. If you don’t find a way I’m going to have to find one for you. Don’t think I won’t. I have plenty of time on my hands right now.”

Tony laughed and shook his head. He missed Steve desperately, but it was one thing to miss him and love him from afar despite everything that happened and to see him. Because seeing him meant that Tony might have to actually deal with all of their issues and it was possible that things wouldn’t be all that simple. Not to mention that Barnes was in Wakanda.

“Actually, Peter wants to see me. He said something about us needing to get to know each other,” Tony said.

“Smart kid,” Rhodey said. “I do want to meet him properly soon. I suppose you’re not going to show him how you stalked him basically his whole life?”
Tony walked to the kitchen and went about looking through the fridge for something to eat but aside from a block of cheese there wasn’t much that could constitute lunch. It was a little bit sad that he had a completely empty kitchen.

“No, I don’t want to spook him even more.”

“Suppose not,” Rhodey said and then grunted. “I should get back to my exercises. Let me know when you will be coming up. Vision’s been acting a little odd -- well odder, I guess.”

“Any reason why?”

“I think maybe he’s trying to figure out where Wanda is or a way for them to meet up somehow.”

Tony sighed. “Yeah, I don’t get all of that. I just hope he’s careful. He can’t make a mistake and send her back into The Raft.”

Rhodey nodded. “I think he’s aware, but hey maybe it will benefit you and Steve if he finds a way to meet up with them unnoticed. Let me know how tomorrow goes. We’ll talk soon.”

“Sure,” Tony said and then grabbed a take out menu.

Chapter End Notes

I really loved how this chapter came out. Next chapter will have more Peter and Tony. Should be up this weekend. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 61

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading.

This is one of my favorite Peter and Tony chapters. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Happy was clearly not pleased to be going to pick up Peter and Tony would have gone himself except that he wanted to get at least some work done before Peter arrived.

“Don’t give him a hard time, Happy,” Tony told him over the phone.

“Not really sure why you need him over, personally,” Happy said.

Tony had planned on telling Happy about who Peter was to him, but had changed his mind pretty quickly because it was just so amusing to have Happy look grumpily at him through a video call.

“I just do it, Happy. You know who he is, and you’re probably going to be picking him up a lot.”

Happy didn’t seem happy at the news but he didn’t say anything.

“You asked for more responsibility, Happy, this is it.”

“Sure, sure. Babysitting,” Happy said and then, “I’ll bring him over.” And then hung up.

Tony returned to his work. He was a little distracted but not enough to not be able to get anything done. At some point he had gotten into a zone and just worked without thinking about much else until Friday interrupted him by turning off his music.

“Sir, they’re parking,” Friday announced.

Tony stood up and walked out of the workshop. He was a little nervous to properly see Peter again and yet at the same time he couldn’t stamp down his excitement. Peter had reached out — Peter wanted to see him.

Not being able to wait, Tony headed down in the elevator and got there just in time to see Peter get out of the car.

“Wait up, kid, I have to walk you up. You don’t have security clearance.”

Tony chuckled. “I think we can fix that today.”

“Mr. Stark,” Peter said and turned so fast that Tony was surprised he hadn’t injured himself.

“Hey, kiddo, come on.” He extended his arm out and Peter moved towards him within reach so Tony draped it over his shoulders and then turned towards Happy. “Thanks. I’ll let you know if he needs a ride home.”

“I don’t think—“ Happy began.
Tony waved his hand at Happy. “You worry too much, Happy.”

He led Peter towards the elevator and didn’t look back but sure that Happy was watching them.

“He doesn’t know,” Tony told him. “I haven’t clued him in because I think it’s hilarious how he seems to think you’re some sort of threat to me.”

“Well I do have superpowers,” Peter said.

“True. But you wouldn’t hurt anyone if you could help it,” Tony said.

Peter shrugged his shoulders, but he seemed to be in agreement. Tony let go of him when the elevator doors closed and Friday automatically took them up.

---

Peter was a tad nervous. He had been ever since he’d gotten into the backseat of the car and Happy drove him over to the tower. It would never cease to be impressive to Peter, who remembered paying close attention while it was being built because Tony Stark was behind it. This was a place that he had never hoped to enter -- least of all Tony Stark’s penthouse apartment and yet this was his second time there and Mr. Stark wanted to give him security clearance and everything was crazy. Then again, never even in his wildest dreams could Peter have imagined that Tony Stark was his father.

“Want to come see some of what I was working on?” Mr. Stark asked as they stepped out of the elevator, as if this was normal occurrence for Peter to be there.

“Uh, sure,” Peter said.

They walked towards the workshop and Peter followed Mr. Stark closely as he walked to a work table. The bots were all at their charging stations and none of them moved. Mr. Stark seemed to notice where he was looking.

“They’re going through a rebooting cycle,” Mr. Stark said. “Anyway, tell me what you think about this.”

He pulled up the design for what looked to be some sort of prosthetic. It was amazing in design and Peter was sure even more so in the use of it.

“Wow,” he said.

“Yeah, some of the board members said the same thing,” Mr. Stark said. “Ever since Rhodey got injured I’ve been working on making sure that he’ll be able to walk again and I figured why not start a whole division. It’s not going to be for profit at all which I know the board didn’t like, but this isn’t like a phone or a tablet, you know, it’s about helping people.”

Peter nodded and he knew he was grinning wide but he just couldn’t help himself because this was exactly one of the reasons that he had always looked up to Mr. Stark. He had turned his entire life around from weapons manufacturing to clean energy and now to prosthetics.

“This is really cool, Mr. Stark,” Peter said.

“I thought so,” Mr. Stark said. “Anyway, do you want to tinker a bit or do we get to the conversation aspect of this first?”

Peter let out a breath. He really didn’t know if he’d be able to talk about any of it if he didn’t do it
soon. Just getting himself to call Mr. Stark had been hard enough.

“I -- talk first, I think.”

“Okay, sure,” Mr. Stark said.

“I’ve thought about it a lot,” Peter said. “It’s still a little crazy, you know, because I always just didn’t have a father and Ben -- Ben was always great but he’s not here anymore and--” Peter coughed “-- anyway, the thing is you’re you.”

Peter was trying to stay still but he couldn’t help but shift a little in place. Mr. Stark had leaned against the work table and his arms were crossed in front of his chest.

“I’m me,” Mr. Stark said. He sounded like he was trying to understand more than anything and he nodded as if asking for Peter to keep going.

“I had a poster of you on my wall,” Peter said. “I went to Stark Expo and I had one of those Iron Man masks. Mr. Stark, when you wrote back to my fan letter it felt like one of the best days of my life and it was one of the worsts the day that everyone thought you were dead. I wrote -- I don’t know if you ever got it but I wrote this one letter so so sure that you couldn’t be dead and that’s -- that’s who you are to me. I even bought one of those Iron Man plushies once at a fair and I have no idea where it is now but now -- now, you’re my father. It’s crazy -- this wouldn’t even happen in a comic book, you know?”

Mr. Stark chuckled a little and yet he looked pensive. “Do you know who’s poster I had on my walls as a kid?” He asked after a long moment.

Peter didn’t know how Mr. Stark wasn’t addressing everything else. “I don’t,” Peter said.

“Tut tut, and you’re supposed to be a fanboy,” Mr. Stark said with a grin. “I had Cap on my walls and basically on everything. There’s a whole room full of Captain America merchandise in my childhood home and not all of it was mine -- but it was mine. Is mine now, I guess. Anyway, the point is that I never thought I would ever meet him and I sort of resented him for reasons that don’t matter now, but he was the guy on my wall and then he was the guy standing in front of me that ended up becoming one of my best friends.”

Mr. Stark smiled probably as the thought of Captain America and Peter didn’t get it.

“We, um, we just fought him,” Peter said, “he’s a fugitive.”

Mr. Stark nodded and the smile faded a little. “It’s such a mess, Peter, but yeah we did for stupid reasons that could have been avoided but weren’t. Doesn’t really mean that we’re not friends anymore.”

Peter got the parallel a little bit and it helped to know that Mr. Stark understood what he was going through and yet it was still so different because this wasn’t just about them becoming friends -- it was different.

“It’s one of those things that changes over time, Peter. You just -- you have to stop dwelling on it because I’m probably not the person you thought I was or maybe I am. I don’t know -- I guess Cap sort of held up his deal on being morally righteous and all that but there’s so much more that no one really knows about him. That I didn’t know about him.”

The way that Mr. Stark spoke about Captain America surprised Peter a little mostly because of the fight at the airport and how they had both just been so in it.
“It’s just something you’ll figure out on your own,” Mr. Stark said.

“Okay,” Peter said, “that’s -- yeah, I get that. I’ll get over that. It’s strange, but I’ll get over it.”

“Is that your only concern?”

Peter was moving a little on the stool because he really sucked at just staying still. He looked towards Mr. Stark and didn’t know how else to voice everything else -- how he didn’t know what this was going to be like and how it scared him to be so unsure.

“Do you -- Mr. Stark, you said it was up to me and I just, that’s too much pressure on me to decide that I guess. I just, I don’t want this to go badly because I -- maybe I want, I don’t know...”

Mr. Stark for the first time looked a little unsure. His arms dropped from his chest and he inhaled a breath and then he moved towards Peter. He stopped just in front of him and Peter had to look up to look at him.

“The one thing I’ve always wanted is for you to be happy and safe. What I want doesn’t -- it isn’t as important as that. So how about we start with you calling me Tony. Maybe that will change how you think about me. Less of the hero and the guy on your posters and more of just another person who happens to be your father?”

“I can do that,” Peter said and it felt like a good idea. Tony could be someone else -- someone that Mr. Stark wasn’t.

“There’s also -- you could come over every once in a while. Once or twice a week.”

“Oh, yeah, that’d be -- yes, I can definitely do that.”

Mr. Stark chuckled and he placed a hand on Peter’s shoulder. “Good because one of the things I do want is to see you often, kid.”

Peter hadn’t expected that or the feeling of warmth that it gave him and suddenly he could tell that Mr. Stark -- no, Tony -- that he didn’t seem to know what he was doing either or how to handle any of it.

“Now come over here and show me how you made that web fluid. I was thinking of a way to improve on it a little but I want to know what your formula is exactly.”

Peter nodded at once and he had to pull out his phone to look up the exact formula he’d used the last time he improved on it.

“I keep forgetting about the mistake that is that phone,” Mr. Stark said. “Remind me before you leave to give you one of the prototypes.”

“Mr. Stark I can’t--”

“We can call it product testing,” Tony said and waved his hand.

It was surprisingly easy to just be there and Peter imagined many more days spent like this. Maybe they just needed to uncomplicate it and just let it happen. It was easier than overthinking everything.

Chapter End Notes
So Peter and Tony finally cleared the air here. I really loved being able to have them really just come to an understanding of sorts because they left things not on a bad note but on a confusing note at least for Peter so I really love this conversation they have here.

Next chapter is Tony POV dealing with other plot things. It will probably be up Monday or Tuesday. I'm leaning towards Monday. Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 62

Tony had a really long week. It had started when Maria Hill finally decided to email him back. She didn’t answer any of his emails or his questions and just asked for a meeting and Tony supposed that it would probably be for the best. He suggested the compound and she agreed and then told him she would be there the next day. Tony had forgotten how Maria Hill operated. It made him wonder why she needed it to be so quick and hoped that she didn’t bring bad news.

Either way, the next day he headed over to the compound and was not too surprised when it was Hill and Fury that were waiting for him with Rhodey in the main conference room.

“Ah, you finally show up after all this time,” Tony said.

“Well after all the mistakes that have been made some of us had some work to do,” Fury said and he gave Tony a stony look made worse by the eyepatch and Tony had to sigh as he took a seat.

“Natasha reached out to me,” Maria said after a moment. “She wanted some resources and we gave them to her. They’re keeping busy taking care of some problems. Nothing huge. We thought it best.”

Tony also supposed that it was only Natasha that knew where their orders were really coming from. But it made sense -- they couldn’t just be out there on their own without intel. It was better that they weren’t bored in some safe house.

“Okay, great,” Tony said. “As long as they don’t get caught for some reason I’m all for it. I want them back here -- that’s the goal now. We need this team back together.”

Fury smirked. “You’ve made having that happen a bit difficult, Stark. Ross is a thorn at our sides and the UN works very slowly.”

“The elections--” Rhodey began.

“The elections make this difficult too. It’s become a talking point -- this whole mess has. We’re having it from both sides. Liberals that think The Accords were right and Conservatives that want it to be worse mixed in with those that want the US to pull out of the whole thing and that Cap was right. None of that is making any of this easier.”

Tony had actually forgotten that it was a Presidential election year. He supposed that was the problem about not paying attention to the news that didn’t interest him. Tony just had a million other things to worry about.

Maria shifted in her seat. “Hank Pym reached out to us,” she said.

“What does that have to do with anything?” Tony asked.
The name sounded familiar though even though Tony couldn’t pinpoint exactly why that was.

“Hank Pym created the Ant-Man suit,” Fury said.

“Oh,” Rhodey said, “the guy - the one that shrunk and got big. Sam told me about him.”

Things were starting to click for Tony a little. Hank Pym as in Pym Tech. The guy -- Ant-Man had definitely mentioned something about Pym not trusting Starks. It figured that his father had some sort of hand in this as well.

“Okay and what does he want?” Tony asked.

“They’re going after him and his daughter for creating the suit. Scott and the Pyms are not exactly an interest to Ross because they expect that Scott is with Cap and so the suit is unlikely to be found.”

“But he’s not with Steve,” Tony said.

“Exactly and from what Hank has said -- well, he’s likely to do the stupid thing and reach out to his family which means the FBI will catch him. But if he turns himself in the UN is willing to work out a deal with him. It’s a step in the right direction,” Maria said. “The problem is that this deal would exclude the Pyms and since Hank Pym is the original user of the suit and also the creator and he and his daughter are unwilling to sign the Accords -- bad history with Shield makes Hank cautious. I don’t blame him. Wasn’t a fan of your father either.”

“That doesn’t surprise me. So what, what is the plan then?”

“We’ve already spoken to Scott.”

Tony chuckled. “Of course you did.”

“He’s going to have to sign The Accords of course and they want his testimony on what happened. They want your view on him too. He wasn’t an Avenger so he was never given the option to sign The Accords before everything happened.”

Tony nodded. “Okay. This sounds a little easy.”

“Well we don’t know what’s going to happen to Scott exactly but it looks favorable.”

“Okay, but what about Hank Pym and his daughter?” Rhodey asked.

“We’re dealing with them a little bit differently,” Fury said. “There’s something more important to them than being in good standing with the law and smart enough to not get caught. Either way, what they’re trying to do would go against The Accords.”

Tony nodded. He still didn’t know why the meeting was necessary if it was just about Scott — the one person that had sided with Steve that Tony knew nothing about and hadn’t even bothered to find anything out about -- and Hank Pym who happened to be someone that hated his father and as such probably the whole Stark name.

“We want to add Barton on to this,” Maria said, answering the question before Tony could ask it.

“Ah,” Tony said.

“The UN is likely going to offer Scott house arrest in exchange for not arresting him and throwing him in The Raft again. He won’t be allowed to be Ant-Man at least not until the house arrest is over and either way the suit does belong to Pym,” Fury said. “That is assuming that everything goes well
which we think it will."

Tony nodded along. It really was a step in the right direction and something that Tony hadn’t expected to come about so easily or so quickly. It gave him some hope that they could bring the others home too when it came time to it.

“So you want the same deal for Clint,” Rhodey said. “Is he planning to stay retired this time?”

“So he says,” Maria said. “That isn’t the point though, is it? We just need him to not be considered a fugitive anymore is all.”

Tony knew there was more to it. He knew that Fury regarded Clint well -- cared for him even -- but that couldn’t just be it. Tony hadn’t expected for this to be about Clint and Scott. He had expected it to be more about Natasha or Steve. No, Fury probably needed Clint for something. It probably had to do with his new underground Shield.

“So you need us to what testify that Clint never actually read The Accords?” Rhodey asked.

“Wouldn’t that make things worse for Cap for pulling them both into this in the first place? At some point we are going to need Captain America again. This team isn’t exactly bursting at the seams with members right now.”

“You have that Spider-Man guy and—”

“Spidey stays out of this,” Tony said quickly and firmly.

Fury gave a short but curious nod. “You have Vision, then.”

Maria waved her hand and she sighed. “Okay, fine. The point is that for all that Cap is a fugitive now the moment there is a real threat the world will welcome him back with open arms if not before then. Right now he has to lay low -- would be advised to lay low even if he had signed The Accords and were here with us at this table.”

Tony could see that she had a point. They all knew it. Captain America was bigger than all the politics and all of their mistakes. People did love and admire him in a way that maybe none of the rest of them were admired.

“Fine, that’s all fine,” Tony said. “But what are we going to do about The Accords? They need to changed. Not only to bring all of them back but because no one else should sign them as they currently are.”

“They’re going to have to. We can appeal for some amendments and changes and hope the UN listens. It can’t just come from you, Stark.”

Tony nodded. He knew exactly who would support him in this. King T’Challa. It really was a good thing that T’Challa had gone before the UN and brought his country out of its isolation. Friday had alerted him to the announcement and he had loved watching how confused everyone else was when it was announced because no one actually had any real idea as to what Wakanda could offer. Even Tony was still mostly in the dark.

“His support would go a long way,” Maria said after Tony explained. “The UN will be contacting you about Scott and Clint soon and we hope things will go the right way. It’s a step in the right direction.”

Tony nodded.
They moved on to other topics. Fury and Maria wanting them to fill them in on just how everything had gone wrong. It was when Siberia came up that Tony didn’t know what to say. He had brushed off Rhodey’s questions when it came to that mostly because he knew that Rhodey wouldn’t be okay with how Steve kept something so important from him. So Tony kept it vague. After all, how his parents died wasn’t exactly relevant.

“We parted ways. Had to,” Tony said. “And then I went to check on Rhody and headed back here with -- well, I had to bring Spider-Man back home. Full disclosure, he’s underage. That’s why he has not and will not sign The Accords. But also, he’s not going to disclose his identity.”

Maria looked like she was going to say something but was holding her tongue. They both knew about Peter being his son. Tony didn’t think it was information that he could have ever kept from Fury, but for some time Maria had worked for Tony and had been privy to most of what was going on with The Avengers and it had seemed natural that she would know about him. Tony didn’t want them to know he was Spider-Man if he could help it.

“Hence he is not an Avenger,” Fury said. “Shouldn’t be if he’s underage. Alright, Stark, you’ll hear from the UN. I’m glad to see you’re on board.”

Chapter End Notes

So plotwise I wanted to touch on Scott and Clint and what happens to them because we know Scott is under house arrest and so you can assume that Clint gets a similar deal. I actually wrote this chapter before Ant Man and The Wasp came out so I edited to make that canon here as well even if we’re not going to end up touching on that movie at all really. But this chapter was also sort of set up for how everything is being dealt with and I guess canon probably didn't have Tony's involvement like we have it here.

Next chapter will touch on Steve a little but also Peter and May. I'll try to have it ready for tomorrow or Wednesday. Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 63

As it happened, they didn’t have anything pressing in their future, so Steve was able to take the jet into Wakanda. He invited the others to go along but none of them seemed particularly interested even if Steve was leaving them in a really run down hotel in Sweden. It made Steve wonder about what they might be up to but only Wanda had been acting odd lately. Steve thought that it was something to do with Vision.

They allowed him inside after he called in when approaching their borders and then when he landed, he was met by T’Challa, Shuri, and some of the Dora Milaje who were as impressive as the last time that Steve had been there.

“Captain, it’s good to see you,” Shuri said.

She was the only one dressed in an informal way and she smiled wide at him. In many ways Steve could see how innocent she was despite her brilliance. The last time he spoke to Tony, he had mentioned Shuri to him and how much he wished that Tony would meet her.

“It’s good to be back,” Steve said.

T’Challa stepped up then and greeted him with a smile and a nod. Steve had heard all about the slow way that he was trying to open up Wakanda to the rest of the world. They didn’t seem to be keen on having foreigners in Wakanda or making it some sort of tourist hotspot, but instead they wanted to bring their tech and their advancements out into the rest of the world.

“I hope things have been going well for you, Captain,” T’Challa said.

“I think they have considering we’re still wanted fugitives,” Steve said and shrugged. The only thing that he really hated about it was that he couldn’t go home to Tony. Everything else didn’t matter.

They walked away from the jet but didn’t go inside. The Dora Milaje followed them at a good pace and Steve walked with Shuri and T’Challa. They made small talk as they walked. Steve asked about the coronation and they gave him a few details and it was sort of clear that something had happened recently that they didn’t want to discuss.

“He’s doing well, Captain,” Shuri said eventually.

Steve hadn’t wanted to ask even though they all knew why he had returned in the first place.

“Good. That’s good,” Steve said.

“We offered him a room back with us but he didn’t want to intrude. I think he likes being out here instead. It is quite peaceful. The children love him. He likes the goats too.”
When Steve caught his first glance of Bucky he almost didn’t think it was him except that he was the only white person there so it couldn’t be anyone but him. His hair was brushed out of his face into a half-bun. There were braids in some of the ends of his hair and he was grinning at a young boy that was showing him something Steve couldn’t make out.

Bucky seemed to hear them before they arrived, because at some point, he turned to look towards them and his smile widened when he saw Steve.

“Steve,” he said when they were even closer and he grinned widely.

“Bucky, you’re -- it’s good to see you smiling again.”

Bucky was still missing his arm, but he lifted the other and Steve stepped in to hug him. It was strange to see a Bucky that didn’t seem as burdened. Some of it was still there of course because he remembered everything, but he was lighter. Happier. Steve felt like he finally really did have Bucky back.

“Told you I needed this,” Bucky said. “This one here is much too brilliant.” He motioned towards Shuri.

“Someone has to be,” she said with a small grin.

“How long are you staying, Stevie?”

“Just wanted to check up on you. But I could stay a few days -- I don’t want to leave the others waiting if they need me. Not sure what Natasha had planned.”

Bucky nodded. “Everyone’s good then?”

Steve nodded and smiled.

“And how are things with Stark? Talk to him yet?”

Steve should have known that the question was coming. “I did,” he said.

---

The sun was setting and Peter sat on the edge of a building. His mask was off and he brought a water bottle up to his lips. It was hot out and anyone that was outside were in a hurry to get back inside. Very little was happening. At least the suit was surprisingly cool to wear and Peter really didn’t mind being out in the heat, but he had just had to chase a loose dog running down a sidewalk before it ran out onto the street and even he had broken a sweat doing that. The dog had been so ingenious that he had somehow dodged all of Peter’s attempts to capture it with the spider webbing. Come to think of it, the dog had probably assumed that Peter was playing with it.

The owners of the dog -- a small curly haired beast -- had thanked him profusely afterwards and Peter had actually enjoyed the dog a bit when it was trying to lick his face even through the mask and wiggling in his arms in excitement.

But being around the dog had made him a little bit sad when he thought about how much he and Ben had wanted to get a dog at one point. Uncle Ben had been almost as insistent as Peter had been and together they had almost made May change her mind but then Peter got bitten by the spider and getting a dog hadn’t seemed as important.

He wondered if it would be smart to want one now when he was so busy as Spider-Man and May
was working more hours than ever. Peter was also spending most of his free time with Tony -- it was still so difficult to think of him as Tony and not Mr. Stark except that thinking about him as Tony made it easier to not just fall back into an existential crisis about his biggest hero being his father.

He finished the water bottle and set it down next to him and just watched the sunset for a while longer. May was supposed to be home from work in an hour or two and Peter had promised to have dinner with her. It was supposed to be so that they could actually talk things out at long last.

It wasn’t that Peter had kept giving her the cold shoulder. There really was no way to avoid interacting with May because they lived together and had to coexist and Peter needed her for things like money and food. But Peter had kept her from really pressing him about Tony or basically anything to do with the secret and Peter finding out. Still, he could tell that May wanted to talk about it and he couldn’t hold off any longer at least not since he and Tony were getting along well.

Peter wasn’t planning on telling her about Spider-Man. It just didn’t feel like telling her would go over well and Peter sort of liked knowing that the only person that actually knew was his father who also happened to be a superhero.

After the sun had gone down and the sky slowly went from a light blue to something darker, Peter put the mask back on and went back to the house, sneaking in through the window and changing back into his clothes from earlier. He had been back no longer than a half hour before he heard May getting home. He gave her a few minutes before leaving his room and seeing what she was up to.

“Hey, Pete,” she said when she saw him. “I was thinking we can order something in. Any preference?”

Peter shrugged.

“Thai, then?” May asked and dropped her things on the sofa and then moved towards the kitchen.

“That’s fine,” Peter said and lingered watching her as she returned from the kitchen with a takeout menu.

Somehow this felt worse than any of the conversations that he had had with Tony about their father and son relationship which at the moment was more a mentorship approaching an odd friendship than anything parental.

They went about ordering food and after that was taken care of, Peter felt like he couldn’t put it off any longer.

“I want you to explain it to me -- why um, why you didn’t tell me. Tony says -- he says that he deferred to you and Ben because you knew what was best for me. I just don’t really get it. He’s my father.”

May stopped what she was doing. She was frozen on the spot and then she turned to look at him and she sighed.

“It’s not something you’ll understand until you have kids, Pete,” May said. “Tony Stark was not always the same Tony Stark he is today. Ben and I always knew he was your father. Mary never tried to hide that from us and while we never judged her -- we always understood why she decided that the two of you were better off without him.”

It was hard to hear May talk about it. Tony had sort of brushed over that but even he had admitted how much he just wasn’t in the right place to be a father when he first learned that Peter’s mother was pregnant.
“Okay,” Peter said.

“When you were little it wasn’t -- it didn’t matter, you know. And Tony sent gifts and money and he always just seemed to know things and it was fine. Mary had always kept him updated and I followed on with that tradition too. He didn’t press us when the accident happened and we told them we were going to be your guardians. He didn’t put up a fight. Ben and I -- we were so scared that he would but it was almost too easy and it was a bit surprising when Pepper Potts was telling us just a few years later that he wanted to meet you.”

Peter nodded. “Okay, but why didn’t you let him?”

May sighed and she ran a hand through her hair. “Because I didn’t want to lose you,” May said. “Peter, he was your father wanting to meet you and this was back when he had just announced to the world he was Iron Man. We didn’t know what kind of person he was or what the whole Iron Man thing meant and we didn’t want him to take you away from us -- from the only family you knew.”

Peter didn’t want to say that he got what she was getting at because he wished that he had met Tony then. It did mean everything to him that Tony had wanted to meet him around the time that he was getting his act together.

“So you told him no,” Peter said, “even though he’s my father and he wanted to be a part of my life.”

May nodded. “We did. And we just had to keep saying no because it was so dangerous. Not only the celebrity aspect of it but then he became a superhero and did you know that he was kidnapped a whole bunch of times when he was a kid? But then Pepper Potts was kidnapped too which really made us think you’d be in danger. We were so afraid that if anyone found out that you’d be kidnapped or worse. We didn’t want to put you in danger because of him and Tony understood that. He maybe didn’t like it all the time but he understood and he always -- he accepted it.”

Peter nodded slowly. Spending time with Tony and just seeing how much Tony seemed to respect May and constantly ask to make sure that she knew where Peter was -- it made him realize that maybe Tony knew that Peter was better off growing up with Ben and May.

“May, I still wish I had known sooner. Even if I didn’t meet him -- you could have told me. Ben was -- he tried to tell me when he died.”

“What?” May asked.

Peter took in a deep breath. “We were doing a project in biology and we were doing blood typing and I asked about my parents blood type and he told me and I realized that there was no way Richard was my father unless Ben got the blood type wrong. We were talking about it right before -- we were in the store and I was asking about it. He wanted to tell me afterwards when he was -- I didn’t let him.”

“Oh, Peter,” May said and she rushed over and pulled him into a tight hug and Peter couldn’t help but cling to her.

The tears just burst out of him and May just pulled him in tighter and Peter who hadn’t thought about Ben too much in the past few weeks and somehow had thought about him more in one day than he had in a while was hit with that grief again and he knew that May felt it too and it lessened all the anger and hurt over not knowing the truth because even if he had known it wouldn’t have changed much and he probably still wouldn’t have met Tony until he did. It did make Peter wonder what might have happened if he never became Spider-Man at all. Would he have ever learned the truth at all?
Chapter End Notes

I really loved finally getting to this May and Peter convo and having them just get past this. Steve and Tony POVs in the next chapter. It will be up Friday probably. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 64

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When it came down to it the hearing with the UN representatives was simple. He and Rhodey both gave their own testimonies mostly stating that neither Clint or Scott were present when the Secretary of State gave the presentation on The Sokovia Accords and that neither were on The Avengers roster. In the end it went like Fury said it would and they both wound up with house arrest even though Tony and probably the UN council was probably well aware that the house arrest would probably be broken by one or both in due time. Tony just hoped that by then he could get The Accords changed into something more reasonable. His lawyers were working on it. Of course, these were the same lawyers that had given him the go ahead on the last version but Tony knew that part of the reason for that was that Tony had given them too short a time to really consider it and he himself had called it a good thing and wanted to hear nothing to the contrary.

Tony had gotten into contact with T’Challa, too, and the King invited him to Wakanda to discuss everything to do with The Accords. Tony hesitated to agree to visit mostly because it would mean leaving NYC and Peter.

Peter wasn’t over at the tower every day, but he was over enough that he was becoming a fixture. Tony was well aware that with school starting up soon he might not be seeing Peter as often, but while he could, Tony intended to spend as much time with him as possible. There was just so much of it that they had lost and it was only recently that Peter had stopped stumbling over calling him Tony which meant progress.

Still, in the end, Tony replied in the affirmative -- promising to let T’Challa know when he would be visiting.

“I’ve heard great things about your sister,” Tony had added. “I’m eager to meet her.”

“I bet I know who your source is,” T’Challa responded with some amusement. “But I can assure you that she will be thrilled to meet you as well. Although I should apologize in advance. She can be a bit eager.”

It had made Tony even more excited to meet her. He wouldn’t stay in Wakanda long, but it would be nice to finally see the place. Steve had mentioned a few times how amazing it was. The only part of the trip that Tony could see as a problem was that he might see Barnes again. He didn’t know if he’d be able to handle that.

The thing of it was that while Tony knew that he forgave Steve -- or at the very least understood his motives and where he was coming from -- he still hadn’t really dealt with the problem or the grief of knowing the exact way in which they died. Tony had done his best to avoid dealing with it and it had clearly worked because he hadn’t really thought about Siberia or everything that happened there in a while.

“I’ll be gone for a few days,” he told Peter later that night while Friday queued up the new Star Wars
Peter had insisted that they needed to watch it once Tony let it slip that he hadn’t actually seen it. In Tony’s defence, he really didn’t have time to see new movies. He had heard about it in part because it was bringing back an old beloved franchise, but also because of how well it had done. Of course, with Peter’s love for Star Wars, Tony supposed that he had to be up to date.

“Business trip?” Peter asked. He wiggled in his seat, getting comfortable with the cushion under his back.


The movie started up with the familiar music and then the iconic opening crawl and Tony was distracted by needing to actually read it. Next to him, Peter got rid of the cushion and settled himself on the couch a bit better.

Peter wasn’t one to talk during a movie, but he did gasp and react to things happening on screen even though Tony suspected that he had probably seen that movie more than enough times for none of it to be even a little surprising. But Tony loved it. He loved being able to turn and look at Peter who was so engrossed that he didn’t even notice he was being watched.

By the time the movie ended, Tony could say that he did enjoy it. It was nothing like the sequels and instead reminded him more of the originals. It had a good energy and a good cast and Peter was rambling on about fan theories and what he and Ned personally thought and Tony just let him and asked a question when he could. Eventually, Peter just stopped, looking a little embarrassed by it.

“I’m glad you have something to be a fan of other than me,” he said while Peter gathered his things.

Peter rolled his eyes. “It’s not the same thing,” he said.

“Guess not,” Tony said, “but I still like it. You have to have interests, Peter, otherwise you’re boring and your love for Star Wars did help us out at the airport so there’s that.”

“I guess,” Peter said with a small smile. “So, when are you leaving?”

“In a couple of days. You can come by tomorrow if you can. I think I’ll be leaving the day after and I don’t know when I’ll be back exactly.”

“I think I have to go to dinner with May tomorrow,” Peter said. “She’s -- we’re trying to get back to normal.”

Tony nodded. “It’s good. Maybe getting out of the way for a little bit will help with that. So I guess I won’t see you until I’m back.”

Peter played with the straps of his backpack for a moment. “I guess not,” he said. “I -- whatever it is, you’ll be careful right?”

“Of course. Not a dangerous thing, I promise.”

“Okay. Well, I’ll miss coming around,” Peter said and he looked down at the floor.

Tony stepped forward and touched his shoulder. Peter fell into the hug at once, almost surprising Tony at how quickly he moved. Still, as unexpected as it seemed to be, Tony was glad to hug Peter. It was a short hug, Peter pulling back and looking just a tad uncomfortable.
“I’ll let you know when I’m back. Don’t do anything crazy while I’m gone.”

“I won’t,” Peter said.

Tony didn’t think it would stop him from worrying. “You’ll call Happy or Pepper if you need anything right? Can’t reach him call Rhodey.”

Peter nodded but Tony could tell that he was tired of Tony saying that. It didn’t help that Peter actually hadn’t met Pepper or Rhodey yet even though his best friends really did want to meet him. Maybe he’d need to introduce them once he was back.

---

After calling Natasha to make sure that it was okay, Steve decided he could stay for a few more days. Wakanda was the perfect vacation spot. Steve had never once taken a vacation since returning from the ice and even before that there hadn’t been many chances. He and Bucky had had their fun of course, but Steve had always been so unhealthy that there wasn’t much his mom would let him do or that Bucky would allow for that matter.

So aside from a few trips to Coney Island or taking leave during the war, Steve had never really had any chance to relax and stop worrying. Having Bucky at his side looking healthier and more like the Bucky that he knew from the past made all of it just that much better.

T’Challa and Shuri were both so busy that Steve didn’t want to be in their way. He had decided to stay with Bucky in the small hut that he’d been given. It meant that he got to see for himself how well Bucky was really doing and how he still wasn’t all whole or put together. But Steve also got to witness how much the people of Wakanda seemed to like Bucky -- especially the kids. They had all seemingly accepted him into their fold and they all seemed to call him White Wolf for some odd reason but Bucky loved it.

“And you still haven’t told me about what’s going on with Stark,” Bucky said on the second night that Steve was there.

Steve had just finished getting ready for bed and he had been dodging the question ever since he’d seen Bucky on the first day.

“He accepted the phone I sent and we’ve been talking,” Steve said. “Not much else to tell. I think he’s trying to get over all of it.”

“You better not mess this up, Stevie,” Bucky said.

“Last thing I want to do,” Steve said. “I miss him like crazy. I keep having to keep busy so I don’t take off and fly to the compound to see him. It’s hard not talking to him everyday -- worse not seeing him.”

Bucky nodded. “It must be just as hard on him.”

“I don’t really like thinking about that.”

Bucky gave another short nod and he bit into the fruit he was holding in his hand.

“I just hate that I’m not there to support him through all of this. I know he’s not telling me everything when we talk and I just -- I hate for him to go through anything alone.”

Bucky touched his arm lightly in offer of support and Steve appreciated it. Looking at Bucky made
him realize that he wouldn’t change any of it, if it meant that this man didn’t look as calm and peaceful as he did. Steve didn’t regret much or let himself linger on regrets and while the whole not telling Tony about Hydra killing Howard and Maria would haunt him forever, Steve knew that everything else couldn’t have gone any other way.

Chapter End Notes

Things are happening. I really love where this leads. The next chapter will probably be up Saturday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 65

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading!
I love the response this fic keeps getting. It definitely keeps me writing and editing.
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wakanda was just as impressive as Steve had described it. Actually, it was more so. Tony flew in at night and was met by T’Challa and a group of women that had to form some sort of security team for him.

“We did not expect you until tomorrow,” T’Challa said.

“I left earlier than I expected to,” Tony said. “I hope you don’t mind me crashing here.”

T’Challa didn’t mind and it was late enough that although he offered Tony something to eat, Tony had to decline. Instead, he was shown to a guest room and the promise of discussing everything the next morning.

The room he was given was huge. There was also a huge window that looked out upon Wakanda and Tony couldn’t quite believe that he was there and that this place existed. Inside, Tony felt like he was elsewhere entirely because even the guest room was so well made and adapted to technology that Tony couldn’t help but be impressed and yet even in the dark, Tony could make out how much of Wakanda was still very much untouched and natural.

Even though he wasn’t too tired, Tony got ready for bed and then he pulled out his tablet and immediately video called Peter.

Peter picked up at once and Tony could tell that he was in his bedroom.

“Hey,” Peter said.

“Hi, kid. Just checking in. Have a good patrol tonight?”

“Yup,” Peter said. His hair flopped on his forehead as he moved. “Helped with a small fire. This old lady forgot to turn off her stove.”

Tony tried not to react to what Peter said. “Um, Peter, maybe leave things like that to firefighters.”

“But I was closer and I only helped get the people out of the building. I was safe, I promise. And anyway, isn’t the suit fire retardant?”

It was, but Tony would far prefer it if that particular feature didn’t become a necessity for Peter all the time. Just like he was hoping that Peter would never need to use the parachute.

“It is. Not the point, though, I just want you to stay safe.”

Peter smiled a little and Tony noticed as Peter moved his phone while moving from his desk over to
his bed. “I’m pretty safe,” he said. “And anyway, I have a healing factor.”

“Which won’t actually stop you from dying,” Tony muttered and then sighed. “Anyway, just remember that I won’t be around for the next few days. If you do need anything you can call Happy or Pepper.”

“You’ve said that once or twice already,” Peter said and then, “so where are you anyway? You didn’t say where you were going.”

“If you must know, I’m in Wakanda,” Tony said.

“No way,” Peter gasped and then frowned. “Wait, where even is that? And why are you there?”

Tony grinned. His kid really was the best. It was actually a little bit surprising that Peter didn’t know about Wakanda since there was that whole outreach center being built and everything. But then, Peter probably didn’t pay that much attention to the news. He was a teenager after all.

“Do some research kiddo, it will be good for you. I’m visiting a friend. Anyway, I’ll talk to you again tomorrow.”

“Okay,” Peter said. “And I will look that up. Wakanda.”

Tony laughed and then hung up. This kid really was something else. Tony almost wished that he’d found a way to bring him with him without raising too many questions.

---

“Would you like to visit Shuri’s lab?” T’Challa asked the next morning after Tony had eaten something delicious for breakfast by the window in the guest room which really showed off the country from its mountains to its long stretch of land.

“Yes, I’m aware. I don’t know if I should warn you about her enthusiasm or not. But there is someone else that will be eager to see you.”

Tony couldn’t think of who else might want to see him. He just hoped it wasn’t Barnes with some sort of apology. As far as Tony knew, Barnes was still in the ice. Steve hadn’t said otherwise the last time they spoke, but anything could have happened since then since they hadn’t spoken in a little while. Tony was just too busy and so it seemed was Steve. Tony did miss him, though. He missed him dearly. Some days were worse than others and while Tony couldn’t be sure that he still wasn’t upset even months later, he also did know that he loved Steve and that he would have far preferred to have Steve at his side than far enough away that he would never get to see him.

“Oh,” Tony said.

T’Challa chuckled but nodded. “Yes, I’m aware. I don’t know if I should warn you about her enthusiasm or not. But there is someone else that will be eager to see you.”

Tony couldn’t think of who else might want to see him. He just hoped it wasn’t Barnes with some sort of apology. As far as Tony knew, Barnes was still in the ice. Steve hadn’t said otherwise the last time they spoke, but anything could have happened since then since they hadn’t spoken in a little while. Tony was just too busy and so it seemed was Steve. Tony did miss him, though. He missed him dearly. Some days were worse than others and while Tony couldn’t be sure that he still wasn’t upset even months later, he also did know that he loved Steve and that he would have far preferred to have Steve at his side than far enough away that he would never get to see him.

The lab was huge and amazing and a dream come true and Tony didn’t know what to look at. He had never been a huge sweet tooth as a child, but this was the kind of candy shop that Tony had needed. Everything was amazing. Shuri wasn’t the only one working. She had some sort of team and there were things being developed left and right. When he spotted her, Shuri was in the middle of a
3D display showing a prosthetic. It made Tony pause because of all his own work on prosthetics.

“Sister, I have someone to meet you.”

Shuri turned. “Tony Stark,” she said and her voice took on the quality that Peter’s had the first time they met -- awed and surprised and confused all at once.

“You didn’t tell her I was coming,” Tony said.

“No. She doesn’t need to know everything.”

Tony laughed as Shuri approached them and instead of a greeting she said, “I have read everything you’ve ever published and I have so many questions about the arc reactor tech.”

“I probably have just as many questions about everything you have going on here,” Tony said and gestured around them.

The more he glanced around and caught on to what seemed to be in the works the more impressed he was. He knew that Shuri worked primarily with vibranium, but there were other things too.

“Also, I’m grateful for the phone,” Tony added. “Nice little flip phone.”

“It was appropriate,” Shuri responded. “Older phones are even harder to trace, you know, at least when holding the kind of tech that one does.”

Tony rolled his eyes good naturedly. Shuri might have convinced Steve and maybe even her brother by saying that, but he knew better. She had chosen that design in particular to vex him. It was odd, but Tony found himself comparing her to Peter and trying to figure her out with those parameters in mind because Shuri was young and brilliant and had accomplished plenty already from what he could see.

“I do have to ask, Mr. Stark,” Shuri said, “why haven’t you started using something other than alloy for the Iron Man suit? Isn’t it a little old school to still do that when there’s other--”

“Shuri,” T’Challa said.

“I’m sorry, brother, but--” Shuri was cut off by another voice.

“Tony?” Steve asked. “What are you doing here?”

Tony didn’t hear anything else that Shuri might have said as he turned and found Steve and course this was exactly who T’Challa had meant when he said that someone else would be happy to see him. Tony took only a few seconds to look at him and the changes that had already taken place in him like the beard that he was sporting and the slightly longer hair and then he was moving towards Steve. Steve didn’t move, but Tony did, wrapping his arms around him.

“Hi,” Tony said. “I can’t believe -- I didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Neither did I expect you,” Steve said. “But I’m glad.”

They held each other tightly and nothing else mattered. At least not in the immediate moment because there was still so much that they just hadn’t discussed yet and they needed to clear the air and get over all of that before something else came against them that tore them apart again.

“Me too,” Tony whispered back.
Shuri clapped her hands. “Right, so all the cuteness does not belong in my lab.”

Tony rubbed at the back of his neck as he stepped away from Steve. “Um, sorry. Just haven’t seen each other in a while.”

“Oh, I know,” Shuri said and grinned at them.

“Anyway,” T’Challa said, “we can discuss things later tonight, Tony. You and the Captain can spend some time together until then.”

“Yes, thank you,” Tony said.

T’Challa turned and left them and Shuri stared at them for a long moment before Steve picked up Tony’s hand and he led him out of the lab and then outside altogether. Tony hadn’t been outside since he had arrived the night before and everything was completely different in the daylight.

“Wow,” he said.

“I know. This place is kind of crazy beautiful. I wish I had some of my art supplies.”

“I might have some in the quinjet,” Tony admitted. “Are you -- have you been here the entire time?”

Steve shook his head. “No, no. I would have told you. I, um, I came to see Bucky. He’s out of the ice and he’s doing much better. No more triggers.”

Tony nodded slowly. “I’m -- I’m glad.”

“I know it’s hard,” Steve said. “He’s -- he still blames himself for everything even though it wasn’t really him.”

Tony didn’t really want to get into it quite yet, not when he could still have some time with Steve not corrupted by everything else. He knew that ignoring the problem wouldn’t help, but it was better than getting right on it immediately. There was something else he wanted more.

He pulled Steve away from view and Steve followed without much trouble and he was there, meeting Tony in the middle for the kiss that Tony pulled him into. It felt like finally being able to take a drink after a long and hot day. Steve kissed with intensity and care and his arms wrapped around Tony gently and yet Tony could still tell that Steve needed Tony to be there and needed to know that it was all real and Tony just let himself fall into Steve and rest his weight on him even after they pulled out of the kiss and they just stayed in each other’s space. Tony didn’t even mind the beard. He found it different and interesting and a little bit scratchy but in a good way and it didn’t hurt that Steve made the whole look work.

Words weren’t necessary. Not when they each knew that a discussion was coming. But for the moment they could just feel and truly appreciate that they were finally together again even if they both knew that this wasn’t going to last.

Chapter End Notes

I really really loved getting to write their reunion. Next chapter will have a little bit of Peter but also more Steve and Tony. Will probably be up on Tuesday. Thanks for reading.
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Chapter 66

Thank you to everyone reading!
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Steve couldn’t believe that Tony was there just within reach and that Steve could actually touch him -- that Tony would let him. Tony seemed just as amazed as if he couldn’t believe that they were seeing each other so soon after Siberia and Steve was well aware that there would be much to discuss and settle on, but for the moment they could bask in being in the same place together.

Steve showed him around and he tried to restrain himself from reaching over to hold Tony’s hand in part because he knew that they were being watched, but also because he wasn’t sure if Tony would want to hold his hand.

“I think this place is amazing,” Tony said. “And Shuri -- she’s something else. I kind of want Peter to meet her.”

“How is Peter? I’m so glad you’ve finally met.”

Tony smiled wide and Steve could tell that he was happy. “He’s amazing. I knew that before, but I’ve been spending a lot of time with him and I can’t even begin to believe that he’s my son. I am so glad I’ve finally met him. I thought -- for so long I thought that I lost time with him and I guess I did, but it doesn’t really matter because he still needs me? Or, I don’t know -- he’s just so young.”

Tony looked at Steve and Steve could tell that Tony was proud and happy and just amazed by his son and Steve was glad that Tony wasn’t alone and that there was something -- someone -- in his life that he could be happy about.

“How is he dealing with everything?”

“Well, now, I think. He’s the one that really wanted us to get to know each other. I just -- he really isn’t pushing this aside. He calls me Tony now which is an upgrade from hearing Mr. Stark every other sentence. I’m just going to let whatever happens happen.”

Steve nodded. “And how is the whole Spider-Man thing going?”

At that, Tony groaned. “I’m pretty sure he was in a building while there was a fire yesterday. I don’t even know. I just -- I’m hoping for the best but I can’t help but worry.”

That was definitely Tony all over. He worried over everyone and Steve just knew that he would worry about Peter most of all.

“I kind of feel bad about how I fought with him,” Steve said.

“Back at the airport?”

They kept walking, going past a few Wakandans that glanced up when they walked past. They
really did stick out among all the natives and it wasn’t just because of who they were because it didn’t seem like most of the people of Wakanda cared that he was Captain America or that he was walking with Tony Stark.

“Yeah. I, um, I kind of threw a truck at him. He caught it. I had kind of gotten a sense for his strength by that point but it makes me feel bad now knowing it was Peter.”

“I think he might have mentioned something in passing,” Tony said. “You couldn’t have known, though. I really didn’t want any of you to know who was under the mask. I think he likes having a secret identity.”

Steve nodded.

They walked around for a while longer and Steve showed Tony all of the things that Bucky had showed him over the past couple of days. At one point they even walked close to Bucky’s hut, but he didn’t know if it would be a good idea for the two of them to actually see each other just yet. Maybe once he and Tony finally talked everything over.

They spent most of the day wandering around until Okoye came to find Tony.

“The King has some time now for your meeting,” she said. “Captain Rogers is welcome as well.”

Steve glanced towards Tony who nodded so he walked back with them and didn’t bother to ask what the meeting could be about.

---

Peter hadn’t really meant to go into a building that was on fire, but he’d heard the screams and so he’d gone in and helped to get everyone out. It had been the right thing to do and Peter had been right there when he heard the yelling and the fire alarm. Then, he had tried to do his best to help the firefighters which had ended up meaning staying out of their way.

He didn’t really get why Tony was so concerned about it, because Peter was capable enough of taking care of something like that, but then he supposed that Tony was always a little concerned. After all, Peter hadn’t thought about it but he could remember back in Berlin when he’d gone to that rave and Tony had called him and sounded just a bit on the side of anxious while asking Peter to get back to the hotel. Actually, he had acted like May or Ben would have -- a bit concerned and also angry. It made so much more sense now that Peter knew that Tony was his father.

Not having anywhere to be because Tony was out of the country, left Peter deciding to be out in the Spider-Man suit. He wasn’t looking for bad guys or trouble and spent a lot of time just jumping around on the roof of a building. He took a few videos and pictures and paid attention to anything he might hear.

Eventually he moved from one building to another, swinging on the web and throwing himself up into the air and practicing his landings. It got boring after a while and nothing exciting was actually happening. The day was hot and sunny and few people were out but no one seemed to be causing any trouble.

For a while, Peter people watched until that got boring and then he pulled out his phone and checked his Facebook. Not much was happening although apparently Flash was having a pool party. Naturally, Peter had not been invited. He supposed that Ned hadn’t been either. There were pictures up because there were always pictures and he spotted Liz in one of them. She was as beautiful as ever and Peter just stared at her picture for a while before he saw that even Michelle had been
invited. Of course in the only picture of her, she was in the background of a selfie with a thick book open in her lap. Unlike everyone else she wasn’t even wearing a swimsuit. It figured. Peter just had to wonder why she had even gone in the first place. Michelle Jones would always be a mystery to him.

He headed back home, swinging around and taking the long route just in case something was amiss. He arrived well before May would be back from work so he just changed into regular clothes and settled down in front of the tv to watch something. He wondered if he might get a call from Tony again.

---

The meeting with T’Challa ended up including an amazing and brilliant woman named Nakia and Steve and it was for the best since Nakia seemed to be more in tune with the politics surrounding The Accords and the UN than any of them. Steve was also great to have there because he brought a whole other perspective into it that Tony was appreciating and agreeing with more and more in light of Peter’s involvement as a superhero.

 Mostly they hashed out what they wanted The Accords to look like and where the big changes needed to happen. Tony also told them all about Clint and Scott and the pardons that they were getting even if they’d be stuck inside their own homes for a while. Tony still wasn’t sure how that was going to work out for Clint since his home was supposed to be a secret. He supposed that he would end up using a place that wasn’t the farm. Either way, it wasn’t one of Tony’s big concerns because Fury and Hill would take care of that.

They discussed everything for a few hours with Okoye and later Shuri joining them to add their two cents in. Tony was highly amused by how much T’Challa seemed to trust the three women, but then they did clearly add much to the discussion.

By the end of it they had come to a long list of amendments that The Accords would need. They were also trying to figure out exactly how to get the UN to see it their way and make sure that Ross didn’t involve himself again. In the end they all knew that The Accords wouldn’t matter if the world needed The Avengers because they would be there in an instant to save it.

They all had dinner together and Tony was actually surprised that they weren’t joined by Barnes which probably meant that they didn’t want Tony to see him or that he himself didn’t want to see Tony. None of it mattered. Tony didn’t know what he would do in the event of actually seeing Barnes.

Dinner was fun, either way. Shuri made fun of T’Challa and she and Tony had a long discussion about nanonites and vibranium and Tony brought up prosthetics too and actually showed her the exoskeleton he’d built for Rhodey. Steve and Okoye talked about Steve joining her and the Dora Milaje for training the next morning and T’Challa tried to speak to everyone about something or other. It was nice.

“Can we have our own discussion?” Steve asked after they finished their meals.

“Yeah, sure,” Tony said. “Want to come to my room? Or yours?”

“I’m staying with Bucky, actually,” Steve said. “He has a small hut. We walked past it earlier. I think he finds being out there away from everything easier. The kids love him. They’ve been calling him White Wolf mostly because he’s white I guess. I don’t know.”

Tony nodded. “My room, then,” he said and led the way.
When Tony closed the door, Steve grabbed his hand but only spoke when Tony had turned to look at him. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I’m just really really sorry. It wasn’t fair to you -- what happened.”

“No,” Tony said. “It wasn’t.”

Steve led him towards the bed and they both sat down.

“Remember Christmas when you took me to the house in upstate? I wanted to tell you then about all of it. I should have, but I didn’t want to ruin the day and just everything you did. I don’t know, Tony, I just could tell you weren’t over their deaths and I didn’t want to add to it and make it worse - - bring it up again.”

Tony sighed. “It wasn’t -- I know you thought you were trying to protect me or whatever, but, Steve, that wasn’t up to you. I needed to know. I blamed him for her death when it first happened and maybe it’s still his fault for having that serum in the car with them but it was more than just a car crash. I needed to know that.”

Steve nodded and he actually grabbed Tony’s other hand. The touch and their connection from it made everything a little easier.

“I know and maybe it would have been better if we had told you when we first found out but there was just so much happening. I was trying to find Bucky again and then Thor showed up looking for the scepter and there just wasn’t any time.”

“I get that,” Tony said, staring down at their hands, but his head shot up. “Wait, who else knew?”

“Natasha and Sam,” Steve said. “Probably Fury knew there was something suspicious about it now that I think of it. I wonder if Peggy--”

Tony shook his head. “No she wouldn’t have known. You know Peggy, she would have figured out Hydra was a part of Shield if she ever knew that there was any suspicion that it wasn’t an accident. I guess they didn’t want to tell me either, then?”

Steve squeezed Tony’s hands. “Sam didn’t even know you then and Natasha was sure I’d tell you.”

“Okay,” Tony said. “I get it, I think, why you kept it from me. It’s just -- you left this huge target on our backs by not telling me. Actually, this whole thing with Bucky and your need to protect him above all else left us in shambles and I’m talking about the team. Look, I get it, I would go to the ends of the Earth to rescue Rhodey -- hell, I would do it for you. For Peter I would destroy myself if it meant that he was okay. So I can’t really fault you for it except that you put him first and that has led to the team being torn apart and just made things worse than they needed to be.”

Steve bowed his head. “Tony, The Accords as they stand are wrong. You said just that earlier today and I know you didn’t see that then, but I did. I saw the problems that it would bring and the way that it would tie all of our hands.”

The whole thing was just so complicated. It was a mess that they could never hope to unravel and understand and maybe they just didn’t need to because the past was the past and there wouldn’t be changing any of it. Tony could forgive the mistakes that had been made because some of them were his too. He didn’t know how long it would take him to get past Barnes’ involvement in the deaths of his parents, but it would happen eventually too. After all, deep down Tony knew that Barnes wouldn’t have done it of his own accord.

“I don’t think talking about any of that is actually going to help,” he said and scooted closer to Steve.
“Maybe you’re right,” Steve said. “I just -- I want you to know that I wish things had gone differently. I hate more than anything else that I’m not with you in New York -- at home. I miss the bots and the tower and just everything. You most of all.”

Tony leaned forward and kissed him. It was easy to just fall into a kiss with Steve and to let his hands fall out of Steve’s to land them on Steve’s face and neck. Steve’s hair was silkier when long, soft under his fingers and lovely to touch and Steve tasted of the sweet chocolate dessert they’d had during dinner.

“Tony,” Steve mumbled against his lips when Tony pulled back and nuzzled against Steve’s neck.

“Hmm?”

Steve’s hands pulled him forward, pushing their bodies together as he fell onto his back with Tony on top. It was everything to feel Steve underneath him all muscle and hard plains and Tony just went in for another kiss that Steve returned eagerly even as he lifted himself on the bed, rolling them over so that Tony was flat on the mattress and Steve was leaning over him, bending down to keep the kiss going before he was trailing kisses down Tony’s jaw instead.

“Love that, Steve. I love that. Do you...whatever you want, alright. I’m -- yeah, anything.”

Steve kissed down his neck and lifted his face to look at him when he got to the edge of Tony’s shirt. Their eyes met and Steve smiled beatifically. “I love you, Tony.”

Tony gasped. “Oh. I -- yeah, I love you too.”

Steve laughed and then they were kissing again and Tony knew it was going to be a long but very good night.

Chapter End Notes

I love this chapter so much! And yes, this was Steve and Tony's first time because despite how long it seems like they've been together they really haven't been and I love that we finally got to this part but more importantly that we got to the conversation they needed to have. Next chapter we have a birthday to celebrate. Should be up by Thursday.

Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Peter’s birthday came around before he knew it and May insisted that he invite Tony over for a birthday dinner.

“I haven’t seen him in a while and I’m sure he wants to spend some of your birthday with you,” May had said and then threatened to call Tony herself if Peter didn’t ask him.

So on the night before his birthday while he was hanging out at the tower with Tony which was spent mostly in the workshop working on the War Machine armor once again, Peter brought it up.

“I don’t know if you’re busy tomorrow night and obviously you don’t have to say yes but then May might think I didn’t ask at all which would mean she would probably call you--”

“Spit it out, kid,” Tony said.

“It’s my birthday tomorrow,” Peter said.

Tony nodded. “I’m aware.”

Peter took a deep breath. Tony was actually staring at him.

“Well, I’m having dinner with May and she wanted me to ask you to come. I mean, if you can. You don’t have to or anything because it’s kind of silly and unnecessary and you really don’t need to and--”

“Sure,” Tony said and grinned at him before dropping a hand on his shoulder and squeezing.

“Oh,” Peter said.

“How else would I be able to give you your present, anyway?” Tony asked and pulled Peter towards him not into a hug but close enough so he could then ruffle Peter’s hair.

“You didn’t have to get me anything,” Peter muttered.

“I’ve gotten you something every year since you were born and I’m not going to stop now,” Tony said.

Peter stopped. He frowned. “No, you haven’t.”

Tony turned to face him. “Well, many of those presents probably didn’t have my name on them and to be honest I probably didn’t pick them out but that doesn’t mean they didn’t exist.”
Peter didn’t know why he hadn’t expected that. Because of course Tony Stark would make sure that his son got a present for his birthday. It made sense. Maybe some of those presents weren’t chosen or sent by Tony himself because if Peter knew anything about him it was that Tony was busy and really did make other people do things for him, but he had known that Peter would always have something from him. It made Peter wonder which ones they were. He figured maybe May might know. He would have to ask.

“It was the least I could do, Peter, since I couldn’t physically be there,” Tony said.

“I — thank you.”

Tony just smiled and ruffled his hair again.

He went home that night a little bit excited about having his father at his birthday dinner and when he arrived back home May stared him down.

“Did you ask, Peter?”

“I did actually. He’ll come. Are we ordering in or are you planning on cooking because I don’t want us to give him food poisoning or something.”

“I’ll order something,” May said. “My cooking is not that bad though.”

Peter nodded even though they both knew that she just wasn’t the best. For his birthdays they usually went out to eat. Most years they invited Ned along. This one was going to be a bit different. It was the first year without Ben and on top of that Ned was still in California visiting his cousins. They also couldn’t go out because Tony Stark was coming and it would just attract too much attention if they were seen together. People would certainly question it. They might think that Tony was dating May which just thinking about it sounded weird.

---

Leaving Wakanda had been hard mostly because it meant leaving Steve and leaving that guest room that would be completely ingrained in his mind because of the good memories it provided. It had also meant that he was getting back to the real world and away from the fantasy that was Wakanda. Peter made up for it. Peter more than made up for it.

He and Steve talked a few times since Tony had left, and it was enough for the time being because Tony was sure that they would be together again. He felt lighter and happier when it came to Steve. Especially since the morning after he had woken up to Steve’s blue eyes watching him.

“Hey,” Steve said.

“Hi,” Tony muttered back.

Steve linked their hands together, playing with Tony’s fingers. “I really would love to leave with you,” Steve said.

“I wish I could sneak off with you too,” Tony said back. “If things were different…”

“We’ll figure it out, Tony. You always do. We’ll find a way to be together.”

It was the pure conviction and the way that Steve looked at him that told Tony that Steve was very serious about them and about the two of them working towards being together.
Leaving him behind had been hard, but it was what needed to be done and if they didn’t figure out a way to resolve all the legal issues, then Tony would find a way to make sure that they could meet up from time to time even if it was in Wakanda. They had talked long into the morning and the number one takeaway was knowing that they were going to work together and hear each other out and stop allowing everything else to pull them apart.

Everything felt lighter and easier and Tony felt more committed than ever to Steve. Peter would always undoubtedly come first, but Steve was a close second.

The night of Peter’s birthday, Tony got off the phone with Steve minutes before heading out of the tower towards the Parker’s house. He was running a little late, but figured it didn’t really matter but sent Peter a text telling him he was on his way.

May answered the door when he arrived.

“Hi,” Tony said.

“Come in, come in. I’m glad you could make it.”

“First one I’ve ever made it to,” Tony replied.

May nodded. “I am sorry for that,” she said. “He, um, he was asking about all the things you sent him over the years. I don’t even remember everything, but he’s really happy about it, you know?”

Peter was sitting in the living room. The tv was on but he wasn’t paying attention to that. He was instead in the middle of a video call. Tony made sure to stay out of the view of the camera just in case. He had to wonder if Peter had told any of his friends about Tony being his dad. Tony thought that he probably hadn’t.

“Ned, thank you. I mean it, you didn’t have to send me anything. May wants me for dinner, alright. I’ll see you next week. Thanks again,” Peter said and hung up the call before he stood up. “Tony, you’re here.”

“Yup,” Tony said. “I am.”

He peered towards the kitchen but there didn’t seem to be anything cooking.

“Oh, we ordered something in. I hope you like Italian. May and I go to this amazing Italian place. It’s like genuine stuff -- anyway, we got something from there. Should get here soon.”

“Italian is fine,” Tony said with a grin. “Actually, I’m kind of glad your aunt didn’t go to the trouble.”

Peter laughed. “Yeah, I don’t think any of us would have wanted to eat that.”

Being in Peter and May’s home was a little weird now that the secret was completely out and yet Tony loved it a little bit. He loved that there was nothing to hide aside from Spider-Man and that Peter and May seemed to be in a much better place.

“So, while we’re waiting for that, do you want to see your present?” Tony asked.

He had debated it on the flight back from Wakanda and then on the days following that, but in the end it made sense to give this to Peter. Tony trusted him enough to use it wisely and Tony was also well aware that it would become yet another safety feature.
“Uh, yeah,” Peter said and Tony could see his excitement in his eyes.

It was two presents in one really, and Tony had been carrying the rectangular box since he’d arrived, but he handed it over. He saw May join them, offering Tony a glass with water.

“How about you--” Peter glanced at May and then Tony.

“Oh, course, kid, go on,” Tony said.

He tore the wrapping paper -- courtesy of Butterfingers who was the best at wrapping -- and gasped as the box within which contained one of the brand new Stark laptops. One that hadn’t been released to the public yet. It wasn’t actually the gift that Tony was excited about.

“I -- Mr. Stark you didn’t have to. You already gave me the phone and--”

“And it’s your birthday, Peter,” Tony said. “Go on, take it out. There’s something else.”

May didn’t say anything from where she was sitting and Tony was glad that she didn’t fight the clearly expensive gift that Tony was giving him. But the laptop would have come sooner or later depending on what kind of computer Peter actually had at the moment. Tony knew that Peter would need it for school anyway.

“Mr. Stark, the laptop is more than enough.”

“It’s sort of connected,” Tony said. “I took the liberty of setting it all up and getting you everything you need on this thing. I installed a few extras. I figured you’d like it.”

“Oh, okay,” Peter said.

He took the laptop out of the box and Tony grabbed those things and put them out of the way as Peter opened the lid and the computer came to life.

“Hello, Peter,” the AI said. “It is nice to finally meet you.”

“Mr. Stark?” Peter asked and he turned to look at Tony with his eyes wide.

“That is your personal AI. She’s a little bit like Friday but far less capable. I’ve had to restrict her quite a bit because of The Accords and just other reasons but I’ve been working on her for a few years now. I didn’t name her -- figured you could do the honors.”

Peter didn’t seem to know what to say. He gapped between the computer and Tony in sheer amazement.

“Are you okay, Peter? I think you are in some distress,” the AI said.

“How does she know?” Peter whispered and then looked at Tony. “I don’t know what to say this is amazing. I can’t believe it.”

Tony chuckled. “Believe it, kiddo. What are you going to name her?”

“I’ve -- I have to think on that. Get to know her first, maybe.”

Tony shrugged his shoulders. “Sure. Whatever you want.”

May walked over and sat down next to Peter, glancing at the laptop. “This is a very Tony Stark gift,” she said with a grin. “Thank you.”
Tony nodded.

The doorbell rang, and May left to presumably get their dinner which gave time for Tony to tell Peter about where else he might find the AI.

“She’s already been downloaded into your stark phone,” Tony told him, “but more importantly, she’s ready to go in your suit. I’ll need to tweak something, but I figure having her there having your back will make things easier on you.”

Peter stared at him for a long while ago. “She’s in my suit,” he said. “That’s so cool. Best birthday ever. Thank you so much, Tony. I can’t believe this.”

Peter then put the computer on the coffee table and threw his arms around Tony and Tony hadn’t expected a hug and yet he didn’t mind it one bit. In fact, he was more than happy to have Peter’s weight on him for a few seconds before he pulled away when May called for help.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter begins our slight divergences when it comes to Homecoming. I had forgotten all about Peter’s birthday until I was getting ready to actually start homecoming and then remembered that it was something I’d have to address and then I realized that I didn't know what Tony would give him and then it hit me that actually he would probably give him Karen and then this chapter happened. We have two more chapters to go before Homecoming starts and I'm so excited to get to that. Next chapter will probably be up this weekend.

Thanks for reading.

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He named her Karen. He hadn’t really thought about the AI much in the days following his birthday, mostly because the only thing he really had her doing was transferring his files from his old computer into the new one. The version of her in his phone came in handy easily though, but it was something to get used to because Peter had never used Siri on his iPhone and this AI was eons ahead of Siri. Tony still had to tweak something in the suit to make her active so it was almost a week before Peter got to experience the Spider-Man suit with the AI active and it felt weird at first.

“Hello, Peter,” her familiar voice said when he put on the mask.

“Hi,” Peter said, not sure exactly how it was going to work with her in the suit. Tony had told him that she would get to know him adjust accordingly but that she was coded with him in mind.

“Can I do anything to help, Peter?”

“I’m just heading home. But if there’s anything that I can help out with on the way you can let me know.”

“Okay,” she said and then, “this is your best route. Head north.” On the HUD appeared a small GPS map which Peter had not expected at all.

“I really do need to name you,” Peter said as he swung in the direction the map told him to go which was almost exactly how he’d intended to get home anyway.

“You can call me anything you want,” she said.

“How about -- can I call you Karen?”

“Sure,” Karen said.

“Okay. Karen, it is,” Peter said and he kept swinging, throwing himself into the air when he had a chance to just for the fun of it.

It took him a few days to get used to Karen and her constant presence. She was nice to have though and she seemed to see more than Peter did — giving him ideas or observations when she could and then also just making things easier when Peter didn’t know what to do.

By the time that school came around he had gotten pretty used to her. Going back to school wasn’t difficult. Peter had always enjoyed school. He just didn’t know if he was enjoying it as much as he had before now that he had Spider-Man to look forward to as soon as the school day ended — it was even better now that he had Karen. He loved being in the suit and had it with him always. The addition to Karen in the suit helped with finding where he could be helpful and yet also showed him

Thanks as always to everyone reading.
I'm not entirely pleased with this chapter probably due to some transitional issues but I still do like what happens here. Enjoy.
how to better use his suit made it even more thrilling to be out there as Spider-Man. The only downside was that Karen really worked at getting him home before midnight and making sure he did his homework.

Peter was aware that he was sort of avoiding Ned at times because he didn’t want to constantly say no to hanging out, but Peter just didn’t know what else to say. He was barely managing to make decathlon practice and had already quit marching band and robotics lab because all of that on top of being Spider-Man and trying to spend time with Tony was just a lot. Hanging out with Ned was fun, but it wasn’t a priority. Peter just needed to figure out how to fit Ned into his schedule a bit better.

The thing that was truly annoying was how much Flash was still picking on him. He just wouldn’t let up when Peter was near and Peter was well aware that it came from Flash still not being part of the competing decathlon team and some weird competitive thing that Flash had with him.

But being back at school also meant that Peter got to see Liz more. He tried not to stare too hard when she was around, but it was difficult because she was just so pretty. It was hard to not find anyone at Midtown that didn’t have some sort of crush on Liz.

Michelle seemed to constantly catch him watching Liz which only served to amuse her before she threw something witty his way and then refocused on whatever book she was reading or protest she was researching. Peter had seen her at plenty of them while swinging around New York. Michelle was just such an activist and Peter admired her for it.

It took a few weeks to get used to being in school again, but eventually Peter figured out how to get himself on some reasonable enough schedule even if it meant that he wasn’t going to see Tony as often as he had over the summer. It had bummied him out a little at first but short of quitting decathlon on top of everything he’d already quit, that’s just how it was going to be. It didn’t help that Tony seemed to be going to upstate New York all the time and so then it didn’t matter that Peter had time to see him because he wasn’t at the tower.

They had reverted back to texts and emails and video calls and it was fine. Peter liked being able to keep in touch. Karen helped with all of that. She was one of the best things that could have happened to Peter. Karen just sort of cared in an odd way because she wasn’t actually real. But she was always there asking Peter how he was and trying to help even if it meant that she was answering questions for him while he was studying or trying to figure something out. Peter could tell that she wasn’t on the same level as Friday was, but he didn’t even care because Karen was Karen and Peter wouldn’t replace her.

---

Tony sort of hated that Peter was back in school. Mostly because it meant that Peter was only ever at the tower once a week if that. He just had so much else going on from homework to his friend Ned and then of course was the whole Spider-Man thing. It was also in part Tony’s fault too because he needed to be at the compound from time to time. He nearly always flew over in the quinjet because it was faster, but it was becoming tiring. The problem really came from Vision disappearing all of a sudden and leaving just a message to say that he was alright and that he’d return soon. Rhodey was in such a better state and mostly walking on his own that it had been easy to put him in charge of things at the compound but Tony still needed to check on him. He also needed to work on some of the business with The Accords and The Avengers and it was just easier to do that from the compound especially when Hill or Fury wanted to meet up.

They were making headway on The Accords. Especially now that the elections were really looming on them. Tony had gone out to personally endorse the Democratic candidate at a fundraiser and gotten to talk to them about The Avengers. Tony suspected that the changes would go through
before November, but it didn’t hurt to think about the future past that.

On a night when he decided to just crash at the compound, he was woken up by Friday.

“Karen reached out. She says Peter is in some distress.”

Tony shot up out of bed. “Distress how? Is he in the suit?”

Friday didn’t say anything for a moment. “Yes. Karen says he’s headed home now. He miscalculated a swing and injured himself. Sprained wrist. Some bruising.”

Having Karen in the suit and having specifically programmed her to reach out to Friday for a number of different things was one of Tony’s best ideas. He was still a little confused by the choice of the name Karen, but he didn’t mind as long as Karen helped to keep Peter safe.

“Call him, Fri,” Tony said through a yawn even though he was quickly waking up.

Karen picked up the call immediately and then Peter’s face was on Tony’s phone and he did look a little pained.


Peter groaned. “It hurts a bit but I’ll be okay, Mr. Stark.”

“Are we back to that now?” Tony asked, mostly to lighten the moment a bit and distract Peter some.

Peter was moving. Probably swinging home and he grimaced as he went and Tony wanted to just find a way to make that pain stop but he didn’t know if he actually could. Did pain meds work on Peter? They never had for Steve because his body just processed them so quickly but Tony didn’t know if it was the same with Peter. He really needed to get on giving Peter some sort of physical and a test for his powers. The suit had probably connected enough data to help with figuring some of it but there were more definitive things they could do.


“Are you close to home?” Tony asked.

Peter grimaced again and nodded. “Two blocks away. I can make it.”

“Don’t go too fast, kiddo, I don’t want you to injure yourself again.”

Peter slowed down some. “I really am okay. Probably heal up in a few hours. You didn’t have to call.”

Tony chuckled. “If I wasn’t at the compound, I would have gone to you myself.” Maybe saying that was a little much for Peter but Tony meant it.

“Oh,” Peter said.

“You’re doing good, kid. Just focus on swinging and try not to jostle your wrist too much.”

When the call switched from the suit to Peter’s phone a few minutes later, Tony let out a sigh of relief. Peter was back home and out of the suit and it didn’t take long for Peter to prop his phone up somewhere.

“I’ll be right back,” he said and went out of frame and when Tony saw him next he was in one of his
t-shirts and pajama bottoms.

“Okay, kiddo, show me that wrist? How’s it feeling?”

Peter moved towards his bed and he lifted his hurt wrist towards the camera. It looked bruised and the skin was red.

“Put some ice on that, healing factor or not,” Tony said.

“It’s still hurting a bit,” Peter said. “Not much, but throbbing, I guess. Ice might help.”

“It will,” Tony said. He stood up and paced the room. It really wasn’t that bad, it was just horrible to think about Peter hurt in any way.

He talked to Peter while Peter went and fetched an ice pack and then as Peter got into his bed, instructing him not to keep it on too long or directly on his skin. He could tell that Peter was tired and it made Tony suddenly curious as to why Peter had been out so late at night to begin with or why Karen had let him. It would be a question for the next day because Tony was going to make sure that he saw Peter.

“I can see you’re nodding off, kid, so call me tomorrow and let me know how your wrist is doing. Also don’t go running off right after school. Happy’s going to pick you up tomorrow. And I expect a good explanation for you being out so late. It’s a school night.”

“Actually, no school tomorrow. Teacher--” he yawned, “--conferences.”

Tony sighed. That explained him being out so late. “Fine. Even better. Happy will pick you up tomorrow morning.”

“Hmm, okay,” Peter mumbled. Somehow, he was still just adorable and Tony couldn’t quite believe it.

“Good night, Peter.”

“Night, dad.”

Friday or Karen or both closed up the call, but Tony kept staring at the screen in complete surprise because he didn’t know how to react. Peter had called him “dad”. He probably hadn’t even realized it, but he’d done it and Tony couldn’t help but let himself smile. His chest filled up with warmth and he lay back in his bed and knew he was grinning widely. It was one word but it meant everything.

Chapter End Notes

We have one more chapter before Homecoming really starts up but we’ve made it to September and Peter’s back at school. Next chapter we have more Peter and Tony. Next one will be up by Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

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“Hey, Happy,” Peter said when he got into the car.

His wrist had healed completely by the time that he got up and May was waking him up to eat breakfast before she left for work. He’d told her that he was spending the day with Tony and May just nodded. He loved how used to him spending time with Tony she was.

Happy grunted from the front. “I didn’t think I’d be seeing you so soon,” he said.

Peter just grinned. “Are we going to the tower?”

“Nope,” Happy said. “Avengers Compound.”


Happy didn’t respond and Peter hadn’t really expected him to. In his experience, Happy liked him best when he wasn’t asking questions. So instead, Peter spent most of the ride to the compound doing some of the homework he’d brought with him, happy that he had thought to bring some along.

When they finally arrived, Peter was floored. He couldn’t believe that the compound existed. It was a proper place where he could imagine a bunch of superheroes living and Peter was going to visit it. It was entirely different from the tower which Peter had gotten to really explore in depth over the last few weeks but this place was crazy. All his questions about why he was there were quelled by the need to take everything in. Happy took him in through some sort of lobby and Tony appeared at once.

“Thanks, Happy, I’ll take it from here.”

Happy nodded but didn’t leave. Instead he just continued on, leaving Tony and Peter behind. He seemed to be getting more used to Peter.

“How’s the wrist? I don’t recall getting a call about it this morning.”

“I forgot,” Peter said.

Tony seemed more amused about it than anything as he grabbed Peter’s hand gently and looked at his hand and wrist which felt like it was back to normal already.

“Looks good,” Tony said.

“Um, why am I here?”

“I did promise to show you this place, but I had a thought last night. We actually know nothing about
how much the bite affected your physiology aside from what you’ve been able to figure out on your own.”

Peter was surprised. He really hadn’t thought much about the bite and the changes the mutation had given him since it happened but Tony was right. They really didn’t know everything. So far things hadn’t changed noticeably any more than what had happened at the beginning, but it didn’t mean that more changes or mutations couldn’t happen or that the bite had affected him in some other way.

Tony took him down to a floor that was part medical wing and part lab. It was huge and there were only a few people there but Peter suspected that there were usually a lot more.

An asian woman who looked faintly familiar stepped towards them as they entered.

“You must be Peter,” she said. “It’s lovely to meet you at last.”

He shook her hand.

“I’m Dr. Helen Cho.”

Her name sounded familiar too but Peter couldn’t place it. It must have been something relating to Tony or The Avengers or both. He just couldn’t remember what.

Dr. Cho led them towards a cot where a bunch of machines were already set up and she motioned for Peter to sit. It felt oddly like he was actually at a doctor’s office about to get a physical which he actually hadn’t done in a while. But before they could get started, the elevator door opened at the other end of the room and Peter gasped because it was Tony’s best friend. James Rhodes. War Machine.

Peter knew all about him from his time as a fanboy of Iron Man and The Avengers, but he had heard more personal things since he and Tony had gotten closer and especially since he had helped Tony with some of the exoskeleton devices. The fact that Rhodes was walking towards them without the need of a cane was amazing.

“I heard we have a special guest here today. How come I didn’t get to meet my nephew?”

“Nephew?” Peter asked and his voice came out as a squeak.

Tony and Rhodes both burst into laughter and even Dr. Cho seemed to be trying not to laugh. Peter tried not to pout like a child but he really didn’t like being laughed at.

“Well, what else would you be?” Rhodes asked and Peter was distracted. “I’ve been hearing about you for years. He’s super proud of you, you know, your dad.”

Peter didn’t know how to respond. Tony sighed. “I didn’t want to bother you while you were doing physical therapy,” he said.

“Could have told me he was coming in the first place,” Rhodes said. “Then I would have been ready.”

“What with a PowerPoint presentation of all my failings?” Tony asked.

Dr. Cho laughed.

“No,” Rhodes said, “but maybe your more embarrassing moments.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Anyway,” Tony said. “We’re in the middle of something.”
Peter wasn’t sure that he wanted Rhodes to stick around for the medical exam that was about to happen. It was sort of awkward enough to have Tony there and Peter actually knew him.

Rhodes nodded and smiled at Peter as if sensing his unease. “I’ll let you to it but I expect to see both of you upstairs for a meal later. I think I’ll invite Pepper too. You’ve been keeping him from us and that ends today.”

“You have,” Rhodes said and winked at Peter. “See you later, Peter.”

“It was nice to meet you,” Peter said, finally managing to speak again.

Rhodes smiled at him. “Finally,” he said and he reached over and ruffled Peter’s hair before he turned around and left the way he came.

“So that’s Rhodey,” Tony said.

Peter nodded. “The exoskeleton is working well.”

“It is. He gets tired and has to sit a lot but it’s been getting better. The physical therapy is really helping him.”

Dr. Cho nodded. “I’m very impressed with his recovery,” she said. “You know the only person that could have medically made a difference was in a car crash before any of this happened. Such a shame -- he lost use of his hands. So I’m glad you found another way, Tony.”

Tony nodded.

“Right,” Dr. Cho said, “let’s get started.”

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Having Peter at The Avengers Compound was different than having him at the tower. For one there were more people around to see him and ask about him, but for another it didn’t feel like it usually did when it was just the two of them. Most of them didn’t know why Tony was having this random kid looked at in medical but at least they didn’t ask questions. Dr. Cho was of course aware and she seemed excited to be working on it too.

Dr. Cho promised to get him some results before he and Peter left for the city, but after all the tests were done ranging from taking blood samples and dna samples along with a bunch of other readings that included seeing Peter run on a treadmill to get his heart rate and figure out a bunch of other things like how fast he could run a mile and how quickly he would start to get winded. Dr. Cho was checking for everything. At one point they even tried to get a read on his strength and he seemed to be as strong as Steve — perhaps stronger.

Tony showed him around afterwards. He took him down to the training rooms and then through to Steve’s office which Tony had been using lately and then into the rest of the communal areas. Tony actually did have a bedroom there but he had used it so rarely that he still wasn’t using it. If he slept at the compound he usually stayed in Steve’s more lived in space instead. It felt nice to be surrounded by his stuff.

It was just on the side of sad to see all of the rooms that belonged to The Avengers empty. Vision had left without saying anything earlier in the week, but he had sent Rhodsey a message that he was somewhere in Europe. Tony suspected it had something to do with Wanda and he just hoped they
were smart about it and kept it under the radar. Things were going too well to be messed up by Wanda.

They joined Rhodey for an early dinner and Tony loved seeing the almost starstruck look in Peter’s eyes when it wasn’t directed at himself.

“I really do want to spend more time with you, Peter,” Rhodey said while they ate. “I hear you like Star Wars.”

“I do,” Peter said.

Rhodey nodded. “I also know that you helped Tony with some of the work on my braces. Thank you.”

Peter spluttered something as he tried to answer and Tony tried not to laugh and he could tell that Rhodey felt the same way.

As he had expected, Peter didn’t remember calling him “dad” the night before and he didn’t mind that Peter didn’t remember and didn’t want to switch from Tony to dad, but he liked knowing that at least some part of Peter already viewed him that way.

Pepper arrived late to dinner, but walked in like she wasn’t and kissed Rhodey’s cheek and then Tony’s and then almost did the same to Peter before she stopped herself and smiled before extending her her hand out to him.

“It’s good to meet you in person, Peter. I’m Pepper.”

Peter shook her hand a little awed and Pepper grinned at him. Tony often forgot how much Pepper cared about Peter and how involved she had always been right from the beginning. Peter probably had no idea.

“Hi,” Peter managed.

“You know if it wasn’t for Pepper, I wouldn’t have had any idea of your existence,” Tony said after Pepper had sat down and grabbed some food.

“No he wouldn’t have,” Pepper said. “Probably would have forgotten to send your birthday presents on time too. How’s your aunt, Peter? I haven’t heard from her in a while.”

“Oh, she’s good. You talk to May?”

Pepper nodded.

“She was my assistant for a long time, Peter,” Tony said to help explain it.

“I have to remind myself every day that the job I do now was not as difficult as it was back then,” Pepper said with a grin.

Peter smiled a little and Tony winked at him. This really was his family. Maybe some members were missing but this had always been it from the beginning. Still, he wanted everyone else to be there too.

“How’s school?” Pepper asked.

“It’s good.”

Pepper nodded. Tony could tell that Peter was a bit nervous but he also seemed to be happy to be
meeting Pepper and Rhodey and it certainly helped that they were so welcoming.

They finished eating by the time that the sun had gone down and Tony knew he’d have to bring Peter back because he did have school the next day. First they went to check with Dr. Cho who gave them a few of the results from the earlier tests and promised the rest for the next day.

“Well, it seems that you’re in perfect health, Pete,” Tony said.

“He is,” Dr. Cho said. “There’s traces of the mutation in his DNA. It’s definitely been altered, but it’s not something that anyone would notice if they weren’t looking. His healing factor reminds me a bit of Captain Rogers’. His metabolism is also quite fast. He burns a lot more calories doing what he does which means he has to eat more than normal.”

“What about medication?” Tony asked.

“Just like Cap,” Dr. Cho answered. “I doubt anything would work on him but I guess a stronger dosage might do the trick. Now I’m curious to see if alcohol would have any effect on him.”

Tony chuckled. “Not sure I want to know considering he won’t be drinking until he’s twenty one and actually shouldn’t be getting into a habit that runs in his family.”

Peter didn’t say anything to the look that Tony gave him. He’d never drank anything alcoholic before and he didn’t think he’d ever want to.

They left soon after talking to Dr. Cho and Tony let Happy drive them. Happy didn’t seem to be in too bad a mood on the drive back, but he didn’t say much and didn’t protest when Tony walked Peter inside.

Chapter End Notes

Peter finally met Pepper and Rhody. It’s something I couldn’t quite figure out where to place but it fit here. Next chapter will truly start Homecoming and we have a Peter POV. It should be up by Thursday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Ned could count on one hand the number of times that Peter had come over since school started back up. During the summer, Ned had been gone on a family vacation but even for the few weeks that he’d had left when he returned he and Peter had barely seen each other. Ned had been hoping things would change once they were back in school but they seemed to only get worse.

It was the Stark Internship that was really doing it, Ned knew, because Peter seemed to be at it every day after school which really seemed a bit excessive. Ned hadn’t even gotten the full story out of Peter about how he had gotten the internship in the first place. Flash and some of his friends didn’t even seem to believe Peter when he told them that he had an internship with Stark Industries and it did seem a little bit far fetched but Ned knew that Peter wouldn’t lie about something like that even if Peter had always been a little bit obsessed with Iron Man. Although everyone was to an extent. Ned personally preferred Captain America.

So he wasn’t surprised when Peter said he was busy that afternoon even though he seemed excited about the LEGO Death Star. It just meant that Ned needed to try a little harder because he was tired of not seeing his best friend and he didn’t mind going over to Peter’s even if it meant going late.

“I’ll knock out the bones of the Death Star at my place. And then, I’ll come over afterwards. For the most part, the difficult thing is the base of it. The top half we can knock out in two hours, tops.”

Peter nodded distractedly as he looked after Liz who seemed to be talking about Homecoming again because it was all she ever talked about these days. Liz was the overachiever type who seemed to be as busy as Peter was these days but also managed to have an amazing social life going by all the friends she had and all the parties that were thrown at her house or that she attended. She was a senior which made her doubly unattainable and it was probably why Peter was so interested in the first place.

The rest of the day was the usual. They went to class. Peter was distracted and managed to still answer when called upon. They went to lunch. Michelle sat near them with her nose buried in a book but somehow still listening in on conversations around her.

Then, Peter went and quit decathlon surprising everyone including Ned who really didn’t understand why Peter seemed to think it was a good idea. It had been one thing to get out of marching band because it really was pointless. Ned had even allowed that robotics could go but he had never expected for Peter to want to quit decathlon. Not when Flash had always been clearly jealous that Peter was probably the best they had and not an alternative like Flash. His spot was also going to go to Flash which was a disappointment. The rest of the team was not going to ever stop hearing about it.

After school, Peter disappeared before Ned could catch up to him, so Ned headed home with every intention of starting on the Death Star and then going over to Peter’s to catch him after he got back from the Stark Internship.
He actually ended up building most of it and it was dark by the time that he went over to Peter’s which hopefully meant that he would find him at home. Instead, May answered the door.


“Good, good,” Ned said. “Is Peter home?”

May shrugged. “Likely not. Should be soon. You can wait in his room if you want.”

“Okay. Thanks, May.”

Ned had always liked May. She was easy going and nice and while there had been some bad months there right after the death of her husband, it was clear that she was slowly getting back to being herself again. She wasn’t as sad.

Peter’s room was a bit of a mess, but then it always had been. It just seemed messier somehow, like Peter really didn’t have the time to actually pick up after himself. Ned settled himself at Peter’s desk and started working on the rest of the Death Star while he waited. He almost had the whole thing completely done when May opened the door, bringing in a glass of water and a plate with store bought cookies which was a good thing because May really couldn’t bake.

“Thanks,” Ned said.

May nodded with a grin. “That looks pretty cool. Peter will be excited to see it.”

She left before he could respond and Ned just kept working. It was a good while before Ned was interrupted again but this time it wasn’t May. Instead, it was Peter’s window being pushed open and Ned just froze. Was someone breaking in? Ned looked around the room but there wasn’t anything he could use and either way, Ned knew he wouldn’t actually make a difference. A moment later, Spider-Man crawled in and Ned could only watch as Spider-Man climbed on to the ceiling and took off his mask and--

It was Peter. Peter was Spider-Man! Ned could barely believe it. He was frozen on the spot but he followed Peter’s movements with his eyes as Peter crawled on the ceiling across the room to the door and closed it using spider web and then he lowered himself to the floor and didn’t even notice that Ned was right there watching him. When Peter finally spotted him, Peter gasped and Ned finally moved only to dump the Death Star to the floor. He heard it break and fall apart but that didn’t matter. Peter was Spider-Man.

Peter turned to face him, moving faster than Ned had ever seen him move.

“What was that?” May called from the kitchen.

“Nothing, nothing,” Peter said quickly and then, “damn it, Karen, why didn’t you warn me?”


“No. No, I’m not.”

Peter jumped to denying it even as he seemed to press on the chest of the suit and it just released and Peter stepped out of it.

“You were on the ceiling,” Ned said even as Peter kept trying to deny it.

“No, I wasn’t. Ned, what are you doing in my room?” Peter asked and he looked panicked more
than anything else.

“May let me in. You said we were going to finish the Death Star,” Ned responded and he really should have known that Peter heard none of what he said earlier in the day.

“You can’t just be in my room when I’m not here,” Peter said and then the door was pushed open again and it was May who had gone and ruined dinner. They could actually see smoke coming from the kitchen.

“That turkey meatloaf recipe is a disaster. Let’s go to dinner. Thai? Ned, you want Thai?” May asked. “Oh, when did you get in? I didn’t hear the door.”

“Must have snuck past you, I guess,” Peter said and then, “Ned’s got a thing.”

“Yeah,” Ned said even though he didn’t know why he was agreeing exactly.

May gave them both a look and then settled on Peter again. “Maybe put on some clothes,” she said. “What did you ruin what you were wearing at your -- um, at the internship?”

“Little bit,” Peter said with a shrug.

“Gotta be more careful, Peter,” May said as she walked away.

Peter closed the door behind May and he leaned into it for a moment.

“Oh, she doesn’t know,” Ned said and he was still in a state of shock. How had Peter been some sort of superhero and kept it from Ned? This had been going on for months even. Ned remembered all the times that he’d sent Peter links about Spider-Man and Peter hadn’t said a thing.

“Nobody knows! Well, To--Mr. Stark knows because he made my suit, but that’s it,” Peter said in a rush.

“Tony Stark made you that!” Ned gaped at him. Was Peter for real? Things could only get better and better. Ned couldn’t believe it. “Wait, does that mean -- are you an Avenger?”

Peter was getting a shirt on and he didn’t seem to know what to say which gave Ned some time to try and take it all in because this was crazy. His best friend was Spider-Man and not just that but Tony Stark himself had made him the suit and he spoke about it so casually as if everyone could get Tony freaking Stark to make them a suit. What was even Peter’s life?

“I don’t -- I wouldn’t say I’m an Avenger,” Peter said at long last and then in a more serious tone. “You can’t tell anybody about this. You have to keep it a secret.”

Ned didn’t understand. Why would he want to keep this secret? This was the coolest thing ever -- why wouldn’t Peter want everyone to know. None of the Avengers kept secret identities and it had worked well for them so he didn’t really get why Peter didn’t want to tell everyone that he was the guy under the red and blue suit. Didn’t he want the recognition? The admiration?

“A secret? Why?”

“You know what May’s like. If she finds out people try and kill me every night, she’s not gonna let me do this anymore. Come on, Ned, please?” There was something about the way that he said that, that made Ned wonder about just how dangerous things got for Peter. Was he in danger of actually dying every night or was he exaggerating?
“But I don’t think I can keep this a secret,” Ned said because this was exactly the kind of thing that would piss off Flash like nothing else not to mention how no one would try to mess with them if they knew. “This is the greatest thing that’s ever happened to me, Peter!”

It really didn’t seem like Peter actually understood how much the secret could change things for them -- for Peter.

“Ned, May cannot know. I cannot do that to her right now. You know? I mean, everything that’s happened with her. I -- please -- no one can know there’s just so many ways that that wouldn’t help right now.”

Ned could tell that Peter needed him to agree and even though he didn’t think it was the way to go, he had to respect that Peter had his reasons. May did seem better since Ben’s death but it hadn’t even been a full year yet and this would probably make a whole mess of things for Peter and her.

“Okay,” Ned said.

“Swear it, okay?”

“I swear.”

“Thank you,” Peter said and let out a sigh. “I can’t believe this is happening now.”

Ned nodded and then had a thought. “Can I try the suit on?”

“No,” Peter said at once.

Ned hadn’t even started to really think about the suit. The suit that Tony Stark had built for Peter! It brought up a whole lot of other questions to mind -- like how Peter had even gotten to meet Tony Stark in the first place and why Tony Stark had built him a suit. Because if he remembered correctly, Spider-Man had basically been in sweats the first few times he’d been spotted. The whole Internship had seemed unlikely enough and Peter had never explained it but maybe Tony Stark had noticed Spider-Man somehow and gotten involved. He really needed to get the full story out of Peter.

“How does it work? Is it magnets? How do you shoot the strings?”

Peter seemed to still be a bit on the agitated side. He grabbed Ned and walked him to the door of his bedroom. “I’m going to tell you about this at school tomorrow, okay?”

“Great. Okay, well --” he paused right at the door. “Wait, then, how do you do this and the Stark Internship?”

Peter sighed. “This is the Stark Internship.”

That certainly made sense. He said goodbye to May as he walked past her to the door still a little out of it and tried to really wrap his mind around all of it because he still couldn’t really believe it. How could this have even happened? He was definitely going to need to pester Peter for answers the next day. Nothing this exciting had happened ever. It didn’t even matter that the Death Star had gotten destroyed and that all the pieces were still scattered all over Peter’s bedroom floor.

Chapter End Notes
I found writing Ned an adventure even if I did end up basically doing the scene from the movie but at the time I was actually having a bit of writer's block and writing Ned helped.

Next chapter will probably be up on Saturday. Thanks for reading.

Someone is translating this fic into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 71

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading/commenting/leaving kudos. You are all the best.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

May could tell that Peter was acting odd. Then again, since most of the summer had been spent with him barely speaking to her, May could accept that Peter was changing and growing. After all he was going through his teenage years but on top of that there was also Tony Stark. He was spending so much time with Tony Stark lately. May couldn’t actually believe that Tony just seemed to make time for Peter all the time. May was glad about it, of course, because Peter needed to know his father and clearly Tony wanted to spend time with him. It was just that Peter wasn’t really telling her much anymore. It meant that if things kept going the way they were that May was going to have to ask Tony for updates on Peter even though Peter lived with her.

She hadn’t seen Tony since Peter’s birthday dinner which had gone well even though Peter hadn’t wanted to invite him in the first place. She couldn’t believe that Peter was already fifteen. He was too old and too young all at once.

The whole time they were out at the Thai place, Peter seemed quiet. It was the kind of quiet and reserved that Peter had been whenever he was being bullied in school. Some kids had always loved to pick on her Peter in part because he was so brilliant. Not even having him go to a school full of kids like him made things easier. Some kids were just always going to be mean and maybe Peter made an easy target.

“How’s school?” May asked.

“Fine. The same,” Peter said.

May nodded. It was odd to see Peter just move his food around a plate since lately he’d been eating more than his share of food. It had concerned May a little when she first noticed because she didn’t want Peter to get unhealthy eating habits but Tony had told her it was normal after Peter ate three helpings of their birthday dinner. Tonight he seemed distracted.

“What’s the matter? Thought you loved larb,” May said.

Peter didn’t respond.

“Is it too larby?”

No reaction.

“Not larby enough? How many times do I have to say larb before you talk to me? You know, I larb you.”

Peter sort of smiled then, but there was still clearly something wrong. Something that might also explain why he was so quick to send Ned away even though Ned had been waiting for him for a while.
“Did anything happen with Tony today?” May asked.

Peter shook his head. “No,” he said. Since he never really shared anything about his time spent with Tony it didn’t surprise her that he wasn’t filling her in on his afternoon.

There was a tv on and a news report started, showing some sort of explosion that had happened earlier in the day. The mention of Delmar’s caught her attention because it wasn’t far off. Peter probably walked past there every day on his way to and from school and he was often in there grabbing food.

Then they mentioned Spider-Man’s involvement stopping an ATM robbery. May had heard about the new hero in passing. Actually, it was a bit surprising to her that Peter didn’t gush about him at all especially since this hero seemed to mostly be spotted in Queens. The report continued and May was glad that at least no one had been injured in all of it, but May still didn’t like how close something like that had happened.

“If you spot something like that happening, you turn and you run the other way,” May said to Peter. “Actually, if you see that Spider-Man you run the other way too.”

Peter nodded. “Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Of course,” he said and yet he sounded weird, almost like he was lying but maybe he was just shocked about the destruction of Delmar’s.

Peter’s phone rang a few times and May was distracted from questioning him and since it was on the table May saw that it was Tony calling.

Karen, who May was slowly getting used to, spoke up from the phone. “Peter, Mr. Stark is calling. Should I tell him you’re busy?”

Peter picked up the phone at once to answer.

“Hi,” Peter said and then paused. “Yeah, having dinner with May right now.”

May didn’t hear what Tony said back, but he seemed to keep the conversation quick.


“What was that about?” May asked as Peter put the phone down.

Peter hesitated before answering. “He, um, he wanted to make sure I knew Happy was picking me up tomorrow.”

May nodded, but she was sure that hadn’t been all. Something like that could have been told via text and she was well aware of how often Tony texted Peter and vice versa. She didn’t want to demand that Peter tell her everything. He was old enough to keep things to himself and do things on his own, but she was still curious and still hoped that Peter would willingly open up to her.

Peter took a few bites of his food and May watched him as he ate. It was a while before Peter said anything again.

“Hey, May, I need a new backpack,” Peter said.

“That’s the fifth one,” May said. “What did you do to this one? Destroy it while doing lab work with Tony?”

Peter was saved from answering when their waiter brought over sticky rice pudding and Peter had to
poke fun at how often guys tried to flirt with May while they were out. It had happened a lot before too even when Ben was present which had made for a lot of fun jokes. She didn’t find it quite as funny anymore, but Peter grinned at her.

“I think he larbs you,” he said.

May laughed. “So, what happened to the backpack, Peter?”

“Lab accident,” Peter said and he sort of scrunched up his nose.

“Then it is possible that the person who owns the lab is responsible for the loss of so many backpacks, hmm?”

Peter shrugged his shoulders. “I’ll try to be more careful.”

When she called for the check, the waiter came back and smiled at her and then when she looked at the check she found a phone number on the back of the receipt and Peter just grinned at her harder.

“Shut it, Peter.”

---

Tony had been in a meeting with some UN officials, Rhodey, T’Challa over video conference, and Maria Hill when he got alerted to Peter being out on a patrol in the suit. Then a little while later, he was alerted by Friday about an explosion in Queens, but more importantly that Spider-Man was involved. Peter’s vitals were normal and he was uninjured, but that didn’t make Tony worry less. The meeting was too important to cut short, but his attention was divided between updates from Friday via Karen until Peter had taken off the suit -- which at least meant that he was home -- and the discussion at hand.

They were getting very close to finally getting a completed document to amend The Accords. It was going far easier than Tony had expected it to, but then they were at the beginning stages of it. Still, they did have the support they needed especially since Ross had been pushed out of the special council set up by the UN which gave Tony hope.

When the meeting was finally over, he excused himself and called Peter. Peter answered at once.

“Hey, kiddo, you okay? I heard what happened.”

Friday turned the tv on and they were discussing the incident on the news and seeing the actual explosion was jarring because Peter had been there -- he could have been hurt.

“Hey,” Peter said. “Yeah. I’m having dinner with May right now.”

It meant that he couldn’t explain, but for Tony it was enough to just hear his voice.

“You should come by tomorrow. I’ll call later when you’re alone.”


Tony let out a sigh as Peter hung up. He was okay. It was what really mattered. The other thing that mattered was figuring out just why there had been an explosion in the first place. Mostly, though, Tony didn’t like how the coverage of the incident mentioned Spider-Man. The Accords weren’t yet amended and he didn’t want any unnecessary attention on Peter at least not until things had finally been amended.
Friday alerted him when Peter was back in his room. It really was helpful to have Karen in Peter’s phone, suit, and laptop. Eventually, she would be a bit more free and not constantly reporting back to Friday, but for the time being it was better if she was following the Babysitting Protocol.

He gave Peter a little longer before he had Friday initiate a video call. In the meanwhile he did a bit of work on a new Iron Man suit. The Mark XLVI.

Peter answered the call at once. He was in pajamas and was holding a pen in one hand and clearly working on homework.

“Hey, kiddo, so, what happened?”

“ATM robbery. I came upon these guys and it was possible they had guns, I knew that going in. They had Avengers masks on and I just went in there and planned to just web them up. Except, well, they apparently had weird high tech weapons instead of regular guns. Nothing I’ve ever seen before. It made it a little more difficult and then one of the weapons -- it made the explosion happen. One of them shot out and hit Delmar’s and I had to run out and make sure Mr. Delmar made it out. I tried to call but Friday said you were busy so I figured I’d tell you later and anyway by that point it was all over.”

The way that Peter told the story, he made it sound like it wasn’t as bad as it probably had been. He didn’t look like he had been scared and there were no clear injuries but still, Tony couldn’t help but worry about him. It came with the territory of being a father.

“I was in a meeting, Pete,” he said. “Couldn’t have answered unless Friday determined it dire.”

“Oh,” Peter said.

Tony smiled. “It was hard not to make the meeting short once Friday told me what was going on. She didn’t say you called, though.”


He seemed a little worried about it and Tony knew that Peter had somehow managed to keep the secret for a while but this had been bound to happen eventually.

“He was just here in my room waiting for me and I came in and I think Karen tried to warn me but I was distracted because of what happened earlier and anyway, he saw me in the suit,” Peter said. “I don’t know -- he said he’d keep the secret but it’s Ned and he got really excited about the whole thing so I don’t know if he really will. He wants me to tell him everything tomorrow.”

“You say he’s your best friend, kid,” Tony said, “which means he probably will keep the secret. And it’s good that he knows. You need someone else your age to know about it. Are you going to tell him the other thing?”

Peter shook his head at once. “No. Definitely not. That would -- he would freak out even more.”

They had never really talked about telling the public about Peter being Tony’s son. Not doing so was in part to protect Peter from the attention that it would send his way. It kept him safe. And yet Tony found that he did want people know. He wanted everyone to know. One day they would.

“It’s alright if you want to tell your friends,” Tony said. “You must want to talk about all of this with someone.”
Peter shrugged. “So, those weapons. Where do you think they came from?”

“I don’t know,” Tony said and it really was something to think on. Something to worry about because if just some bank robbers had been able to get ahold of them then there had to be someone manufacturing and then also distributing the weapons.

“What should we do?” Peter asked.

“We,” Tony said a little amused, “nothing. I will figure out what’s going on with the weapons and deal with it. This seems exactly like the kind of thing that I told you not to get involved with. And I know you want to help, but, Peter, please don’t go looking for trouble.”

Tony didn’t know how effective it would be to just warn Peter off of going after anything related to the weapons but he had to try and hope that Peter had more sense than to actually go looking for more trouble than he was already encountering on a daily basis.

“I won’t go looking for trouble,” Peter said.

“Good. It’s getting late, kid, and you still seem to have some homework left. Get to it and get to bed. I’ll see you tomorrow. Good night.”

“Good night,” Peter said.

Chapter End Notes

One of the things I loved about writing Homecoming was the small tweaks and just adding in Tony’s side of things as well as just inserting him where he wouldn't have been the last time because Happy was such a big buffer to Peter getting to Tony so it makes a slight difference to have Tony actually respond to Peter and it's an aspect I've really enjoyed.

Next we have some Tony and Peter as well as some Ned. I'm going to try and post on Monday but Tuesday at the latest.

And a note on writing because this is crazy: I actually started writing ch. 100 yesterday. Yes, 100. I couldn't believe it in part because I thought I was on 97, but also because this is not how long I imagined this getting. So yeah, lots for you guys to look forward to and I haven’t even gotten to IW yet in ch. 100 soooo who knows how long this is going to end up.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Ned wouldn’t let it go. It had started when Ned actually waited to walk with Peter to school like they had done all of last year but hadn’t done much of this year. They had even walked by the remains of Delmar’s which really showed the damage those weapons had done. In the light of day, Peter could really see how bad it had been. Ned had seemed shocked enough but that had lasted seconds before he had another question for Peter.

Peter had figured that at least while they were in class that Ned wouldn’t be pestering him about it all and yet he should have known that wouldn’t be the case. Ned was just — he was excited about it. He also seemed to want to actually respect Peter and keep the secret even if he didn’t seem to understand how to properly whisper or why Peter wasn’t so keen to tell everyone. In fact, at times it seemed like he was trying his hardest not to just tell everyone.

It didn’t help that Michelle seemed to always be around and that Peter suspected that if anyone would find out without being told it would be her. She was just too smart but also she just seemed to notice things. Ned talking loudly would be like handing her the secret on a silver platter.

It all came to a head when Ned actually told everyone in their gym class that Peter knew Spider-Man and didn’t seem to realize that saying just even that was a giant clue to anyone that was paying attention. The only good thing was that no one really seemed to believe it even as Peter tried to put together some sort of explanation about meeting him while doing the Stark Internship but since most people had a hard time believing that, Peter really didn’t have much luck.

Somehow, though, Liz did invite them to her party. She was so casual about it too like it wasn’t a big deal. Of course Flash and some of the others were all probably expecting for Peter to make a fool of himself when Spider-Man didn’t show up like Ned claimed Peter could make happen.

It was also Liz that gave him an out. “It’s okay. I know Peter’s way too busy for parties anyway, so-”

Peter should have jumped on that, but between Ned trying to single handedly destroy his secret and Flash’s need to constantly find a reason to humiliate him it was as if Peter was being given no choice. As soon as the bell rang and everyone started heading towards the locker rooms, Peter turned to Ned.

“What are you doing?” he hissed.

Ned didn’t seem to even realize what he had done. “Helping you out,” Ned said. “Did you not hear her? Liz has a crush on you. Dude, you’re an Avenger. If any one of us has a chance with a senior girl, it’s you.”

Except that Liz didn’t know that Peter was Spider-Man and she couldn’t know either and yet -- Liz had a crush on Spider-Man. It was -- Peter felt thrilled to know that and yet it didn’t mean that Liz
liked Peter so it wasn’t going to matter anyway.

“I really can’t go, Ned,” Peter said. “I’m not really an Avenger and I have the Stark--”

“Um, considering Spider-Man is the internship, you really can’t keep using that as an excuse, Peter. At least not with me.”

Peter sighed and ran a hand through his hair. Ned really was frustrating. For all that he seemed to understand that Peter wanted to keep everything secret and that this was more than just fun and games, he also wanted to use the fact that Peter was Spider-Man for their own gain and that just -- it wasn’t his reason for being Spider-Man. He didn’t think that Ned would understand it, anyway.

“Well, I actually am going to Avengers Tower today,” Peter whispered to Ned. “Mr. Stark is expecting me and I can’t not show up.” Which was true but also Peter hadn’t seen his dad in a few days and he was looking forward to going over.

Ned gave him a long look. “This is your opportunity with Liz. You like her, don’t you? You just have to come to the party and then go and get into the suit and make an appearance and I’ll say you’re in the bathroom or something and then Spider-Man leaves and you return and then we just stay at the party and Liz is super impressed.”

“I don’t know, Ned,” Peter said.

“Come on, Peter, this should be the best thing that ever happened to you. Liz likes you.”

Peter didn’t respond. Instead he headed to get changed back into his regular clothes so he wasn’t late for their next class. He just hoped that Ned would stop with the questions. Somehow, he knew he wouldn’t. And if it wasn’t questions then he would certainly pester Peter about the party because Ned clearly wanted to go and he wouldn’t if Peter didn’t.

Peter learned to sort of tune him out some for the rest of the day and then when the school day was over, Ned just followed him out.

“Ned, I’m serious, Happy is supposed to be picking me up.”

Happy had actually texted him as soon as the bell rang and Peter didn’t want to keep him waiting.

Sure enough when they got outside, Happy was waiting for him by a black car that at least had the decency to not look like something that Tony would drive. Before Peter could leave Ned, Ned grabbed his arm.

“Peter, please,” he said, “I really -- we need this. I can meet you at your house tonight and I know May will be more than willing to take us. I’m only going to just keep texting you about it. This is Liz we’re talking about. You like her and she happens to like you back. You heard what she said.”

Ned would keep on harping on him about that, he knew, but what Ned didn’t get was that Liz didn’t like Peter. She liked Spider-Man and those were two different things. And short of telling Liz that he was Spider-Man, well, Peter didn’t know what else to do.

Peter sighed. “Okay. Okay. I’ll let you know when I’m headed home.”

“Yes!” Ned said.

“Now, I really do have to go.”
Peter rushed away towards Happy who was stony faced as Peter approached. Peter thought that Happy was starting to like him a little more. Tony still hadn’t let him in on the secret yet, but Peter was hoping to wear him down before that. He didn’t want Happy to suddenly start liking him because he was Tony’s son.

“Hey, Happy,” he said.

“Get in, kid,” Happy responded and then rounded the car to get into the driver’s seat. Peter hoped that no one would notice or find it strange that Peter had been picked up from school since it wasn’t a normal occurrence.

Of course when he glanced out the window he spotted Michelle sitting under a tree looking in his direction. That didn’t fare particularly well specially since he could tell that she looked curious.

“How was school?”

“The usual,” Peter said.

Happy grunted and that was the extent of their conversation until Peter got Karen to connect to the car so he could put on his music. Happy didn’t say a word about it which Peter considered to be progress.

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Tony had Friday scan Peter as he arrived into the workshop. He wanted to really be sure that Peter hadn’t encountered any injuries during the fight the night before. Karen would have caught them and let him know about them but it didn’t hurt to double check.

“How was school, kid?” Tony asked and stopped his work to look at him.

Peter set down his books on a table out of the way. “Long,” Peter said as he moved closer. “Ned is just the worst. I feel like I’ve been answering questions all day. He just wouldn’t stop. And now -- now, he wants us to go to this party that we weren’t even invited to originally and it’s just not a good idea.”

“Parties are not always good ideas,” Tony said, “but they’re fun and I think you need to be a kid and let loose. Not too loose, but you get what I’m saying? Have you been having any fun lately? All you seem to do is put on the suit, go to school, and do some work here.”

Peter did look a bit worn down which Tony supposed had something to do with his friend. Going to a party might cure him of some of that. Teenagers were supposed to go to parties.

“I said I’d think about it. It’s just that now that Ned knows I can’t even use the internship excuse on him.”

Tony laughed. He actually had to wonder about how many of his classmates believed him about the internship thing. If anyone actually did their research they would find out that SI never had interns that were below college level and even then they preferred to get grad students the caveat being the they were paid internships because Tony thought it was ridiculous that someone essentially in an entry level position wouldn’t be paid in anything but experience. Still, Tony had made sure to have Peter listed in their records even though the whole thing looked irregular.

“You do that, Pete, now come here. I want a detailed list on those weapons from last night. I haven’t forgotten about that. And I still want you to promise me you’re not going to go looking for anything to do with this.”
Peter jumped up on one of the tables and sat down and Tony returned to his stool and watched him. “Yeah, yeah. Neighborhood Spider-Maning only, I know,” Peter said.

Tony nodded and then had Friday record all of Peter’s explanations on the weapons. It sounded to Tony like it was some sort of alien tech which didn’t sound like a good thing but also surprisingly common. People were opportunists and they picked up anything they could to make a quick buck. At one point this had been exactly the kind of thing that Shield dealt with but DODC had always been a part of it too because they did so much of the cleaning which Tony supposed was a good thing due to how Shield had turned out to be Hydra and everything.

“Okay, moving on from that, why did I get an email from May about destroying backpacks in the lab?” He lifted an eyebrow when he looked towards Peter and waited.

Peter spluttered and almost fell off of the table. “She emailed you about that? Wait, how often do the two of you talk?”

“Not often,” Tony said. Actually, it had been the first email from May in a long while although Tony suspected that she and Pepper still emailed regularly. “I think she wanted to send a message about not destroying your things but I didn’t know you were going through backpacks at an alarming rate considering none of them have been destroyed here.” He stared Peter down and waited.

“I, um, I keep losing them,” Peter admitted. “I don’t leave important things in them usually, but it’s just hard to keep track of a backpack when I’m in the suit so I usually just leave it webbed up in places and then go back for it. Just, they keep disappearing. Not always but sometimes.”

“Ah,” Tony said. “That is a problem. One resolved by you going home to drop off your things and not leaving them where anyone can take them.”

Peter didn’t say anything for a long moment. “Or, we can make a backpack that can hide in plain sight so that no one can steal it.”

Peter jumped off and it was as if he was ready to start creating exactly such a thing.

“Funny,” Tony said and he couldn’t help but smile. “You know, I’m actually missing a wedding for this. Not that I really wanted to go all the way to India. I didn’t miss it to make you a backpack.”

He hadn’t been particularly excited about going but Pepper had sent the RSVP for him and anyway, he’d always enjoyed going to India although Pepper’s whole thing had been about him going to check on the SI office there which Tony hadn’t really wanted any part of. Instead, he’d sent them a gift and apologized for not going.

Peter grinned. “But you did miss it to spend time with me.”

“Yes, after what happened last night I had no choice but to. I needed to see you were alright.”

It was a little bit hard to just say things like that outloud to Peter, but Tony had realized at some point that Peter needed that -- he needed to know and see that Tony cared about him. Their relationship had come a long way since that first meeting and since Peter had found out the truth and Tony would settle for what it was currently -- their weird more than mentorship that couldn’t possibly have a label.

“I’m alright,” Peter said.

“I can see that. Now come on, I do have something I wanted to show you.”
I loved writing the Tony and Peter scene in this chapter. It's one of my favorites, I think because of how easy their relationship is.

A note on some changes: Tony is not in India. I actually really really wanted to have Tony not be in NYC and maybe be in Wakanda but then I figured that if he would have returned the moment he heard about the weapons from Peter. So instead, he just doesn't leave at all and I figured that he might have been at a wedding in the movie? Honestly, I always just thought it was weird that they had Tony in India in the first place.

Next up we have the party. Should be up on Thursday.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Tony got him back home in time to get ready for the party after practically making Peter text Ned that they were for sure going. He even offered to have Happy drive them if May was unavailable. Peter had almost wanted to tell him that the whole thing was a bad idea because of what Ned wanted him to do but he knew it wasn’t a good idea to tell Tony because Tony would have probably confiscated the suit for the night and still forced him to go to the party. Which might actually make for a good excuse to not go through with it. He just didn’t know if Ned would actually believe it.

**Ned:** I’ll be there in half an hour. May still good for taking us?

“Karen, just send Ned a thumbs up emoji,” Peter said and then stared at himself in the mirror for a while longer.

May wasn’t actually home yet, which gave Peter some time to try and really figure out if he was willing to show up at Liz’s party as Spider-Man or not. It just seemed like a silly thing to do and it probably wouldn’t accomplish much even if Ned seemed to think it would. What was he even going to say if he did show up in the suit? “Hey, I’m Spider-Man. Peter told me to stop by.” How lame was that? And was it even logical? Why would someone like Spider-Man -- the persona that he was supposed to be -- just go to a party that Peter Parker invited him to? It didn’t make sense.

“Your friend will be arriving soon, Peter,” Karen said.

Peter sighed. “He’s always late but what do you think, Karen? Should I do it? Do you think it’s a good idea?”

“I don’t think you should be using Spider-Man this way, Peter,” Karen said. “People should like you for who you are -- not the mask you wear.”

Peter sighed. “I know.”

He finished getting ready, changing into nicer clothes and trying to make his hair look less dishevelled. Ned didn’t get there in the half hour he’d said he would, but Peter didn’t mind because it gave him some time to clean his room up a little since it had been getting a bit out of hand. He was actually a little surprised that May hadn’t been on him to clean it up.

“Hey, dude, have everything ready?” Ned asked when he arrived wearing a hat that sort of suited him.

“Um, I don’t know about this, Ned, don’t you want to just stay here and maybe finish the Death Star. I think I managed to pick up all the pieces. Don’t you want to put it all together?”

He could tell that Ned was tempted but he shook his head. “Come on, Peter, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. It won’t come again.”
Peter led Ned back to his room. “I don’t know that I want it to happen again.”

“This is Liz we’re talking about,” Ned said, “you like Liz and this is your chance. Peter, please.”

“Fine. Fine, but I don’t know about Spider-Man yet, alright.”

Peter knew that saying that would make Ned just beg and plead for the rest of the night until Peter gave in but at the same time he also knew that giving a definitive yes wouldn’t be his best option at the moment. They didn’t have to wait long for May and then she drove them over, happy somehow that they were going to a party. Sometimes she didn’t act like a parent at all.

It was obvious that Liz had invited not just their whole school but probably other people she knew from other schools to the party because there were people everywhere when they arrived and Peter didn’t recognize most of them. It made Peter a bit nervous to think about using Spider-Man in front of so many people just to impress a girl. Especially since Liz probably wouldn’t be impressed by Peter which was what really mattered.

They made it inside eventually and Peter wasn’t surprised that Ned asked about the suit. Peter actually had it on underneath his clothes because it had seemed easier to do that than to have to actually go and change.

“We’re gonna have Spider-Man swing in—” Ned was saying, “say you guys are tight, and I can get a fist bump or one of those half bro-hugs.”

He was so excited. It was sort of hard to kill that vibe and yet Peter knew he had to.

“Can’t believe you’re at this lame party,” Michelle said, suddenly making herself known.

She looked like she had made zero effort for the party and yet she was there. Had somehow gotten an invite even though she had no friends and it was definitely not her thing. Or maybe it was. Michelle was weird and Peter would never be able to figure her out.

“But you’re here too,” Ned said.

Michelle narrowed her eyes on them. “Am I?” She asked and then walked away.

Between being an awkward mess when Liz found them and greeted them with clear surprise in her eyes to even see them there and then Flash who had of course found a way to show himself off by playing DJ -- not that he was bad at it actually -- Peter felt cornered. Ned wasn’t helping any. That’s how he found himself excusing himself to the bathroom so he could find a place to put on the mask and swing in.

Somehow, he ended up outside looking in on the party from a high enough spot that meant that no one could spot him. He saw Michelle inside, not really interacting with anyone but eating and people-watching and just being there. She didn’t even seem out of place somehow. There was something about her surety and her confidence that made people not overlook her but just not care about what she might be up to. Ned on the other hand looked out of place. He stuck out in the middle of everyone, a wallflower going unnoticed and unbothered. Unlike Michelle, though, Ned cared. He cared a little bit too much.

“God this is stupid,” Peter muttered even as he took off his undershirt which really only left the mask to put on. “What am I doing? Tony’s going to be so mad. Karen, please say you won’t tell him about this.”

“Well, it isn’t putting you in any danger,” Karen responded, “but I have to--”
Just then from somewhere not too far away there was an explosion with blue light and the party and all the people below including Ned and Michelle and even Liz didn’t matter. Peter needed to make sure no one had gotten hurt from whatever that had been. He had an inkling it probably had something to do with those weapons but that didn’t matter. Peter had seen it and he was already in the suit. He needed to check it out. He had to make sure no one was hurt.

He swung down and away from the party and it didn’t take him long to realize that it’d be hard to swing in the suburbs because there were no tall buildings and even the trees were too short. He was about halfway there when Karen displayed a call from Tony seconds before answering it.

“Kiddo, I thought you were going to that party? Why are you in the suit? Everything okay?”

Peter was running. He was getting closer and closer.

“I saw something -- had to go check it out,” Peter said.

“Yeah that won’t do. What’s happening, Pete?”

“There was a blue light kind of like the weapons from the other night,” Peter said and kept running. He was surprising fast. Definitely faster than before anyway.

Tony didn’t say anything for a long moment and then, “did we not already discuss that you’re to stay away from this? Peter, go back to the party. Leave this be, I’ll take care of it.”

“But I’m already so close. Tony, I can hear them. I’m already here. I’ll just -- I’ll watch okay?”

He needed to cut the conversation short if he was going to get closer and not give himself away. “I have to go, Tony. I’ll call back.”

He cut off the call and moved closer. They were under a bridge and it was clearly some sort of weapons deal. These were the guys who had gotten those weapons to the ATM robbers. Peter had gone and found the source with not much of a problem at all. He got as close as he could to be able to see and hear them and then he waited to see what would happen next.

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Kid goes to a party. Kid gets into some trouble. It was a classic, except that the kid was supposed to get a little tipsy or maybe break something on accident or just get into fun shenanigans like singing off-key karaoke or doing a strip dance or kissing the wrong person -- all things that Tony himself had participated in -- but he wasn’t supposed to get into his suit and do exactly what he’d promised not to. Tony did recall one particular birthday when he’d put the Iron Man suit on and made a fool of himself while not even being really drunk but in his defense he had been dying. Peter was dying too -- the kind of death that came from not listening to your father.

Tony got into the newest Iron Man suit -- incidentally one that Peter had helped build -- and it didn’t take him long to pinpoint Peter’s location. Tony didn’t even really care about what may or may not be going on where Peter was. He was far more concerned with getting Peter home and away from those weapons.

“Peter is moving,” Friday announced.

His display showed him a map and sure enough Peter was on the move.

“Connect to his coms, Fri,” Tony said and when he was connected. “What are you doing kid?”
They’re getting away,” Peter said clearly a bit winded. Tony heard some sort of crash.

He was almost there. Actually, he could see him. Peter was being dragged on the road and he himself had attached himself to the van by his webbing. This kid was going to be the death of him.

“Peter, let them go,” Tony said.

“But I can’t -- they’ll get away.”

“That doesn’t matter,” Tony said. He sped up just as someone inside the van actually tried to shoot Peter with one of the alien weapons and Peter still held on. Tony went entirely cold at the sight of his son being shot at. “Damn it, Peter.”

Tony didn’t want Peter to be injured which was the only reason he didn’t shoot out a repulsor blast at the van itself. He couldn’t be sure what a combination of his repulsor and the weapons would do and short of flying to the front of it and stopping it he didn’t know what else to do. Peter wasn’t going to give this up and he was going to get hurt especially since those weapons could really throw a punch from the state that they were leaving the road. He was about to fly over the van and do just that when Peter got thrown off.

“I’m okay,” Peter said complete with a groan and Tony figured that he was telling the truth since Karen didn’t say otherwise, but he still had to stop and check in on him.

“Stay here,” Tony said, “or better yet go back to the party. I’ll take care of this.”

“But, Tony, I can--”

“No,” Tony said. “Or I take you back home myself.”

Even through the mask, Tony could tell that Peter didn’t like that idea. Tony wouldn’t have cared either way.

“But that’s them -- they’re the ones that are selling the weapons,” Peter said, “we can’t let them get away.”

Those weapon dealers would be caught eventually. While Tony would prefer for it to happen sooner rather than later so that Peter could keep himself out of trouble, he also thought that keeping Peter away from them was actually more important.

“Okay,” Peter said. “Okay. I’ll go back to the party.”

Chapter End Notes

I really really enjoyed getting Tony more involved in this moment and it continues on in the next chapter which will be up Saturday.

Thanks for reading.

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Even as Iron Man headed off after the van, Peter knew that he couldn’t not help, so he rushed after him, crossing through people’s yards without a care for who saw him or what destruction he might cause. He finally spotted the van and Iron Man bringing it to a stop and dodging attacks from yet another of the alien weapons. Peter jumped off of a roof to help Tony but instead, something grabbed him -- something that felt like claws. Metal ones at that.

He actually screamed and Tony must have heard it because he abandoned the van and the two guys and flew up after them.

“Karen, what is that? What’s --”

“I told you to stay away,” Tony muttered in the comms before Karen could answer and Peter could tell that he was mad. “God damn it, kid.”

The flying guy whoever he was didn’t seem to have realized that Iron Man was there until that moment and once he did he just panicked and his grip on Peter loosened enough that Peter managed to just wiggle out of his grasp.

Peter hadn’t realized how high they were and then he was falling and Peter didn’t have anything to shoot a web at so he could swing to safety. He flailed, trying to figure out what to do and trying not to panic but he was falling and he was falling fast.

“Karen! Karen, what do I do?”

“Deploying parachute,” Karen said.

Tony cut in. “No need for that. I got him.”

Iron Man was rushing towards him and Peter felt it when he grabbed him out of the air because of how hard he hit Tony’s armor but that didn’t matter because his panic and his fear had subsided. He was fine. Tony had him and he was fine. Peter clutched at the armor.

“Peter, you are so much trouble,” Tony said as he flew them down and they wound up at a park by a lake -- a lake that he had nearly ended up in.

Peter took off his mask and Tony’s faceplate went up and Peter had never seen him like this before -- he didn’t know what to make of the anger and the way that he didn’t even seem to know what to say. It took him a long moment filled with a bit of pacing.

“I asked you to do one thing,” Tony said. “One single thing -- to not go looking for trouble. To not go looking for this specific kind of trouble. And then I told you to go and let me take care of it but you couldn’t do that. Peter, what am I supposed to do if you won’t listen to me?”
“But I just wanted to help,” Peter said.

Tony shook his head. “I get that, I do, but I need you to do what I ask you to do. This could have been fine -- I had those guys but now they all got away and…”

“But that winged guy he’s clearly the one behind all of this. We can -- I can take him down..”

“Take him down, now, is it?” Tony asked and Peter could tell that Tony was mad because he had never heard his voice go like this -- loud and with an edge to it. “What the hell did you think you were doing? What are you even thinking? Have we not gone over this already -- you can forget about the guy with the wings and the weapons. Someone will take care of this.”

“But why--”

“Because I said so,” Tony snapped.

It made Peter nervous somehow to have Tony actually snap at him. Peter’s phone rang as it had multiple times over the course of the night and he knew that it was Ned. Oh god, what had happened back at the party? He had just left Ned there on his own.

“And who is calling you?” Tony asked.

“Ned,” Peter muttered, glancing at his phone and the picture of Ned.

Tony nodded and he seemed to have calmed down a smidge. “Wondering where you are, I bet. Kid, you can’t even go to a simple house party without getting yourself into trouble. I am not -- I’m not happy with you right now. If you want to keep being Spider-Man I need you to listen to me. I’ll -- go back to your party and your friend.”

He was disappointed. That was the look that Tony was giving him -- disappointed and upset and Peter hated it. This was a look that he had met only once before the night he left the hotel room back in Germany. Back then it hadn’t felt like a weight settling on Peter and making him small with that weird churning feeling deep in his abdomen because he’d done something wrong. It hadn’t made him feel ashamed and disappointed in himself and just wrecked.

“I’m--”

“We’ll talk tomorrow, Pete. But it still stands. Stay away from this.”

Then, Tony just closed the faceplate and left and Peter watched him until he disappeared and he didn’t know what came next. His phone rang again and this time Peter picked up.

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He hadn’t wanted to yell at Peter but it had just been so hard not to. Tony hated it. He hated how the whole thing had made him feel especially the anger and the feeling that there was nothing he could actually do. The thing of it was that he had specifically asked Peter to not go looking into the whole alien weapon thing just hours earlier only for him to do exactly that. Tony understood that Peter had just seen the blast and had to go make sure no one was getting hurt, but this wasn’t the kind of thing that Peter needed to involve himself in. He should have been smart enough to just leave it alone especially once Tony was involved. At first it had seemed a little like some random guys trying to sell weapons they’d found or engineered out of alien tech -- probably stolen -- but that last guy that had shown up with mechanical wings meant that this could be bigger than that.

Tony could only imagine what might have happened if he wasn’t there. What if he had gone to that
wedding and been all the way in India when all of this was going down. Sure, Friday would have known to send a suit but that just wouldn’t have been the same and it might not have even been enough. He just had to hope that he hadn’t spooked them because they needed to be caught and put in jail. Hopefully none of them would try and find Spider-Man.

Friday kept him updated on where Peter was according to the gps on his phone. He didn’t head back to the party but instead ended up back home which was good. Tony had to remind himself that Peter really was a good kid. He was responsible -- he was just excitable and too ready to be a hero. Tony just wished that he would slow down some. That he would let himself be a kid for a while longer while he still could.

When he was back at the tower, he was surprised to find Pepper waiting for him once he had gotten out of the suit. It was a little reminiscent of their first night turning on the tower.

“It’s done,” she said with a small smile.

“What’s done?” Tony asked.

“The amendments,” Pepper said. “Friday said you were busy so we couldn’t reach you but there’s been a consensus on everything we proposed. The council seems to be on our side. It helps that we have so many of the original countries that asked for The Accords signing off on the changes. They took a vote today and it’s -- none of us expected this to happen so soon.”

This was -- it was the news that Tony hadn’t expected to get any time soon mostly because they were asking for huge changes.

“That’s amazing,” Tony said.

Pepper nodded. “I couldn’t believe it myself. The UN is usually not this quick but I think with the reinstitution of Shield and all the problems that have been happening with the Inhuman population across the globe they had to do something. There’s protests of course. Some sort of terrorist group that’s been going after Inhumans even before this is getting worse and worse but the new Accords will offer some protection.”

Tony really didn’t know what to say. He had expected negotiations to go on for months and months. Maybe the meeting from the other day really had done it, he wasn’t sure, but this was more than he had expected.

“What about Steve and the others?” Tony asked.

“That’s becoming less of a UN problem and more of a US Government problem,” Pepper said. “Although I imagine that Natasha would be the easiest to get back on the legal side of things. Sam, Wanda, and Steve -- it’s going to be a little more difficult.”

Tony nodded. Where one fight ended another begun.

“I know you miss him,” Pepper said and her hand squeezed his shoulder. “He’ll be with you again soon. This -- getting them home, it’s doable.”

“Yeah,” Tony said, “let’s hope that’s the case.”

He walked towards the kitchen to get a bottle of water and Pepper followed and it was nice to not hear her heels but just the soft padding of her bare feet. It reminded him of before.

“So what happened tonight?” Pepper asked and motioned back towards the landing pad.
“Peter,” Tony said and he hadn’t thought about the whole thing for a few minutes which meant that the anger from earlier had faded some. “He just -- he went after something I told him to leave alone and--” Tony rubbed a hand over his face in frustration “--he was falling and he was so scared, Pep, I could just tell not just because of his vitals but I was there to catch him and I was so glad I was there. But this shouldn’t have happened -- he should have been at home or at a party and--”

Pepper shook her head and Tony could tell that she was amused. “Tony, I think you’re starting to realize how I felt.”

Tony couldn’t help but laugh.

“Yeah, it’s not fun,” Pepper said. “Don’t be too hard on him.”

“But what if I hadn’t been here tonight?” Tony asked and he hung his head.

Pepper sighed. “You were here and you were there for him.”

Tony nodded. The thing was that he knew that one day he wouldn’t be. It would be like the night before all over again. He was stuck in some meeting and Peter was in the middle of an ATM robbery that destroyed an entire deli.

“I won’t always be and that scares me more than anything.”

Pepper didn’t say anything. She hugged him instead and Tony wrapped his arms around her as well. It was familiar to have Pepper there.

“It seems,” Pepper said, “that Peter is more like you than you think. But he’s better equipped and he has you and you’re not going to let anything happen to him.”

Tony nodded but it didn’t make any of the worry fade.

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone enjoyed the chapter. I think the next one will be up Monday or Tuesday. We have some Steve in the next one to look forward to. Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 75

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading/commenting/leaving kudos! You guys are the best.

I actually took a small break from writing for the last week or so in part because writer's block but also because I started reading a bunch of things and that just held my interest for a while and just because I had so many other things going on so I'm finally tonight getting back to really writing and I hope it just flows so wish me luck. Enjoy the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter had known that when he found the part from the alien weapon that he should have immediately called Tony and told him about it, but a part of him wanted to prove Tony wrong and show him that Peter actually could handle something like this. That just wandering around Queens helping with grand theft bicycle wasn’t all that Peter could do. He was also a bit upset about how mad Tony had gotten that Peter just -- he hadn’t wanted to talk to Tony just yet not in fear of getting told off again but because he just didn’t feel like he could.

Ned had told him that it wasn’t worth it for him to return to the party seeing as Flash had naturally turned Spider-Man not showing up and Peter disappearing into some sort of joke. There really was something wrong with Flash and his weird fixation on humiliating Peter. It just wasn’t fair -- none of it was fair. Peter shouldn’t have gone to the party in the first place -- that was what had led to all of this.

He got back home, feeling a bit bad that Ned clearly had a bad night at the party. He felt worse when he got there and May who was sitting out in the living room watching reruns of How I Met Your Mother asked him how he got home because of course she was supposed to pick them up.

“Happy drove us,” Peter had answered.

May nodded and didn’t seem to question it. “Have a good night?”

“I guess,” Peter said. He really hadn’t.

She gave him a look but didn’t pry which meant that May understood when he didn’t want to talk about something. He really loved that about May.

“I’m sorry it wasn’t everything you wanted it to be, hon,” she said and smiled at him. “There will be other parties.”

“Probably not,” Peter said.

May grinned but shook her head. “You can’t live life behind a book.”

“Night, May,” Peter said and heard her respond in kind as he headed into his bedroom and pulled out his phone to text Ned.

Peter: Ned, I am so sorry. I forgot May was going to be our ride? Are you going to get home
alright?

Ned: No worries. Michelle doesn’t live too far from me and her mom came to pick us up.

Peter: Oh. Okay. That’s good.

Ned: She definitely noticed you disappeared, btw. You know how she is. So she’s kind of asking questions.

Peter: Tell her nothing.

Peter: I have something to show you tomorrow about what happened tonight.

Ned: What did happen?

Peter: Remember those weapons I was telling you about? I have a piece of one. Might be the powersource. I don’t know. Want to try and figure it out tomorrow?

Peter knew that getting Ned to help him with something like this would take the sting of everything that happened that night away. And either way, Peter figured that Ned would probably be a big help in figuring out how having this might help Peter prove to Tony that he could be more than just a neighborhood Spider-Man. That he was Avengers material even.

He didn’t like that he felt like he needed to defy Tony, but he just hated that Tony seemed to think that Peter wasn’t capable when Peter had had them -- he had almost caught them. If he had just a little more time he could probably take even that guy with the wings down and then maybe Tony wouldn’t baby him as much.

---

Steve heard about it from Natasha. Tony and the rest had done it -- they had changed The Accords. Everything wouldn’t be in effect right away but the UN seemed to approve of the changes but even better so did most of the countries that had become involved in The Accords. It was one step closer to being with Tony and it was the only thing that Steve wanted.

All he drew and sketched these days was Tony. Tony’s eyes in the morning when he was still waking up and he was looking at Steve like he was surprised to see him there. Tony asleep, curled up under just a sheet. Tony with his arms crossed over his chest as he looked out of a window. Tony’s lips slightly turned up in the moment before he smirked. Tony in his lab with the bots. Tony’s hands while he worked.

“Would you give it up, do the house arrest if that’s what they wanted you to do?” Natasha asked after she told him. “Like Clint and Scott did?”

Steve didn’t know. Would house arrest be better than the rundown hotels and the constant hiding? When it came to comfort probably. When it came to his sanity -- well, he would have Tony wouldn’t he? The only thing was -- would Tony be enough? Or would Steve get bored of it and break the rules again? If there was reason enough he just might.

“I don’t know,” he said.

Natasha nodded. “Yeah. We’re not the sit still kind.”

Except that maybe he could be if it meant being with Tony. They had often spoken about the dream -- the whole settling down somewhere and just being together. Maybe it meant that Steve had to do it
first at least for the year or two or more that he wouldn’t be able to leave the tower or wherever Tony was. It would be sacrifice enough -- punishment enough for everything he’d put them through. They would be together which was what mattered more than anything.

“I think it’s doable,” Steve said at last.

“And when it comes down to it I doubt they’d hold it against you if you had to leave the house to save the world,” Natasha said.

Steve laughed. He couldn’t help it because it just sounded so ridiculous and yet Natasha made an excellent point. Hadn’t they said always that whenever the next big threat came that it wouldn’t matter -- they would be there? Then this didn’t have to be much different. Plus, knowing Tony he would figure out a way to make it work and make it easier.

“Fury thinks that’s the best case scenario -- house arrest like Clint and Scott at least for a time. The Accords changing makes a difference. You’d have to sign them too.”

“Whatever is on the table now, I trust it,” Steve said. What he really meant was that he trusted Tony.

Natasha nodded and Steve knew better than to try and guess at what she was thinking. Instead he turned back to the newest Tony drawing. There were so many and the last thing Steve wanted to do was lose even one of them. He wanted to give them all to Tony once it was all over -- show him just how much time Steve had spent thinking about him.

When Tony finally did call with the news, Steve let him tell him even though he already knew and he listened to Tony’s excitement.

“I miss you so much,” Tony said eventually. “I just hope this means we can bring you all home soon.”

“Me too,” Steve said. “How’s everything?”

Tony let out a laugh. “Peter is something else, Steve. Doesn’t seem to know how to stay out of trouble.”

“Kind of sounds like someone I know,” Steve returned. “I can’t wait until I can meet him.”

“He’s a big fan,” Tony said. “I bet he’ll be star struck. Won’t know what to do.”

Steve loved when Tony got to talking about Peter because he was just so soft and happy and just absolutely proud and it was all over his voice and it made Steve happy to know that even though they were apart that Tony had Peter and that Peter made him happy.

“What did he do?”

“Went after something I told him not to. I just want him to be a kid, you know. He’s trying to grow up so fast when all I want is to turn back the clock. Hopefully he’ll leave this alone after last night.”

“Go easy on him, Tony, you know all he wants to do is help. He’s -- you said he’s really happy and excited to be a hero.”

Tony sighed. “He doesn’t know what that means yet.”

“He probably doesn’t but that’s why you have to help him out. And why you can’t let your worry take over.”
The topic changed back to The Accords, then, going over all the changes that had been decided in the end. Most of them sounded familiar enough from when Tony had met with T’Challa. There was nothing truly glaring for Steve to disagree with. It wouldn’t matter anyway because he missed Tony too much to not sign the new version and he knew that would be a step towards going home.

“How are the others feeling about it?” Tony asked.

“I think Natasha thinks this is a good thing. Sam agrees with me. I think he misses being back home too. Wanda wants to be with Vision. They all want to go home.”

“Good. Good. We’ll be trying our best.”

Steve nodded even as he responded. “I know you will.”

When the phone call ended, Steve turned back to his drawing. He wasn’t sure how much longer they were going to be on the run -- moving from place to place and being overly careful-- but he hoped that it would end soon. His hair had grown longer than he’d ever kept it but it made him less recognizable when he did go out in regular clothing. He’d gotten used to his beard, too, and yet he couldn’t wait for the day when he could go back to looking like himself again.

Chapter End Notes

This one was a bit filler, I think, but also kind of necessary. Next up we have more Peter and Tony and also a special guest that none of you are going to guess but who snuck up on me entirely. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 76

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading.

This chapter is a little late. I've been meaning to post it for three days now and just not finding the time to do it. But at long last. I also have a lot note about timing within the story at the end of the chapter. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tracking the weapons dealers had only become an idea for him once he remembered that he’d seen Tony add tracking devices to the suit for his use one of the many times that he’d seen Tony fix or add on to the suit. The last upgrade had brought along a little spider drone that Karen could control easily.

So with all his technology at hand, it was easy enough to find a tracker and put it on them and then he just waited. He and Ned waited and Peter had every intention of sharing the information with Tony once it became anything. But for most of the afternoon into the night the tracker didn’t offer much of anything. Ned even slept over even though he and the rest of the decathlon team were leaving for Washington DC the next day.

Then, the tracker finally had something for them and Peter realized that he might have to join the decathlon team after all, seeing as the weapon dealers would be in the area and it was the only way that Peter would get to go after them.

Peter had excused himself from seeing Tony by claiming he had to be at school on Saturday and Tony had believed it since it technically wasn’t a lie and he and Ned had gone to school to try and figure out the glowy thing and then he had gotten busy with the tracker and Ned and he forgot that he’d promised to call. He knew that Tony wanted to talk to him about the whole thing from the night of the party and a part of Peter just wanted to avoid that. It was easier that way. It was also why he hadn’t told him about the weapon or how he and Ned were tracking the weapon dealers because it would have meant talking about everything else.

So it wasn’t until he was in the bus with the decathlon team and Flash was shooting him glares while Liz quizzed them that his phone started to ring and when Peter looked down he wasn’t too surprised that it was Tony calling.

Peter excused himself and answered and hoped that no one was listening in.

“Hi,” Peter said.

“You’re leaving New York,” Tony said. “What is that about, kid?”

At least he didn’t seem mad just cautious and curious somehow.

“It’s for school. You know I’m on the decathlon team. We have nationals.” He moved towards the back of the bus, away from anyone that might be listening. It was lucky that most people were sitting towards the front because they were getting a practice in.
Some of them were looking at him curiously including Michelle and Ned. Even Liz seemed to get distracted by him walking away from the group.

“Oh,” Tony said. “I don’t think you — you didn’t mention that.”

Peter gulped. He hadn’t told him or May that he had decided to quit the team. He sat down and looked out the window.

“I was going to quit,” Peter admitted. “Sort of changed my mind last minute. It was just getting a bit hard to keep up with this and — and the internship.”

Tony coughed. “Right, the internship. Well, I’m glad you’re going. This is what I’m talking about when I’m telling you to be a kid. These are the things you’re going to regret not doing when you’re older. I — tell you what, kiddo, I think I can have Pepper get me out of a meeting. When’s the competition?”

Oh god, Tony wanted to come. He wanted to be there for the competition and Peter suddenly felt horrible. Here he was going against his wishes when it came to the weapons and he was keeping information from Tony and yet Tony wanted to show up for the decathlon competition and it was just so much more than Peter could have expected. And it also meant he couldn’t tell him what he’d done or what he’d found because he could just picture the disappointed look in Tony’s eyes and he didn’t want to see that.

“Tomorrow,” Peter said. “In the morning.”

“Friday can get me all the information,” Tony said. “Next time let me know if you have a trip and plan on leaving the city. Friday gave me a scare when she told me. I thought maybe that winged guy got a hold of you.”

Peter gulped. “Nope, just a school trip.”

“Good luck, kid, and have some fun, will you? And I’ll see you in DC.”

He hung up before Peter could respond so Peter just walked back to Ned and sighed.

“What happened?”

“It was Mr. Stark. He’s tracking me or maybe the suit. Anyway, he just wanted to check in.”

Ned gave him an appraising look and it made Peter remember that he still hadn’t told Ned that Tony was his father. It was easier not to in the long run and yet maybe it would be better if he could also have someone to talk to about it that wasn’t May. After all, despite how things had gone where Spider-Man was concerned, Ned was a good listener.

“He worries about you,” Ned said.

“Yeah,” Peter said and left it at that.

—

Tony didn’t know if Peter had just not expected for Tony to be interested in his decathlon competition or if he had forgotten to mention it entirely. It was also possible he had wanted to tell him and then things had gotten in the way like Tony getting upset at him over not listening to him. After all, he knew that Peter was avoiding him. He’d made up some excuse about needing to go to school on Saturday and then forgotten to call him afterwards. It had worried Tony, and that worry
had only grown once Friday notified him that Peter was leaving New York.

Had he had too much of a reaction? Didn’t Peter get that Tony’s entire world had flashed before his eyes in the moment that he saw Peter taken up higher and higher. How Peter’s vitals had been in display for him and he knew Peter’s heart was beating faster than ever because he was truly and deeply afraid? But of course not, Peter didn’t know that Tony had rushed to catch him once he was falling and that the entire time that Friday and Karen had been working to be sure that Peter was actually alright, Tony had been freaking out internally because he just didn’t know what else might have been done to his son in the minutes that he’d been up in the air.

Maybe at first it had been easier to just let things happen as they would and reel himself back from feeling too much at Peter so as to not spook him. Maybe he had held back too much and it meant that Peter didn’t fully understand that Tony not only just cared — he loved him. It was just that things were going well with Peter without adding all of that into it so soon, but Tony couldn’t help but wonder if that wasn’t part of the problem.

Howard had never once told Tony that he loved him — never directly at least because there had to have been a time when he showed it somehow or maybe not because it was Howard and his priorities had been skewed at best. Tony couldn’t be like that. He couldn’t be anything like Howard when it came to Peter. He was going to start by showing up at this academic decathlon competition. One day he might actually say those words to him too.

Pepper wasn’t thrilled with him when he told her he wouldn’t be at the board meeting. A mention of Peter made that a little better.

He left for Washington DC around 3am after spending most of the night getting some work done on a few new precautionary devices now that The Avengers were down to him, Rhodey, and Vision. Even though he had hope that the others would return soon there was returning to the states and returning to the team and the second was going to take a while. Not that it would matter if there was ever a real threat because then it was all hands on deck — Tony still thought that there would be a new threat in their horizon. There was too much out there in the universe for there not to be some sort of threat.

The destruction that Hydra’s coming out had brought to Washington was still so clear and the reconstruction still ongoing but it was going quicker now. It was still such a show of the way that they had screwed up — that The Avengers brought destruction even while they were trying to save everyone. It was also — this was what had started everything in a way. The fall of Shield and subsequently the reveal of who The Winter Soldier was. Two things that would haunt Steve and later Tony.

Not wanting to bother Peter because he was probably still asleep, Tony didn’t call when he arrived. Instead, he went straight to a dinner for breakfast. Not just because Tony needed to get some coffee but because he was making the most of the trip and getting in a meeting. Maria had set it up for him when Tony mentioned wanting to know more about the inhuman issue that the world was facing. The new director of Shield had agreed to meet him and Tony was excited to see what the man was about. They called him The Patriot. He was like some Captain America fanboy that was trying to actually be Captain America. Apparently the guy was an inhuman which made him even more interesting to Tony even if he seemed to keep wanting the media to talk about him. He’d signed The Accords of course, but there were so many other inhumans that hadn’t and that were hiding and Tony wanted to be sure that they were reaching out to those people and letting them know that changes had taken place.

The new Shield headquarters were sort of a mystery to everyone for good reason but they still had an
office in Washington and yet Tony wasn’t surprised that their meeting was happening at a dinner. Tony arrived first to just a handful of people quietly eating or drinking their morning coffee. He was seated at a booth and it was just a matter of time before someone slid into the seat across from him and Tony actually gasped because this wasn’t The Patriot. This wasn’t Agent Mace.

“Wait, wait, wait — aren’t you supposed to be dead?” Tony said. And then after Coulson had taken off his sunglasses. “And where’s the other guy? Agent Mace. He calls himself The Patriot?”

Coulson just smirked a little in that odd way of his that said he was just a regular suit and wasn’t going to be sharing any secrets. It left Tony feeling like he’d been betrayed all over again and yet clearly it was a secret from the whole world if someone else was the head of Shield when it was actually Agent Phil Coulson.

“So,” Tony said. “I take it that our one eyed friend knows about this.”

Coulson tipped his head and Tony nodded. Yup. Secrets upon secrets with that one. Tony just didn’t know if he wanted to actually find out if Coulson had been dead at all or if it had been Fury using it to band the Avengers together.

“And I bet he’s already filled you in then?” Tony asked.

“As much as he’s been able to. We’re heavily involved with the US Government now due to The Accords. The changes will make a difference of course.”

“In finding that girl,” Tony said.

“In part,” Coulson said. “Daisy is -- she’s not just upset about The Accords. And actually, Mace ended up a bit busy today. Shield isn’t what it used to be.”

“Hmm, neither are The Avengers,” Tony said. “But we can only hope that things will get back to a relative normal soon.”

It was good that it was Coulson he was dealing with. It meant that Tony didn’t have to try and get some sort of agreement out of someone that might want to just get him to stop bothering him. It was also nice to have a familiar face. One he could trust, even.

“I’m not really in charge,” Coulson said towards the end of their breakfast.

“Somehow, I don’t believe you. Eye-patch wouldn’t have left just anyone with rebuilding Shield. Although I don’t exactly know what he’s working on now.”

Coulson nodded. “Neither do I.”

He didn’t ask about how it was done or why and Coulson didn’t offer an answer but Tony suspected that whatever it was it wasn’t something that should be replicated. But one thing that Tony was sure of was that Coulson had died. He had seen the body himself in the moments after it happened and sure he hadn’t seen it again -- even at the funeral -- but Tony supposed that Fury had done something to get him away and then bring him to life again.

Chapter End Notes

So I know Homecoming has a bunch of timing issues the biggest one being the 8 years
later thing but that's not even an issue here obviously. The true issue came to me when I realized that they were going to their academic decathlon finals in September/October which is ridiculous because most high school clubs/oragnizations base their competition schedule around the school year or at least a semester and finals would never be at the start of the school year. A big competition sure...but not the finals? So I decided to just stick to the movie timeline on that as annoying as I found it. I think the real issue comes from the need to use the title Homecoming which equates to Spider-Man coming home to Marvel but also the High School Homecoming Dance which does take place in September/October as opposed to something like a Prom which is towards the end of the year.

My next issue came when I realized that everything happened really really quickly. At least this part of it. So this is the day to day timeline for anyone that's interested in things like this because this is stuff that I seriously do think about.

Thursday: Peter deals with the atm robbery - Ned finds out about Spider-Man
Friday: Liz' party and all that comes with that
Saturday: Peter and Ned deal with the glowy thing and end up back at school (this one bothered me because the movie makes it seem like it's a regular school day)
Sunday: the decathlon team leaves for Washington DC and will sleep the night for the competition the next morning
Monday: decathlon competition

So yeah, best I could do with the material but also it's important that things happen so quickly because this explains how little time Peter has to actually come to a good decision and say tell Tony about the weapon part he found.

Hope everyone enjoyed the chapter. Not entirely sure when the next chapter will be up definitely expect it before Thursday.

thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

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Chapter 77

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading and for sticking with this fic for so long. You guys are the best.

Time has seriously been getting away from me lately. I've been on my computer collectively for about three hours over the past week. It's because I'm adjusting to a new work schedule and also because I have a bunch of other projects that I'm working on. I managed to get this chapter edited on my phone about an hour ago to post tonight but at last it is here. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Karen was surprisingly easy to get around when it came to hacking into the suit and taking the tracker out. Peter had expected for the AI to put up more of a fuss from Peter’s phone or to just act up within the suit itself but there had been nothing. She just let him and Ned do it. It worried Peter a little because that meant that anyone could probably mess with the suit if they got into it.

“There’s also this thing called the training wheels protocol,” Ned said as he looked through the coding.

“He would call it that,” Peter said and after a moment. “Can you disable it? I think that’s the thing that is keeping all the other suit programming from working completely.”

Peter knew that it was probably a bad idea but if he had the full use of the suit maybe things would be easier. He could deal with the weapons dealers and the winged guy and just prove to Tony that he could do more.

“Is that a good idea? Peter, this is clearly like this for a reason.”

“Come on. I don’t need training wheels. He just keeps treating me like a kid -- like the other night if he had just...anyway, just--”

“Peter, you are a kid,” Ned said, glancing up from the laptop.

Peter got up from the bed and he groaned. “Yeah, but I can handle it. I can stop a bus with my bare hands, Ned. I can do this, Ned. Do it.”

Peter could have probably figured out how to do it himself but Ned just had a knack for coding and he was faster than Peter could hope to be.

“Keep the glowy thing safe, okay,” Peter said after Ned had finished and Peter had put on the suit under his regular clothes.

“Yeah, okay. Be safe.”

Afterwards, leaving the hotel was a breeze even after running into Liz. Watching them all at the pool before leaving had been difficult -- mostly because it would have been easy to just forget about the whole alien weapon thing and join the others. He could let Tony take care of it in his own way and
put the suit back to normal before Tony noticed. But then, Peter had to think about the thing sitting in the hotel room and what the dealers might be doing and it was his duty to go after them. It wasn’t something he could forget or turn his back on.

The suit was different. Karen was different.

Peter had been dealing with Karen for a while now and he loved her. Loved the way that Karen spoke to him and set him reminders for school and just gave her opinion and listened to him. But having the whole suit with everything open to use made her a little more free somehow or maybe Peter was just trying to notice a change where there wasn’t one.

At the gas station, Peter was overwhelmed by all of it. The options before him that he’d never seen like Instant Kill Mode. Why would Tony even include that? It was crazy. And then there were all the web shooter combinations which hadn’t been that complicated or numerous the last time Peter checked. Maybe it had all been a huge mistake to hack into the suit.

By the end of it, he ended up stuck inside a DODC facility vault which was just his luck. The place was so secure that Karen couldn’t even connect to the Stark Servers so it was a good thing that she was a program inside of the suit and not reliant on the servers or the satellites. That did mean that he couldn’t access her on his phone. Actually his whole phone had no service whatsoever.

“Karen, what are we going to do?”

“I don’t know, Peter, but Mr. Stark will be at the competition tomorrow.”

Peter groaned. He’d actually sort of forgotten about that. He knew that Tony hadn’t realized what Peter was up to due to the lack of tracker and because Karen wasn’t required to let Friday and Tony know that he was using the suit, but if Peter didn’t make it back on time then he would know something was up and that just — well it wouldn’t end the way that Peter wanted it to. Especially after the other day. Maybe he’d made a mistake in not telling Tony anything.

He tried to work on getting more familiar with the new aspects of the suit but even that didn’t really take him too long. All the web shooter combinations turned out to be pretty useful and the refresher course on that made Peter really appreciate the thought and work that Tony had put into it. So then, he spent some time talking to Karen.

Peter always talked to Karen when he was out on patrol but it was always about the patrol and school but having nothing else to do he started telling her about Liz and decathlon and the huge mess that he was going to be in if he didn’t get back on time.

Karen listened and responded and Peter knew that it was just a program but she was nice and trying to help and Peter felt like he could tell her anything. Eventually they got onto the topic of Tony because short of talking to May about it, there wasn’t anyone else he could discuss it with.

“I like him a lot,” Peter said. “He’s been great, you know, and not exactly what I expected him to be like. Maybe more eccentric.”

Karen didn’t respond and let him continue on. Peter was on a hammock that he’d created with the web. It was comfortable to lay on. He imagined that in another circumstance he might have been able to sleep on it.

“And I don’t know, Karen, sometimes it feels like he’s acting like — I guess a father. He says things and does things that remind me of Ben and he was sort of like a father figured for me and yet other times it feels like I really am his intern or a friend -- although I guess not so much that one. I don’t
know. And I know he cares about people a lot. That’s obvious. So I just have to be one more person that Tony Stark cares about. Which is great. It’s great to be that -- I just, I don’t know, I’m related to him so maybe -- but we didn’t know each other even if he--”

“You’re overthinking this, Peter,” Karen said, interrupting him. “Maybe you should tell him how you feel. You are his son, Peter.”

“Biologically,” Peter said and he sat up.

“Exactly. You are his son. You should call him dad,” Karen said. “It’s what you really want.”

Peter almost fell out of the hammock because he moved so quickly and he shook his head. “I -- no, no, I couldn’t. He wouldn’t want me to--”

“I think he would,” Karen said.

“You don’t know that, Karen,” Peter said. “That’s as bad an idea as telling Liz that I like her or that I’m Spider-Man.”

“I think telling the truth is better than keeping things in -- you’ll feel better if you just speak to them about how you’re feeling.”

Peter sighed. “I don’t know, Karen. Anyway, must have been a while we’ve been in here now. How long have I been in here, Karen?”

“Thirty Seven minutes.”

It was going to be a long night. He needed to figure out a way to get out.

---

There were actually a lot of people there for the decathlon competition. Tony somehow hadn’t expected that but then he supposed that some people took the whole thing seriously and then there were proud parents and family members. Tony was a little surprised that May wasn’t there, but then maybe she hadn’t had an option. Tony wished he’d checked in with her on it.

He arrived a little bit on the late side so that no one would notice him and he entered as the competition was beginning. It was reminiscent of the time he and Steve had snuck into Peter’s middle school graduation down to even the baseball cap and glasses. The trick with a good disguise was to blend in but also to be confident enough in it and not act suspicious. Everyone was so busy and concerned with the competition and whoever they had come to see that no one actually paid enough attention to notice him. Even if they did -- who would believe that Tony Stark was at a high school decathlon competition. No one would be looking for him at one and if they did happen to realize he was there, no one actually approached him. Which was good. The attention wouldn’t be drawn away from the kids and their competition.

He sat towards the back of the room and watched as the teams came out to take their seats. The schools were announced and a few seconds went by as everyone sat down and Tony recognized Peter’s friend up there but Peter hadn’t come out with them. There was no sign of Peter. Was Peter somehow not going to be competing? Was there a miscommunication?

Tony tapped on his glasses and whispered to Friday. “Where is Peter right now?”

Into his ear piece, Friday said, “tracking his phone now.”
The glasses brought up a map and it didn’t take long for Friday to find him. Peter was in Washington DC. He just wasn’t anywhere near the competition.

"Is he in the suit?" Tony asked, a little confused because he should have been alerted if Peter got in the suit and there hadn’t been an alert. Tony wouldn’t have been surprised if Peter had gone off as Spider-Man considering what happened in Germany but he couldn’t imagine that there would be a good reason for him to actually miss the competition entirely.

His teachers and classmates were depending on him and it was entirely surprising that no one was freaking out more about Peter not being there or had his friend covered for him with some silly lie?

"I can’t tell," Friday said. "I don’t know if the suit is online right now."

Which meant that he either was in the suit and somehow Tony hadn’t been alerted or that Peter had gone off without the suit. He didn’t know what could be worse.

Tony got up without trying to be a distraction and left the room quickly. He walked outside before calling Peter who picked up after a few rings.

"Hi," Tony said and he tried to keep calm. "So where are you? I’m here at your competition and lo and behold you are not here. What gives?"

"I -- um, I got caught up with something," Peter said and Tony could tell that he sounded nervous. "But I have to--"

"Oh, no you don’t. Nope," Tony said and he was pacing. "There is nothing else that can matter more right now. You better be headed back as we speak. I can’t believe you, Peter, and I will not get you out of any trouble that you get into at school for this. Nor with May. I took the time out of an important meeting to come to Washington to see your competition only to sit in that room and realize that oh the kid I came here for isn’t even there. What could have possibly been more important than this?"

"Well, I tried to explain but you just said it didn’t matter," Peter said and he sounded both irritated and tired all at once. "So I guess it doesn’t. I’ll -- you can go back to New York since I’m missing the competition and I hate to take up more of your time."

Without another beat, Peter hung up on him. Tony felt like the click of the phone call ending had been a slap. He felt horrible. Peter had sounded so defeated and upset by the end of the call and he was solely to blame. He just -- he was worried. This was not how he had expected the day to go. No, Tony had planned to show up and then hopefully steal Peter away for a congratulatory lunch or something because he was sure that Peter and his team would win. Instead, Peter had disappeared for some reason and whatever that reason was, Tony hadn’t even let him explain because he was upset about Peter not being around in the first place. Maybe he wasn’t entirely cut out for doing this.

Chapter End Notes

I really love this and next chapter and particularly my additions to the Karen and Peter convo. Next one should be up on Saturday (Sunday at the latest). Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that’s interested.
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Chapter 78

Thank you so much to everyone reading!

I wanted to have this one out yesterday but I didn't realize how long this chapter got after I edited it the first time and it might have gotten even longer now during this second edit (which made it take longer to edit). And there was no good place to actually cut the chapter in half so I'm just posting the whole 3k words. Enjoy.

He really had screwed it all up. Peter just hadn’t expected that he wasn’t going to get back to the hotel in time. Getting out of the vault had taken forever. The security was just top notch and Peter had to suspect that since Tony had had a part in forming the DODC that he had probably had a part in making their vaults so secure as well.

But finding out the the glowy thing could actually act as some sort of bomb changed everything. Peter had no idea why he hadn’t asked Karen about it before. He had just been so focused on figuring out how to stop the weapon dealers and the tracking that it hadn’t seemed that important to ask Karen. Plus, Peter had figured that since it was alien tech that Karen wouldn’t know what it was either.

Ned didn’t answer any of his calls once Peter finally did get out after hours and hours of trying to figure out the code to bypass the door. Before Ned could answer any of his calls, Tony called. Peter should have expected it really considering that Tony was there for the competition. The whole conversation was a mess from start to finish. The worst part about it being that he could tell that he had disappointed Tony but also gone and wasted his time too. Peter hadn’t even gotten to try to explain anything or get Tony to do something about the glowy thing. Peter just hoped it wouldn’t go unstable.

When he finally did make it back and he finally got through to Ned, it felt like he was talking to himself because Ned felt a great need to just blather on about decathlon as if that mattered in comparison to anything Peter might need to say. Why couldn’t he just listen to Peter for once? But no --

Then, Liz was on the phone and she was half-concerned half-upset with him and Peter really couldn’t win could he? Why did no one want to take just a few seconds to hear what he had to say? And then the call was dropped and Peter felt even more eager to get there.

By the time that he finally did make it to The Washington Monument it was to everything falling apart. The bomb exploded.

Peter ran into Michelle on his way. For some reason she wasn’t inside the building with everyone else and yet she seemed genuinely scared about what was happening. Most people were freaking out left and right and Peter just kept running and he jumped up and started to climb.
Tony hadn’t returned to the competition after the phone call. Instead, he headed to the car and he sat there for a while trying to figure out what his next step was. He wasn’t going to leave Washington. No, he needed to see Peter and speak to him about everything. Tony just didn’t know what he was supposed to say or how he was supposed to handle the whole thing. It was -- this was new territory.

“See, these are the things Pepper is good at,” Tony said out loud to himself and Friday.

He didn’t know how much time had passed before he noticed people coming out from the competition which signaled that it was actually over. Peter’s classmates seemed to be going sightseeing from the looks of the bus they got into. Peter should have been with them.

“Boss, there’s something happening,” Friday said fifteen minutes later.

“What’s going on, Fri?”

“Some kind of explosion, boss,” Friday said. Then, after a beat, “Spider-Man is on the scene.”

“Of course he is,” Tony said darkly. Because Spider-Man showing up in Washington DC when usually he only operated out of Queens made all the sense in the world. It wasn’t suspicious at all to anyone keeping tabs on him.

The whole keeping his nose clean and keeping things low-key had apparently flown out the window at some point. Naturally, Tony hadn’t thought to bring the Iron Man suit because this was supposed to be a normal day for him. He was supposed to be like all the other parents just going out of town to see their kid compete. With Peter it seemed like normal would never be achievable. Tony needed to get used to it. He needed to plan for it.

Friday took control of the car and drove which meant that Tony had time to get himself together. He got to The Washington Monument in record time. When he arrived, police was already outside the building along with other first responders. Peter was reaching the top of the Washington Monument and Tony’s breath caught in his throat when he saw him.

“Sir, you should remember to breathe,” Friday said.

Tony coughed.

“Should I initiate a call with Peter?”

“No. No. Might distract him.”

Peter was trying to get into the building from what Tony could tell. He was hindered by the helicopter which was enough of a distraction without adding Tony into that mix.

“Who’s in charge of the helicopter?” Tony asked. “We need them to back down. They’re not going to be the reason my kid gets hurt.”

Friday got him the information and gave him direct contact and Tony kept his eyes trained on Peter as he spoke to someone on the phone.

“This is Tony Stark and it is my intern trying to rescue the people inside that building and I want that helicopter to back off—”

Peter suddenly jumped and Tony could make out what was happening only because of his glasses and the zoom-in that he’d done and he watched as Peter broke through a window and made it inside. Tony let out a breath and he hung up. This kid was going to be the death of him.
By the end of it, after he’d actually managed to save everyone, Peter just felt guilt. He felt like he couldn’t do anything right. Things just kept going wrong and he was to blame. He’d gotten lucky and no one had gotten hurt -- although they had come pretty close. Peter had barely managed to rescue Liz.

Peter had been quick to throw out a web and catch himself before he really fell the whole way down the elevator shaft. Then, he’d managed to find a way out and it seemed like as soon as his feet were on solid ground, that Tony was on the phone.

“Karen’s going to bring you to where I am, kid,” Tony said. “Get out of that suit though. Don’t bring any more attention to yourself, eh.”

“Okay,” Peter said because there was nothing else to say and he already felt bad enough.

Peter changed in a maintenance closet and he was lucky that he did have his regular clothes on him. Then, he followed the GPS map that Karen had for him on his phone. The entire walk, Peter was preparing himself for a lecture or a telling off -- something that he wasn’t going to like anyway. He couldn’t imagine that Tony would have anything else to offer to the situation and Peter found that he wouldn’t blame him. It was just that all of this was his fault. The bomb being in the monument and going off was his fault not to mention him getting stuck in the DODC vault and just everything that had happened the night before. Why did he just keep messing up so much? This was why Tony didn’t believe he could handle things like this in the first place and Maybe he was right.

Outside of the monument it was chaos. The police were there and reporters and crowds of people seemed to be just standing around. Peter walked around everyone, hoodie up. He followed the GPS instructions not too far and he spotted Tony as he approached. He was leaning against his car. His arms were crossed and he was staring at his phone and frowning. He looked up when Peter approached and before Peter had even gotten within two feet of him, Tony moved towards him and pulled him into a tight hug.

It was a hug that Peter hadn’t realized that he needed and even less wanted. He fell into it and his arms wrapped around Tony and Tony just pulled him closer and tighter and Peter felt better -- he wasn’t freaking out as much anymore.

“I’m so so proud of you, Peter,” Tony whispered after a moment and his voice was full of emotion and Peter hadn’t expected him to say that. “I was worried. But you did good.”

Peter had pressed his face into Tony’s shoulder and Tony lifted one of his hands and his fingers carded through Peter’s hair gently. It felt amazing -- comforting. Like nothing was going to go wrong because Tony was there and he was -- he wasn’t upset at him. It was everything and more and it reminded him so much of hugging Ben after a nightmare when he was a little kid. Maybe it felt better than that and it lasted a while with neither of them saying anything because Peter didn’t want to ruin it and he didn’t know what to say.

“You’re okay, Pete,” Tony said eventually. “I was watching. It was -- you did so good, kid. Come on, we have to get out of the street.”

He led Peter to the car and Tony actually opened the passenger door for him before going around and getting into the driver’s seat. He didn’t turn the car on though and instead he faced Peter.

“So,” Tony said, “want to tell me what happened?”
“I -- I was following a lead.”

“Hmm,” Tony said. “I gathered that.”

Peter felt guilty. After the way that Tony was reacting and the way that he had clearly been worrying about Peter it just made everything he had done just so much worse.

“I, um, the other night I found a piece of the weapon,” Peter admitted. “It was left behind, I guess, but anyway I picked it up.”

Tony wasn’t visibly upset. He just sort of stared at Peter for a long time and then he let out a breath. “Okay,” he said. “Go on.”

“Ned had it on him. It went through an x-ray machine.”

“Which made it unstable and made it blow up,” Tony said and he was still eerily calm. Peter could only imagine the way that May would have reacted to this if she had been the one in the car with him. There would have been yelling and crying and May freaking out and not knowing what to do.

“I didn’t mean for any of this to happen,” Peter said. “I just -- it was there and I thought maybe I could find a way to help and figure out who the winged guy is. I wanted to figure out what it was and then I had a way to track them and I didn’t -- I wasn’t looking for trouble--”

Tony sighed and Peter could tell that he was trying to figure out what to say so Peter looked away out to the street where few cars drove by.

“We’ve discussed this a few times now, kid,” Tony said and Peter’s attention went back to him. “I realize now that you really are more like me than I expected. This reckless nature of yours -- it’s dangerous and I know it comes from a good place but, Peter, you aren’t thinking things through. You’re just doing what you think is right and it’s dangerous and -- anyway, I hope today has made you a little more aware of what we’re facing here.”

Peter almost couldn’t look at him. It would have almost been better if Tony was yelling and not taking this oddly calm way. Tony just didn’t seem all that angry but Peter could tell that there was disappointment mixed in the way he looked at Peter and it was hard to face that.

“Those weapons -- they’re made from Chitauri tech,” Tony continued. “There is so much about them that we just cannot know. But even if we did know it we don’t know what they have done to them.”

“I didn’t think—“

Tony let out a laugh. “You don’t say,” Tony said and then sighed. “The point is, kiddo, that the last thing I want is for you to get hurt. And this — what happened today could have been catastrophic. I saw you Peter -- and as well as you did today things could have ended very badly. If it wasn’t you -- it could have been one of your friends. Things like this — the things we cause because we’re trying to do good it’s the whole point of The Accords. Accountability is important but not as important to me as your life.”

The worst part about it was that Tony was right and Peter had screwed up. Tony had been right all along. Peter really was in over his head when it came to all of this.

Peter should have told Tony about the glowy thing when he first came upon it and handed it over so Tony could look into it. Maybe Tony would have let him help with that. Or maybe not.

It became obvious though that Tony apparently hadn’t even realized that Peter and Ned had hacked
into the suit because he didn’t bring it up and as guilty as Peter felt over it he just couldn’t make himself tell him about that. He and Ned would just have to reverse it before Tony noticed and that would be that. He just didn’t want to disappoint Tony even further.

“Peter,” Tony continued. “I just want you to be careful and maybe my approach in asking you to stay away from this altogether wasn’t exactly the best, but if you could just exercise some modicum of thought before just jumping into things and keeping secrets that will have to be enough for me for now. You have to keep me in the loop, kid. All I want is to be able to help you. Well, I’d rather you not be in danger at all if you could help it but that’s not going to happen.”

Peter felt somehow even guiltier about the suit. He was on the brink of saying something except that he knew that Tony would actually be angry then. And not just that — it felt like it was too late to bring it up. He and Ned were just going to have to put it back to how it used to be and hope that Tony just never realized.

“I’m sorry,” Peter said. “I just wanted—”

“I know,” Tony said and he actually reached over and ruffled his hair but he smiled at Peter and things were going to be okay.

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Tony ended up having to drop Peter off at the hotel once Ned called after Tony had taken him to get a quick bite to eat once Peter admitted that he hadn’t had anything since dinner the night before.

A part of Tony was mad. It had taken everything in him to try and keep calm because he knew that Peter would react better to that than Tony yelling at him about everything that had happened that day. Tony had been close to taking the suit away as punishment but it hadn’t felt right -- not when the suit was meant to protect Peter as much as it was a tool for his superheroing. Anyway, he was hoping that the whole incident had given Peter some perspective and that he might finally leave at least this whole thing alone. Otherwise, he was going to truly send Tony into an early grave.

“I’ll see you in New York, kid,” Tony said, “and since I’m not really grounding you over all of this I think it’s only fair you deal with whatever your teachers want to punish you with for skipping out on the competition. Yeah, haven’t really forgotten about that.”

“I’m sorry,” Peter said.

Tony waved his hand. “We’ve gone over that. Go on. And call your aunt, she’s probably freaking out if she heard about what happened at The Washington Monument.”

He hadn’t wanted to put more pressure on Peter by mentioning that he really had made it quite obvious to everyone that he was somehow affiliated with Midtown High by showing up as he had in Washington DC after only appearing in New York before then. Also, since everyone was reporting on the event, Spider-Man was now a well known name. It was a good thing that The Accords had been amended before this otherwise Tony didn’t know what kind of trouble they would be facing and what kind of questions he would be getting.

Before leaving, he contacted Coulson again, this time over the phone.

“I think you’ve seen what happened today in Washington,” Tony said.

“Yes. Inhuman?”

“No. No. Although I suppose it might be better if people think that’s what he is. Or maybe not. I
“don’t know,” Tony said. “I’m surprised none of your people showed up.”

“We didn’t need to,” Coulson said. “Is he an Avenger?” Coulson asked.

“One in training perhaps. I -- the reason I called is because I don’t want there to be too much interest in his powers. At least not from the wrong people.”

“You mean Ross and perhaps others interested in the Supersoldier Serum. Are you saying he’s--”

“No, no. He was bitten by a spider. It’s not entirely clear what happened. But we both know that someone might want to replicate anything that might give them similar powers. Supersoldier or not his powers are -- well, it’s possible he’s stronger than even Steve but that’s beside the point--”

The more people that were involved in helping them out -- people that Tony could trust -- the better. And Coulson was -- he was someone that Tony could really trust.

“Also,” Tony added before he hung up. “I’m telling Pepper you’re alive. And probably Captain America too. Get you that signed trading card set.”

Coulson actually laughed. “Stark, there was ever only one complete set and it was destroyed the day I died.”

“It’s possible I have another one,” Tony admitted. “Or something better. I’m just -- I’m happy you’re alive.”

“Me too.”

Chapter End Notes

I really love this chapter. I think it has to be one of my favorite Peter and Tony interactions.
Next chapter will be up by Thursday. I'm trying to aim for Tuesday and it all just depends on how quickly I can get to editing it. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chaper Notes

Thank you to everyone reading. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

May got the call from Peter long after she had been contacted by Ned’s mom, who was freaking out, and had managed to calm down long enough to tell May that there had been an incident in Washington and that the decathlon team had been inside the Washington Monument. May had felt like someone was squeezing her tight and like she couldn’t breathe until she registered that Mrs. Leeds was telling her no one had gotten hurt. Mrs. Leeds understood when May said her goodbyes.

When she checked her phone she was surprised to have missed a call from Peter, Tony, and also a few messages from both.

Tony: I don’t know what you’ve heard about what happened but Peter is alright. I saw him myself. He’ll be heading back to New York with the rest of his classmates.

Peter: Hey. So something crazy happened. I wasn’t actually in the monument when it all went down. I was with Tony. Everyone made it out alright. I tried to call earlier but you were probably busy. I’ll see you tonight.

Knowing that Tony had actually been with Peter and that he had seen Peter safe and sound made everything a little better. Still, May ended up looking up what happened. She found a few news reports on it and clicked on one which had actually captured footage of what had happened. Mostly to do with Spider-Man and how he had saved the day. It made May wonder about Tony and his Iron Man suit and why he hadn’t jumped in to help. May thanked whatever gods were listening that Peter hadn’t been in the elevator. Really she had to thank Tony getting Peter out of the sightseeing trip.

May waited until she had calmed down more to call Peter and they had a quick conversation. Peter sounded normal and unbothered and she could hear Ned in the background. Everything was okay. There was nothing for her to worry about. She just couldn’t wait until she saw Peter again with her own eyes.

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Due to all the excitement with the elevator and the explosion, May never found out about Peter going missing when it came to the competition. It didn’t stop the school from remembering. Peter got pulled into the principal’s office the next day and Principal Morita spoke to him about responsibility and how disappointed he was and then proceeded to give Peter detention. He had never had to face a detention before, but Peter supposed he deserved it.

What he didn’t deserve was how the whole incident had reawakened in Ned a need to tell everyone that Peter was Spider-Man. It was just that the whole school was talking about it and they were all in awe of Spider-Man and wondering who he was. Liz seemed to have everyone asking her questions about him and from what Peter had seen she was happy to talk about it and yet didn’t have much to really say.
“You should tell her,” Ned said time and time again, “she has a crush on you, man. This is like your dream come true.”

Except that Liz didn’t know it was Peter and despite Karen saying that Liz would understand if he told her it was him, Peter didn’t really think he should share the secret with yet another person. Ned was enough -- he was more than enough.

Michelle was acting weird, too. She was always weird, but Peter had noticed that she was watching him more. It was odd because Michelle was always just around and it wasn’t necessarily strange for her to always be around except that she kept showing up in the strangest places. Peter was even surprised to find her in detention. He was sure that Michelle had never gotten a detention in her entire life and yet there she was. The only good thing about detention turned out to be that Ned wasn’t there pestering him about how he should just go and tell everyone that he was the one that had rescued everyone. Due to how fixated Ned was on that, Peter hadn’t even gotten a chance to talk to him about putting the suit back to how it was before they took the tracker out and Peter knew he couldn’t do it on his own.

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It turned out that getting Coulson’s help and his connections with government officials somehow hastened how quickly the US government was willing to work with getting all of the Avengers back on US soil. They wanted Captain America back but they were also well aware that he had to serve out some sort of punishment. It was all for show in a way -- a way to make the public aware that everything they’d seen or heard about Steve refusing to sign The Accords was getting rectified. It helped that everyone was aware of Clint and Scott’s house arrest.

“Not sure exactly what the time table is on this,” Coulson told him over the phone, “but it seems they want it to be fast. Number one thing you can do, Stark, is get the tower ready for them. They won’t be allowed to stay at The Avengers Compound since they won’t be officially back on the team but they will need a place to live.”

Coulson was right on all of it happening fast, because a few hours later Pepper got a call from the UN representative that was dealing with The Accords. The UN was game for helping them return stateside as long as The New Accords were signed before they did. If they didn’t sign that then they had to sign a retirement testimony.

So for most of his Tuesday, Tony spent it on the phone which made it the most boring day of his entire life even if things were going the way he wanted them to. By the time that it ended, he was exhausted and it was only then that he realized that he hadn’t called or checked in on Peter since getting back into New York.

“Friday, call Peter. He hasn’t been in the suit today has he? That’s odd.”

“Maybe he’s taking a day off,” Friday said.

“Possible. He did have a rather exciting day yesterday.”

Peter didn’t pick up immediately and then when he did, he looked a little winded. His hair was a mess atop his head too.

“Hey,” he said.

“Doing some running there, kid?”

Peter laughed. “Sort of. I left my phone in the kitchen earlier.”
He brushed his hair back and then moved and Tony could tell that he had sat down.

“What happened with school?”

“I got detention,” Peter said and shrugged his shoulders. “Everyone’s talking about Spider-Man. It’s kind of crazy.”

“Never been to detention before,” Tony mused. “I wasn’t in high school long enough to get into any real trouble. Sounds boring, though.”

“It is,” Peter said. “I wanted — thank you for coming yesterday. I know I wasn’t there and it became a mess but I’m glad you wanted to come to the competition. Especially — I remember you said you had to get out of a few things so—”

Tony sighed. “Kid, SI is lucky it has Pepper because I was never a good CEO. I don’t like boring meetings, I hate the board, and I have missed more meetings than I’ve attended. Missing a day of work for you was better than any of the numerous excuses I have made over the years to miss others. I like being involved in your life. Okay. And I’d like to know about any other competitions or whatever that you’re involved with.”

Peter nodded and he seemed a little relieved and perhaps even pleased.

---

Peter knew that he really didn’t need to keep getting himself involved with the whole alien weapon dealing thing, but he figured he could do something and pass on the information to Tony. It might even be the best way to show Tony that Peter did listen. The problem was that he really couldn’t stop thinking about the whole thing and he mostly just wanted to help.

“Hey, Karen,” Peter said.

“What’s up, Peter? How was your Spanish quiz?”

Peter smiled a little. She had helped him study the night before and it had been more helpful than Peter would have imagined. “I think it went good,” Peter said. “Anyway, I was wondering if you could help me. I’m trying to figure out who the guys under the bridge were that night. I don’t really have much to go off of.”

“I can run facial recognition on the footage of that encounter,” Karen said.

Peter had to pause. She had footage. “Footage?”

“Yes, Peter. I record everything you see.”

And what was the likelihood that Tony had access to all of that footage as well? Probably pretty high.

“Everything?”

“Everything.”

“All the time?”

“It’s called the Baby Monitor Protocol.”

Of course it was. Tony most definitely had access then. Peter had to wonder about how much he
actually saw because if he had checked it recently then he would know everything that Peter had been up to and that just -- he would figure out what Peter had done to the suit with Ned.

“He has a knack for naming things, doesn’t he,” Peter said. “Are there other protocols I should know about?”

“There’s the Lullaby Protocol. The Time Out Protocol. The--”

“Right, so he went all out. How am I not surprised. I don’t think I really want to know about all of them right now. Just roll it back to Friday.”

“Sure thing, Peter,” Karen said.

She started off from the first instance of Peter putting the suit on on Friday which had been right before he went to the party and he was practicing what to say in the mirror he groaned. That was embarrassing. Especially when he started just fooling around pretending to be Thor -- but it wasn’t his fault that next to Tony, Thor was awesome. It was kind of a shame that he was apparently off Earth for some reason or another. Peter could only hope to meet him some day.

“Hey, Karen, go later in the day. To the arms deal.”

She moved it forward and then there they were.

“Okay. The two of the right, who are they?”

It took Karen a moment. “Searching law enforcement databases. No records found.”

“Nothing?” Peter asked. That was surprising. You would think that two arms dealers who had somehow gotten involved with alien tech would have some sort of record.

“One individual identified,” Karen said. “Aaron Davis. Age 33. He has a criminal record and an address here in Queens.”

That was his best bet, then. Peter considered just telling Tony about Davis, but he wasn’t one of the dealers and maybe this lead wouldn’t actually give him anything. After all, Davis hadn’t seemed to know about the alien weapons so what were the odds that he knew where to find the dealers? No, Peter would go himself and then whatever Davis gave him. That -- he would tell Tony about.

“Let’s pay him a visit, Karen.”

Chapter End Notes

A note on timing: So the movie did something a little weird around this part (like I said multiple timing issues) in that Peter is in school and gets detention and then skips out of detention to go figure out how to get to the weapon dealers. It's weird because most schools don't host detention in the middle of the school day (they sometimes do in the morning before school starts) but usually it's an after school affair. So it's odd that Peter skips detention, figures out to go find Aaron Davis and then the thing going down at the Ferry is at 11am? And to top that off in the movie we have Tony calling Peter around the same time even though Tony should know that Peter is in school.

But anyway, for the sake of the story this Peter wouldn't be so keen on skipping school
since he isn't trying to become an Avenger or prove himself that way. So he actually stays in school and goes to detention and then after school decides to look into Aaron Davis. And so the ferry thing won't be scheduled for 11am but much later in the day.

On another note, I've finally started writing Infinity War which is kind of crazy.

Next chapter should be up by Saturday.

Someone is translating this fic into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“I hereby dub you, asset manager,” Tony said and pointed at Happy.

There was no one else that he could trust with the task ahead of them. Before The Tower could be deemed a good place for Steve, Wanda, Natasha, and Sam to have their house arrest stay, there was a whole inspection that needed to happen. While Tony was allowed to keep his Iron Man armors and everything related to them as well as other tech and his workshop was obviously going to have some Avengers related work inside of it, the others weren’t really allowed to have access to their suits and anything they had used as Avengers. Even Cap’s shield was supposed to be confiscated. It was going to be kept at The Avengers Compound -- a place where none of them could go until their house arrest was over. They couldn’t really go anywhere at all really.

“What does that mean?” Happy asked.

“It means you’re in charge of moving everything to the compound. Everything that isn’t already in my workshop, that is. And all the things we were keeping in storage that should really have already been at the compound to begin with. We also will have to move their personal belongings from the compound back here. You wanted more responsibility. This is it.”

Tony was glad to pass it on to Happy. Happy would oversee everything with his usual level of alertness and over-concern and Tony wouldn’t have to worry about everything making it to the right place.

In the meanwhile, Tony could deal with all the particulars of the move and of The New Accords finally coming in to play. He was actually going to have to negotiate Peter’s involvement because he was a minor -- but Tony wanted it all above board. He still hadn’t even had time to talk to Steve about what was happening yet but with Natasha around, he was sure that he would probably know everything.

There was one last meeting before everything was decided on and it was the most important one. Tony was more than ready to move past all of it.

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Peter tried to call Tony after he spoke to Aaron Davis which he really hadn’t done particularly well. Enhanced Interrogation Protocol had been something completely unexpected and basically useless. Peter didn’t think he was ever going to use it again after the embarrassment that it had caused him. But in the end he had useful information. There was going to be some weapons deal going down at the Staten Island Ferry and it was going to be happening soon.

“Call Tony, Karen,” Peter said as he left, shooting out a spider web so he could swing up and away.

The phone rang and rang and then Friday picked up. “I’m sorry, Peter, but Mr. Stark is in an
important meeting. Would you like me to interrupt and let him know you are calling?”

Tony had told him once that he could interrupt anything if it was important enough but this just -- was it important enough? Tony would probably just shrug it off. Tell him that he would get them another time because that’s how he had been handling this whole thing so far. Well, Peter had them. He had them and he could stop them and he had gotten a little more used to the suit and what it could do.

“Is it really important?” Peter asked.

“I believe so, Peter, but I can interrupt.”

“No. No, don’t,” Peter said. “Thanks, Friday.”

“What are you going to do, Peter?” Karen asked.

“We’re going to try and stop that weapons deal from happening,” Peter said and ignored how his stomach churned. He could do this. He had handled the thing at The Washington Monument fine and this didn’t seem all that hard.

The Staten Island Ferry departed from The Whitehall Ferry Terminal and was easy enough to get to. Peter had been on the Staten Island Ferry only once before but it was a nice and calming trip and the Statue of Liberty was visible from the ferry. He got there in time to find the right ferry except that it was pulling out of the terminal. He jumped off the terminal roof, gliding to the ferry and managing to attach himself to the side. He looked inside through one of the windows.

“Karen, activate Enhance Reconnaissance Mode,” Peter whispered. It was one of the features that had come with taking the Training Wheels Protocol off. It was useful.

He recognized the one guy from the night under the bridge but the other one that he was talking to was someone new. Peter had never seen him before. According to Karen neither had criminal records. He watched the guy get up. Peter needed to follow him.

“Incoming call from May Parker,” Karen announced, “should I reroute to your heads-up display?”

“No, no. I can’t talk to May right now. Karen, are you crazy. I’ll call her back. Just ignore her calls for now.”

Maybe Tony would understand if Peter was doing this just to get the information on the culprits. Maybe that was his whole reason for being there.

“Hey, dronie,” Peter said, “keep an eye on that guy..”

Peter climbed up the side of the ferry, going up to the top in the direction the one guy had gone. He stopped outside where other people were milling around taking in the view of the city. The bridge guy approached one of the guys out there.

“Karen, who’s the one on the left?”

“Mac Gargan,” Karen answered. “Extensive criminal record, including homicide. Would you like me to activate Instant Kill?”

“No,” Peter said. “Cool it with the instant kill, Karen.” It was a seriously weird feature for Tony to have included in the suit. Although maybe in the right situation it might be handy.
The guy Peter had followed whispered to the other one and Peter heard it. “White pick-up truck.” But it was a different guy that moved, looking dead serious as he walked, probably headed towards the truck. All of them standing out there were probably together and in on this.

“Dronie, scan the ship for a white pick-up truck,” Peter whispered.

It took Dronie seconds to find it and Peter watched on the HUD display as his drone went down to that level of the ferry and everything really was lining up almost perfectly. Peter couldn’t really believe it. There was no way that he could just let any of this go.

“This is too perfect. I got the weapons, the buyers and the sellers in one place.”

“Incoming call from Tony Stark.”

And then there was that. Perfect timing. “Good, good. He’s probably out of that meeting. Answer, Karen. We have to let him know what’s up.”

Tony’s face popped up into the heads-up display and Tony was clearly in a car. “Hey, kiddo, I saw I missed a call. Anything going on?”

“I had a lead,” Peter said. “So I followed it. And I know, I know I’m not supposed to be looking into this any more but there was a weapons deal happening today and you were busy so--”

“Say what?” Tony asked just as the ferry made a noise -- a very obvious noise and Tony’s eyes narrowed over the video call. “What’s that?”

Something was happening. The guy from the bridge and the one that actually had a criminal record -- the one guy was passing on keys. The deal was happening now -- Peter had to stop it.

“I’ll take those,” he said as he threw out a web and pulled the keys out of their hands.

“Peter, what the hell is going on? Kid, you better tell me right now! Kid -- where are you?”

Peter flipped down which was maybe a mistake. “Um -- a little busy at the moment. Hey, guys. The illegal weapons-deal ferry was earlier. You missed it.”

“Peter, I swear to -- Friday why wasn’t I alerted to Peter being out in the suit? Why am I not getting tracking details?”

Peter was a little busy webbing the bad guys up to really pay attention to Tony especially once they pulled guns out on him, but he still heard what Tony had said and shit, he was found out. Tony would surely figure out what he and Ned had done to the suit.

“I -- I’m on a Staten Island Ferry,” Peter whispered and then turned back to the fight.

One of the guys was coming at him and he had that weapon that the other guy from the bridge had been using but it wasn’t the same guy--

“I got to say, the other guy was way better with that thing,” Peter said as the guy’s fist encased in the weapon went through the metal railing when Peter dodged him.

“Peter,” Tony’s voice came through his comms. The video call had to have been dropped. “I’m on my way. ETA 10 minutes.”

“Okay,” Peter said and he just kept shooting webs. Ten minutes. He could do ten minutes and hold them off until Tony arrived and then they could take them in and this was all over.
That’s when Peter spotted him. The guy from inside the ferry that Karen hadn’t been able to identify and he looked intense. It took Peter just a second to realize that that was probably the guy with the wings. It made perfect sense. Peter hadn’t seen his face either time he’d come upon him and he was a part of this – a huge important part of this. Peter was distracted for a few seconds until--

“Freeze! FBI.”

The FBI was there? When did that happen? There were a whole bunch of them too, pointing their guns down at Peter and that’s when everything started going crazy because the guy had put on the wings and he was coming towards him and the FBI agents and Peter had to get them out of the way as the guy flew out, not caring at all if he hurt anyone.

“Peter, what’s going on?” Tony asked.

“Bird guy is here,” Peter said. “Also the FBI?”

The bird suit guy was trying to get his guys away, Peter could tell, and what was worse -- he was holding one of the Chitauri enhanced weapons and shooting down at him and the FBI agents who with their guns couldn’t even touch him. He was both too far away and too well protected in his bird-suit. This wasn’t going at all like Peter had expected.

“Yeah, this was the FBI bust. God damn it, kid, you just had to get involved with this,” Tony said and he sounded frustrated.

Peter shot web out at the bird guy and tried to pull him down but it was hard. He seemed to be able to cut through his webbing easily and he just kept shooting and a part of Peter was more concerned with making sure that no one actually got shot.

Somehow, he managed to get the weapon away from the bird guy but it was still shooting and there was nothing that Peter could do to stop it. He threw as much webbing as he could and that helped for a few seconds but in the meanwhile the bird guy was flying off and it seemed like the guy with the glove had run off too. The perfect situation had turned into the complete opposite and even though the buyer had been left behind and the FBI would probably catch them -- the dealers would be gone.

Then, the weapon started to shake and it started to shoot some sort of laser beam and there was nothing Peter could do because his webbing wasn’t helping and there was no way to even get to it but then it just fizzled out and exploded and a few seconds passed before the ferry started to pull apart. People were screaming. There was water coming up and Peter didn’t know how to--

“What is going on, Peter?” Tony asked over comms.

“Oh my god. What do I do? Karen--” Peter had only a few seconds to decide. “Karen, give me an x-ray of the boat and target all the strongest points.” He knew that his voice was shaky at best. What web combination could he use? What would be most successful?

“I’m coming, kid,” Tony said.

Peter couldn’t even respond and yet knowing that Tony was on his way made him feel a little better.

“Web grenade,” he said to Karen. “Web grenade. Splitter web, go.” He threw himself between the splitting ship and his web went where he wanted it to go, holding strong. He just had to hold the ship together. He twisted it all together — strengthening the hold.

He made it to the other side and the web was holding. Things looked good. No one had gotten hurt and Peter had--
“Great job, Peter. You are ninety eight perfect successful.”

“Ninety eight?” Peter asked.

Karen narrowed down the problem for him. One of his webs wasn’t holding -- hadn’t landed where it needed to and even as some people were cheering him on, it began to splinter off and then everything was breaking and the yelling started up again as the ship started to split again. Peter jumped into action, grabbing what webs he could to try and pull the ship together even though he already knew that it wasn’t going to actually do anything no matter how hard he tried because even though he was strong, his webbing wouldn’t hold. But then it started moving together again and there was Iron Man fixing the whole problem and Peter let out a sigh of relief.

“Tony, what can I do?” Peter asked over the comms.

Tony didn’t answer for a moment and Peter tried to figure it out for himself as the ship was brought together and then Tony in the suit just fused the ship together. Peter followed after him.

“I think you’ve done enough,” Tony said. “Just -- just go, Peter. I’ll take care of this.”

Peter stayed for a while longer, watching, but Karen eventually suggested he go and Peter figured that it was probably best to listen. He didn’t go far, swinging off of the ferry to the nearest place out of the way which happened to be on Governor’s Island.

Chapter End Notes

So one of the major problems I had coming into Homecoming was "moving day" because obviously Tony wasn't going to be moving in this fic because he wouldn't be far from Peter. But bringing Steve and the rest home made a different sort of moving day possible which is the thing that really made me do Homecoming the way I've done it which is relatively close to canon in a way I didn't expect.

I've been writing a lot this week. I just finished ch. 111...and Infinity War has just brought along all the feels. Because while there's less material to work with in a way when it relates to this fic, there's so much more emotional material to explore and deal with...

Next chapter will be up Monday or Tuesday.

Thanks for reading.

Someone is translating this fic into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Tony couldn’t even begin to figure out how he was supposed to deal with the mess that Peter had created. The entire time right after he got out of the meeting -- the very successful meeting that meant that everyone was actually coming home in about a week’s time -- Tony had been looking forward to getting on the phone with Steve and celebrating a little. Instead, Friday alerted him to a missed call from Peter. Something not important enough to interrupt according to Friday but Peter had called and to Tony that alone was important enough -- important in a way that made Tony almost want Friday to interrupt any meeting if it was Peter calling. So, he called him back only for Peter to somehow be on a Staten Island Ferry in the middle of yet again getting involved with the weapon dealers.

It wasn’t until Peter mentioned the FBI that Tony actually remembered that they had been following up on a few leads. Apparently Peter had done his own investigation and ended up on the ferry too. Peter just -- he had a way of just getting into things. But worse, he screwed them up too. Tony blamed himself for Peter ending there. He should have told Peter what was going on with the FBI but Tony had been so busy he’d forgotten that they were on the trail of the weapons dealers. Of course, after what happened in Washington DC, Tony had pretty much expected that Peter wouldn’t do something so absolutely reckless again -- at least not this soon or related to the dealers. He hated that he was wrong.

It didn’t take long to fix everything once he got there. After putting the ferry back together, he hadn’t been able to just go after Peter. No, instead, he had to deal with the first responders, but then also the FBI. They’d managed to catch the buyers which was good -- but the dealers had gotten away.

“It’ll be hard to place them, now,” the FBI agent that Tony spoke to said. “They’ll be more cautious but we’ll keep working on it.”

Then, Tony had to deal with the officials from the Ferry terminal and the NYPD. He’d also made sure to have anyone that even thought they were hurt went to the nearest hospital on his dime. Tony also offered to pay for all the repairs the ship would still need. It took him a while to finish up and to take the thanks that some of the people the ship wanted to give him.

“Where’s Peter?” he asked Friday after it was all done.

“Governor’s Island,” Friday.

Tony flew to where Friday had pinpointed as Peter’s location and sure enough he was there sitting on the edge of a building with his mask off, looking defeated. Tony watched him for a moment and he felt horrible about what he needed to do now, but it was the only thing he could do.

“Previously on Peter screws the pooch,” Tony said, breaking the silence. Peter actually jumped which was a first because sneaking up on Peter was hard. Tony stepped out of the suit as he spoke.

Peter turned to look at him, moving slowly. He looked so sad and defeated and yet ready for
whatever Tony had in store for him and a part of Tony wanted to just hug him and tell him everything was okay. He wanted to tell Peter that he was impressed with how Peter had almost managed to keep the ferry together not to mention how Peter hadn’t allowed anyone to be majorly hurt. But he couldn’t give Peter that. He couldn’t encourage this kind of behavior and maybe...maybe that was the problem. Tony sort of loved that Peter was Spider-Man. He liked having superheroing in common even if it scared him every time that Peter was out in the suit. Tony had to remind himself that this was all for Peter --

“So,” Tony said, “I told you to stay from this. Instead, after everything we’ve already been through, you hacked a multimillion dollar suit which I have to imagine was solely done so you could sneak behind my back and do the one thing that I told you not to do.”

Peter had the decency to not deny any of it. Instead, he asked, “Is everyone okay?”

“No thanks to you,” Tony said and he meant for it to sting -- for Peter to realize how easily someone could have died. Yes, Peter had somehow kept most people safe during some of the situation but most of that had been sheer luck.

“No thanks to me?” Peter asked and and he frowned, his face twisting a bit. “Those weapons were out there and you knew about them for how long now and didn’t do anything about it? Instead you kept telling me to stay out of it but you did nothing to stop it -- to capture the bird guy. If you had cared about this at all instead of all the meetings and the things keeping you busy all the time then maybe--”

Tony stepped closer to where Peter’s stood and Peter trailed off and Tony could tell that he seemed a bit unnerved. “I guess the real problem here is that you don’t listen to anything I say,” Tony said. “You know everyone they’ve all had some hang ups on me allowing you to do this since you’re a fourteen year old kid. And since apparently you really don’t seem to care at all for anything I’ve had to say on what you can and cannot do -- ”

“I’m fifteen,” Peter said and it was said so petulantly.

“No, this is where you zip it, kid. The adult is talking.” Tony closed his eyes and braced himself. This was -- he hated this. This aspect of parenting that he’d never expected to have to deal with because by all accounts Peter was not the type to act out.

“But I was--”

Tony settled him with a look and Peter let out a breath but kept quiet.

“What if somebody had died tonight?” Tony asked and he needed Peter to understand it. Peter didn’t say anything so Tony continued. “Different story, right? Because that’s on you. It’s on you forever -- you don’t forget something like that or leave it behind.” Tony closed his eyes tightly. He hated thinking about it -- about his Peter who was sweet and slightly innocent and just so so bubbly and smart having to deal with that guilt and that heavy weight of what ifs and whys that would never be answered.

Worse was -- worse was the other thing. The thing that had become Tony’s worst nightmare. He didn’t dream of it often -- it wasn’t like one of those nightmares of the cave or space or sometimes Barnes. It was an intrusive thought.

“And if you died,” Tony said and trailed off because it was hard to say and hard to think on. It was the one thing that would destroy him. Tony was sure of it. If Peter -- if it ever came to that it would be his end.
“I--” Peter said and shook his head.

“If -- if that happened, then that -- that would be on me--”

“I’m sorry,” Peter said and his words came out shaky.

Tony took a moment to rub a hand over his face and try to push away the thought. Peter was alive. He was fine -- he was just there in front of him.

“I’m sorry,” Peter repeated.

“You’ve said that before. Just yesterday, if I recall. And if I also recall correctly, I also made it clear then that I would always have time for you. Which is something you just keep forgetting for some reason. And, you know what, sorry doesn’t actually cut it here because we’re just going to be back to this tomorrow or the next day. It’s what just keeps on happening and--”

“I just wanted to be like you,” Peter said, cutting him off.

It was admirable, the way that Peter didn’t protest, didn’t offer excuses for this actions or explanations for what happened. He just took what Tony was saying. He didn’t try to make the whole thing harder and yet he did. A sentiment that should have meant a lot to Tony meant so little. He wasn’t anything to aspire to. Tony had done nothing but screw up for a large part of his life and even after he finally became the person he needed to be he still wasn’t ever perfect.

“And I wanted you to be better,” Tony said. “I’ve seen the kind of person you are. I know the things you can do and that you can accomplish. You can be better.”

Peter seemed to try to find a way to answer, but for once he wasn’t find words but it didn’t matter because it wasn’t over yet. Tony wasn’t finished because he knew that this time he actually did have to punish Peter somehow. He hated doing it -- disliked how it would mean that Peter would be without any protection especially if Peter made the choice to go out in his old suit. It’s why he hadn’t taken the suit away in Washington and yet this time he couldn’t avoid that. Not just because he needed Peter to learn something but he needed to check the suit over and figure just what Peter had done to it to disable tracking and the Training Wheels Protocol.

“I’m going to need the suit back,” Tony said.

“For how long?”

Tony regarded him, but he didn’t want to give him a timeline because he really didn’t know how long he would need to keep it for the lesson to land and for Peter to actually realize how reckless and thoughtless he had been over the course of the last week or so.

“I don’t know,” Tony said at last. “Right now, I’m thinking forever.”

Peter’s eyes widened. “No,” he said. “No. Please.”

Tony shook his head. Those tear filled eyes were not going to sway him.

“Let’s have it,” Tony said.

Peter shook his head. “This is all I have. Please, Tony. I’m nothing without the suit.”

There was a time when Tony had believed the same thing about the Iron Man suit because he hadn’t realized that the Iron Man suit was only a part of it -- that no one else could be Iron Man because
Tony had built the suit himself. Not even Rhodey could handle everything that Tony had included into his own suits. No one could build one either -- maybe Shuri -- but no one else.

“If you’re nothing without this suit, then you shouldn’t have it,” Tony said. “And you’re wrong, you know. That suit isn’t all you have.”

Peter had always been smart, and Tony was glad that he didn’t try to argue against him until he changed his mind. He seemed resigned instead.

“I don’t have any other clothes,” Peter admitted.

“Okay,” Tony said and decided that this was the moment where he could add a separate part of Peter’s punishment. “We can sort that out. But first let’s get off this island.”

Tony got back into the suit and Peter looked unsure.

“Come here,” Tony said and motioned him over. Peter stepped towards him slowly. “Put on the mask and hold on.”

He waited for Peter to put the mask on, but didn’t give him a warning before he picked Peter up under the arms and flew up. He heard Peter inhale and then cling to the armor. It would have been funny had the situation been any different. Tony landed in an alley a few blocks away from The Whitehall Ferry Terminal.

“Happy is meeting us. He’s bringing you clothes.”

Peter nodded a bit sullenly.

Peter didn’t have to know, but Tony had texted Happy to pick up something embarrassing for Peter to wear on the way home. He almost laughed when he saw the pink fluffy hello kitty pajama bottoms and the touristy oversized t-shirt. Then there was the sandals. Happy had really gone and found the worst thing he could.

“Um -- you want me to wear these?” Peter asked.

“Yeah. It’s that or nothing,” Tony said.

Peter gave him a look that spoke to how ridiculous he found the whole thing before he got inside the car to get changed. Happy had bought the shirt two sizes too big and it hung off of Peter. It made Peter look smaller than he really was but he didn’t protest as he handed the suit over.

“Take him home, Happy. I’ll fly the armor back,” Tony said.

For good measure, Tony also took the Spider-Man suit with him. He hoped he was doing the right thing. It just hurt to do it and to see Peter so absolutely defeated and hurt. But he wasn’t meant to be Peter’s friend -- he was his father and he needed his son to stay alive even if he was alive and angry at him.

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed writing this one and changing the scene to fit the story and their relationship. So I hope everyone else did as well. We get a little bit of Steve in the next
one which will probably be up on Thursday. Thanks for reading.

Someone is translating this fic into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Tony hated him.

Peter knew that hate was probably a strong word, but that’s what it felt like. It felt like Tony was just so disappointed and so upset at him that he hadn’t been able to even stick around after Peter handed over the suit. Peter had had that coming once Tony figured out about how the suit had been hacked into. He had just screwed up so badly with not getting it fixed up. The whole ferry thing had gone wrong too and Peter hated it -- he hated that everything he did seemed to end in disaster, proving to Tony time and time again that Peter really was just a kid and that he couldn’t actually handle the whole hero thing. Or rather that he couldn’t handle them alone. He was really regretting not talking to Tony directly after the interrogation.

Happy dropped him off outside the house and didn’t wait long before pulling off. At least he didn’t say anything on the drive over because Peter didn’t know if he would have been able to hold it together if he had. As it was, he had been close to breaking down the entire drive back.

More than anything, he hated how useless he had felt while Tony fixed everything and the weapons dealers still got away. The look of disappointment in Tony’s eyes had been worse afterwards especially after remembering how Tony had been in Washington DC and how he’d held Peter and been gentle. This time he’d taken the opposite approach and Peter didn’t blame him. Someone could have died and it would have been Peter’s fault.

He got inside and May was on him at once. “I’ve been calling you all day. You didn’t answer your phone. You can’t do that, Peter! Then this ferry thing happens and you’re nowhere to be found and I know you weren’t with Tony because he was out at the ferry thing. I called five of your classmates and Ned. I called Ned’s mom.”

Peter tried to walk around May but she stopped him and Peter just let her. “I’m fine. May, I’m okay. Honestly, just relax. I’m fine.” Except that he wasn’t really.

“Cut the bullshit,” May said and it threw Peter off a bit because May was never one to curse much around him.

Peter stared at her for a moment, not sure what to say. Did she know? Did she know he was Spider-Man?

“I know you left detention early today -- the school called. I know you left the hotel room in Washington too because your school called. I know you didn’t make it to the decathlon competition. I know you sneak out of this house all the time. That’s not fine, Peter, you’re not fine. And I don’t know if this is related to finding out that Tony Stark is your father or what but something is up. You haven’t been okay in a while and I just -- I want to know what’s going on with you. This is me asking, Pete. Please.”
Peter hated it. Hated the way she looked at him and was expecting him to answer. Peter couldn’t tell her the truth -- about Spider-Man and how much time he spent running around Queens in the suit. Telling her would be pointless anyway since he couldn’t really be Spider-Man anymore. But mostly, May was understanding about a lot but Peter suspected that Spider-Man wouldn’t be something she understood.

“I got into a fight with Tony,” Peter said instead. “Probably for the best I don’t even see him anymore since he probably hates me now.” It wasn’t exactly all that far off from the truth except that it hadn’t really been a fight.

“Tony doesn’t hate you,” May said. “That still doesn’t explain everything else.”

Peter sighed. He wasn’t going to get off easy. “I left detention to see Tony. I told Karen not to answer the phone because I was with him and we were -- anyway I won’t be busy with going over to the tower anymore. It’s been a lot, May. Getting to know my dad and sort of having an internship there and school and I thought I could do it all but I just can’t. I want things to go back to what they used to be. I screwed it all up.”

He must have looked pitiful. Or maybe May just didn’t want to add to the horrible day that he was already having because instead of bringing up the sneaking out again or pointing out the many holes in his explanation, she just pulled him into her arms. Warmth surrounded him and it helped.

“It’s okay, Pete, it’s okay.”

Peter didn’t know when he started crying, but it had been building up in him since the ferry and May just clutched him to her and her hands were in his hair and it was so reminiscent of Tony hugging him just the other day after what happened at the Washington Monument. It hit him hard to know that he probably wouldn’t have that again -- that Tony probably wanted nothing to do with him because he was such a screw up. He couldn’t be Spider-Man because he just kept screwing it up and he was bad at listening to anything Tony asked of him too.

“I’m sorry I made you worry,” Peter whispered.

“I know,” May said. “And anyway, I used to sneak out too when I was your age.” She kissed the top of Peter’s head and Peter’s tears were slowing down. “Take a shower. You smell. You smell like garbage. I don’t even want to know why you smell this badly. And -- wait, what happened to your clothes?”

Peter shook his head. “Got ruined. This was all Tony could find.”

“Right. The billionaire couldn’t get you anything better,” May said with a slight smirk and Peter just groaned as he headed to his room. At least he wasn’t crying anymore.

“By the way,” May called out, “the man is your father and he cares a great deal about you. I know you know that.”

Peter didn’t respond. He knew that logically she was telling the truth and yet -- and yet Peter also didn’t know how he was supposed to look at Tony again after disappointing him the way he had -- deliberately going against his wishes and just making things worse and worse. Maybe Tony was right and he didn’t deserve the suit -- he didn’t deserve to be Spider-Man.

---

Tony flew back to the tower and he dumped the suit onto a table in the workshop but couldn’t really look at it or start working on it because he was still just so upset and annoyed by Peter’s antics. It
was that he had hacked the suit that pissed him off the most. The reckless behavior was something that he had come to expect and when he really thought about it, it wasn’t all that reckless at all. But for Peter to actually mess with the suit -- that was something else entirely. Tony trusted Peter with the suit and he’d gone and removed the tracking and the protocols set in place to protect him. Even Karen was a bit of a concern since she didn’t seem to be answering to Friday.

Tony walked over to the futon and sat down and wished that Steve was with him. Earlier in the day he had been so happy and ready to have Peter over with Pepper and Rhody and Vision for a small celebration for what they had finally settled on. It wasn’t entirely official yet because Steve, Natasha, Sam, and Wanda would need to sign The New Accords first, but it was as good as and Tony couldn’t wait for them to be back. But then, he’d had to go and clean up Peter’s mess. He’d made it there just in time too before everything really fell apart and someone was seriously injured. As it was, someone had almost drowned and a couple of people had concussions.

“Friday, do you think I handled that well?”

“I do not know, sir,” Friday said.

“Yeah, me either,” Tony said and pulled out the flip phone. He really couldn’t wait until the day when he didn’t need to use that infernal device ever again.

He called the only number on the phone and waited only a few rings before Steve picked up.

“Hi,” Steve said and Tony could tell he was smiling. “I heard the good news.”

“It seems someone keeps blowing the surprise,” Tony said. “Then again, that spy of yours is good. I’m glad we’re all on the same team.”

Steve chuckled. Tony leaned back on the futon and he let himself smile because hearing Steve’s voice just did that to him.

“We’re all game,” Steve said. “We’ll sign as soon as everything is ready. I’m just a bit impressed by how quick this is all going.”

Tony grinned. “That’s what I like to hear,” he said. “Have you read the new version?”

“Of course.”

“Good. I didn’t want any surprises. Is there anything -- it’s all good right?”

“Yes, Tony. The changes make sense -- it’s something we can worth with. That we should work with. No surprises here. We’re not going down that path again. I just want to be home. I want to be with you.”

Tony let out a breath. Relief because he was still a little unsure. “I -- good. Good.”

Neither spoke for a moment until: “What, um, what happened with that ferry today? I saw Spider-Man was involved? There was some news coverage that even we got to see.”

Tony sighed and then he jumped into an explanation. He went back to the first night that had started everything -- that ATM robbery that Peter had been involved with and then the night that Peter had gone chasing that van and the whole thing at the Washington Monument until finally he got to the ferry.

“He is going to send me to an early grave,” Tony said. “I’m almost tempted to put the arc reactor
back in my chest before he gives me a heart attack. He’s -- I’ve never worried so much in my life.”

Steve laughed and Tony waited for him to respond.

“I think he’s just trying really hard to please you -- to show you what he can do,” Steve said at last. “That said, he can’t be that reckless. Maybe he just needs to train up a bit -- really practice with his powers so he’s not just running around trying things as he goes when he comes upon something like this.”

Tony smiled to himself. “I was never fond of those long morning drills you made us all do. Might be good for Peter, though. You’ll be back soon enough.”

“Yes and not supposed to be doing any of that,” Steve said.

“You’re allowed to train,” Tony said. “As long as it’s done inside the tower. Really there’s not much you can’t do inside the tower. But you’re probably right. It’s just that I’ve seen him in action, you know, and he’s amazing. He has such good instincts and he picks up on how to use his webs and the suit really well that it didn’t occur to me that that was something he needed to work on. Actually, he came very close to keeping that ferry together. Minor mistake.”

“You sound proud. And of course Peter needs to train.”

“I am,” Tony said. “Peter’s wonderful. He’s everything -- I just don’t want to lose him. He could be anything he wants and I’ll support him but I just -- I was so angry at him.”

“So let him be for a few days and then go see him. And the rest of us will be there soon and we’ll help -- I can’t wait to meet him.”

Tony let himself smile again. He could only imagine how happy Peter would be to meet Steve. To meet all of them really.

“I just hope he doesn’t decide to go out in those sweats of his while I have the suit. Anyway, enough about Peter. I’m making a few changes to the tower for all of you. Just wondering if you want your old floor back.”

“I don’t really think that will be necessary, will it? I mean, I’ll mostly be sleeping on that futon in your workshop.”

Tony couldn’t help but laugh, but he let his smile linger. “Just wanted to double check.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone liked this one. I particularly enjoyed writing the Tony and Steve convo in this one. Next chapter starts with a Michelle POV. That one should be up Saturday or Sunday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Michelle loved to people watch. It was literally one of her favorite things after reading, protesting, and just confusing people but that one related to the people watching because it was fun to watch confused people after they spoke to her. Michelle also just wasn’t all that fond of people. They were annoying and grating and for the most part stupid and usually a waste of time to talk to.

Her older sister always told her that she had to just have more patience and that she only felt that way because she didn’t really have friends. It was just that books were easier -- and more interesting -- and that no one at Midtown High seemed interesting enough for her to befriend. The only ones that came close were Ned Leeds and Peter Parker mostly because they were very amusing to watch. But they had each other and Michelle didn’t really want to infringe on their friendship especially since Ned seemed a bit clingy and because Peter didn’t actually seem like a good friend most of the time.

She had been sitting with them at lunch since the beginning of freshman year and for the most part things had always gone in a similar manner until Peter’s uncle died and then Peter understandably changed a bit. Except that he went from being grief stricken to just acting plain odd and he just kept getting odder. Summer had made things even stranger.

Peter had somehow landed a Stark Industries internship which was almost near impossible to get. He also then quit most of his extracurriculars and even tried to leave decathlon despite his obvious crush on Liz Allen which should have been reason enough to keep him in decathlon at least. But then Peter turned around and showed up for their competition in Washington DC which had been the specific reason he quit in the first place. Somehow, he’d then ended up missing the competition and no one ever found out why.

Of course there was also the odd way that Ned and Peter seemed to be whispering all the time too and Michelle just couldn’t really make heads or tails of what was going on with them because Peter just seemed to somehow know when Michelle was approaching and change the topic before she heard anything. Although some of the snippets of conversation that she had caught certainly sounded weird. It made her think they were reaching a very deep level of geekness that involved playing dungeons and dragons or something.

Things had started to make sense for her after Washington mostly because of Spider-Man. Unlike everyone else in school, she hadn’t been particularly interested in Spider-Man before the trip because it didn’t really matter in comparison to everything else like the greed of corporations and the extinction of the bees. She became interested once the hero from Queens showed up in Washington because what were the odds that Spider-Man would be there at the same time that they were. And then the next time that Spider-Man showed up it was back in New York and Michelle just knew.

Peter Parker had to be Spider-Man. She didn’t have full proof yet, and if there was anything Michelle knew it was that proof was important. So, she watched him. She followed him to detention but nothing exciting happened while there. Then after that, Peter just seemed down. He brushed Ned off and just seemed to be going through the motions. He stayed in detention and he went to class and he
even showed up to robotics lab. He still seemed hung up on Liz. It was disgusting.

Michelle had just sat down for lunch for more Peter -- or should she say, Spider-watching -- when Peter walked in and sat down next to Ned.

“I have a date for Homecoming,” he whispered to Ned and looked shocked while saying it.

Michelle felt shocked too. She hadn’t even expected Peter to go to Homecoming since he hadn’t managed to stay at Liz’ party for longer than five minutes which was yet another clue about him being Spider-Man. Michelle also hadn’t considered that Peter would actually build up the courage to ask anyone to go with him.

“What,” Ned said and was Ned capable of playing anything cool?

“Yeah, I have a date. I -- I asked Liz and she said she knew about me liking her already--”

Michelle couldn’t help but snort. Everyone knew that Peter was into Liz. Anyone with eyes could have been able to tell. Peter was the worst secret keeper ever. Hence -- Michelle knew that he was Spider-Man. But Peter had asked her -- he’d asked Liz and Liz had said yes.

“--anyway, she said she hadn’t had time to figure out a date because she was in charge of most of the planning. But, dude, I’m taking Liz Allen to Homecoming.”

Michelle told herself to shrug off the weird feeling that hearing Peter excited about his date gave her. Instead, she tried to figure out what the odds of Peter actually staying through the Homecoming Dance would be. It meant that she might just have to go and find out. Her mom and sister would be thrilled.

---

Tony was not entirely surprised at how fast everything moved. Happy had moving day all set up and ready. He even had an inventory going for everything which Tony had gone over and there were just so many things that he was surprised to find in the tower. Thor alone had left way too much behind but then they hadn’t actually moved any of his stuff to the compound back when they were all moving over there mostly because Thor hadn’t had plans to stay. He also hadn’t returned since which was only slightly concerning.

The thing about alien tech showing up — Chitauri tech at that, was that Tony still knew that he wasn’t wrong in worrying about an alien threat. It was one of the many things that he didn’t like thinking about and that he still felt like he needed to prepare for. That they all needed to prepare for. It was why he wanted everyone back together in a way. It made him a little nervous that Thor had yet to return.

In part due to how busy he was, Tony hadn’t reached out to Peter. He wanted to let him just have some time to think it all through. What Tony had had time for was getting a few new trackers into the suit and setting everything back to how it had been before. Tony also decided it was high time he actually review the footage the suit had taken. He didn’t see everything and was specific in what he asked Karen to replay for him because Peter did deserve some privacy. Afterwards he knew that Peter spent way too much time on rooftops, and that Peter’s intentions were always to be helpful.

After a few days of not hearing from Peter, Tony called May.

“Hi, Tony,” she said when she picked up. “How are you?”

“Good. I’m good. How’s Peter? Is he still upset?”
“Yeah. You could say that. He won’t talk about it -- whatever happened -- but he was really upset that night. I think he was just putting too much pressure on himself.”

Tony sighed. “I’d hoped giving him some time would help.”

“No, he’s doing okay, Tony. I think -- well, I don’t know what happened but whatever it was you can get through it. He, um, he asked this girl he’s been crushing on to Homecoming and she said yes so there’s that. He’s super excited.”

It was a little bit amazing how much May just didn’t seem to be keen on asking questions. She didn’t push or try to find answers when things got confusing or odd. With how Peter was with the secret, it was a real wonder that May hadn’t figured that he was Spider-Man yet. Actually, it was a wonder that only his friend Ned had figured him out. Maybe May just didn’t want to see it.

“That’s good,” Tony said. “I -- I’m really happy for him.”

Somehow, despite everything, it seemed that he was going to be missing this milestone too. Actually, Peter had never even thought to mention that he had a crush on anyone. But then, Tony had never asked any leading questions on that.

“I got him a suit already, but you can stop by Friday to see him off.”

“Sure,” Tony said and he was sure he agreed too fast.

“Also, he doesn’t know how to tie a tie and I don’t either so he’s going to need some help.”

“Thanks, May.”

---

Peter was surprised when Tony showed up while he was getting ready for the dance. Since Tony hadn’t called or texted or emailed since the whole thing with the ferry, Peter just hadn’t either. A part of him hadn’t wanted to either. Instead, he had refocused back in school and attending his detentions and then somehow he’d even managed to get a date with Liz. In the course of just a few days he’d gone back to how things used to be complete with Flash making fun of him for no apparent reason.

He and May had gone shopping for a suit for him to wear and Peter was excited about the whole thing. Excited and nervous. Somehow, Liz liked him for him without relating it to Spider-Man and it was the best feeling in the world. Ned still seemed to think that Peter needed to tell everyone about him being Spider-Man, but he’d cooled off a little once Peter told him that he didn’t even have the suit anymore. Of course that had brought a lot of questions about why, but even Ned seemed to notice that Peter just didn’t feel up to answering those questions.

The loss of the suit was still hitting him hard mostly because for so long it had become an escape for him. He had still gone out and just had a bit of fun with his powers and it had felt so absolutely freeing but it didn’t mean that he didn’t miss the suit. Karen inside his phone and computer just wasn’t the same and she was such a reminder of Tony and of everything that he was to Peter that he didn’t really like talking to Karen at the moment.

“I invited him,” May said when neither Tony or Peter spoke after Tony had arrived.

“Oh,” Peter said.

“Well you do need some help with getting your tie on,” May said.
It was nice to have him there, Peter couldn’t deny that, but he just didn’t how how to act or what to say and they had been past that already and now it felt like things were back to square one.

“So,” Tony said. “You have a date tonight.”

Peter nodded.

“It’s good. Is this the girl that Karen says you like,” Tony said.

“Karen told you about that?” Peter asked and he knew that he was blushing but Tony just smiled wide.

“Yeah, kid. Once May said you had a date with your crush I had to ask someone. Anyway, go get that suit on and lets get that tie on. I want to see what a cleaned up Peter looks like.”

“As opposed to one wearing hello kitty pajamas,” May said.

Peter groaned and Tony laughed.

When he had gotten his hair how he liked, gotten the suit on and just mentally prepared himself for everything, he came back out of his bedroom. Tony was drinking coffee with May in the kitchen and they both turned to look at him.

“You look so good,” May said and clapped her hands together once.

“You clean up good, kid,” Tony said and he placed his coffee mug on the counter. “Where’s the tie?”

Peter handed it to him. Any other time that Peter had had to wear a tie, Ben had been the one to tie it. For the funeral, Peter had gone without, but then he hadn’t actually worn a suit then either. Tony stepped up, wrapped it around his neck and winked at Peter.

“My butler taught me how to do this,” he said.

Peter nodded. His butler who had been named Jarvis -- the namesake for Tony’s first AI.

“Better to do it in front of a mirror,” Tony said and Peter led him to the bathroom. It was small and cramped and Peter thought that it would feel weird to be in a bathroom with Tony standing just behind him but it wasn’t.

Tony showed him while Peter watched on in the mirror, following his movements. Then, Tony took it apart and told Peter to do it on his own while Tony instructed.

“Not bad, kid. Not bad. Little crooked though.”

He turned Peter around and then started fixing it up for him. Tony turned down the collar and brushed off his shoulders and Peter knew that this was what it felt like to have a dad. It was the way that Tony looked at him and how he seemed so happy to be there even though it was for something so absolutely mundane. They hadn’t even talked about all the other stuff and yet even though they would need to, Peter somehow knew that things would be fine.

“She’s going to be really happy you’re her date, Peter,” Tony said. “This handsome boy.”

Peter ducked his head and Tony chuckled.

May made him take a bunch of pictures before either of them could leave.
“Got to go, kid. I would drive you there myself but it’s moving day and inspection day. Lots to do. Have fun tonight, alright?”

“I will,” Peter said.

“Take lots of awkward pictures,” Tony said as he walked to the door.

Things were far from good again just yet, but it gave Peter hope that things weren’t as bad as he thought they were.

But then, things did get worse. They got worse big time when Liz’ dad opened the front door and it was him -- it was the guy with the wings.

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed writing the Michelle POV in this one. But I also really enjoyed writing the last scene as well because I really really wanted that moment for Peter and next up Homecoming and a Ned POV. Should be up Tuesday or Wednesday.

Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 84

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was normal to be nervous while your date’s father drove the two of you to a dance. Perfectly normal. Except that had it been normal, Peter would have been worried about making a good impression or the date itself and not because the bad guy -- the guy that Peter had been trying to catch this entire time was his date’s father. The winged guy was Liz’ dad.

And by the time they made it to the school and the dance he knew that Peter was Spider-Man. Mr. Toomes. No, just Toomes sent Liz away and then he turned in his seat and looked at Peter dead in the eyes and it felt like time had stopped. His breath caught in his throat and his heart was beating fast.

“--nothing is more important than family. You saved my daughter’s life. I could never forget something like that. So I’m gonna give you one chance. Are you ready? You walk through those doors,” Toomes said, “you forget any of this happened -- and don’t you ever, ever interfere with my business again. Because if you do, I’ll kill you and everybody you love. I’ll kill you dead. That’s what I’ll do to protect my family. Do you understand?”

Peter was scared, downright terrified as he sat in the back of the car and there was an intensity in Toomes’ eyes that told Peter exactly how much he meant it and not just meant it but also had a way to make it happen. He would go after May.

“And I know Iron Man is involved in this somehow -- he just keeps on showing up and maybe I can’t touch him but I certainly know what he’s about and he’ll abandon you too, Pete. After all, he could have stopped me a long time ago and he didn’t and as far as I can tell he hasn’t really made any real attempts. So, look at that, I just saved your life. What do you say?”

Peter had to force it out. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Toomes said. “Now, you go in there and you show my daughter a good time, okay? Just not too good.”

Peter did the only logical thing that he could think to do. He left his phone behind as he got out of the car and he knew even as Toomes drove away that he couldn’t just go into the dance as if nothing had happened. First and foremost, he had to call Tony. Except that his phone was in the car and he didn’t have the suit and he didn’t actually know Tony’s number. Still, he walked towards the school and tried to shake the shock of it all because he still couldn’t believe it. The guy that he’d been trying to catch had been Liz’ dad all along and none of it made any sense--

Inside the music was blaring. Ned waved at him and he seemed to be hanging out with Michelle and a few other people. Liz was somewhere with her friends and she just looked so pretty. She was perfect. If Peter cared less he might have been able to just enjoy the night with her, but he wasn’t that person. He couldn’t look the other way.
Liz seemed to be able to tell that something was wrong as he approached.

“What did he say to you?” She asked.

A lot. Too much. “I -- I have to go,” Peter said and there was no way to explain it.

She was disappointed and confused and she didn’t even seem to know what to say and Peter felt like the biggest jerk. This was not how this night was supposed to go. It was so unfair.

“I’m sorry. You don’t deserve this.”

He walked past her and didn’t look back. There was no coming back from this when it came to Liz. Actually, there was no hope for anything with Liz because Peter was about to call Iron Man on her father and the guilt of taking her father from her would eat him alive despite the fact that her father was a criminal. It just -- it meant that dating Liz just wasn’t going to be possible, not if he’d be guilty about it. It was already bothering him -- Peter knew well what it was like to lose a parent. Still -- he couldn’t let him get away and keep being the reason that alien tech was being used to make weapons. He was the bad guy. Not to mention that he’d just threatened to hurt anyone Peter loved.

It was lucky, in a way, that he’d brought his old suit to school the other day when he planned to go out afterwards. He hadn’t managed to go but the suit was still there as were the old versions of the web shooters. It was going to have to do because Peter didn’t have much of a plan aside from getting in touch with Tony somehow and figuring out a way to track his phone. Peter also couldn’t really leave it just to Tony because he didn’t know how long they had before Toomes was gone and then they might not have a chance to catch him at all.

He got into the suit quickly and ran outside but of course Toomes had left behind one of his guys -- he had expected Peter to not listen.

---

Ned didn’t remember exactly how Michelle had convinced him that they should go together to Homecoming, but he’d ended up picking her up with his mom and driving there together. It had felt weird except that Michelle really wasn’t all that bad once you got used to her. It was also nice not to have to show up on his own since Peter was off bringing Liz to the dance which Ned still thought was kind of crazy.

“He’s late,” Michelle said.

Ned didn’t even have to ask to know she was talking about Peter. “Did we expect anything else from Peter?”

Michelle didn’t just laugh. She tended to cackle. She was odd.

“Still don’t really get what Liz sees in him, if I’m honest,” Michelle said with a shrug.

Ned didn’t respond. Mostly, he didn’t know what to say because it seemed to him like Michelle really liked people to think she didn’t care about much when it was so clear that she actually did care and she cared a lot.

When Liz entered on her own, it made Ned worry. Had something happened? Was it Spider-Man related? Had Peter actually bailed on taking Liz to the dance? But Liz seemed fine, she was gushing over her friends’ clothes and they were all discussing how well the planning had gone and how great everything looked and Ned figured that she would be more visibly upset if Peter had bailed on her. So, he waited, and sure enough there was Peter.
Except that Peter looked white as a sheet and he didn’t even really acknowledge that Ned had waved at him. He just stalked towards Liz and he said something to her that made her frown and then he was rushing away and Ned knew something was up.

Michelle seemed to be looking after Peter too with an odd frown.

“I got to go,” Ned muttered.

“Yeah,” Michelle said. “Go.”

He didn’t find Peter immediately, but he knew that Peter didn’t have the high tech suit anymore so Peter probably hadn’t gone far. Then he heard something crash out back and he was running just in time to see Peter facing off against some guy with a weird device on his arm and Peter didn’t really seem to be doing too well.

Ned spotted one of the web shooters when he almost stumbled over it and he grabbed it to hopefully toss to Peter, but he saw an opening instead and he shot a string of web out and it seemed to help.

“Nice shot!” Peter called out and then he seemed to just wrap his arm around the web that Ned had shot and just thrown the guy against the bus. Just how strong was Peter?

Ned let go of the web shooter and Peter caught it deftly and just threw a giant web at the guy and had him stuck to a bus which was crazy cool. He realized, then, that he’d never actually seen Peter in action outside of YouTube videos. It was crazy impressive.

Peter rushed over to him and he looked shaken. “Liz’ dad is the guy with the wings! I -- we have to contact Tony.” Peter seemed to be trying to come up with a plan on the fly and after a few seconds he stared at Ned and nodded to himself. “You’re going to have to be my guy in the chair, Ned. I need you to call Tony and if he doesn’t answer tell Friday it’s an emergency. Tell them to track my phone. You should track it too! Yeah, get a computer and track it. We have to hurry -- we have to catch him before he gets out of town.”

Peter spoke so quickly that Ned almost didn’t catch everything he was saying, but he managed to get the gist of the important bits including how Peter seemed to call Tony Stark by his first name and found it so normal that he didn’t even notice he did it.

Peter rushed off, jumping up into the air and flipping on top of a streetlamp and Ned rushed back inside the school, running towards the nearest computer lab. He got to the computer lab and quickly logged into the first computer he saw and began to process of getting access to Peter’s phone. It was lucky that he had most of Peter’s password information memorized since Peter used the same thing for everything. He was inviting someone to hack him. For good measure he put on one of the headsets and connected that to his own phone.

**Chapter End Notes**

And so it begins...

Next chapter is a continuation of the Ned POV. It will probably be up Friday.

Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into [Portuguese](#) for anyone that's interested.
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Chapter 85

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading!
This chapter is a bit early since I got editing done early. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ned’s phone rang the default tone and Ned was surprised when his phone displayed Flash’s name as it rang which just didn’t make sense because Flash never called him. He picked up partly out of surprise and curiosity, in spite of all the other million things that he had to do. He shouldn’t have been surprised that it was Peter.

“Hello, Ned? Hey, hey, can you hear me?”

Something was happening on Peter’s end. Loud -- maybe windy. “Go for Ned,” Ned answered. He almost had Peter’s phone.

“I need you to...to track my phone,” Peter said.

“I’m working on it. Where is it?” Ned asked and the location was loading.

“Liz’ dad’s car.”

“Genius move,” Ned said and he did quick work of getting the location services to work for him. The phone was on the move. “Okay, he just passed the GameStop on Jackson Avenue. I’m sending the tracking info to Flash’s phone.”

“Hey, where are the headlights on this thing? I’m in Flash’s car.” Peter sounded a little panicked and Ned had to wonder about why he was in a car instead of using his webbing to go after the bad guy. Didn’t Peter usually just swing to and from places?

Ned logged onto another computer. He needed more screens. “I’ll pull the specs.”

“Okay,” Peter said.

Ned had to backtrack as it finally settled on him. “Wait, you stole Flash’s car? Awesome.”

He’d stolen Flash’s car and phone clearly. Flash was probably livid.

“Yeah, it’s awesome,” Peter said and he sounded distracted. “Get out of the way! Move! Move!” Peter yelled.

“Are you okay?” Ned asked. He was working as fast as he could with the car specs and the phone but there was Peter distracting him too. Rolling back and forth from one computer to the other was fun though and--

“I’ve never driven before….well, only with May in parking lots. This is kind of different. I think after tonight I’m going to actually have to learn. Maybe -- hey, have you called Tony yet?”
“Working on it,” Ned said even though it had slipped his mind with everything else that he had to do. He rolled over to the computer Peter’s phone was on. “I just gotta backdoor the phone system.” Ned typed and typed and he almost had it. It wasn’t too difficult. It was loading.

“Guy in the chair,” Ned said mostly to himself and he rolled over to the car specs for a second but it was a PDF file and the type was tiny. The other computer made a noise and Ned rolled back to that screen. He was in. He had to find the phone number and make the call. But what did Peter have Tony Stark under?

Ned got into contacts and he tried to search for Tony Stark, Mr. Stark, even Tony but none of them seemed to appear in contacts. So then he began to scroll through them but that didn’t help any. Peter had a lot of contacts.

“Peter, I can’t find him in your phone. What’s his contact name?”

Peter gasped and after a short pause: “Um -- it’s Peter, I am your father.”

Ned had seen that one -- had assumed it was Ben’s old number and some odd sort of joke but this -- “What?” Ned was sure that if he had been holding something he would have dropped it. As it was his mouth did fall open.

“Ned! Ned! We can talk about that later. Just call him! And the lights, how do I turn on the lights?”

Ned shook himself. He had move past the shock -- past the implication that Tony Stark was Peter’s father. He needed to leave his freak out for later because Peter was driving a car and following some a dangerous guy. From everything that Peter had told him about the guy, he wasn’t someone that Peter could just take on. He needed to focus on helping Peter.

Once he had the right contact name finding the number was easy enough. Ned figured it would be best to call through Peter’s own phone even if it was a remote call. He just hoped it worked. Oh, god, he was calling Tony Stark. He was calling Peter’s dad? This was the weirdest thing that had ever happened to Ned.

It rang a couple of times but no one answered.


Then finally a voice came through. “This is the phone of Tony Stark. He is busy at the moment but will get back to you if this call is important.”

“It’s going to voicemail,” he said to Peter. Damn it.

“No, no, he doesn’t have voicemail. That must be Friday. Just tell her it’s an emergency.”


He got back onto the phone. “Um, is this Friday? I’m -- this is Ned. I’m Peter’s friend. It’s an emergency. Peter’s in trouble.”

“Trying to connect to Mr. Stark,” the voice said at once. “Unable to connect.”

“She can’t connect to him,” Ned said to Peter. “I don’t--”

Friday spoke again. “Calling Happy Hogan.”

Peter didn’t respond at once. “That has to be a security protocol--”
The phone rang a couple of times--

Ned scrolled through the car specs. There was just so much information.

“Take off in nine minutes. Hello? Who is this?”

Ned turned back to the other computer and sure enough a video call had gone through and some guy in a dark suit and tie was on the screen looking confused. Ned supposed that was supposed to be Happy. He didn’t seem like the friendliest of guys. It made Ned wonder about the name. Behind Happy there were people moving with boxes into what seemed to be a plane. Happy didn’t seem particularly interested in Ned from the way he was looking at him. Instead, he seemed to be more concerned with what was going on behind him. Only because of Peter and how he’d always been interested in Iron Man -- which, wasn’t that just ironic? -- Ned knew that Happy was Tony Stark’s bodyguard.

“Hello?” Happy asked.

“Oh. Hi. Mr. Happy, it’s Ned. I’m sure you don’t know who I am but I’m an associate of Peter Parker. I got something important to tell you--”

Happy went from annoyed to angry and he hung up after, “you got to be shitting me...is this an idea of a prank.”

“Damn it,” Ned muttered. He tried to call Tony Stark’s number again.

“Hey, Ned, how we coming on with those headlights?” Peter asked.

Ned turned and the information was right there. He skimmed it and found it at once. “Round knob to the left of the steering wheel. Turn clockwise.” At least that was one thing he’d gotten right.

“Left. Okay. Perfect.”

The call went through to Friday again. “Unable to contact Mr. Stark,” Friday said.

“Okay. Okay. But can we call someone other than Happy? Someone that can help Peter?” Ned asked.

“Calling Ms. Potts,” Friday said.

“Thank god,” Ned muttered. He really didn’t fancy dealing with Happy again.

This whole thing was insane. Peter had found his father and it wasn’t just some random guy but Tony freaking Stark and Ned didn’t know what he was going to do if he didn’t get through to him. He had to wonder about that Happy guy and why he’d just brushed him off without even trying to find out what was going on. Ned just hoped Ms. Potts wouldn’t do the same. Peter needed help. Peter was relying on Ned to get him help.

His next option might be having to call May and see if she could get someone to pick up. If May knew that Tony Stark was Peter’s father then she would surely have a way to get in contact with him. He knew that Peter didn’t want May involved but Ned had also seen what that guy had almost done to Peter and clearly the guy with the wings -- Liz’s dad! -- just had to be worse. Peter needed his best friend to stay alive.

The phone was ringing.
“Ned, Ned! Where is my phone now? GPS stopped.”

“Peter, he stopped in an old industrial park in Brooklyn,” Ned said, finally looking at the location of Peter’s phone again. Maybe that was the final destination.

“He said he was going out of town. Weird,” Peter muttered. “He must be up to something.”

The phone rang a few more times and Ned was losing hope that Ms. Potts would pick up. If she didn’t, he didn’t know what might happen.

“Tony Stark didn’t pick up. I was redirected to someone named Happy. Don’t think he likes you, by the way. It sounded like he was catching a flight. Was loading something up. Something about taking off in nine minutes. Anyway, he hung up on me.”

“What?” Peter said.

“He was surrounded by boxes. Loading up a plane.”

“Boxes,” Peter repeated and then, “It’s moving day. Tony even told me earlier. Shit. Ned, he’s going to rob that plane. I have to stop him. Are you calling again? Tony’s probably -- he said something about an inspection.”

“Friday is redirecting the call to Ms. Potts, now,” Ned said.

“Okay,” Peter said. “She’ll listen.”

“I hope so,” Ned said.

The phone rang a few times. And then someone actually appeared on the computer screen. Did everyone that worked for Tony Stark use video calls over regular phone calls?

“Hello,” she said and frowned, “who is this?”

It was Pepper Potts and she was frowning at him and Ned was sure that she was going to hang up on him.

“Hi,” Ned said and this was just all kinds of strange and awkward. “Um, I’m Ned. I’m an associate of Peter Parker. I got something very important to tell you--”

Her expression changed at once. Still confused but maybe worried. “About Peter? What’s wrong -- what happened?” As she spoke she moved, getting up and walking.

“He’s in trouble,” Ned said and he was so glad that she was taking this seriously. “He needs help. He needs Iron Man.”

“Okay. Okay. I -- where’s Peter?”

“He’s following the guy with the wings -- the alien weapons dealer. Peter’s trying to stop him. It’s a warehouse in Brooklyn -- Peter’s nearly there but he’s going to need back up. I don’t think he’s going to be able to handle this on his own, Ms. Potts.”

She was walking faster. “Well, he could. He shouldn’t--”

Ned nodded. “Peter needs Iron Man.”

Ms. Potts looked shocked and unsure all at once but then she nodded. “Thank you, Ned. I’ll let Tony
know.”

In the meanwhile, Peter really was almost there. Ned just hoped that he wouldn’t be too in over his head with this and that Iron Man got there in time -- that Peter’s freaking dad got there in time. How had this become Peter’s life? He was a superhero with a superhero father and Ned was somehow his best friend and his guy in the chair. It was crazy. This was not how normal people lived.

On Peter’s end he heard something that sounded like crunching metal which wasn’t good.

“Peter?”

“I’m okay,” Peter said but he sounded a little winded. “Did you get through?”

“Ms. Potts is telling him,” Ned said and then the phone call cut off.

“Peter?” Ned asked. This wasn’t good -- this wasn’t good at all. “Peter?” Nope. He really was gone.

When he looked back at the other screen it looked like Ms. Potts had left the call running but her phone was pointed to the ground.

Then, Ned heard voices.

“Tony! Tony!”

Some more muffled sounds and Ms. Potts seemed to be moving again.

Ned gulped as Ms. Potts moved the phone and then he was looking at Tony Stark. He was so so impressive. “Peter’s in trouble,” Ms. Potts said.

Ned didn’t know if he could get words out. “He went after the guy--”

That’s when Ned heard footsteps and he was going to be busted. But that didn’t matter because he’d gotten through to Tony Stark and Peter was not going to be alone in his fight. So whatever trouble he was in -- whatever detention he got -- it would be so so worth it as long as Peter came out of it alive.

“What!” Tony Stark said.

“Peter,” Ned said, “he went after that guy with the mechanical wings. He’s in trouble -- he told me to call...I lost contact with him a little bit ago.”

The lights turned on.

“What are you doing here? There’s a dance--”

Ned glanced at the screen where Tony Stark had disappeared. Ms. Potts smiled tightly at him. “Thank you,” she said and then the call cut off.

Ms. Warren was staring at him and her eyebrows were raised, her arms were crossed. Ned was in big trouble.

“Mr. Leeds, what are you doing? You’re supposed to be at the dance and--”

Ned’s eyes widened. He gulped and then: “I’m -- I’m looking at porn?”

Why was that the best thing he could come up with?
I really really loved writing this chapter. Ned is always fun to write and I think his perspective really worked for this part. But also I didn’t know he was going to find out about Tony being Peter’s dad here until I was writing it, but it just works. And Next we have Peter at the warehouse. I think the next chapter should be up Sunday.

Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 86

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading.

This one is late. And I did write up a note over on my tumblr about the chapter being late but I'm still sorry it is. I hate not posting by the day that I've planned to but it was just a particularly long weekend and I didn't get to editing or writing anything all. But anyway, sorry for the wait. Hope you all like this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Friday alerted Tony to two suspicious calls that didn’t seem to originate from an actual phone, but since he was actually busy with the FBI inspection of the living floors for everyone that was returning, he figured he’d deal with all of that later especially since Friday hadn’t seemed too pressed about it. It had been a little annoying that the FBI decided that they needed to do the inspection on the same night as when everything was leaving the tower. Tony had tried to make them change the day by telling them he could only do the evening, but instead they had just agreed to show up at night. Tony knew it was mostly because they were in some sort of rush to get them all back. If Tony weren’t glad for how fast things were going, he would have found it a little suspicious.

They were mostly done when Friday announced that Pepper was heading his way.

“Okay,” Tony said, a little surprised because he couldn’t think of any reason for Pepper to need to see him.

He didn’t expect for Pepper to just suddenly arrive. “Tony! Tony!”

Tony turned and the FBI agent closest to him turned to look at him. “I -- I will be right back,” Tony said. “Keep doing whatever it is you’re doing.”

“Peter’s in trouble,” Pepper said at once and then turned her phone towards him and Tony hadn’t known to expect Peter’s friend. What was his name? Ted? No -- no, it was--

“Tony went after the guy,” the kid said.

Ned. His name was ned. Wait, what guy?

“What!” Tony said. Why hadn’t he expected for Peter to get into some sort of trouble at his school dance.

“Peter,” Ned said, “he went after that guy with the mechanical wings. He’s in trouble -- he told me to call...I lost contact with him a little bit ago.”

Tony looked away from Ned and instead at Pepper who looked as worried as Tony felt. Pepper didn’t even really know what Ned was talking about either. The winged guy -- how had that happened?

“I have to go,” Tony said.
Pepper nodded.

“Can you -- take care of them.”

Pepper nodded quickly. “Yes. Of course I can. You have to go. Go.”

Tony rushed out of the room past Pepper to the elevator and Friday didn’t have to ask before she took him up and then he was in the workshop. He grabbed Peter’s suit -- set back to how it was supposed to be. Then, he ran out to get into his armor.

“Friday, where’s Peter exactly? Can we get a track on his phone?”

“It seems he’s in Brooklyn,” Friday said.

“Which is exactly where his dance is not.”

“You are correct, boss,” Friday said.

His kid was just never going to have any kind of normal thing ever no matter how much they all tried to keep things normal for him. No, instead he got super powers, found out his father was Tony Stark, and couldn’t even go on a field trip or dance without getting into some sort of trouble.

Tony flew fast, following the directions Friday had for the phone’s tracker. She filled him in on everything else that had gone on -- how Peter’s friend had called and Friday had had to redirect him to Happy because that’s what she’d been told to do if the number was odd in some way or the call didn’t seem to be coming in strangely. Tony didn’t blame her for it. He just hated that Happy hadn’t taken whatever Peter’s friend had said seriously. It would have saved them so much more time -- Tony just didn’t know what he was going to find when he did get to Peter and maybe getting there sooner would have made a difference. Maybe it was time that Happy was filled in on who Peter was to him so that he could understand the importance of not ignoring anything Peter related.

---

Peter hadn’t seen it coming -- hadn’t realized that it was a distraction and that Toomes was just biding his time while talking and talking and trying to somehow convince Peter to view things his way. Peter had seen some of his plans -- he was aiming high and going for taking the whole plane and everything that was on it. This was supposed to be a last hurrah -- the last heist before he just disappeared. Peter didn’t know what that would mean for his wife and daughter, but Toomes had been doing this being their backs for years. Peter supposed that the plan had been set in motion before Peter figured out his identity. He seemed to call himself The Vulture from what Peter could make out of his plans. As far as secret identities -- it seemed fitting what with the wings and the scavenging aspect of his whole operation.

“How do you think your buddy Stark paid for that tower? Or any of his little toys? Those people, Pete, those people up there -- the rich and the powerful, they do whatever they want. Guys like us, like you and me, they don’t care about us. We have to pick up after them. We have to eat their table scraps. That’s how it is. I know you know what I’m talking about, Peter. After all, it does seem you know Stark personally.”

It had been hard to listen to -- to realize that Toomes did sort of have a point and yet he had it all wrong because while there were some people out there that were like what he was describing, it didn’t fit Tony. That wasn’t his father. Sure, Tony Stark had made mistakes, but he had more than made up for them. He was far more interested in making things better than not. Peter was well aware of all the foundations and donations and just everything that Tony did to make things better. Toomes
was -- he was the one putting weapons out onto the streets for people to use to kill themselves or others and creating chaos.

“Why are you telling me this?” Peter asked.

“Because I want you to understand,” Toomes said. “And because it’s obvious you idolize Stark and one day he’ll disappoint you and he will leave you behind just like everyone else because that man -- he doesn’t care who he hurts or who he barrels over--”

That wasn’t Tony. Peter had to remind himself of that. Peter raised his hands to throw more web at him, but before he could he heard the wings and he turned to look.

“Really, what I needed was a little time to get her airborne. Not that I don’t believe what I’ve told you, Pete.” Toomes smirked.

Peter had gone a screwed it up again. Peter had just -- he had been hoping that if he held out for long enough that Tony would show up and they could just arrest the guy or something. He hadn’t realized that the wings could be controlled on their own. So while standing around just listening to Toomes talk -- despite the fact that he had him stuck to the desk -- he’d given The Vulture enough time to make his next move. The mechanical wings headed towards him. Peter dodged and jumped out of the way.

Toomes used that moment to cut himself out of the web and Peter was too busy dealing with the wings which just seemed to keep coming back at him even if they didn’t seem to come too close to actually hitting him and they were easy to dodge. Peter would have assumed that Toomes would want to get them on, but instead attacked him on their own.

When Peter finally got a chance to look towards Toomes, he just seemed to be watching with some odd amusement which left him confused -- but he didn’t have much time to think as he jumped out of the way of the wings yet again.

“I’m sorry, Peter,” Toomes said after a while when Peter landed on his feet after a particularly good dodge.

“What are you talking about? That thing hasn’t even touched me yet.”

“True. Then again, wasn’t really trying to,” Toomes said.

Why hadn’t Peter realized? He hadn’t been paying close enough attention. He was so stupid and Toomes just seemed to get the better of him again and again. The support beams! The wings had cut through all of them and that’s why the wings were flying all around him with no real aim -- it had never been about them getting to Peter.

From then, it began to happen. Starting to collapse and Peter sort -- he knew it before it happened. And then it was...and Peter wasn’t fast enough as it all just came down. He couldn’t get out of the way of it and the concrete was falling. Splintered wood and other debris that just rained down all at once and Peter was thrown to the ground surrounded by dust as he became pinned and more and more kept coming down and Peter couldn’t move -- couldn’t even try to wiggle out of it. She shock of it all hardly made him feel it and then once he did--

Peter screamed. Everything hurt. He could feel the weight of the concrete on him and it felt like he was being smothered. He couldn’t move -- couldn’t push the weight of it off and he knew he was starting to panic. Everything was too loud and yet not at all at the same time and Peter didn’t know if he could get out on his own. He needed help. Logically Peter knew he could probably lift all of the
concrete and roof off -- but he was on his back and he was freaking out and logic wasn’t a part of any of it. It couldn’t be when his heart beat so fast that it was all that he could hear. Most of his body felt shaky and like it was being pierced everywhere. Breathing was hard -- shallow and it hurt every time. He needed help -- someone had to come. Peter coughed. Maybe if he called out.

“Help!” He yelled and it was weak so he tried again. “Hello? Hello! Please, please, I’m down here! I’m down here! I’m stuck. I can’t move. I can’t -- I can’t--”

Someone must have heard the building going down right? Would they go check it out or call the police? Peter hoped so. Someone had to come. Otherwise -- no, no, he couldn’t think like that. He was Spider-Man. Where was Karen? Why wasn’t she there to help him through it or to talk to him and get him help. He needed her more than ever. No, it wasn’t just Karen. Wasn’t even the suit. He needed--

Oh, god, he was going to die like this -- stuck under all the concrete and the rubble and who knew when someone might find him. May would lose the last of her family and then there was Tony -- his dad. Oh, god, his dad! He needed his dad!

“Dad! Dad! I can’t do this!” His voice was getting raspier. “I can’t -- I’m stuck. Please, please! Someone, please! Help!”

His voice wasn’t loud and he was getting hoarse. No one was going to hear him or rescue him. He was stuck. Peter didn’t know when he started crying, but he did and he could remember Tony -- his dad -- saying something about the suit. How the suit wasn’t -- it didn’t make him Spider-Man. It was like -- biology alone didn’t make Tony Stark his dad but everything else did. The way he cared and worried and--

Peter was sobbing. His chest was tight and the didn’t think he’d be able to yell again. But even trying to shift any of the weight on him was difficult and the longer he was under everything the harder it would become. Suddenly, Peter thought he heard a familiar sound -- but it couldn’t be--

“Peter! Peter! Where are you? Peter!”

Peter could hear him -- he could hear the suit and maybe it was in his head and he was making it up. “Peter!”

“Dad? Dad! I’m here. I’m here!” He tried to be louder, tried to make a movement if only so that his dad might spot him and when he tried to push up the rubble actually moved a little and Peter felt like he could breathe.

A moment later, more of the building that had fallen on him moved and Peter pushed up too once he realized that he could. He could do this -- he could get out. His dad was here -- he had come for him. Clearer and clearer were the sounds of the repulsors. Warmth blossomed in his chest despite everything. Ned had done it -- he’d gotten through to Tony. Everything was going to be okay because Iron Man was here. His dad was here.

The Iron Man suit appeared amongst all the dust and Iron Man reached for him and Peter reached back -- the cold metal met his hand and Peter pulled himself up with Iron Man’s help until he was out and Peter could actually stand. He stumbled a little at first and nearly fell against the suit and his dad didn’t hesitate to just pick him up, one armored arm under his knees and the other at his back. He flew them out. Peter didn’t even notice how much it hurt -- how sore he was and how his very skin felt like it had been rubbed too hard.
They landed not too far from where Peter had left Flash’s crashed car and there his dad stepped out of the suit and Peter who was covered in concrete dust, sweat, tears, and probably some blood too, threw himself at Tony and his dad caught him at once and it didn’t matter that his body was too sore and that his dad’s arms were brushing against bruised skin. Mostly, Peter just wanted the warmth of his dad and to listen to the heartbeat that formed a steady rhythm that Peter could match his own to.

“You came,” Peter whispered and he knew he was crying again. It didn’t matter.

Tony pulled back and Peter looked up at him. Tony seemed to be assessing him. He lifted one hand and brushed his fingers on Peter’s cheek and Peter saw the grey dust that they came away with.

“Of course I did, kiddo,” his dad said. “I’ll always come.”

“Good,” Peter said.

Tony reached out to wipe Peter’s tears which just made Peter cry even more because even though he’d been under the rubble for what was probably only minutes it had been scarier than anything he’d ever experienced and he had felt alone and sure that he would die. He’d thought that no one was going to come -- that somehow Ned wouldn’t have gotten in contact with his dad and that all of it would have been some big mistake like just about everything else he’d done.

Peter fell towards Tony and buried his face against Tony’s neck and Tony just rubbed his back and it took Peter a moment to remember why this had all happened in the first place. Tony’s fingers had started carding through Peter’s hair -- soothing and comforting. But wait--

Peter pulled away and looked up at Tony who looked back at him confused and worried.

“Dad, we -- he’s going to steal whatever you’re moving to The Avengers compound. That’s -- we -- you -- have to stop him.”

Tony nodded. “Okay.”

“I -- it’s okay if you don’t want me to--”

His dad stared at him for a long while and then he pushed back from of Peter’s hair from his forehead. “Suit up, Spider-Man,” he said and he smiled a little.

Peter looked at him incredulously because it was the last thing he had expected, but Tony nodded and then from somewhere just pulled out his Spider-Man suit and Peter took it with shaking hands.

Chapter End Notes

This is in some ways one of the best moments for Tony and Peter and I really loved how the moment worked out...
Next chapter should be up by Thursday.
Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 87

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading. There was a strong response to the last chapter which was interesting. I actually wrote out a bit of an explanation on my choices for the changes for anyone interested. It’s over on my tumblr.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

He called him dad.

It was -- it was a minor detail to focus on in light of everything that was happening, but at the same time it was huge.

Peter changed into the suit and Tony gave him his privacy but even then, he couldn’t help but notice that Peter had a lot of bruising on him. That guy had made a building fall on Peter. On his son. He was going to pay for that. Tony had been so relieved to find Peter after Friday alerted him to the building collapse that his anger at knowing what had occurred had faded some, but it was fast returning.

“Dad,” Peter said and the word was everything.

“Yeah?”

“He was my date’s father,” Peter said. “I don’t know if Ned told you. I wasn’t looking for trouble -- I was just going to the dance and he figured out I’m Spider-Man and--”

“And?” Tony asked.

Peter sort of shrugged his shoulders. “He threatened me -- told me to stay away. I couldn’t, though. I really couldn’t and you have to understand, I wasn’t--”

“I know, Pete,” Tony said, cutting him off.

It was a hard reality to face -- to realize that maybe he had been too hard on Peter. Too overbearing and too much of what could be considered overprotective. He’d watched enough footage of Peter’s time with the suit to know that Peter was good at what he did. That everything he’d done over the course of this whole thing with the weapon dealers had been with every good intention and then a whole bunch of bad luck.

“Thanks for coming for me. I was —”

“I know.”

Peter wiped at his eyes and face but there was still a lot of dust left behind. “I didn’t think Ned would get through to you.”

“Friday redirected him to Pepper. If that hadn’t happened I don’t think I would have known.”

“Oh,” Peter said and he looked down. “I stole a car.”
Tony couldn’t help but laugh and then he looked towards the car. “I can see that,” he said. “You weren’t kidding about not being able to drive. We might have to rectify that among other things.”

His kid was a precious amazing and wonderful mess and Tony couldn’t imagine ever loving anyone the way that he loved Peter.

“So, what are we--” Peter trailed off and sort of motioned is arms.

Tony had been thinking about that too. They had to find and capture this guy. It was high time this was dealt with.

“Friday?” Tony asked.

“Boss, there’s movement over by that empty billboard,” Friday said, from the suit and both he and Peter turned and sure enough the winged guy was up there and he didn’t seem to be moving. That was the man that had made a building fall on his kid and he wasn’t going to be getting away.

“The plane,” Peter said with a gasp. “He’s waiting for the plane to take off.”

Tony turned to look at Peter. “What?” he asked.

“Your plane,” Peter said. “He’s trying to steal the plane and everything on it.”

---

“Friday, where is the plane?” Tony asked.

Peter kept his eyes fixed on Toomes. He seemed to just be perched up there by the billboard. Peter could just swing up there. Toomes probably wouldn’t even expect it really. He glanced back at his dad and then he put the mask on.

“You are injured, Peter,” Karen said.

“Doesn’t matter right now. And hardly.”

“The plane took off two minutes ago,” Tony said and Peter heard the strain in his voice. They had wasted too much time after Peter had been rescued.

“Can it -- can it fly back to the tower?” Peter asked.

Tony shook his head. “No-- wait, he’s on the move.”

Peter turned fast and sure enough The Vulture was in the air. Peter didn’t think twice before he ran up Flash’s car and jumped into the air as he threw out a web. He swung up towards where The Vulture had been. He heard the Iron Man repulsors behind him and enjoyed the sound as he reached the billboard. The Vulture was too high up to reach, but Iron Man wasn’t as he flew past and Peter didn’t even give him warning before he attached a web to the armor.

“Where’s the plane?” Peter asked.

“Reflector panels,” Tony said and he sounded distracted.

Peter focused on how quickly they were moving. If they could get a little closer he might be able to grab onto The Vulture. Although maybe that might make him notice them. Peter shot another web at the armor to steady him and his dad glanced back and in that same moment a couple of things happened.
The Vulture turned. One of Peter’s webs broke off.

The next moment happened quickly. “I knew you’d be around here somewhere, Stark,” The Vulture said. “So I prepared for that. Just like I prepared for Peter. Shame it had to come to that. I kind of liked the kid.”

That was when Peter realized that Toomes hadn’t seen him. He was hanging off of the armor but just out of view and it was dark. The Vulture was also overconfident and so sure that he’d managed to keep Peter under the building.

“You’re going to pay for that.” Tony said and then Tony lifted his arm and Peter was trying to keep himself from moving too much due to the wind. He could tell that Tony wasn’t moving too much because of him -- because the high altitude was not something that Peter had accounted for while creating his webbing and the wind was pushing and pushing at it.

Toomes dodged the repulsor blast and Peter felt the web breaking. He shot out another but it didn’t land on the Iron Man armor. Instead, it was on The Vulture who didn’t even seem to notice. He was far more focused on his dad which was good except that Iron Man somehow didn’t see The Vulture throw something at him.

“Dad,” Peter gasped over comms, but it wasn’t enough warning.

“EMP,” Karen said to Peter just as The Vulture flew up and away from Iron Man and taking Peter with him.

“The suit can guard against that, though,” Peter said to Karen.

“Yes, but I don’t believe that was a regular EMP,” Karen said.

Peter turned even as he had to hold on as The Vulture speeded up and he caught the tail end of the blast and then Iron Man was falling.

“Dad?” Peter asked over comms. There was no response. “Karen, what do I do?”

“Iron Man suit will be up and running soon,” Karen said.

“Okay. Okay. So I have to stop The Vulture, then.” Peter took a deep breath. He had just been under a building that this man had brought down on him and every single time before this had ended horribly but --- but he could do this. He could do this.

“Are we getting close to the plane?” Peter asked.

“According to GPS we’re close,” Karen said.

They hadn’t even managed to delay The Vulture much. The wind was coming harder and harder as they came up faster and then they were at the plane and Peter had to brace himself as The Vulture landed and Peter just managed to hold on. He threw more web at it and at least some of it stuck but it kept being ripped off. So much for amazing tensile strength.

“Karen, how -- what do I do?” Peter asked.

“The plane does not have a pilot. Just a destination,” Karen said.

Peter nodded. Then, what did that mean? Was Toomes trying to just do as he always did and take some of the stuff on the plane or was he trying to somehow steal everything on it. The wings had
attached to the plane and they weren’t moving. Peter had to think quickly.

“There are also security measures,” Karen went on to say.

Peter was barely holding on to the plane. He had to get inside but he was well aware that there was no way to do that. Except that Toomes had that handy thing that disintegrated matter. And he’d sealed up his hole with his wings!

“Peter?” Tony’s voice came in and Peter felt relief flood him.

“He’s in the plane,” Peter said. “I’m -- I’m kind of outside of the plane.”

“Shit,” his dad said. “I’m coming. Suit had to reboot.”

That’s when a drone came off of the plane.

“Karen, scan that thing -- what is it doing? What is Toomes doing inside?”

Peter moved closer to the wings. He tried to kick them even as the plane shifted its course and the wind came at Peter fast and hard.

“He’s taken control of the plane,” Karen said.

---

EMPs weren’t fun. For the most part his suits never had much problem with them anymore -- nothing like the early suits. Some of the EMPs actually gave the suit more energy than shut everything off -- but this had been alien tech or something constructed from alien tech and even his suit hadn’t been able to take it. But it was lucky that a quick reboot didn’t take longer than a couple of minutes. Long minutes during which he worried for Peter who had gone with the winged guy. He hadn’t even had Friday to keep him company as he fell and then systems had come back and he’d had Peter’s tracker to follow. As he got closer, he could see the plane reflecting Peter’s suit on it’s panels.

“Boss, it appears the plane’s security measures have been overridden. It is no longer headed for the Upstate New York facility.”

Peter had said that the guy had made it onto the plane. It was almost a little impressive that he’d managed it. He saw the drone fly away from the plane and shot it down with a small missile.

“Where is it going now?”

“I don’t know,” Friday said.

“Damn it,” Tony said. He was closer now and Peter spotted him. Peter who was trying to dislodge the wings. Tony flew towards him and he motioned for Peter to move back as he raised his hand and shot a repulsor blast at them, and whatever had been keeping them on the plane gave.

They seemed to come to life rather than fall off so Tony just shot at them again. In the meanwhile, Peter scurried into the plane which was good. He’d be safer in there probably. Tony dodged a wing that came close to hitting him. Something fell into the hole in the plane. Good -- it might stop enough of the depressurizing.

The wings came back at him and Tony was just on the side of almost impressed at how well they did with no pilot. He didn’t want them to hit the plane with Peter inside, but he kept them occupied and
hoped that Peter could deal with Toomes on his own. No. He knew that Peter could. Because despite how much Tony wanted to hurt that man for what he had done to Peter, Peter could fight this fight too.

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“So you made it out,” Toomes said and he looked angry and intense -- his eyes wild as he stared at Peter.

Peter didn’t respond. He knew his best bet was to tie him up. The hole on the plane was sucking things out -- not any of the cargo because that wasn’t directly where the hole was, but it could get to that point and either way a hole in a plane was just not a good idea.

“You just couldn’t let this be and you had to involve Iron Man too. Didn’t you, Pete?”

“I see nothing wrong with involving the person you’re trying to steal from,” Peter said and he shot a string of web at him which was when Toomes moved and lunged for Peter, his hands extended.

Peter was faster. He jumped back onto the wall and then it wasn’t far from getting to the ceiling and dropping down behind Toomes. The cockpit was right behind him with all the controls and while Peter may not know much about flying a plane -- maybe he should add that to skills he needed to learn next to driving a car -- he knew Karen could probably guide him on changing the destination coordinates. First, he kicked Toomes on the back. But there was also the hole to deal with and Peter knew enough about physics to know that any kind of horrible thing could happen next.

Toomes turned as he stumbled and Peter shot web at his arm attaching it to the side of the plane. He didn’t hesitate to shoot out more at his other hand.

“So you’re just going to take me from my daughter now, Peter? I kind of remember something Liz said...something about you not having any parents--”

He was good at talking -- good at trying to get Peter to lower his defences by angering him.

“Well, she’s wrong,” Peter said. “And Liz deserves so much more than you.” Then, Peter used his elbow to fix a blow on his head and he threw more web at him. Toomes’ head dropped down but he was still breathing.

“How’s it going in there, Peter?”

“Do you think I could learn to fly a plane?” Peter asked as he walked back to the cockpit. The plane seemed to be rocking a little and it was getting worse.

Tony didn’t say anything for a moment. “Do you need to fly a plane right now?”

“No. I don’t think so. Just -- I have him webbed up but now --”

“Peter, the plane is losing altitude,” Karen announced. Tony must have gotten the same impression. “It’s losing pressure fast too.”

It was the hole - it was going to bring the plane down if it didn’t first cause some sort of explosion. Maybe if he could close it up--

Outside there was some sort of explosion and for a moment Peter thought that it was the plane -- that somehow a motor or turbine or something had just exploded. The plane rocked even more and Peter felt it shift downward. This wasn’t good.
“Dad, what -- what should I do? I think it’s going to crash.”

“I can see that. Can you get that hole taken care of?”

“Yes. On it,” Peter said and he’d already been headed there.

Peter tried to move towards the hole despite how much it was pulling. He knew he might be sucked out and as he drew nearer he felt the pull. It was only his strength and his powers that kept him from flying out and then Peter saw that one of the boxes had actually been pulled towards the hole. It was plugging some of it, but not all. It was a miracle it hadn’t fallen through entirely. It was probably the reason the plane was still in the air even if it was destabilizing and to add to that, Peter felt a bit woozy.

He filled in the holes he could with webbing, unsure that it would hold for long but hoping that it would do something while he found something else to cover the hole. At least the pull had lessened.

Peter rushed towards the cargo and he ripped off the lid of one of the wooden crates. He webbed it into place just as the plane jolted again.

“I got the plane, Peter,” Tony said. Oh, that’s what that last jolt had been about. “How’s our friend?”

Toomes was still out cold. It didn’t mean he wouldn’t wake up soon, but Peter was prepared for that. He just would prefer if he didn’t and if he didn’t have to deal with this man ever again. But Peter did hate what it would do to Liz. Despite everything, she was back at the dance having fun with her friends. She wouldn’t have any idea what was coming and Peter hated it it a little bit and yet he couldn’t let him go even for Liz.

Karen gave him instructions on what to do at the controls to make it easier for Iron Man to just take the plane down. They somehow ended up at the beach in Coney Island, but it turned out to be the best place to land the plane safely. It was a bit of a rough landing, but it was a landing.

The door the plane was opened fast after that and Peter stumbled out into the armor. The helmet came off and his dad smiled at him.

“Proud of you kid. Couldn’t have done this without you. Now where is he? I’d like a few words with him before the authorities get here.”

There was anger in his father’s eyes. Anger in a way that Peter had never seen before -- it looked dangerous.

“I -- I webbed him up inside.”

Chapter End Notes

I really like what this chapter ended up turning into. It was fun to include Tony and Peter and to have them deal with different aspects of the fight in a way. I actually still do have to write what happens immediately after the end of this chapter as my other version did close things up -- things got a bit longer and I’ve been forced to add another chapter. Not sure when it will be up for that reason...but I will aim for Monday and hopefully work won’t be too horrendous and tiring this week. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into [Portuguese](https://example.com) for anyone that’s interested.
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Tony found him inside webbed up as Peter had said. Toomes was also knocked out. There was dried blood on his forehead and he seemed a bit bruised up but mostly he looked fine and as Tony got closer, he realized that he was actually starting to wake up. He was twitching a bit anyway.

Tony stepped closer and waited until Toomes finally came to and he tried to get out of the webbing and found out that he was actually stuck. He didn’t even seem to realize that he was being watched.

“If I had gotten my hands on you I’m sure that you would be in a much worse state,” Tony said.

“What does it even matter to you, Stark? The little people have never mattered to you.”

This man hated him. Tony had seen that look before on other people. With the others there had always been a more personal connection that Tony just didn’t see here.

“That kid who doesn’t even really know what he’s doing -- he’s not going to matter to you soon enough.”

Tony had to restrain himself from hitting him. But it was hard.

“You mean the kid you tried to kill!” Tony snapped. “You made a building fall on him.”

Toomes shrugged as much he could within the webbing. “I underestimated him, then. Anyway, this is all your fault. Wouldn’t be in this position if it weren’t for you--”

Tony scoffed. “My fault. Right, I made you steal from the DODC. I made you try and steal my plane.”

Toomes didn’t seem like he was going to respond to that, but Tony was going to have Friday dig up anything she could on this guy to really get to the crux of why he had been doing this in the first place.

“We’re really accumulating a good list of crimes to tag you with,” Tony said instead. “And I’ve made some really good friends over the course of the last few months. I know you know who Spider-Man is. And he might not realize how bad that is -- but I do. And I also know that you have a daughter and a wife and that they’re in for a bit of a shock when the news comes out that you’ve been arrested. And when the FBI has to investigate your home and all the money you’ve made illegally selling alien weapons--”

“--you would know all about weapons, Stark--”

Tony kept his cool. He stared at Toomes. “I do know about weapons. I also know about what is supposed to happen to alien tech. And I know that with you in jail that life your family has been
leading will change drastically. Not for the better. They’ll be hounded by reporters. They’ll have a hard time anywhere they go -- recognized for something you did. And if I know anything about the school Peter goes to, then I know that your daughter must be quite smart. It would be a shame if so many doors were closed to her due to her father’s actions.”

Toomes seemed to snarl at him and his eyes stared at Tony angrily. “What the hell are you getting at, Stark?”

Tony didn’t intend for Liz to feel the effects of who her father was or what he’d done. He wouldn’t place that on her -- but since her father seemed so intent on hating Tony then it wouldn’t be a stretch for him to believe that Tony would do that.

Tony let his lips quirk up. “Well, the two of them are not to blame for any of your life choices. I’m sure they can be secured new identities and kept away from all of this. I could even guarantee that they can visit you. It’s all a matter of how you want to play this is all. I’m giving you options.”

“What do you want, Stark?” Toomes asked. He was gritting his teeth and Tony could tell that he was angry -- that if the web weren’t holding him he’d be coming at Tony -- suit or not suit.

“Well, I would need you to keep his identity secret. Not that you’ll be talking to many people where you are going -- but I can’t be too careful.”

Toomes stared at him for a long while and Tony had to wonder at what he might be thinking. The inside of the plane was a bit of a mess. Some of the crates had opened up and things were on the floor. Nothing unstable had opened at least. Mostly, though,

“So you actually care about him, then,” Toomes said. “That’s unexpected.”

“He’s my intern,” Tony said in a tone of voice that he hoped conveyed that that line in their conversation would end there. He couldn’t wait until he was sure this man was locked up and away from Peter.

Outside Tony heard sirens and other noises. That would be the FBI arriving probably with some of the NYPD and maybe even Shield agents. The Shield agents would certainly come in handy.

“And if I don’t agree,” Toomes said.

Tony smirked. “That’s more fun for me, actually. Then, I get to beat you up a little and you’ll end up on a high security underwater prison and you’ll never see any living person ever again. It’s your choice. And if you ever say anything about Peter to anyone -- well, there will always be a cell waiting for you on The Raft.”

From what Tony could tell about the guy he was smart. He had been pulling this whole weapon dealing thing for what probably was years and not only that but he had gone unnoticed. Who knew what else he’d managed to make from the chitauri tech. Although, Tony suspected that he wasn’t alone in the creation of the weapons or even the mechanical wings. Toomes had to have partners and the FBI would be tasked with finding and rounding them up.

It took a few more minutes and Tony heard Peter outside keeping someone from entering the plane, but then Toomes nodded.

It took everything in him to not be rash and to not put his fist to this man’s face but Tony was being rational -- he was thinking about Peter. He was thinking about Peter’s secret identity and how important it was to Peter to keep the secret.
A man that Tony recognized as a Shield agent was waiting closest to the plane and Tony filled him in. There were some arrangements to be made, but Tony just wanted to take Peter home. He did most of what was needed from him and then, he let them take over.

Happy arrived on the scene, then, and Tony was glad to have him oversee getting all of the things from the plane to the compound before anyone else got some ideas about stealing his things.

---

After everything was over, they wound up at the tower. Tony had had Friday drive a car over for them which was weird and yet so very much a Tony Stark thing that Peter didn’t even give it much thought. Instead, he had been trying to figure out what came next. Liz’ dad had been arrested and taken away which was something she and her mom – who had been super nice – would be finding out soon. Peter needed to call Ned and let him know he was okay. He just didn’t know if he should call Liz too -- but maybe it was better if he didn’t. The whole thing was a mess.

The car ride had been spent mostly in silence. Mostly because Tony was still busy on his phone dealing with something. He just kept typing away and Peter didn’t want to disturb him. Then, they made it to the tower and it was enough for his dad to sling an arm around his shoulders as they got to the elevator.

It turned out that after last time, Tony had had Happy go out and pick up a few clothes for Peter, so when they got to the tower, he actually got to take a shower and get into a new set of pajamas that were not pink or covered in hello kitty. He’d looked into the closet to make sure the rest of the clothes weren’t something crazy, but they were all just -shirts and jeans. Normal clothes.

“Your aunt’s idea,” Tony said when Peter thanked him. “She thought the hello kitty pjs were hilarious but then insisted I not try to embarrass you too often if you end up without clothes again. I’m actually surprised she didn’t try to ask how you ended up ruining your clothes, now that I think on it. How are you feeling?”

His whole chest and back was covered in bruises but they were slowly healing and he didn’t feel as sore or hurt as they had earlier in the night. Having a healing factor was one of the best things about his powers. He’d be fine in a few hours.

“Better,” Peter said.

“Okay. I ordered pizza. Should be here soon. I also called May.”

Peter froze. “Did you tell her about--”

“No, kiddo. Still your secret to tell her whenever you want. I just had to ask her if you could spend the night here after the dance,” Tony said.

“Oh,” Peter said and he was glad. He couldn’t imagine what it might have been like to go back home after everything.

“I -- you can go home if you want, obviously, but I figured maybe you might not want to. It was -- I know what that is like and I know the best thing right now is a distraction.”

He had been scared -- so scared that he had been sure no one was going to find him and that he was just going to stay there forever. And then later being up in the air with his webbing not making any kind of difference Peter had been so sure he was just going to fall off.

“You would have gotten yourself out,” Tony said after a while and stared straight at Peter. “I know
you’re strong enough to -- but that doesn’t mean it wouldn’t have been hard. Mentally maybe more than physically. I’m glad I got you out sooner.”

“Me too,” Peter said.

---

Tony didn’t want to be away from Peter. He knew it was partly for his own comfort and state of mind -- but it was also because Peter was still shaken even if he wasn’t trying to make it so obvious. There was also a whole lot more just hanging over them because they hadn’t discussed any of what had happened between them previously. Showing up to see Peter before the dance had been the first step that Tony was taking towards making up for taking the suit away, but then the whole night had just gone down the unexpected route that ended up in Tony handing the suit back to Peter. It was the right choice and Tony regretted taking the suit away, and yet -- Peter still needed to learn some caution.

“Come on, let’s watch a movie,” he offered when Peter looked unsure after they had finished most of the pizza that Tony had ordered. “Unless you want to tinker a bit.”


“Karen should have a backup of your phone. Come on, we can get you a new one right now.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean—“

Tony laughed. “Nope, not hearing all of that now.”

“Okay,” Peter said and Tony smiled at him and then wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders and walked him to the workshop. “I don’t think I’ve said that I’m sorry for taking the suit away. It probably would have made a difference to you to have it. Would have gotten a call to me faster, anyway.”

Peter nodded. “My fault. I was -- I wasn’t being responsible because that’s sort of what the suit needs, right? My powers, the suit -- they’re a part of me and I have to do right by them. I’m sorry we hacked the suit.”

“We?”

“Ned did it. He’s really good with that type of thing,” Peter said. “He didn’t want to do it. I sort of had to make him. He also hacked into my phone tonight to call you.”

“Ah,” Tony said. “That -- that certainly explains why Friday didn’t put him through immediately. And here I was concerned you were sharing my number with your friends.”

Peter rolled his eyes.

Tony really wasn’t all that mad about the whole thing anymore, he found. Not in light of how obvious it was that Peter was really just trying to do the right thing. It had been reckless but he had the right intentions. But more importantly, Peter was starting to get what Tony had been trying to get him to understand.

“I wanted to prove myself,” Peter added. “Really be a hero, I guess, not just the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.”

Tony nodded. “I think you need more training,” he said, remembering what Steve had said.
They entered the workshop and Tony had to search for where he’d put the spare prototypes.

“Training how?” Peter asked.

“Cap used to have us run all these different drills and scenarios and stuff. You could do some of that -- really practice all those web combinations. There’s something else -- something Karen noticed. You react before something even happens. It’s as if you can predict danger.”

Tony rifled through a few drawers while he spoke, but he turned to look at Peter when he could.

“I guess I’ve never really thought about that,” Peter said. “Never noticed that danger predicting thing either.”

“Exactly,” Tony said. “It’s why some training is in order.”

“I guess I wouldn’t mind that,” Peter said. Tony should have known he wasn’t going to put up much of a fight.

He found a box in one of the drawers and pulled it out. “Here it is.”

It easy to just have Friday download Karen into the phone and then transfer a backup of Peter’s old phone into the new one. He turned back to Peter while Friday downloaded everything.

“We’ll have to test it out a bit, but it might have something to do with your powers,” Tony said. “Could be instinct. Maybe it’s a spider thing.”

“Maybe,” Peter said.

The phone was ready in a few minutes and although it still only held a twenty percent charge, Tony handed it to Peter so he could call his friend. He gave him some privacy by walking to the other side of the lab but he could still hear snippets. Mostly, Peter’s friend seemed to be interrupting him while Peter tried to explain that he was fine. Tony smiled to himself and went through his missed messages. There were a few. Friday had already sorted them by most important so Tony dealt with those first.

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed getting to end of this part of Homecoming. There's a little bit left of Homecoming coming up to wrap it up in the next couple of chapters. Next chapter will probably be up on Tuesday or Wesnesday. Thanks for reading.

This fic is being translated into Portuguese for anyone that's interested.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
They watched Back To The Future when they got back to the den complete with bowls of popcorn and Tony had even gotten out a couple of blankets for them which just built up how cozy, comfortable, and easy the night had to be.

Peter had watched the first movie only once before with Ben and May and it was a good one. He liked that it was something he had already watched -- something entertaining that he didn’t have to necessarily put all of his attention on. His mind just kept drifting back to being under all that concrete and how in that moment he had wanted Tony -- he had wanted his dad -- because somehow he always just seemed to be there to help him and save him and make things better and he just hadn’t disappointed.

It made him just a tad embarrassed now, to think on how he had been yelling and how easily he’d slipped into calling Tony dad in those moments. He sort of -- he wanted to keep doing it.

“You’re thinking kind of loudly over there,” Tony said.

Peter sighed and turned to look at him. Tony hadn’t even pulled out his phone or tablet like Peter had expected him to because Tony nearly always needed to be doing something with his hands. Instead, he was actually watching the movie.

“I’m -- I called you dad,” Peter said.

“You did,” Tony said. “I don’t mind.”

“Oh,” Peter said and he smiled a little. “I think -- maybe I’d--”

“You can call me whatever you want, Pete,” Tony said and he reached over and squeezed his wrist.

Peter was warmed by the easy way that Tony just breezed past the awkwardness that Peter felt and just made everything seem okay. Made it seem normal.

“I’ve never had a real dad,” Peter whispered. “Ben was always just Ben and I don’t really remember Richard all that well but you’re -- you’re really my dad. You know?”

“I know,” Tony said and smiled at him. His eyes looked maybe a tad misty, but Peter couldn’t really tell and then they both turned back to the movie.

---

Peter fell asleep a few minutes into the second Back To The Future which made it easier to just watch him and not the movie as Tony had been doing. Eventually, he turned it off and shifted Peter
into a better position on the couch and hoped that he’d stay comfortable. He fixed the blanket over him and then just lingered and watched him. He looked even younger while he slept.

Tony wasn’t tired. And even if he was, he just knew that sleep wasn’t going to come easily. Instead, he went and reviewed everything that the FBI agents from earlier had left after they finished their inspection. He was sure Pepper had taken care of all of it already, but he just wanted to see what they had left behind. Then, he grabbed a tablet and sat down and got to work on some designs for SI. Every once in awhile he looked up and found himself just staring at Peter. His bruises had faded and his hair had dried floppily on his head.

It was a while later, when Tony got up to get a drink that he heard Peter scream. He rushed back. Peter had pushed away his blanket and it pooled on the ground next to him. Peter whimpered and gasped and his head went from side to side. He almost rolled off the sofa, but Tony pushed him back on it and he dropped to his knees next to Peter and shook him gently.

“Peter, Peter, wake up.”

He shook him a little again. Peter’s forehead creased and he groaned and then he woke up slowly, eyes looking everywhere in confusion but wide and with just a tinge of fear in them.

“You’re okay,” Tony said and he placed a hand on each side of his face to keep him from moving too much. “You’re okay.”

“A building fell on me,” Peter said. His voice was soft and a little breathy.

Tony nodded.

“You came for me.”

“I did.”

His breathing slowed down and then Peter just wrapped his arms around Tony’s shoulders. “Thank you,” he said.

“We’ve been over this already, kiddo,” Tony said.

“No. For -- for being here now,” Peter said as he pulled away, moving so that Tony could sit next to him. “Can we just keep watching the movie?”

“Sure, kid.”

Peter scooted close to Tony as Tony put the movie back on and then after a few minutes, Peter leaned his head on Tony’s arm. Tony lifted his arm and wrapped it around Peter’s shoulders and he could tell that they both needed this. Peter let out a sigh and moved closer and Tony couldn’t help but smile.

---

“Three more days,” Sam announced.

They were in Wakanda and this time, Steve had brought everyone with him. Sam more than any of the others seemed amazed by the place. He just didn’t seem to be able to believe that a place like Wakanda could exist in their world. Natasha as always kept her reaction low key and invited herself to train with the Dora Milaje as soon as she could. She and Okoye hit it off. Nevertheless, they were all excited to be heading home.
Wanda for her part just kept to herself -- quiet and reserved possibly because she knew that she was responsible for the deaths of some Wakandians even if it hadn’t been intentional.

Their trip to Wakanda had become necessary once the UN decided that they could go back to the states. But before they could so do they had to sign The New Accords. T’Challa had offered Wakanda for the signing and Steve had been grateful because he knew that once the papers were signed they would go to a hearing in New York City and their punishments would be doled out. They all knew that it was going to be house arrest -- they just didn’t know what the length of their punishment would be. Going to Wakanda to sign gave Steve the option of seeing Bucky before they went back. Another goodbye because it really seemed like they were destined to be torn apart. Maybe that would change in the future.

Bucky’s whole situation was one that Tony and T’Challa didn’t want to bring up yet. There was too much that he had done as The Winter Soldier and too much to risk by trying to get him cleared of his charges just yet. Tony hadn’t said it -- but he was still a little bit sore about his parents too and it was certainly a factor in him not trying harder. Steve didn’t resent him for it. Bucky was happier in Wakanda irregardless and Steve didn’t know if Bucky would even want to leave a place where he’d finally found some peace. He loved the people and he loved his hut and just everything about his daily life in Wakanda. There wasn’t a fight for him to engage in and he could just learn to become himself. Steve could tell how well he was doing there.

“I know,” Steve said. “I can’t believe it.”

“Tony really did it. It’s been barely four months,” Sam said. “Not that I’ve been counting or anything.”

They were all a bit shocked at how well everything had gone. It was just crazy because normally things didn’t work out in this manner quick and without anything going wrong. It almost made Steve suspicious except that Tony was behind it all and he could trust Tony. Steve had been expecting to stay on the run for the next year at least and somehow that just wasn’t the case. It wasn’t going to be amazing to be stuck at the tower for however long the US government and the UN felt that he might need to be, but he’d be with Tony. He’d be home and that would be enough. Not that any of it would actually matter if there was a real threat.

“His boyfriend’s involved -- of course he’s getting us all back there,” Natasha said as she walked towards them. “And I don’t doubt that he has plans to make house arrest easy and fun.”

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Michelle had tried to enjoy the rest of the dance, but since she didn’t really like anyone that was in attendance and it wasn’t really her thing in the first place, it just hadn’t felt all that fun. Still, she had gotten what she went for which was to see Peter leave early. She hadn’t expected it to happen so early on -- basically with his arrival -- but it had and Ned had gone off too soon after. Michelle had considered following but that had felt like really doing a bit too much.

They had all seen Ned come back later on, though, with his hat held in his hands and looking like he didn’t know how to act. He stayed mostly on his own, constantly checking his phone and looking worried.

Michelle had tried to approach him and talk to him about it, but he was just too distracted and then eventually Ned just went home, leaving much earlier than anyone else and Michelle felt like she should go home too so she called her mom and got picked up.

The weekend felt long and no one reported on anything to do with Spider-Man although someone
said that Iron Man was sighted somewhere in Brooklyn. Then, it came out that Liz’s dad had been arrested. No one knew exactly why he’d been arrested, but it had apparently been something big. It happened the night of the dance which seemed just a little suspicious. Maybe even connected to Peter leaving the dance early.

The other thing that happened that night was that Spider-Man stole Flash’s dad’s car. It was a little hilarious because Flash and his date had walked into the dance stunned and then Flash had started telling everyone that he’d lent the car to Spider-Man. Except that Rita who had agreed to go with him for some reason or another just told a different story entirely -- a more believable story -- about how Spider-Man had demanded the car and Flash’s phone and then taken off. But more importantly, she had also mentioned that Flash had been pissed off about the whole thing especially when Spider-Man did some damage to the car as he left. All in all, Michelle had been pretty amused.

By the time that Monday came around mostly everyone knew about Liz’s dad. They also knew about the state in which the car had been found.

Michelle almost expected to not see Peter at all on Monday, but he walked in with Ned at his side and Ned seemed to be pestering Peter about something again.

She felt some relief to see Peter and to see that he was actually okay, but she still didn’t try to talk to him about the whole thing. Instead she watched him from afar for the next few days. She even saw him when Liz showed up to pick up her things with her mom. They all knew that she was leaving and Michelle didn’t blame her. Michelle left them be while they talked and was surprised when Mr. Harrington approached her.

“With Liz having to leave the school year early, I was hoping you would take on the mantle of team captain,” Mr. Harrington said.

“I -- really? Me?”

Mr. Harrington nodded. “Yeah, well the other real choice is Ned and I think you’d be better at it.”

“Um, sure. Yeah. I’ll do it.”

“Good. Good. We’ll meet up today like planned and we can let everyone else know then.”

Michelle nodded. She hoped that Peter would show up because they really did need him to stick around for the team and show up to future competitions. They all knew how smart Peter was and with Liz gone they would definitely be needing Peter if they were going to have any kind of chance at next year’s nationals.

When Ned and Peter did show up to the meeting, Michelle pretended to not be relieved.

“Congratulations, Decathlon National champions,” Mr. Harrington said.

Everyone was cheering and happy. Peter clapped along with everyone else even though they all knew that he had skipped out on the competition. How the rest of the team hadn’t figured out that that meant that Peter had to be Spider-Man kind of boggled Michelle especially since they were all supposed to be smart. They really did not notice much, did they?

“I’ll have to put this back in the trophy case soon but just for motivation right now at this practice we’ll have it out here. I’m ahead of the game, but we will need a new team captain. So I am appointing Michelle.”

Everyone started cheering and clapping. Peter who was sat in front of her smiled at her and Michelle
tried not to let them all know how much she appreciated their reaction.

“Thank you,” she said. “My-- My friends call me MJ, though.”

“I thought you didn’t have any friends,” Ned said because it was Ned.

Michelle looked at Ned and then Peter and she ducked her head. “I didn’t,” she said.

Peter smiled when Michelle looked back up and then he fished out his phone when it rang. “I have to go,” he said and looked genuinely apologetic.

“Hey,” Michelle said as he stood up. “Where are you going?”

The others were distracted and not even paying attention except for Ned, but that didn’t matter.

“What are you hiding, Peter?” Michelle asked.

Peter looked like a deer caught in headlights, like he couldn’t believe that Michelle had just asked that question. He didn’t even seem to know how to respond.

“I’m just kidding,” Michelle said. “I don’t care.”

“Um, okay. Bye.”

He rushed away and Michelle turned back to the group. “Um, we should get some practice in.”

Ned nudged her and looked dead serious with his eyes narrowed on her. It was almost comical. “What do you know?”

Michelle shrugged and smirked to herself when she looked away.

Chapter End Notes

I really love this chapter and how much I managed to fit into it. There is one final element of Homecoming that I need to touch on but we’re really at the end of it. Next chapter Steve comes home!

Unfortunately I don’t know when that chapter will go up. I’m working straight until Tuesday and actually have to bake a cake and attend a party this weekend as well so no time at all. So at the earliest I expect to have it ready for Tuesday but it could be Wednesday.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 90

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading. You guys are the best. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Grumpy: Where are you? Didn’t Tony tell you I was picking you up?

Grumpy: I’m outside.

Grumpy: I don’t like being kept waiting.

Grumpy: Seriously kid. We’re going to be late.

Peter faintly remembered his dad telling him that Happy was going to pick him up after school that morning when he’d called when Peter was rushing out of the house. But with seeing Liz again and feeling the guilt of being a part of why her father had been arrested, Peter had been a little distracted. He’d forgotten that he intended to skip the decathlon meeting. It wasn’t like it was important considering their competitions were over for the year but Peter was actually glad he’d gone if only because Michelle would have pestered him later for not being there.

He didn’t text Happy back so he could use the time to rush out of the library and out to the front of the school instead of delaying them further.

The days following the dance had been odd. Peter had been glad that he’d stayed the night at the tower but he’d had to go home Saturday afternoon and going back to what was supposed to resemble normality after a night when he had been trapped under a whole bunch of concrete had just felt weird. It was worse because May could sort of tell that something had happened even if she didn’t ask. It seemed to be enough to her to know that Tony knew. He’d slipped up and called him dad when talking about him and May had stared at him incredulously but said nothing.

Still, the worst thing about it was the nightmares. Not just about being trapped, but about Toomes and the wings. He was lucky that May hadn’t realized how often he woke up in the middle of the night shaking and scared. Karen helped, talking to him until he could go back to sleep. Most of the time she wanted him to call Tony but Peter didn’t want to bother him.

“Sorry, Happy,” Peter said when he got into the car. “I forgot. I had a decathlon meeting.”

“I give you a pass today because you helped to keep that plane from getting stolen,” Happy said.

Peter grinned. “Works for me.”

“I should also apologize because your friend did try to warn me and I didn’t believe him.”

Peter tried not to show his surprise. So he just nodded at Happy. When Peter checked his phone, he found that Ned had sent him a whole bunch of texts.

Guy in the chair: I think Michelle knows.
Guy in the chair: Wait are we supposed to call her MJ now?

Guy in the chair: Anyway, she definitely knows something.

Guy in the chair: I think she put it together. What are we going to do? Are you going to tell her?

Guy in the chair: No, but she definitely knows. Should I talk to her about it?

Peter sighed and didn’t respond. Ned was such a drama queen for no reason. Peter wasn’t sure that Michelle knew but even if she did there were worse people that could find out. Like May for instance. Peter had always known that Michelle would be the one to put everything together anyway because of how observant she was and she had definitely seen him running out of the dance. Not to mention that he’d gone past her as Spider-Man when they were at the Washington monument. Peter just hoped that she would keep it to herself and not give him a hard time when she did finally confront him about it. Actually, knowing Michelle, she wouldn’t bring it up until it suited her. She was the opposite of Ned, after all.

Ned texted one more time.

Guy in the chair: Do you think she knows that Tony Stark is your father too?

Peter had almost forgotten that Ned knew that particular secret until he got to school on Monday and it was the first thing that Ned wanted to talk about.

“I just can’t believe it,” Ned had said. “I mean Iron Man is your dad.”

“Yes, yes, but keep it down,” Peter said.

“I remember when you found out that Richard wasn’t? This is just crazy. How did you find out? What do you call him? Does he act like a dad? Oh my god, Peter, are you allowed to use his suits?”

Question after question after question had followed and Peter had answered what he could and brushed off others until Ned finally got that Peter didn’t want to actually discuss it. In the end, he did tell him how he found out and Peter had insisted that Ned keep it to himself. It hadn’t stopped Ned from having more questions later.

The drive to the tower was quick and Happy went inside with him but stopped at a lower floor after giving Peter a nod and Peter was reminded yet again that Happy still didn’t know that he was Tony’s son. Peter went up on his own, directed by Friday to the penthouse and then--

“Boss is in the workshop,” Friday announced when he got out of the elevator.

“Thanks, Friday.”

Sure enough he found Tony in the workshop tinkering away on an Iron Man gauntlet. He looked up when Peter entered and grinned.

“Hey, kid,” he said.

“Hey,” Peter said.

“So why am I here today?” Peter asked as he dropped his backpack on the futon.

“I’m a little offended that you’re already getting tired of spending time with your old man,” Tony said.
Peter spluttered. “That is not what I--”

Tony smirked and Peter rolled his eyes.

“Actually, during everything that happened I didn’t get a chance to tell you about what’s been keeping me busy lately,” his dad said. “I think a part of me didn’t want to talk about it until it was official. But anyway--”

Peter had assumed that it was to do with Stark Industries or other important work that required his time -- after all he was Tony Stark which meant that he had to arguably be busy all the time. He realized, also, that he’d never tried to ask or pry about it whatsoever so now he was actually quite curious.

“It was to do with The Accords and with the other Avengers,” Tony said.

Peter frowned. “What do you mean?”

It seemed like Tony was building up to a reveal from the way he sort of smiled. “Well, they’re coming home. Actually, they’re already in New York. I’m expecting them within the hour.”

That was not what Peter had expected. “What?” Peter asked. “I -- how? Aren’t they supposed to be fugitives? Does that mean the team is back together? Am I -- do you want me to meet them as Spider-Man or Peter? This is insane. I--wait, how come no one knows about this yet?”

Suddenly Peter felt exactly like Ned, all of his questions just pouring out and his dad moved closer and placed a hand on his shoulder, effectively shutting him up.

“Hey, hey, calm down, kiddo, only Steve knows your secret identity but they all know I have a son. I’m not big on the whole secret thing, obviously, since all they seem to do is bring trouble but what you want them to know is your choice.”

“Oh,” Peter said. “But this is still crazy.”

“Yup. That’s pretty much the norm around here.”

Tony laughed. He looked happy about it though which was odd because Peter had somehow expected a different reaction. After the fight back at the airport, he hadn’t expected Tony to welcome them all back so easily. Or for him to even work so hard to bring them home. It explained so much about all the meetings and all the things that his dad was doing all the time because this was entirely personal and important to him.

“They’re not -- the team is going to remain what it is now. They’re all going to be on house arrest.”

“Oh,” Peter said. “House arrest here?”

Tony nodded. He moved back towards the holo table and it seemed like he was working on a new Iron Man suit. “It’s why so many things needed to be moved to the compound.”

Peter had never even thought to ask about that mostly because he’d forgotten after being glad that none of his dad’s stuff was stolen, but also because so much had happened that night.

“That makes sense,” Peter said.

“I thought you’d be excited to meet them,” Tony said.

“I -- I’m -- Yeah, I am. I just wasn’t expecting to be doing that today.” It was lucky that he wasn’t
wearing any of his Avengers t-shirts. They hadn’t been a prominent part of his day to day clothes since he learned his dad was Tony Stark, but occasionally he still wore them.

“Well, if you don’t want to do it today, you don’t have to,” his dad said.

“No, no. I -- I do want to meet them.”

His dad grinned.

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Their arrival back in the states was kept quiet. So was the hearing and just about everything else. It felt odd to have everything happen so silently and yet Steve appreciated it. They had all gone into a courtroom and one by one they had been given their sentencing. Steve had expected Tony to be there but he hadn’t shown up and Steve had been glad because he didn’t know if he would have handled seeing him during all of that. Instead they had been met by Maria Hill and Pepper Potts and briefed by the two of them as well.

In the end, Natasha got a full year of house arrest and the rest of them two years. Steve had been prepared for at least that or more and in the end they all knew that it was worth it especially since they all knew that none of it would really matter in the end. None of them were scared of breaking the law if the need arose and Steve suspected that Tony would figure out a way to mess with their anklets and let them leave the tower without much trouble anyway.

An FBI agent escorted them to the tower along with Pepper and Maria. It was odd to arrive at a place that he had considered home for so long that way especially when they entered through the front instead of any of the other more conspicuous entrances. Steve wouldn’t be surprised if it got out that they were back because of that. Then again, it didn’t matter because it was supposed to be reported on at some point otherwise it wasn’t a good PR move. He expected the media to go crazy with the news later that night or more likely the next day.

“Mr. Stark has made accommodations for all of you. The whole tower is available to your use at his discretion as you all know some floors are used for Stark Industries. You will however not be allowed to leave the tower. You will need to wear your anklets for the entirety of your time under house arrest. Any tampering with the anklets will break your probation. That will equate to prison time for the remainder of the house arrest time and the possibility of more added time.”

He took them up to the huge communal floor that Tony had clearly remodeled recently and they all went through the process of getting their new anklets on. The FBI agent locked each of them with some sort of electronic key and a blinking green light turned on. Steve already hated the anklet. It wasn’t that it was uncomfortable but more to do with how it represented such a loss of freedom. He had to remind himself that it didn’t really matter. Tony probably already had a way figured out for taking the anklet off. Once they all had their anklets, Pepper walked the FBI agents out and it all sort of settled on him. He was home. He was home to stay.

The communal floor had a huge kitchen -- even bigger than the one in the penthouse -- a cozy den, dining room, a game room, a study, and a couple of guest rooms. Back when they all lived in the tower they had never really used the communal floor because despite how well stocked it was, they all preferred to be up in the penthouse. But it did make for good neutral ground when needed.

“So,” Sam said. “No welcoming party.”

That was when the elevator opened again as if it had all been timed perfectly. Steve expected it to be Pepper but when they all turned to look, it was Tony that stepped out. Next to him was a teenager
that Steve recognized as Peter from pictures he’d seen in the past except that now he looked a little bit older. Steve hadn’t realized that he would be seeing Peter so soon. He hadn’t prepared to meet Peter yet -- but it was...seeing them together felt amazing.

“The welcome home party is actually this weekend but for now it’s just me and the kid,” Tony said. “It’s good to see all of you again.”

“Good to be back,” Natasha said.

Even though he saw Tony in Wakanda what felt like not too long ago, Steve still felt a rush of emotion at seeing him again. He’d missed him -- had been missing him for months and now he was getting to be with him. Steve didn’t know if he should run and pull him into a hug or just keep his cool. In the end the decision was made for him by Natasha who was the first to move towards Tony. Sam joined her and Tony moved closer to them, greeting them all with a grin. Steve was about to join them when he realized that Peter was hanging back. He’d sort of given them all an awkward wave when they’d first arrived, but he just hung back by Tony which was oddly endearing. Except that he looked awkward as Tony hugged Natasha and Sam each. So, Steve walked towards him.

“Hi,” he said, “I’m Steve. You must be Peter.”

Peter gaped at him for a moment and then closed his mouth and gulped. “I — yeah, I’m Peter.”

“I’ve heard a lot about you, Peter,” Steve said.

“Really?” Peter asked and his eyes widened which just made him look even younger. It was odd to think that this kid was Spider-Man when he looked so small and scrawny and mostly just innocent and young. Tony was right about one thing though, he was adorable.

Steve nodded. “Your dad kind of likes to brag.”

Steve looked towards Tony who was actually in the middle of talking to Wanda and Maria but lifted his head just in time to catch his eye and smiled and Steve knew that Tony too couldn’t wait until they could get a moment alone.

“When did he, um, get a chance to brag about me?” Peter asked and Steve turned back to look at him.

“We’ve kept in touch while we were -- but even before all of this he kept up with whatever was going on with you.”

“Oh,” Peter said and Steve could tell that he was a little surprised and yet pleased.

That’s when Tony joined them, placing a hand on Peter’s shoulder and not seeming to be able to keep a smile off his lips.

“You two have met, I see,” Tony said.

“Going better than the last time,” Peter said.

Right, he had thrown a truck at him. Steve coughed. “I, um, could have gone a bit easier on you.”

Peter shook his head immediately. “It’s all good -- I did take your shield and all. And it was fun, kind of. Actually, it was really cool. I never thought that I’d ever -- anyway, I didn’t get hurt or anything.”

“Not then, you didn’t,” Tony said and gave Peter a side glance.
Peter leaned into Tony’s side and Steve felt so warm seeing them like that -- knowing that Peter and Tony’s relationship had certainly come a long way. A part of him wished that he had been present to see it happen, but what really mattered was that Tony and Peter had become father and son while Steve was gone. Tony seemed to be basking in it.

“Anyway, I’m sorry about that,” Steve said. “It’s nice to get to properly meet you.”

“Yeah,” Peter said. “Same.” Now that Tony was next to him, it seemed like Peter had relaxed some.

Chapter End Notes

They're back! I was so excited to have them all back in one place.

I can't believe we're up to ch. 90. As an update on how the writing goes: I'm up to ch. 121 and this is the first post-infinity war chapter which is crazy to me since now I'm really going off canon. But it's going to be a fun adventure and it means that I am getting closer and closer to finishing writing this fic which is kind of crazy after all the time spent on it. Of course, I still do have quite a bit of editing ahead of me...

The next chapter will definitely be up before the weekend. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 91

Chapter Notes

I am still so so very flumoxed by the response this fic has. It's kind of crazy. Thank you to everyone reading and everyone that's stuck around this long. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter had felt weird as Tony introduced him to everyone. He wasn’t shy, never really had been that person, but being around the Avengers -- people that he’d looked up to felt weird. He had shaken hands with all of them and they had seemed happy to meet him, but that just left him feeling all the more awkward. So, he stuck by his dad.

Pepper rescued him for a little while, checking in on him to be sure he was fine. Peter had forgotten that she had played a part in getting his dad to go after him, but she brushed off his thanks and then he was pulled into a conversation with Sam Wilson and Captain America and Peter could only think about all the Captain America videos that he’d seen at school.

Tony had appeared, then and Peter had leaned into him when he went to stand next to him. “How does everyone feel about some food? I bet you’re all hungry.”

Peter helped with getting a table set for everyone there, but that didn’t keep him busy for long.

“You doing okay, kid?” Tony asked.

“I -- yeah. It’s just -- this is a lot. Meeting them.”

His dad just smiled. “They’re just people. Good people.”

Peter nodded. He needed to stop thinking of them as The Avengers and instead his dad’s friends. It wasn’t Black Widow and Captain America that he was meeting but just Natasha and Steve. It was like back when he’d started thinking of his dad as just Tony. Once he made that distinction in his mind, Peter found it was a little easy and he could enjoy it all instead. Staying close to his dad made things a little easier.

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“It looks like the lovebirds just can’t keep away from each other,” Sam said with a grin and a nudge at Steve before he walked to an armchair across from them. “Excellent choice in food by the way, Tony.”

After eating, Wanda and Natasha had excused themselves to check out their rooms and check that their things had been moved over without any issue. Tony hadn’t been too surprised because Natasha had always been somewhat particular about her things -- she was probably making sure no one had gone through anything. Tony had certainly been a little tempted.

“Sam,” Steve said with a bit of warning note in his voice, but it was amused.

Tony hadn’t really had any time to really greet Steve aside from a few glances. Smiles sent their way and a touch here and there in passing. It was enough. There was nothing to hide -- especially not
among their friends -- but Tony wanted a moment alone. It was something that would come soon enough. Yet somehow, they had ended up in the den together with Peter at Tony’s side.

“Just saying -- Friday said I got your old floor. Which can only mean one thing.” Sam said and grinned. “Not to mention all the pining--”

Steve shook his head with a small smile.

“Pining was it?” Tony asked, turning to face Steve.

Tony didn’t really care that Sam liked to tease Steve. That’s just who Sam was. He was also a lot of other things like responsible and caring and much too loyal to Steve but Tony still appreciated him and all the ways that he was such a good friend to Steve. But what Tony had completely forgotten was that Peter didn’t know about him and Steve. Tony had never gotten around to telling him at first because he hadn’t known where he and Steve stood and then later because it had felt like an odd thing to bring up in passing. Maybe he should have mentioned something before bringing him down to meet everyone but Tony hadn’t really been thinking about it.

When he glanced at Peter, Peter looked shocked. His phone, which had been keeping his attention since they’d sat hung from his hand and his mouth was open, but he closed it promptly.

“Right,” Sam said, having noticed Peter as well. “I think I’m going to check out my floor. See that my shoes made it over alright.”

Pepper and Maria had left some time between Tony ordering food and the food arriving because they were both proper adults with proper jobs that also were not on house arrest so with Sam leaving, he was left with Peter and Steve.

“Are -- what did--” Peter really could find words.

“Pete, I guess I forgot to mention that I’m sort of dating Steve?” Tony asked and looked towards Steve who grimaced a little.

“I -- I think maybe I’ll let the two of you talk,” Steve said. He gave Tony’s shoulder a squeeze and offered Peter a smile.

Steve didn’t go far, walking towards the kitchen to likely get started on cleaning up. Once he was out of sight, Peter turned towards him.

“You’re dating Captain America?” Peter said. “My dad is dating Captain America?”

“Yup,” Tony said. “Not exactly something the public knows for good reason but yeah, that’s exactly it.”

Peter nodded, but Tony could tell that he was still trying to take it in and process the information. It was probably harder because he was a fan than because Tony was his father, come to think of it. Then again, maybe it was the other thing. It was hard to tell with Peter.

“I’m a little shocked,” Peter said after a moment and he looked towards the kitchen for a moment and then back to Tony. “I didn’t know -- are you like bisexual or something then? Wait -- do I want to know that? Maybe I don’t want to know that. This is -- I can’t believe it.”

Tony laughed and he reached for Peter, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and bringing him against his side. Peter leaned into it, one of his arms going around Tony’s back easily. It was crazy how far they’d come and how much Peter just wanted to be near Tony with no protest whatsoever.
He was a very cuddly for a teenager and Tony found that he didn’t mind that at all.

“As far as I’m concerned I don’t really care what I’m labeled,” Tony said and looked down at him. “This -- it doesn’t affect anything when it comes to you and me, okay? It’s just one more thing that you couldn’t have imagined being true.”

“You can say that again,” Peter said with a nod as he pulled back from Tony. “Although, someone out there probably does think you’re together. I’m pretty sure people write fanfiction about you. Ned probably knows more about that. Anyway, how, um, how long have you been together?”

Tony didn’t really have an answer for that. “I -- I don’t actually know. Steve might.”

Peter nodded.

“Hey, Steve, how long do you think we’ve been together?”

“I don’t -- I don’t remember,” Steve said with a frown as he walked back from the kitchen and then looked towards them. “I don’t think it really matters. It matters more that we’re in the same place again and that we love each other. Right?”

“Yeah,” Tony said.

“That’s -- that’s really good,” Peter said. “Aunt May and Uncle Ben used to get into huge fights because one of them always forgot an anniversary. You won’t have to worry about that.”

“No, no, we do have to celebrate this sometime. I like celebrating,” Tony said.

“You like spending money,” Steve said as he walked towards them. “So let’s celebrate today. Homecoming. Or we could celebrate that time we were in Wakanda.” It was fun to watch how Steve’s cheeks went slightly pink. At least Peter didn’t seem to notice that. Instead, he seemed deep in thought.

“Both,” Tony offered. “Definitely both.”

“Ned would freak out if he ever found out,” Peter said at last and then his eyes widened. “Oh, I forgot to tell you. Ned knows you’re my dad.”

“He’s kept the other secret well in hand. I trust him -- just not with your suit. Although those skills of his are rather useful. Could come in handy one day. Say, maybe I’ll offer him a real internship.”

Peter laughed. “He really didn’t want to mess with the suit. I made him. He might pass out if you do that.”

Tony had been considering it since Peter had let it slip that it was his friend that had hacked into the suit. Not just anyone could get into his tech and alter or disable protocols. It was impressive enough - - especially for someone that wasn’t already familiar with Tony’s coding like Peter was. And while Tony didn’t want to reward the behavior, he also knew that his skills might be useful in some way even if it wasn’t for superhero business and more SI related. After all, Ned had been the one helping Peter on the night of the dance -- the one that had made it possible for Peter to get help. Tony didn’t want to imagine what might have happened if Ned hadn’t gotten through. Peter would have been stuck under that building and while he would have gotten out from under it on his own, Tony appreciated that Peter hadn’t had to be down there longer because he’d gotten there in time to help him.

“You should bring him around some time,” Steve added, “if he’s your friend and a fan.”
“I -- yeah, sure,” Peter said with a large grin directed at Steve. Steve smiled back.

“I’m not sure if we should tell him about my dad dating Captain America, though.”

“You can call me Steve,” Steve said.

Tony watched as Peter nodded.

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Peter was still a little bit shocked about Tony and Steve -- it was really hard to think of him as Steve but he knew he’d get used to it -- being together. But, it made sense. It explained a few things like how torn his dad had been about The Accords and how hard he’d been working to change them and bring everyone back.

It didn’t mean that Peter understood anything about the fight that he’d been brought to at the airport anymore because if they were together why had it gotten to that point? All of it seemed more complicated than Peter would probably ever understand and since it had seemingly been resolved he didn’t really think there was a point to try to actually understand it. He was just -- he was getting used to it.

What didn’t seem complicated was how much they cared for each other. It reminded Peter a little bit of how Ben and May had been with each other because now that he knew about it there were these looks between them and his dad had been so happy to have everyone back -- to have Steve Rogers back.

Peter left once it got dark mostly because he did have school the next day, but also because he wanted some time out as Spider-Man which was why he’d declined being driven home by Happy when his dad offered up the idea.

It had been interesting to hear The Avengers during dinner talking amongst themselves and over each other full of interruptions and stories and Peter had just been a part of it. He’d been there. He didn’t really understand the particulars of the house arrest, except to think that the whole thing was silly. He supposed that it was political and it didn’t actually matter because when it came to it, his dad would just let them off their anklets and if the world was in danger they would be there to protect it no matter what. Peter was glad they were back and it was clear that his dad was glad as well.

“Did you know about Tony and Captain —Steve?” Peter asked Karen as he swung between two buildings.

“I am an AI, Peter. But yes.”

Peter grinned inside the mask. “It’s a little odd but I guess he deserves to be with someone right?”

“Yes. So do you, Peter. How’s Liz?”

Peter sighed. “Gone. She moved. Not that sending her father to jail would have done me any favors. I’m glad I didn’t tell her I am Spider-Man now. She might have hated me more if she knew that.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Peter. I don’t think she hates you.”

“Maybe not,” Peter said. “But either way there’s no hope there. It doesn’t matter --”

“It does,” Karen said.
“Thanks, Karen,” Peter said.

On his way home, he stopped a mugging and saved a child from getting run over by a taxi but there wasn’t much else for him to do and even Karen didn’t seem to pick up on anything going on so Peter actually went home after a while.

“Let dad know I made it back, Karen,” Peter said sort of unnecessarily because Karen would have let Tony know even if Peter didn’t ask her to.

“Will do,” Karen said.

He snuck in through the window as usual. He was so practiced at it these days that he didn’t even think about it as he got the window open and then climbed in, crawling on the ceiling so he could close his bedroom door which he somehow always left open in his rush to get to school in the morning.

The door creaked as he closed it, but then it always did. Peter jumped down from the ceiling, dropping down and landing on his feet with no trouble. He was still distractedly thinking about The Avengers being back and what would happen once Ned found out. There would be lots and lots of questions. So, Peter didn’t expect for May to hear his door for once or for her to come looking for him. Because, no sooner than Peter had taken off his mask, the door opened again and May was just within the doorway.

“Peter, I—” she said and Peter turned. He gasped.

May looked up. “Holy shit. You’re — you’re— Peter, what the fuck?”

Chapter End Notes

You guys didn't think I was going to leave that particular moment from Homecoming out now did you? So, yup, May knows...and we will see her reaction in the next chapter. Not entirely sure when it will be up...but probably by Monday. At the latest Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Peter didn’t think that he had ever heard May actually curse like that before. Well, at least not in front of him. So, for a moment he was a little shocked at that and then he realized that she was staring him down with that disappointed look of hers.

“I -- so, I’m Spider-Man,” Peter said and hoped for the best.

May fixed him with a glare. “I can see that, Peter! What the hell is this?” Her eyes narrowed on him. “So all this time I’ve been worrying over you and you’ve been sneaking out for this? Unbelievable!”

Peter didn’t know what to say or do, so he just stood there and watched her as she paced back and forth just within his bedroom not saying anything for a while.

“It was you,” she said suddenly and stopped to look at him. “It was you at the field trip on the Washington monument! And at the ferry! And who knows where else and—“

May narrowed her eyes on Peter again and Peter knew that she had put something else together.

“He knows, doesn’t he?” She demanded.

Peter knew exactly who she meant and he tried not to outwardly show that. “Who do you mean?” Peter asked and tried to play it off as if he really had no idea but he’d never been a good liar.

“Don’t bullshit me, Peter. Your father! Your father who flies around in a metal suit. He knows, doesn’t he?”

Peter sighed. He knew that he could try to deny it but it wasn’t going to actually get him anywhere because May had a way of getting to the truth and lying was only going to make this worse. He didn’t know if lying about Tony knowing would make a difference to May anyway. She was pissed and there probably would not be reasoning with her over it.

“Yes,” he said.

The whole thing felt even worse because he was wearing the suit, a clear display of exactly what she was mad about and May only seemed to just get even more infuriated as Peter confirmed her suspicions.

“Right,” May said, “so going by this thing you have on he’s also condoning this. Unbelievable. This, Peter, this is exactly the reason we didn’t want you to meet him.”

“He has nothing to do with me being Spider-Man. I was Spider-Man before I even met him or knew who he was,” Peter responded and he couldn’t believe that May was just blaming Tony as if Tony had shown up in his life and been the direct reason for him becoming Spider-Man. As if Tony had given him the suit and asked him to be Spider-Man.
May shook her head. “Yes, but what else would you be with all the hero worship you did all those years looking up to Iron Man. And now you’re going to go out there and get yourself killed over this and he’s going to let you. And yes, fine, maybe Ben and I shouldn’t have let you get so obsessed with The Avengers but I didn’t expect—”

She was crying. Her face red and splotchy from the anger or the tears or both. Peter hated seeing her that way.

“I have super powers,” Peter said.

“I don’t care!” May yelled and hands went up into the air in frustration. Peter took a step back. He’d never seen her this angry.

“May—”

May cut him off. “Fine, so he didn’t make you do this, but when he found out, he should have told me. No, instead he probably thinks it’s awesome to have some sort of mini-me. The kind of thing that he’d be happy about. I’m not surprised at all.”

“That’s not—” Peter tried.

“I don’t want to hear it! You’re my kid. Mine. I don’t want you doing this and that’s final. And I don’t want you to see him either. Not if he’s putting you in danger like this. It’s not okay.”

Peter had never had to actually be parented like this before. He had never been the kind of kid to get into trouble or make things difficult. He’d been grounded and had things taken away from him lots of times but every punishment had been easily doled out and taken and none of it had ever felt like a big deal. They had even felt deserved. Ben and May had always been fair and just and they had never been truly angry at him, not the way that May was now. He’d never seen her like this so serious and upset and angry and acting completely on her emotion.

“But, May—”

“No,” May said and shook her head. “I buried my husband. I won’t bury you. You’re not doing this.”

And Peter knew that he couldn’t not do it. No matter what it took, he was Spider-Man with or without the suit and that was not something he could actually give up no matter what May said. That was a part of him. A huge part of him and Peter had already gone through a small period time when he wasn’t actively being Spider-Man and it wasn’t for him not just because his powers wanted to be used, but because there was always trouble and people in danger and Peter couldn’t ignore that -- not when he could help.

“It’s not up to you,” Peter said.

“Not up to me, is it, Peter? Well guess what, you live under my roof. You’re underage and you’re in high school for goodness sake. I’m in charge of you. And I know I don’t often act like it and that’s my fault for being so lenient with you but that stops now.”

It was shocking to hear May like that. Peter shook his head. “May, you can’t—”

“I can. I don’t want you doing this. I’m in charge here, Peter, I’m the adult. You’re just a kid and you don’t know—”

Peter shook his head. “Nope. You’re not. You’re not even my real aunt.”
May gasped.

It hurt Peter to say it but it was ultimately true. “And if you don’t want me doing this while living under your roof then I’ll just have to leave. I have -- I have a dad, now. If you can’t accept Spider-Man then--”

It was hard to get it all out and not just cry over it. He stared at May and waited for her to say anything, for her to take it back or say anything. Instead, she kept silent and it was like they were having some kind of stand off except that May was still crying and she was oh so clearly hurt even while the anger remained. Peter waited, not sure what he could do or say because this was unexplored territory and he had never expected for May to react like this to finding out. She had always been so reasonable -- so open to listening to Peter. It was like dealing with someone else altogether. Except, well, Peter had always known she wasn’t going to take it too well. It was why he’d kept it secret in the first place.

“Peter, you better not mean that. You know what I’ve done for you. You know what I’ve sacrificed for you -- what Ben and I sacrificed to raise you as our own. So you will listen to me. You won’t be moving out and you won’t be Spider-Man. I’ve never had to put a foot down with you. Never. I’ve let you do whatever you wanted and stay out as late as you wanted and when I found out you were sneaking out every night I didn’t say anything. But this is--”

Peter had to stop her. She didn’t get it. “It’s something I have to do,” Peter said. “Dad understands that. I get you don’t -- but he does and he’s my father and I’m sure he’ll be happy to let me live with him. It’s how it should have been anyway.”

May looked stricken. “Peter, you can’t—“

Peter turned away, not sure that he could actually face her and it hurt. He hadn’t realized that he was crying until he reached up to wipe at his face and his fingers came back wet. His eyes landed on his desk and on all the things there. Save for the computer, it was May that had gotten him all of them. She who wasn’t even his real family and yet had never treated him like he wasn’t.

May touched his shoulder, but he couldn’t turn to look at her. Her hand rubbed down his neck and back and it would have been easy to just lean into her and seek some sort of understanding.

“You’re so smart. Brilliantly so,” May said and her voice was gentler and more like her and yet the emotion was also so clear. “I don’t want that to be wasted on this. I don’t want your life to end because you want to be like the great Tony Stark who is not everything you think he is.”

Peter stood stock still for a long moment and then he shook his head. “It’s a compliment to be compared to him,” he said. “I know he wasn’t always the best, but he turned that around and made things better. I love you, May, but I’m Spider-Man and Tony accepts that. And maybe now you can stop worrying about sacrificing anything else because of me.”

He didn’t wait for a response. Instead, he grabbed his backpack -- one that Tony had actually given him after he lost yet another backpack -- and he threw all of his school things inside as well as his laptop. Peter grabbed a few more essentials but didn’t bother with clothes. He had some at the tower anyway and they would do for now.

He glanced at May as he grabbed the mask and she looked shattered. It was hard to look at her for long and his chest ached because May should have accepted him and if not that then they should have allowed him to really explain it. He had been right in thinking that she would freak out but he hadn’t known to expect her to just be so against Spider-Man that she would demand that he stop doing it altogether.
“I gotta go,” Peter whispered and he put the mask back on.

“Hello, Peter, you seem to be in distress,” Karen said.

“You could say that,” Peter said and then he walked towards the window.

He heard May call his name, but he only turned to look at her again as he climbed out of the window and he could see how worried she looked. She was crying and her face looked pained and yet Peter knew he couldn’t turn back. He couldn’t do anything but this. If he had learned anything with how the last few weeks had gone it was that Peter was Spider-Man not just because of his powers or the suit that Tony had built him, but because of who he was and because he wanted to help others.

“Should I contact Mr. Stark?” Karen asked.

“No, Karen. I’m -- I’m going to head over to the tower,” Peter said and he swung away from the house and in the same way he’d come.

Peter tried to calm himself down, trying to make himself feel a little less. He kept himself high up, swinging from building to building out of sight of most people. Karen didn’t say much and he was glad. It meant that he could distract himself and not break down into tears over everything. Except that it was hard not to think about it -- to picture May’s face when Peter had told her she wasn’t even really his aunt. He regretted saying that the most especially after everything that May had done for him. Peter stopped at a roof just a few blocks from the tower and he tried to catch his breath. He pulled off his mask and brushed tears away.

“Am I doing the right thing?” He asked.

“I don’t know, Peter. Does it feel like the right thing?” Karen said.

It did, which was a little hard to admit when he considered everything that he was giving up to make this choice.

“I want to be Spider-Man. I can’t give it up. She doesn’t want to understand that,” Peter said and sighed. Maybe things would have been different if Ben were still around.

“Maybe she just needs some time,” Karen said.

“Yeah. Maybe,” Peter said. He could only hope. “She’s just -- May doesn’t usually change her mind about things but maybe--”

Karen took a moment to respond. “May cares for you, Peter.”

“I know,” he said.

He sat there on the roof for a good while, thinking it all over and trying not to let himself think about all the ways that things could have gone differently. After a while, he just put the mask back on.

He swung off of the roof and headed towards the tower which took him only minutes. He landed right outside the penthouse floor. It wasn’t a balcony but a landing space for Iron Man.

“Karen, ask Friday to let me in,” Peter said.

Friday opened the door.

“Thanks,” Peter muttered before he stepped inside. He wasn’t surprised to find that Steve and his dad were both already waiting for him. Peter took off the mask.
“Hi,” Peter said.

Tony opened his arms and Peter dropped his backpack. He walked briskly forward and threw himself at Tony, wrapping his arms around his dad and pressing his face into his dad’s t-shirt covered chest.

Chapter End Notes

I'm interested to see what everyone thinks about May's reaction. I didn't expect it to go this way exactly, but it felt like the right direction to take it in.

Next chapter is a Tony POV and will probably be up on Thursday.

November is always somehow the busiest month of the year for me in part because work is hectic. I work for Costco and the holidays make things so hectic and November is where all of that starts up. But November is also my birthday month and this year my birthday is the week of Thanksgiving which has made everything extra crazy for me personally. So as a warning this month and possibly next I am posting a little bit less per week.

I am also currently focusing on editing right now so hopefully that will mean having more chapters ready to go before I dive back into writing.

Lastly, RIP to Stan Lee. He'll live on in all the characters he's left behind. :(  

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog [this chapter](http://example.com/chapter) and the [masterpost](http://example.com/masterpost) on my tumblr.
Chapter 93

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading this. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steve pressed kisses down Tony’s throat right to the top of the worn Black Sabbath t-shirt. He leaned his head back against the kitchen wall and could feel Steve’s laughter on his skin as he pulled back. He opened his eyes to look at him and Steve’s blue eyes bore into his and Tony pulled him into a hard kiss, his hand grasping as Steve’s hair which had grown even longer since the last time Tony saw him, and giving it just a gentle tug. Steve’s beard had grown too and it felt amazing against his skin, soft and scratchy all at once. Tony had a good mind to not let Steve shave that off ever.

Tony took quick breaths as the kiss came to an end, but he pressed himself into Steve again feeling the toned muscle against him and he had missed that so desperately. It hadn’t taken long for them to find themselves entangled in each other after Peter left since at last they were alone.

“We should go upstairs,” Steve muttered after a few more kisses. “Anyone could come back.”

“Hmm, yes,” Tony said and he turned and grabbed Steve’s hand and dragged him towards the elevator at a quick pace.

Friday opened the doors without being asked and whisked them up. They held hands but kept no other contact but it was enough. Steve played with Tony’s fingers, slotting them together and just touching and Tony had forgotten that Steve had had a thing about his hands. He had a playful smile on his lips and a twinkle in his eyes and Tony loved him. He loved Steve and he was so glad to have him back home.

“Looks the same,” Steve said as they stepped out of the elevator.

“Didn’t change much up here. Just -- I made some space for you.”

“Oh?” Steve said.

“Art studio,” Tony muttered as Steve pulled him flush against him and Steve was all muscle hard and lean and perfect. “Have to keep you occupied somehow.”

“I can think of a few ways,” Steve said.

“I don’t remember you being this forward.”

“I missed you is all,” Steve said and they were kissing again and nothing else seemed to matter.

They made it past the den and the guest bedrooms and finally to Tony’s room -- their room.

“Made room in the closet,” Tony said and Steve’s hands were wandering under his shirt.

They made quick work of their clothes and everything was quick and slow all at once because Tony wanted to touch every inch of Steve’s body and yet he needed him desperately too. Needed to know
that this was all real that it wasn’t just some fantasy that his mind had cooked up somehow. It felt perfect and real and wonderfully mind blowing when Steve’s hands were intertwined with his and Tony was wrapped around Steve, trying to keep all of them in contact and words didn’t matter -- most things didn’t matter -- they were together and it was everything.

“I love you,” Steve whispered. “Never leaving you again.”

Tony could just kiss him because words were unreachable and then languidly they moved and Tony had the energy to pull a blanket over them before he dropped his head to Steve’s chest and the lack of sleep in preparation overtook him. He felt Steve kiss his forehead and he’d never felt so safe. Happy.

The next time he was aware was when Friday gave him an alert.

“Boss, Peter’s made it back home,” Friday announced.

“Thanks, Fri,” Tony said and that was at least one less worry.

“You have Friday tracking him?” Steve asked and there was laughter in his voice.

Tony kissed the corner of his mouth. “Hon, did you expect anything less from me?”

Steve laughed. “No. I guess not.”

They drifted into silence for a while. It was the perfect moment. He had Steve and Peter was home safe and sound. Everything was right for once. Tony let his eyes close and he let himself just rest. Steve’s fingers traced figures on his shoulders and chest and Tony just breathed him in and he tried not to fall asleep.

Not a few minutes later, his phone rang and Tony who had been half-napping was alert.

“Who’s it?” Tony asked.

“May Parker is calling, boss,” Friday said.

Tony sat up at once and Steve let him go as he stumbled out of their bed in search of his phone which was on the floor somewhere with his jeans. May Parker calling him wasn’t going to be anything good. He just knew it wasn’t.

“Hello?” Tony said.

May didn’t say anything for a long moment and Tony became even more sure that something had happened. He braced himself for it. His mind could come up with a million scenarios but he couldn’t let himself do that. Steve reached for him, handed him clothes and got himself back into his own.

“Peter should be arriving at yours some time tonight assuming he goes straight there and doesn’t wander off,” May said.

She sounded weird, stiff and hoarse somehow.

“What -- didn’t he just get home?” Tony asked.

May didn’t say anything and Tony multitasked putting on pants while holding his phone against his ear as he waited getting more and more worried because what could have happened? Had Karen not alerted him to something happening to Peter? Or Maybe--
“He’s -- Peter’s Spider-Man,” May said.

Tony hadn’t expected that.

“Something you already know and somehow forgot to tell me about,” May continued, “which is unbelievable because I trusted you with him. I trusted you to keep him safe and instead you’re letting him wander the streets going after criminals. Father of the year, Stark, that’s who you are and somehow I’m the bad guy because all I’ve ever done is worry about him and raise him and love him and I’m supposed to just let him go on this suicide mission of his that he’s been inspired to take on because of you. If you haven’t forgotten he’s fifteen years old. He’s not someone to add to your little team. You’re supposed to be his father.”

Tony let her rant. There was nothing he could say after her first few words because May knew. She knew about Spider-Man and she wasn’t taking it well at all. He glanced over at Steve who just looked on, looking a bit worried. He was close enough that he could probably hear everything May said. Tony appreciated having him there.

“So, what? You have nothing to say for yourself? No explanation or excuse?” May asked and she was loud and upset and Tony didn’t know how to handle this. “My fifteen year old is running around in a suit you made him and all those things he’s done and who knows what else--” she broke into a sob and Tony hated. He looked to Steve.

“Talk to her,” Steve said.

“He didn’t want you to know,” Tony said eventually. “I couldn’t break his trust and he was doing it long before I came into the picture, May. It’s not something that he was going to stop doing. You know how stubborn Peter can be and that suit I made him tracks where he is and keeps him safe. He won’t stop no matter what anyone says. It’s a fight I didn’t want to lose but I am protecting him instead. He’s -- he’s not in that much danger. His powers--”

Something broke on May’s end and that’s when Tony knew that she wasn’t going to listen to reason.

“You’re both the same! It’s like taking to a wall. Doesn’t matter anyway, I guess. He’d rather be with you--” a sob broke through at the end and then the call disconnected and Tony looked up towards Steve.

“Did you--”

“Hear? Yeah. That was his aunt?”

Tony nodded. “I didn’t think she’d react that badly although I guess Peter expected it seeing as he didn’t want her knowing.” He quickly got his shirt back on and finished buttoning his jeans. “Come on, let’s go wait for him. Fri, is he in the suit?”

“Yes. Karen says he’s coming.”

“Good.”

“Who is Karen?” Steve asked.

“AI in Peter’s suit,” Tony answered, a little distracted as he pulled up the GPS tracking from the suit and sure enough Peter was heading towards the tower. “Let’s go wait for him.”

Steve grabbed his hand and brought him to the living room to sit on the couch with him while they waited. “What’s his aunt like?” Steve asked.
Tony turned to face him. “She’s usually really nice but strong. I like her, actually. She’s been like a mom to Peter and I know she loves him like one too. That’s what all of this is and I get that but she’s not even trying to understand,” Tony said and sighed. This was all a mess. He wondered how Peter was faring.

Steve weaved their fingers together. “Do you think she just needs some time to get used to it?”

“I hope so,” Tony said. “Peter is a bit on the stubborn side as I’ve learned over the past few weeks and he isn’t going to budge on this which isn’t even the problem because he just seems to attract trouble and he’s just too smart and too noble and too willing to help that the best thing for him is to be able to defend himself and be Spider-Man. I don’t want him to lose her or vice versa but demanding that he not do this just -- it isn’t the right approach. And maybe she’s scared...I don’t know, but it’s why I didn’t do that despite how much I wanted to. It’s why I gave him back the suit and why I know no one can stop him from being who he is.”

When he looked at Steve again Steve was smiling at him broadly.

“What?” Tony asked.

“You’re such a dad,” Steve said and he leaned in and pecked him on the lips. “I like it.”

Tony laughed and he leaned further into Steve, kissing him gently for a moment. Despite everything, he was still feeling happy to have Steve back and with him. May’s call had sobered him up from some of that, but as he dropped his face on Steve’s shoulder and Steve ran his fingers through his hair he just relished in the moment.

Friday alerted them when Peter finally did arrive and they both stood up. Tony’s heart broke when Peter took off the mask because he wore his emotions on his face so clearly. Pain and anguish were so clear but there were also tear marks on his cheeks to add to it.

“Hi,” Peter said.

Tony did the only thing he could which was to open his arms. Peter dropped the backpack he’d been carrying to the ground with a thud and he moved forward quickly and threw himself at Tony. Tony could feel him shaking as he wrapped his arms around him and Peter pressed his face against his chest and Tony knew that Peter was crying. He rubbed a hand down Peter’s back and then looked up to glance at Steve who had a worried frown. It was a while before Peter stopped crying.

“Come on, kid, want to sit?” Tony asked gently. “Tell me what happened?”

Peter let him lead him to the couch, but he said nothing and seemed to want to stay close which Tony didn’t mind at all so he let Peter lean against his side and kept an arm wrapped around him. His tears had subsided, but his eyes were still watery and red.

“I got a call from your aunt,” Tony said and Peter stiffened. “She yelled a bit. She knows about Spider-Man, huh?”

“Yeah,” Peter muttered. “She wants me to stop.”

“I know,” Tony said and ran a hand up and down Peter’s back.

“I don’t want to -- I can’t--”

“I know,” Tony said again.
“You don’t...you don’t agree with--”

Tony sighed. “Do I wish you would be a kid for a while longer and not put yourself in danger being Spider-Man? Sure. But I’ve also come to understand that you are Spider-Man and that you will do it no matter what so…”

Peter nodded. “Can we -- can we talk about all of this tomorrow? I don’t think I can right now.”

“Of course,” Tony said. When he looked up again, Steve was still standing where they’d left him, but he moved closer when he met Tony’s eyes.

“Hey, Peter,” Steve said and his voice was gentle and kind. “I know you’re not feeling that great right now. I can get you some hot chocolate or tea?”

Peter turned a little to look at Steve. “I -- I’m sorry I--”

Steve smiled and he shook his head. “Nothing to be sorry about. But how about it? I could go for some hot chocolate. I make it from real chocolate. Then we can do whatever you want, okay. You can ask me anything you want. I know you have questions.”

Peter seemed stunned. It would have been amusing if this hadn’t been the result of Peter’s fight with May.

“Okay,” Peter said and then looked between them. “I’m not intruding am I? I can -- I can go to Ned’s. God, I’m so rude just showing up like that and--”

He pulled away from Tony and was scrambling back and he was on his feet. Tony reached for him but Steve was faster, putting his hand out on Peter’s shoulder and stilling him. Peter looked up at him and Tony almost laughed because he could tell that Peter was startled by it.

“You’re not intruding,” Steve said. “I promise that you’re not a bother to me or to your dad.” Steve looked down at Peter with a raised eyebrow. “Okay?”

“Okay,” Peter said and then looked back at Tony.

“Kid, you’re welcome here any time,” he said.

Peter nodded and Steve who hadn’t let go of Peter just yet pulled Peter against his side with a loose hold. “Come on, I’ll show you my hot chocolate recipe. Then you can go tell that friend of yours all about how Captain America made you hot chocolate.”

Peter’s lips quirked up, but mostly he looked a little shocked and he nodded. Tony mouthed a ‘thank you’ at Steve and Steve just shrugged back and despite everything Tony felt warm inside as he got up and followed them to the kitchen.

Chapter End Notes

I really loved a lot of what this chapter became and we get more of that in the next one as well. I'm hoping to get it up this weekend. At the latest I'll have it up on Monday.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Steve let Peter go only once they had reached the kitchen. It was odd to feel so protective of Peter already but then he supposed it came with the territory of loving Tony. Or maybe it was just that Peter was so easy to care for.

“The secret,” he said to Peter as he walked to the fridge, “is to use real chocolate.”

Peter hung back and watched him as he grabbed milk — which he knew Tony only kept because he liked a splash of it in his coffee — and then walked over to one of the cabinets where he knew that Tony kept the chocolate and sure enough he had a choice of chocolate chips and bars with different percentages of cacao. Most of it was the good kind of chocolate.

“Okay,” Peter said. “I’ve only — I’ve only ever had the Swiss Miss kind with the powder.”

“Which Steve will tell you is garbage,” Tony said and he walked to stand next to Peter by the island in the middle of the kitchen. “He’s an old man about things like that.”

Steve shot him a playful glare as he went to grab a saucepan and he could tell that Peter seemed to have calmed down some.

“The other secret,” Steve said, “is to do it on a stovetop.”

“Again, like the old man that he is,” Tony said and when Steve turned to look at them, Peter was leaning into Tony and Tony had an arm around his shoulders and his hand was rubbing up and down on Peter’s arm.

He smiled at them and then turned back to the pot. He poured enough milk for the three of them and grabbed a few different types of chocolate and broke the bars into chunks that he threw inside the pot.

Steve heard them when they moved and felt Tony come up behind him. Peter joining in at his side to peer into the pot.

“So you’re melting it,” Peter said.

“Yup,” Steve said and smiled down at him.

Tony pressed a kiss to his left shoulder while squeezing his right and moved over to grab everything else that Steve would need. Steve remembered the first time he’d made hot chocolate for Tony. It had been on a cold night when they were all living in the tower and they were all excited for a movie night. Tony had followed him to the kitchen when he offered to make everyone hot chocolate and he had complained the entire time that Steve was taking too long. But afterwards, he’d admitted that it
was worth the wait.

Tony set down the cinnamon and vanilla next to him.

“Thanks,” Steve muttered and then to Peter. “Can you stir this? We don’t want the chocolate to stick to the pot.”

“Uh, yeah,” Peter said and grabbed the spoon.

Steve went about adding the cinnamon and the vanilla and he watched Peter while he stirred the pot.

“You’re doing good, Peter,” Steve said. “Just keep stirring.”

Peter nodded. Steve looked over to Tony who smiled at him. “I’ll get mugs. Try and see if I have any mini-marshmallows.”

“I think it’s all melted,” Peter said after a while, looking up at Steve.

“We have to let it boil,” Steve said.

Peter nodded. “I’ve never seen milk boil before.”

Steve could see his curiosity and inquisitive mind in his commentary and he had to wonder about how little Peter seemed to know about cooking. Although, he supposed that Peter was a teenage boy and likely not interested in cooking. Tony wasn’t much help in the kitchen either when it came to it.

“It’s not like water,” Steve warned him. “We have to get it off the heat when it starts to foam up. You’ll see.” He reached for the spoon and stirred it around. It wasn’t a long wait before the hot chocolate started to rise in the pot, foaming up.

“Woah,” Peter said.

Steve laughed as he turned off the stove. “Told you.”

“That was kind of cool,” Peter admitted.

“Milk also has a tendency to form a bit of film on top of it when it’s boiled,” Steve said.

“No marshmallows,” Tony said.

“But why does it do that?” Peter asked.

Steve had no answer for that because he’d never cared to find out. It was just a thing that happened that he hadn’t considered needed an answer.

Tony on the other hand did have an answer. “It’s the proteins in milk that do that when heat is applied. Kind of a weird thing that happens.”

“Oh,” Peter said, “and I suppose the fat content of the milk makes a difference then?”

“I guess,” Tony said.

Peter stepped out of the way so that Steve could pour the hot chocolate into the mugs that Tony had set out and he listened to them as they discussed the whole thing for a little while longer. Peter really was Tony’s son through and through.
Peter felt horrible. He kept thinking back to May and picturing her back at the house all alone and upset because he had just left after Peter had said she wasn’t his family when May was so absolutely important to his life and to who he was. It hurt to think about her ultimatum, though, and how much she wanted him to give up Spider-Man.

It was nice, how hard his dad and Steve were trying to distract him and make him feel better. Steve seemed to be particularly good at it with the hot chocolate. It turned out to be really good -- better than any other hot chocolate that Peter had ever tasted. The chocolate flavor was rich but it was so easy to taste a hint of the vanilla and certainly the cinnamon as well.

“Good, right?” Tony asked.

“Yeah,” Peter said and then to Steve. “It’s kind of amazing.”

“I told you so,” Tony said.

They had moved over to the table and it was nice to just sit there with the warm mug between his hands. Peter knew that eventually he would have to talk about it. Maybe not that night, but the next day for sure and he just didn’t know how he was going to explain it. He didn’t even know for sure if Tony would want him to stay at the tower with him on some sort of permanent basis especially since his boyfriend had just returned and Peter had probably interrupted their night as it was.

“Hey, you okay?” his dad asked. “You looked like you were thinking a little hard there.”

Peter nodded and he sipped at his mug. It was warm and just slightly sweet. He met Steve’s eyes when he looked up again and Steve stared back and he was just so inviting and warm and he didn’t seem to be bothered about Peter being there at all.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Tony asked. “I know I said we can put it off to the morning, but if you want to--”

“Can I stay here?” Peter asked.

“The night? Of course,” Tony said. “You’re always welcome. We went over that already.”

Peter shook his head. “No. Well, yes, but maybe longer?”

Tony frowned at him a little, but he nodded. “For as long as you want to stay, kiddo.”

Steve smiled at him in some sort of encouraging manner.

“She blames you for me being Spider-Man,” Peter said after a while and he looked down into his cup. It sort of stung to say it. “She said -- she said you’re a bad influence on me. May doesn’t get it. I knew she wouldn’t. I just didn’t know she’d--”

“She wants you to stop being Spider-Man and you told her no,” Tony finished for him. “I gotta say, kid, I don’t like the two of you fighting.”

Peter shrugged his shoulders. He didn’t really much like it either especially knowing how much it had probably hurt May to see him go. But, he was hurting too. He hadn’t wanted to leave. Despite how welcome he might be at the tower, his home had always been with May and it was going to be odd to not really have that anyone. Still, Peter knew that if she wasn’t going to understand that he was Spider-Man that he wouldn’t be going back.
“Anyway, I did get to hear her thoughts on all of this as upset as she was and I’m hoping she just needs some time to take it all in and get used to it. But, Pete, this is as much your home as it is mine,” his dad said.

“Oh,” Peter said and it was a bit overwhelming but mostly it just felt nice.

“Anyway,” Steve said, as if sensing that Peter needed a change of subject. “I think this is all better left for tomorrow. How do you feel about board games, Peter?”

Peter looked at Steve who was still giving him a smile and seemed just so open and inviting. “I -- I like them. Why?”

“I was thinking we could play something.”

“You’ll have to go down to the communal floor to get them,” Tony said.

Steve gulped down some of his hot chocolate and Peter returned to his own. It really was rich and full of flavor. The best hot chocolate that he’d ever had and it was comforting too to drink it and know that someone had gone through the trouble of making it because of him and for him and that while it was relatively simple it wasn’t as simple as what anyone else might have done.

“Thank you,” he whispered.

“What for?” Steve asked, a little on the surprised side.

“The hot chocolate, I guess.”

“Don’t worry about that. Whenever you need a pick me up in the form of hot chocolate I’m your guy, alright?”

“Alright,” Peter said.

They finished their drinks at around the same time and Steve got up. “I’ll go get a few games,” he said.

“We’ll clean up,” Tony offered and Peter watched as Steve in passing touched Tony’s arm and it was a small gesture and yet it was everything. He was surprised when Steve ruffled his hair when he passed him.

“He -- you really love each other,” he whispered to Tony after Steve was gone.

His dad smiled a little and it wasn’t a smile that Peter was used to seeing on him. “Yeah,” his dad said.

“I’m happy for you,” Peter said. “I was -- it was an odd thing to find out earlier but it kind of isn’t now. I -- I always liked Captain America but I thought he’d be stuffy and just act like...I don’t know...Ned asked me if he was like a mean old grandpa once back when he found out about my powers but that’s not quite right for what I expected.”

Tony laughed. “Mean old grandpa Steve.”

Peter rolled his eyes and he grabbed their mugs and put them in the sink. “He’s not that, anyway. He’s just nice.”

“Hmm. A bit stubborn, but nice.”
Peter went about washing their mugs and then the saucepan as well while he was at it. Once he was done, he remembered that he was still wearing the Spider-Man suit. He had just washed dishes in his Spider-Man suit after having hot chocolate in the suit and it had seemed completely normal.

“I’m going to get changed,” Peter said.

Tony nodded.

When Peter came back, Steve was getting out of the elevator carrying a stack of board games.

“I didn’t know what you’d like,” he said with a shrug and a smile.

It was easy to feel okay when he was faced with someone like Steve who was so willing to do anything to make him feel better. It helped to have his dad there too because Peter found comfort in Tony. He just -- he knew he’d be okay if Tony was around. That was -- it was probably what it was supposed to feel like to have a dad.

“I’ve always had a penchant for Scrabble,” Tony said after Steve had set everything down, “but your choice, kid.”

“Um. I like Clue. But Scrabble is good too.”

“Clue it is,” Tony said with a grin and then pulled that game out of the pile.

Chapter End Notes

I really loved writing the dynamic between Peter, Steve, and Tony in a way I didn't know I was going to enjoy. I guess it was just different after Homecoming to write.

Next up we have more Steve and Peter and also a bit of May. I'm almost done editing that chapter but I have no idea when I'll have time to post between my birthday and Thanksgiving but it will be up by Friday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Tony could have probably gone out to Queens and given May a piece of his mind for making Peter feel so horrible. He hadn’t really felt like that when May had called, but seeing Peter and how much he seemed to be hurting about the whole thing had been enough to make him want to take care of the whole problem himself.

Even with the distraction of the board games, Tony could tell that deep down Peter was actively trying not to think about whatever had happened earlier in the night. He was trying to enjoy himself and Tony knew that he probably was -- at least a little bit.

Tony had been tired even before Peter arrived, but he grew even more so as they played a few board games. It made him regret drinking the hot chocolate and not getting himself a cup of coffee instead, but he knew that if Peter wanted he would stay up as long as he could. In truth, he was tired because he hadn’t really slept much over the last few days.

“I think it’s time we all go to bed,” Steve said after a few games.

Peter looked to be on the tired side too and Tony remembered suddenly that it was a weekday and he had school the next morning. It was entirely possible that he was going to have to skip school.

“It’s getting pretty late,” Tony agreed.

“And I can tell you’ve probably been up more than twenty four hours,” Steve muttered.

“Guilty,” Tony admitted because it was easier than trying to lie.

Peter didn’t protest the idea of going to bed. During all the remodels of the other living floors, Tony had considered doing some work on a bedroom for Peter but he hadn’t gotten much done. He did have one picked out -- the one next to his own. It was in need of some decorating for the most part but it had a comfortable bed and other furnishings and a closet that already contained the clothes that Happy had gone out to get for Peter for just in case situations.

Peter picked up his backpack from the den before following them and Tony pointed him towards the bedroom.

“Yours,” Tony said. “I was planning on getting it a bit more decorated before you spent the night here again but--”

“Thanks,” Peter muttered.

Tony pulled him into a hug. “Good night, kid.”
“Good night, dad,” Peter muttered, leaning into the hug for a moment longer before pulling back and then looking towards Steve. “Good night.”

Steve reached over to ruffle his hair. “Sweet dreams, Pete.”

Peter smiled and ducked his head before going into his room.

Once back inside their bedroom, Tony turned to Steve. “What do we do?” he asked.

“We go to sleep,” Steve said. “You look like you’re going to fall asleep standing there. We worry about everything in the morning.”

“Is it bad that I want to keep him?” Tony asked as he took his clothes off down to his boxers. He grabbed an undershirt from a drawer and put it on before he looked at Steve who had been watching him.

“No,” Steve said. He moved towards Tony and drew him in by placing his hands at his waist and pulling him into his arms into a loose hold.

“You’re a little overdressed,” Tony muttered, picking at Steve’s shirt. “I want them to be on good terms but it wouldn’t be a bad thing to have him here either. Have him live with me — with us.”

It was like confessing a bad thought because he’d always sort of accepted that Peter would just live with May. He had always known that Peter would live there and that they would spend some time together but that Peter wouldn’t want to leave his home which had always been with May.

“I wouldn’t mind that,” Steve said. “I like him. He reminds me of you and I love how you are with him and I love that you get to be his dad now. He’s here and it’s amazing. From the moment I knew about Peter I knew you wanted to know him and you’re a good dad, Tony. You’re good for him.”

Tony felt warm all over. “I--”

Steve kissed him, a gentle and lazy kiss that Tony just let himself enjoy until Steve pulled away and Tony stared at him. This man was everything.

“Come on, Tony. It’s time for bed. We can figure all of this out tomorrow.”

Steve pushed him in the direction of their bed and Tony turned to look at him get undressed and because it was Steve he folded all of his clothes before dropping them over a chair and then he slipped into the bed and Tony moved towards him and felt entirely content to be in Steve’s arms.

—

Breakfast became a whole affair. Peter hadn’t expected to walk out of his room to noise mostly because usually his senses meant that he actually heard everything before he exited a room — which meant that the room was probably sound proof — but also because he had never expected for Tony and Steve to make much noise. Of course it wasn’t even them making noise at all but instead all of the rest of the Avengers who weren’t having breakfast on their own floors or the communal floor but instead in the penthouse.

Peter who was still in pajamas stopped short when he saw them all in the kitchen and they all turned to look at him. A part of him wished he’d changed out of his pajamas before leaving his room especially since it didn’t seem like his dad was there.

“Good morning, Peter,” Steve said standing up from the table.
Peter tried to smile at them. “Good morning, everyone,” he said.

He got a wave from Wanda who had her mouth full. Natasha smiled at him and muttered a good morning. Sam actually said it despite the fact that he was mid-chew. Somehow, it helped to let him calm down a little.

“Are you hungry?” Steve asked and stood up at once. “Tony went out a bit ago but he already called your school so you don’t have to go in today. He’ll be back soon but in the meanwhile food. There’s plenty.” In a whisper when he was close enough to Peter he added: “Tony said something about you needing to eat more than most people.”

Peter let Steve pile food up on a plate for him and he sat down to eat and found that he was actually really hungry. Having the night to sleep on all of it made him regret how hasty he’d been to leave May and yet he would never regret wanting to continue to be Spider-Man. And maybe, it was better to give May some time.

Steve touched his shoulder gently as he sat down next to him and Peter was glad to have him there. It made being there easier and Peter really had not expected for Steve to have that effect on him -- not when he’d been trying not to fanboy over him just the night before.

The others jumped back into conversation as Peter ate and it felt nice that they weren’t acting differently at all. There was no pressure on him but they were also not excluding him. It was nice.

“What is everyone up to today?” Steve asked eventually.

“I think I’m going to sit on one of the comfortable couches and watch a movie. Anyone’s welcome to join,” Sam said. “Gotta rest up after everything.”

“And become some sort of lazy couch potato?” Natasha asked. “I’m going down to use the gym.”

“What’s the use when we’re going to be stuck inside for two years,” Sam called after her as she got up and left.

She turned. “The point is to not lose my edge.” Then, she was gone.

“I’m still going to watch a movie,” Sam muttered, “if there are any takers?”

Peter did feel a little bit odd being there because being a part of the day to day lives of The Avengers was something that he, Ned, and probably most of his classmates dreamed about and Peter was just invited right in.

“I guess since I have nothing better to do,” Wanda said.

“That leaves me and you, Peter,” Steve said as Sam got up from the table with Wanda. “I would invite you down to get some practice down at the gym but Nat doesn’t know about your powers and Tony said you’re still deciding on whether to let everyone know who you are. But, I do want to see them in action soon -- we can hone your technique up a bit.”

“Really?” Peter asked. “You’d -- you want to train with me? That’s so...I’d love that.”

Steve smiled at him. “Of course I do. For now, want to go wait for Tony in his lab? He should be returning soon. I haven’t seen the bots since I got back and I’ve been itching to go down there.”

“Uh, sure,” Peter said. He hadn’t realized that Steve spent any time in the workshop or that he knew the bots enough to even miss them.
They went to the workshop and Friday didn’t give them any trouble getting in and sure enough Dum-E rushed towards Steve when Steve entered. The other bots followed close behind and Steve got busy patting all of them and he actually spoke to them as if they were people as they beeped at him. Dum-E even went as far as pulling Steve further into the workshop. Peter couldn’t wait to tell Ned all about it. Ned was going to freak out.

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Steve had tried to convince him not go, but Tony had known that he had to. He had woken up early, mostly because Steve had gotten up, and the idea had come to him. He had to talk to May face to face and hope that she had calmed down overnight. Steve had tried to change his mind but for Tony this was something he had to do. Steve had forced him to go down to the gym for a little while first and Tony had gone along only because it was still too early to go see May.

Later, he’d called Peter’s school while on his way and explained that Peter would be busy that day with the internship. The woman that had answered the phone hadn’t given him a hard time at all and tried to keep him on the phone longer when she realized that it was Tony calling.

When he got to May’s house, he almost considered just not going in and heading back to the tower where Steve was making everyone breakfast with Sam and Peter was still in bed. But thinking about Peter and how upset he was told him he had to although it might have been a good idea to not show up alone. May had always liked Pepper, after all.

After a few minutes of sitting in the car, he finally got up and walked to the door and knocked. It took a while before May opened the door. She didn’t look great and Tony could tell that she probably hadn’t even slept the night before. Maybe he really should have given her more time.

“What the hell are you doing here?” May asked and stood in the doorway. Her arms were crossed and it was like she was staring him down.

“We have to talk about what happened last night,” Tony said.

May shook her head. “What happened is that Peter has been running around as some sort of superhero. Something that you were well aware of and thought was just fine as a hobby. So, as far as I’m concerned there is nothing you can say that will make this better unless Peter stops doing this. And since he has your approval he won’t.” She was actually calm as she said it, but Tony could tell that she had to be forcing herself to be calm.

“Peter is not going to stop,” Tony said. “No matter what anyone--”

“He’s a teenager who doesn’t know better!” May snapped.

“He’s Peter,” Tony shot back. “He’s Peter who is good. He’s a good kid and a good person and all he wants to do is help people. He’s also stubborn to a fault and I am doing all I can to keep him safe. I love him, May, and I don’t want him to get hurt just as much as you, and I rather he do this on my terms than his. He won’t stop. It’s who he is -- it’s who you raised him to be.”

May was crying. She wiped at her eyes angrily and closed them tightly. “I -- this is too hard to...I can’t lose him.”

Tony nodded. “He’s -- he’s staying with me. I don’t want for your relationship with Peter to be strained over this. You’re family, May.”
He turned to leave.

“I -- I don’t think I’ll ever be okay with him being Spider-Man,” May whispered.

Tony decided it was probably best if he just left it at that.

Chapter End Notes

I hesitated a lot with that last scene and I think I rewrote it at least three times before I was happy with it. So, yeah, May's still upset about it all but I think this convo does get her on the path of really not letting her emotions. I think we get more May in the next chapter.

Next chapter is still not edited and I probably won't get to it until Tuesday or Wednesday so expect the chapter by Thursday.
Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 96

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading as well as the birthday wishes over the last two or so chapters. I had a good one and still not done celebrating but thank you.

This chapter is probably the longest I've posted for this fic thus far but it didn't feel right to cut down after I edited due to how long it has taken to post and how long it will take me to get the next chapter up. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I used to sketch them a lot,” Steve said.

Peter had gotten a little distracted by something Tony had left out -- some sort of new SI project from the look of it.

“You drew me my graduation card,” Peter said as turned away from the work table to look back at Steve.

Steve had almost forgotten about that. “I did,” he said, “I also attended your graduation.”

Peter’s jaw dropped open and his eyes widened and it was all that Steve could do not laugh because he’d never known a person to display their emotions like that. “Why would you do that?” He asked after a moment.

Steve pushed Dum-E’s claw away when it came to tug at him. “It was a spur of the moment thing when we found out when your graduation was. Tony and I snuck in and sat in the back. We were wearing disguises, but we were there. I’m actually surprised no one noticed us or approached us.”

Peter looked shocked like he couldn’t believe it was true and Steve couldn’t really blame him because it did sound a little crazy.

“He never told me that,” Peter said. “He sent the card and we emailed about it, I think, but he never said he was there.”

Steve shrugged. “Tony didn’t want you to know.”

“Tony didn’t want him to know what?”

They both turned. Tony stood just within the workshop and it was clear that he had just arrived.

“You came to my Middle School graduation,” Peter said and he moved closer, standing next to Steve.

Tony rubbed the back of his head and he nodded. “Yeah. We did. No one even recognized us or they didn’t want to believe that it was us if they did.”

Peter shook his head and laughed. He couldn’t believe it. He couldn’t imagine them sitting in the
back row among all those parents and teachers and whatnot.

“It was boring which is a given, but it was nice to see you in person at a time when I didn’t think you’d ever learn the truth.”

Steve could tell that Peter was still a little surprised by the whole thing, but he also saw that Tony was glad for the distraction. Clearly going to see May Parker hadn’t gone as well as Tony had hoped. He wondered what that meant for Peter.

“You could have told me then,” Peter said.

“That’s what I told him,” Steve said and he remembered having a small whispered conversation about approaching Peter and how much it had seemed like Tony wanted to approach him and yet knew he couldn’t.

“It wasn’t a good time,” Tony said. “But, I should have. Or earlier.”

They had never spoken about it, but Steve was sure that Tony regretted not being in Peter’s life earlier.

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Peter spent the entire day with either Steve or Tony. At some point he’d gone back to his room to get changed out of his pajamas but he joined them back in the workshop and Tony’s newest renewable energy tech which Peter didn’t understand entirely but figured was brilliant. They had all joined Sam in front of the TV for a movie after a lunch that was ordered in by Tony and Peter got to see someone eat even more than he did for once. Steve had grinned at him. “It’s a good thing we know someone that can afford to feed us.”

Despite all the fun that he was having, Peter still couldn’t stop thinking about May and the fight and what had gotten him to the tower in the first place. Peter had expected her to text him or call him, but there had been nothing. It wasn’t at all like May to not try to check in on him but maybe -- maybe she knew he was okay. The person that did text him throughout the day was Ned.

**Guy In The Chair:** Why didn’t you tell me you weren’t coming to school today?

**Peter:** Forgot. I’m at the tower with my dad.

**Guy In The Chair:** Wait...wait...did you meet Captain America? And Black Widow? Oh my god, Peter, you have to tell me everything.

Peter was a little surprised that Ned knew until he looked it up online and there were a whole bunch of articles about the return of The Avengers. Everyone knew about it, then. Peter texted him about meeting them and about how nice everyone was. He didn’t tell him about the hot chocolate, but enough about Steve to keep him from pestering him too much.

**Peter:** I think Captain America wouldn’t mind meeting you.

Ned was a good distraction from thinking about May and how things were going to go. By the time that dinner rolled around, Peter had considered calling May but he didn’t know what he could say. If she hadn’t changed her mind about Spider-Man it would be another fight and Peter didn’t want that. He wanted them to get back to normal but maybe they just wouldn’t. The prospect of that scared him. He needed May in his life.

“You’re thinking kind of hard there, kiddo,” Tony said and nudged him.
“I just -- I don’t know what I’m going to do about May,” Peter said.

Tony nodded. “She’s always going to be your family and it’s hard to fight with someone you love. It hurts more. Hey, do you want to do something fun?”

Peter could see that his dad was just trying to distract him but he nodded anyway. Something fun turned out to be online shopping for room decor.

“I was thinking that If you’re going to be staying for a while we’re going to make sure that room at least reflects who you are.”

“Which is exactly what Peter wants from his bedroom,” Steve said, walking past them with empty take out containers.

“His room is boring right now, Steve,” Tony said.

Either way, Steve joined them in the workshop not too much later. He carried a sketch pad and he sat down on the futon just a few feet away from where Friday was displaying the items they were browsing for on a screen.

Peter appreciated the gesture even if it was unnecessary but he was happy to just let his dad have his way since he seemed excited about the whole thing. It was lucky Steve was there to voice his opinion when Tony found something a little too unnecessary.

They ended up buying all kinds of things. From posters to a weird looking lamp, a new dresser, a bunch of desk organizers, new sheets and duvet, as well as curtains. And then to top that off there were orders for clothing and when Tony saw them - plush pillows of all the Avengers which were not for Peter but for his living room.

“This is getting a bit excessive,” Steve said eventually as he peered through everything and found that it wasn’t only Peter that had gotten things but all of them. “I think he has enough stuff. I think we all have enough stuff.”

By the end of it the one thing that was clear to Peter was that his dad wanted him to feel welcome and that Peter was welcome to stay for a while and even if he didn’t, he would always have somewhere to go. He just needed to talk to May. Maybe that conversation wouldn’t go well, but Peter needed to try if only because she was still so important to Peter and he didn’t want to lose her.

“I think I still have to get a few things from home,” Peter said.

“I can have Happy go,” Tony offered.

Peter shook his head. “Do you think I should go talk to her? I don’t think she’s going to change her mind but I — I should try.”

Tony turned to look at him slowly. “If you think it would help. It’s up to you.”

“I don’t like when we’re mad at each other,” Peter said. “Maybe I’ll just give her a bit more time, though.”

It might help her calm down some more than if Peter didn’t go back immediately. Peter didn’t think she’d completely change her mind, but maybe she might let him explain himself. He figured maybe that’s why she wasn’t reaching out either.
“Up to you, Peter,” his dad said and then opened up a new page to show him a few more things.

“I really don’t–”

“Just look,” Tony said. “I’ll be right back. Maybe you’ll like something in there.”

“Don’t be afraid to tell him no,” Steve told him when Tony had left. He was in the middle of turning the page on his sketchbook and Peter was very curious to see what he’d drawn but didn’t want to ask.

“What?” he asked.

“Tony. He can go a little crazy with spending his money on people but he won’t be offended if you tell him you don’t need something. It’s just a part of him -- he shows he cares that way.”

“Oh,” Peter said.

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After she had had some time to think and let some of her anger wane, May still couldn’t be completely okay with Peter being Spider-Man. She would have been opposed to anything that was self-destructive and dangerous. It made her wonder how Ben would have seen it. Ben who had always been in awe of Captain America and who had really been impressed with Tony once it turned out that he was Iron Man. He had loved The Avengers, too, and May remembered suddenly that Captain America had actually saved Ben during that attack in New York. It hurt to not have him for this. To not know for sure what he would have thought or how he would have felt. All of that was compounded with the fact that Peter just -- he wasn’t there.

After the first day -- and after Tony had stopped by -- May had really started to miss Peter. The house felt huge without him and May felt lonely. She’d stared at pictures for a long time. Old ones from when Peter had first come to live with them. It had been the right thing to do to take in Peter despite how much her life had changed because of it. But that wasn’t a bad thing. Peter was amazing -- he was sweet and wonderful and May would do anything for him.

What May couldn’t understand was how easily Tony was just letting Peter be Spider-Man. He had said something about how he was making sure that Peter didn’t get hurt, but it wasn’t reassuring to May about his parenting skills. It did make May a little less wary but she also knew that there was no guarantee that Tony could keep Peter safe all the time. Maybe the suit and his powers and Tony’s involvement helped but for May it was always going to be hard to know that Peter was putting his life on the line. She would feel the same way if he went into the army or became a police officer or a firefighter. But...but Captain America had saved Ben and countless others. Peter was doing the same. He was helping and saving people and it was noble and wonderful and it was making a difference but he was Peter -- her Peter and she hated that she would rather he not help, but she just loved him too much and wanted him to live.

She had a mixture of feelings and thoughts about it and she didn’t reach out to Peter because of them. The thing was that at the end of the day she always went back to not wanting him to do it. When she saw Peter again it had been almost a week since she found out he was Spider-Man. He entered the house like normal, using the front door even, and then stopped short when he saw her.

“Peter,” she whispered.

“Hi, May. I came -- I wanted to get some of my things.” Peter said but he didn’t move, staring at her.

“Yeah, of course. How -- how is everything?”
“Good, I guess. I haven’t been...it’s been kind of busy. I -- I’ll go to my room.”

May followed after him and watched him as he walked into his room. It was just as he left it and he stepped right into the middle of it, but then moved towards his desk and the school things he’d left behind. He packed those up first.

“I didn’t mean for you to really leave,” May said after watching him for a while. “I -- I’m trying to figure out how I can be okay with this. I just don’t want anything to happen to you and it’s hard for me, Peter, you have to understand that.”

Peter let out a breath and he turned to look at her. “I get that. It was a lot for me and I didn’t think I should do this at first. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do, but I have to do this, May.”

“But why?” May asked and she really did want an answer.

Peter put down a book he was holding and he moved to sit on his desk chair. “I have powers, May. Got them from a spider a while back -- I guess about a year ago now -- and because I have them I have to this. I can do this. So I should. Otherwise when bad things happen and I didn’t stop them then that’s -- I’ll feel like it’s my fault. That’s not something I want to feel again.”

“Again?” May asked.

Peter gulped and her shifted a little in the chair. “I had my powers already when Ben--” Peter closed his eyes as he trailed off.

May’s chest ached and she couldn’t say anything and instead she looked at Peter who seemed to be collecting himself. He cleared his throat and smiled tightly at her.

“May, when Ben died I had my powers. I could’ve -- I should have stopped it -- the guy that...Anyway, I didn’t. I froze and I can’t do that again not when someone’s family is in danger and I can help. That’s why I do it, May. And I know you don’t get it or want me to do it but I have to.”

“Oh, Peter,” May whispered. She moved forward and her arms just instinctively went around him, pressing his face to her waist since he was still sitting and Peter’s arms around her too.

It was a while before she let go and looked at Peter. She pushed his hair back and he looked up at her and he was still so so young.

“I don’t like it,” she said. “I really don’t, Pete.”

“I know,” Peter said, “but I have to do this, May. I was -- I was thinking that maybe it would be better if I...well, I’ve lived with you for almost my entire life and Tony’s my dad. I get to see him from time to time but with school and...and Spider-Man I don’t see him all the time. I think I want to live with him for a while.”

It was a punch to the gut to hear that and yet May should have seen it coming. It only made sense. After all, Peter and Tony had become closer and closer since Peter had met him and May didn’t mind that. She was happy that Peter had a relationship with his dad it was just difficult to face that it was changing her relationship with Peter as well.

Her whole life had changed when she and Ben took Peter in. Neither of them had ever wanted kids but they had known that if they didn’t take him that he would go to Tony Stark and neither of them expected that to be a good thing. It had come easy somehow, to take care of Peter. Peter had always been easy. It had been so easy to love him too and all her reservations about kids had flown out the window because of him. Still, at times it had been hard to think about everything they’d given up for
him. She and Ben had wanted to travel the world and do countless other things that just hadn’t been possible with a kid. None of it was really possible now either because it was only her. Ben was gone. And now...now Peter was leaving her too and he was all that she had left.

“May?” Peter asked.

May shook her head and then she sighed. “That’s -- if that’s what you want I can’t stop you. Kind of like I can’t stop you from being Spider-Man I suppose.”

Peter nodded. “I won’t be gone forever, May. I’ll come and stay here when I can and I’ll definitely visit. You’re still -- you’re my Aunt May. I’m going to miss being here. I’ll miss you.”

That made it hurt a little less but still it all felt like a goodbye and it felt like it was all entirely her fault. If she had reacted a little differently or just not tried to give Peter that ultimatum things might have been differently. She remembered what Tony had said about how in order to not lose Peter he had allowed him to continue being Spider-Man. Maybe letting him go and letting him do what he wanted was her way of keeping him even if meant that he wouldn’t be living with her anymore. The other thing that helped was remembering that Peter would have been leaving in a few years for college anyway. This was going to be like that. It was just happening earlier.

“You have to call me every week and I expect texts almost daily,” May said. “I want to see you just as often. It will -- it will take me some time to get used to you being Spider-Man and I’m going to worry every time I hear anything about him -- you. And I will support you 100% if you were to change your mind on being a hero.”

Peter laughed. “I know,” Peter said. “I know, May. But I’m doing the right thing.”

He was the one to hug her first and she held him back tight. “I love you, Peter.”

“Love you too,” Peter said.

He stayed with her for the rest of the day and when she saw his bag later, he hadn’t actually packed up too many things. Mostly his school stuff, a few articles of clothing, and a couple of knick knacks. For the most part his room remained the same and that made May feel a little better. She wasn’t sure that she would ever truly accept Spider-Man, but she needed to let Peter do whatever he needed to do and just hope that Tony could keep him safe.

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone enjoyed this chapter and the resolution. I really didn't want to have Peter move out but it made a lot of sense for him to want to live with Tony after what happened and not because May doesn't accept Spider-Man but just because he really wants to be with his dad for a while. May definitely will not be cut out of his life and he'll spend a lot of time with her and I think they're in a better place at the end of this.

Next chapter will probably go up on Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Things were good for the next few weeks. Peter liked living at the tower. He went back to visit May every few days. Some days for a few hours, other times just to stop by. They didn’t really talk about Spider-Man, but Peter could tell that May was trying to be a little more understanding about the whole thing and if it meant not bringing up Spider-Man then that was for the best. It probably helped that Peter hadn’t been going out as much. Karen kept a good look out for anything that might need his attention -- but with the whole alien weapon thing having been dealt with being out on patrol every single day didn’t feel as necessary even though the FBI was still apparently trying to find The Vulture’s accomplices.

Living with Tony was great. Sam, Natasha, and Wanda had taken some time to get used to mostly because Peter at times felt like he couldn’t get over them being Avengers and then there was also the fact that he had seen Wanda in action back in Germany and she was kind of scary. Then there was Natasha who was Black Widow and who was just intimidating. Sam was a little easier especially since he seemed to be intent on catching up on all the tv he’d missed while he was on the run but also while he was an Avenger.

Steve had been easier than the others somehow perhaps because he was just so welcoming and understanding and because he knew Peter’s secret and he’d been a part of Peter’s arrival at the tower after the fight with May. Peter could understand perfectly why his dad loved Steve so much because Peter was starting to think that he never wanted to not have Steve in his life.

No one at school knew where he was living. Peter hadn’t even told Ned because it was just easier that way and because Ned adored May. Most of the time if he and Ned hung out it was over at Ned’s house. Sooner or later Ned was going to ask why he was never invited over anymore but that was something that Peter would deal with when it came up or he’d have him over at May’s. The thing was that Ned was freaking out enough about the return of The Avengers and Peter’s promise that he would introduce him soon, so he didn’t want to add to that by telling him that Peter was actually living with them and that Vision had literally phased through him the other day because he was too caught up in a book he was reading.

“Ned, they’re still settling in, okay. Just give me a little more time and I’ll ask my dad when I can invite you over to the tower.”

“Okay. Okay. But now that you know them, are they as cool as we’ve always thought they are? And are you officially an Avenger? I mean -- considering they’re on house arrest and all. And like -- do you know how--”

It was just never ending with Ned. Peter was learning to tune him out a little. But at least Ned had finally sort of learned to be a bit quieter while they were in school. Mostly Peter didn’t want to deal with Flash and his thoughts on the whole thing because literally everyone at school was talking about The Avengers returning. It was a wonder that May hadn’t brought it up -- but then she probably
didn’t want to talk about it because of the whole Spider-Man thing. It was fine by Peter even if he sometimes wanted to tell her about how Steve was exactly who Ben had thought he’d be -- he was even better, probably.

The one thing that Peter hadn’t expected was for Steve to actually want to see his powers and for him to want to help him with some training.

The first time they went to the training room, Peter had been a bit nervous mostly because even with Tony he had never showed anyone in his powers like this and in part because the last time Peter had used his powers around Steve they had been fighting each other in an airport in Germany. Steve had eased all of his fears and nervousness by being so absolutely calm that within minutes Peter had forgotten he was worried at all.

Steve seemed to be able to pinpoint where Peter needed to improve and he seemed fascinated by how strong Peter was. They went hand to hand for a while -- something that Peter really had no experience with -- and yet his instincts seemed to take over. Steve was still better and Peter suspected he was holding back a bit, but the whole thing was a success especially since Steve had a whole bunch of pointers for him.

“You’re good,” Steve said afterwards, “and your dad is right, you move like you already know what’s coming next.”

“What?” Peter asked. He didn’t remember if his dad had mentioned that to him before.

Steve nodded at him. “He told me to watch your reaction time a bit and he’s right because I know you’re not trained in any hand to hand combat and you’re on the defensive a lot which is good. It’s a good place to be when you’re a beginner -- but a part of the reason for that is that your instincts already tell you where to expect my next move to come from. It’s a good thing. Part of your powers.” He dropped an arm around Peter’s shoulders. “Come on, I’m hungry and I bet you are too.”

After that, Peter went down to the training room with Steve often. It was a lot of fun. Especially once Steve asked him to use the web shooters and show him what he could do with those. He was especially pleased when Peter told him he’d designed the shooters himself as well as the web fluid.

“You are your father’s son, kid,” he’d said and ruffled Peter’s hair with such a proud look that Peter had felt warm all over. He really liked Steve.

Occasionally, Tony joined them for training. His dad tended to stay on the sidelines and watch. But sometimes -- very rarely -- he joined in and since he usually only had his watch gauntlet on him and not much else Peter and Steve both pulled their punches a bit. It was good practice for Peter because he knew that not all of their opponents would be super-powered. But Peter had gotten really good with that aspect of his powers. He knew his own strength.

Peter had also picked up boxing because of Steve and he was impressed by the strength of the bags that Tony had built for Steve.

The only bad thing about it was that Peter could only be down there when none of the others were around. Otherwise, if they were there, then he had to pretend to be a regular teenager and it was hard to pretend that he was just doing a normal workout. That lasted a few weeks until Peter had enough and accidentally on purpose hit a punching bag -- a normal one -- too hard and sent it flying across the room.

Sam had stared at him for a long time. “So are Tony’s son or Steve’s?” he’d asked after a while.
Natasha who had been in the middle of stretching, stopped and shrugged her shoulders and Peter was sure that she had probably figured him out before that moment. She was a super-spy after all.

“I’m Spider-Man,” Peter had managed to get out.

Sam had nodded. “Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I was wondering when we were going to meet him.”

Wanda heard about it later that night during dinner and she’d nodded. “You are young,” she’d stated, “but you are very strong.”

Vision already knew of course and he’d smiled a little at Peter which was still weird coming from a non-human entity. They had all taken it better than he’d expected and Peter was glad that he didn’t have to hide in his own home. Not to mention that once Natasha knew officially, she started helping with his training too. She added some weapon training to everything else Steve was helping him with.

“It doesn’t matter if you never have to, but someone in your position needs to know how to use a gun. Or my widow bites or even Cap’s shield. Out on the field you use what you can and if I find your web shooters for some reason I’ll figure out how to use them to my advantage.”

All in all, he really loved living at the tower.

What Peter had yet to deal with in light of everything with May had been Michelle — or rather MJ — knowing that he was Spider-Man. She hadn’t exactly brought it up to him and despite how Ned seemed to think that Peter needed to talk to Michelle and swear her to secrecy, Peter was also well aware that Michelle didn’t really have anyone to tell and that she would have told already if she’d ever intended to. He far preferred leaving it all until Michelle herself brought it up to him or he found a reason to bring it up on his own. Ned was just nervous about it for no real reason.

The one thing Peter had had to deal with was the arrival of everything Tony ordered. The redecorating had been fun, and Peter had hated how right his dad had been about the personalization aspects of everything he’d ordered because suddenly the room was his and not just a room in the tower that he was staying in. It was his room.

The whole of it just made Peter a little wistful. Although he would never change anything if given the chance because of Ben and May, he couldn’t help but wonder how different things could have been if he had been with Tony from the start or even earlier.

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“Are you stir crazy yet?” Tony asked.

Steve laughed and he reached over to remove an eyelash from Tony’s cheek. “You know, I’m not. I wake up with you most days. I mean, when you bother to come to bed. Hanging out with Peter is a blast in and out of training. I’m not a fan of the anklet but not much I can do about that at the moment.”

Tony smiled and leaned into Steve’s touch. “I hope that doesn’t change any time soon.”

“It won’t,” Steve said and he was sure of it because he had spent a few months away from Tony and even having missions and things to do hadn’t been enough -- he’d been miserable.

“Okay,” Tony said with a grin as Steve rubbed a thumb over Tony’s cheek and then moved closer until Steve met him in a kiss.
“Oh, god! Not in the kitchen!”

They didn’t jump apart, but Tony burst into laughter and pushed his face into Steve’s shoulder and Steve held him as he kept laughing. Sam laughed from behind them and when Steve looked up, Sam winked at him.

“You know, this is my kitchen,” Tony mumbled as he turned to look at Sam.

“Yes, but you know we all like being up here more. Anyway, you have the best snacks.”

Steve knew for a fact that Tony’s kitchen usually didn’t have much food. Back when they had all been living in the tower Tony had only ever stocked the shared floor and even while they were in the compound he’d kept a very minimal stock of food -- mostly non-perishables. It was recently more stocked up because of everyone’s return and more importantly because of Peter who needed to eat almost as much as Steve did so Tony wanted to be sure that he would have something to eat at any time of the day. It also meant that Steve could cook from time to time instead of having Tony order food in all the time.

They watched Sam grab a pint of ice cream from the freezer and walk back to the door. “Okay. You may continue. Although, isn’t the kid out of school soon? Wouldn’t want to have him scarred for life.”

“Decathlon practice,” Tony said, “and perhaps some spider related activities too. I think he said he was a doing some patrolling today. He likes being useful with the small stuff.”

“Huh, you really do know where the kid is all the time, don’t you?”

“He does,” Steve said.

Sam nodded and left them to it. Steve turned back to Tony after a moment and pressed a kiss to Tony’s cheek and then Tony turned and kissed him once more, quick and easy and like they had all the time in the world to just keep being together which was just perfect.

It was a few minutes later that Tony’s phone rang.

“I want to ignore it,” Tony said.

“Sir, it’s Ms. Potts calling,” Friday announced.

Steve grinned. “Then, you really can’t ignore it.”

Pepper called all the time and Steve kind of loved it because she was one of the few people that could really handle Tony and make him do things he didn’t want to do -- at least when it came to SI. Tony still blew her off sometimes especially when he really didn’t want to do something, but mostly he went with what she asked of him.

Remembering that the reason he’d gone to the kitchen was getting himself a post-run snack, Steve let go of Tony as he picked up the call and he pulled out bread, mayo, deli meats, cheese, tomato, and lettuce.

He listened as Tony spoke to Pepper. He kept the conversation short and was done before Steve had even really started making his sandwich. He decided, then, to make one for Tony too because he’d skipped breakfast because he was in the workshop and Steve couldn’t be sure that he’d actually eaten anything at all since dinner the night before.
“Apparently, I can’t miss tomorrow’s board meeting,” Tony said as he put his phone away. “I expect you to text me during. Board meetings are so boring.”

“Nope,” Steve said and shook his head. “I’m not encouraging you to not pay attention.”

“Fine. I’ll text Peter, then.”

Steve rolled his eyes but he knew that Tony would follow through and Peter would respond because that’s who Peter was. They really were too alike. Although maybe he wouldn’t if the meeting happened while he was in school since he seemed to really take school seriously.

“So, do you have work to do?”

“I have a few things to prepare for tomorrow,” Tony said. “Prototypes. I wasn’t planning on finishing them today but Pepper wants to show them to the board. Not like they could stop us from continuing on with the prosthetic division now.”

Steve nodded. He really was proud of Tony for everything he’d done as far as prosthetics. He’d seen a bit of his work and it was simply amazing. He really was making a huge difference in people’s lives with his work. Steve hated that it had come from Rhodey being injured but it was still all deeply amazing.

“And what are you doing today, then?” Tony asked.

“First, we’re having lunch and then I’m going to spar with Natasha for a bit. I promise I’m not going stir-crazy.”

Tony gave him a pointed look. Tony acted like he hadn’t gone out of his way to make everything easy for all of them. Wanda was happy just having Vision at her side and being able to keep learning to play guitar and practicing her powers. For Sam, Tony had even gotten him involved in the VA even if it was all remote. But he had plenty of other things to do. Natasha had her training and whatever else she did on her free time. But she also had contact with Fury and Maria Hill and Clint and even Coulson now even if Steve still couldn’t quite grasp how the man was alive again. It was insane.

Steve would have been happy to just have Tony. The training rooms were enough too. Peter made all of it that much better. But Tony had also made him his own room for his art which was more than enough. He didn’t think he could grow bored. And then of course, there was all the Avengers stuff. Stuff that really should have stayed in Rhodey, Vision, or Tony’s hands but which Tony had passed on to him and Natasha because he wanted to be sure they could all still be involved.

Chapter End Notes

I’m finally getting some time to edit now despite all the holiday madness that comes with December and I’m hoping that now that we’re possibly finally getting that Avengers 4 trailer tomorrow that it might give me some inspiration for the stuff I’m struggling to write at the moment.

Thanks for reading. I’ll hopefully have the next chapter up by Saturday.
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Natasha hadn’t expected for Steve and Tony to just fall back into it so quickly without any level of drama regarding The Accords and yet that’s what happened. She had noticed how they hadn’t actually greeted each other when they arrived, but instead they had slowly just come together. Natasha had been the first to see Steve’s crush on Tony so long ago that she couldn’t properly remember when she’d first made note of it, but she was happy to see that he wasn’t pining away anymore. He’d done enough of that while they were on the run. She was happy for Tony too who didn’t just have Steve but Peter too. It was almost nauseating how domestic the whole thing was.

Natasha had been surprised when Tony showed up to greet them with his son in tow. She hadn’t realized that Tony had finally gotten into contact with Peter and that they were close at all except that they seemed to have bonded while the rest of them were away. Peter was adorable and dorky and brilliantly smart like his father. He also took after Tony because he was Spider-Man. Natasha hadn’t guessed it at first because Rhodey and Vision hadn’t been there to see them so she’d figured they would meet Spider-Man later but then that just didn’t happen. But Peter moved in and Natasha started to wonder. The only reason she didn’t immediately assume he was Spider-Man was that Natasha didn’t think Tony would allow it, but once she got wind of what happened with his aunt she knew why he did let him do it and why Tony seemed almost obsessive with knowing where Peter was at all times. Natasha didn’t really blame him.

It took Peter a few weeks to get used to all of them, especially the time when none of them knew for sure about his secret identity, but once that was out he stopped being as cautious or as nervous. He was a proper teenager suddenly, one that had lots of questions and lots to say and yet still retained this awkward charm and he really was amazingly awkward but so very easy to like as well. He was more and more like Tony than she could have ever imagined and it seemed to be a good thing. Peter also reminded her of Steve a bit -- or maybe that was to do with how much time those two spent together. Steve had become the defacto Step-father basically overnight and Natasha didn’t blame him one bit because Peter was special. He was easy to love.

For the most part the house arrest was easy to deal with. Tony made it easy, giving them all kinds of things to keep them busy. Most of the time, Natasha read or trained. Sometimes she joined Sam for a movie and once she found out about Peter, she helped Steve train him. One of the best parts was that she could have contact with Clint and his wife and kids. She could also talk to Maria Hill and Pepper and...and Coulson.

Coulson was alive. When Tony had mentioned it, Natasha hadn’t wanted to believe him -- it just hadn’t made much sense and then Tony had made a call and she was talking to him. Coulson. It was him. He was alive. He was technically the current director of the new Shield. Natasha really couldn’t
believe it and then Natasha had realized that he had helped things along with the whole house arrest thing. He filled her in on a lot more than Tony had probably because Tony didn’t know most of what he told her. Getting Coulson back was like really getting her family back.

It was about a month or so into the house arrest that Fury called and it was not a personal call.

“I need you to lose the tracker, Agent Romanoff.”

Natasha had laughed at first. “What is that a joke? You know I can’t do that. Give me another eleven months and I’ll see what I can do for you.”

“Go to Stark, he’ll know what to do,” Fury said. “I need you on something. Info will be delivered to you at pick up.”

The next day, Tony cloned the signal on her anklet and then disabled it and took it off of her and then she was back on a mission -- flying in a quinjet with Maria and unsurprisingly Clint who just greeted her with a grin.

“Just like old times.”

“Yeah, I guess. So. How is everyone?” Clint asked. “I’m still a little mad at Tony that we ended up on The Raft.”

“Don’t hold grudges. You know he’s the reason you’re even here.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Clint said with a wave of his hand and then he grinned.

The whole thing was almost fun. It had been an easy mission overall, and one that Natasha expected anyone else could have done. Maybe Fury was just becoming less and less trusting, but by the end of it, Natasha felt entirely normal again. She felt herself.

“It won’t happen often,” Maria warned her when she was taken back to the tower, “but when we need you we’ll need you. That goes for the Captain too. Perhaps even Falcon.”

“Fury does always seem to have something up his sleeve,” Natasha said.

“That he does, Nat.”

It made all of it all that more bearable to have the prospect of the odd spy mission and yet Natasha didn’t think she would have minded just being at the tower for the year long house arrest. There was worse that she could have been dealing with.

It shouldn’t have surprised her much that a few weeks after she returned from her mission, Maria stopped by with something to pass on to Steve.

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Steve stretched his arms over his head and he looked around the workshop until his eyes found Tony. He was doing something to do with nanotech -- an idea that had been planted in his mind by Shuri. Steve didn’t really understand it, he just knew that Tony was excited about it and that he had spent at least three hours talking to Shuri about it the day before and ignoring the food that Steve was trying to get him to eat.

Peter had been excited by it too because of course he understood what Tony was trying to do which meant that Steve had had to put his foot down just a couple of hours earlier and make him go to bed.
and not stay up all night when he had school the next day. Steve hadn’t really expected for Peter to
listen and then once he left, making Tony promise to fill him in on everything the next day, Tony
burst into laughter that went on for a while.

“Shut up,” Steve said. “It wasn’t that funny.”

Tony had left his work to pull Steve against him and into a kiss. Steve had pulled him to sit with him
on the futon and kept him there for a little bit before Tony got up to get back to work.

Steve couldn’t remember ever being as happy as he was at the moment. He had Tony back and
things were easy again. Then, there was Peter who Steve had known he was going to like -- he just
hadn’t known how much he was going to care about him. It wasn’t even that he was an extension of
Tony by being his son. Peter was just amazing and wonderful all on his own and Steve loved having
him around and getting to have him in his life. After waking up from the ice, Steve had never
expected that he would ever really have a true family in the future and yet Tony had gone and
changed that.

Eventually, he left Tony to his work. He pressed a kiss to Tony’s cheek. “I’m hoping you’ll turn in
soon, but I know you won’t.”

“You know me so well, Cap,” Tony said.

Steve just rolled his eyes. Going to bed without Tony was always hard and Steve didn’t really need
much sleep so he went down to the training floor instead and found Natasha stretching on a mat.

“Didn’t expect to see you up,” she said.

“Tony’s working late.”

Natasha nodded her head. “Ah. He’s back to his old self, then.”

Steve joined her on the floor, stretching out as she was.

“I’m not entirely sure on what he’s working on but he and Peter are excited about it.”

Natasha’s lips turned up a little and Steve was aware of how fond of Peter she was. They were all
entirely fond of Peter.

“Maria stopped by earlier,” Natasha said after a moment, her arms bent behind her head.

“And?” Steve asked.

“She left a file for you. She didn’t want to interrupt you and Tony. She wants us to help out with
something for Fury.” Natasha was suddenly on her feet and she stared down at Steve before offering
her hand to him.

“We’re on house arrest, Nat,” Steve said.

She shrugged her shoulders. “And? You know I went on a mission a few weeks ago. This is the
same thing. You knew it was a possibility. Unless, it’s that you don’t want to leave your boyfriend
and child?”

Steve stood up and he faced the amused look that Natasha was giving him. He let go of her hand as
Natasha motioned for him to follow her. “I have the file. You’ll find it quite interesting actually.”

It was in a manila envelope and he took it when she handed it to him. “You know, Peter’s not really
my kid and Tony and I are not attached at the hip.”

Natasha actually laughed at that. “Don’t lie to yourself. You and Tony are as domestic as it gets and Peter might not be your son but you act like he is. I’m not saying it’s a bad thing. I can tell you’re happy, Steve, and I’m very glad.”

“I’ll look the file over,” Steve said.

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“Did you read the article I sent you?” Ned asked.

They were in the hallway right before their first class started and Peter had been a bit preoccupied with trying to remember if he’d actually packed his homework for Chemistry in his backpack or not.

“Um, no. What was it about?” Peter asked. He faintly remembered seeing something the night before but they had been having a movie night with everyone including Rhodey and Vision and even Pepper so he’d been a bit distracted.

Ned rolled his eyes and then he whispered -- a rather loud whisper -- “about your dad, Peter. I did say it was kind of urgent.”

Peter sighed. “You say that about video game releases too, Ned. But what about my dad then?”

Peter had yet to bring Ned around to the tower mostly because he just didn’t have the time for it. He was doing more patrols lately but he also liked going over to see May as often as possible. Peter found that he really did miss living with May and how easy it had been with her. Not that living with his dad and The Avengers was hard. It was just different. Peter kind of loved it thought. But the thing that had meant putting it off a bit longer was Natasha’s mission. None of them had felt like anyone -- even Ned -- could know that she wasn’t around.

“I just wish you’d respond to texts, Peter. I know you weren’t patrolling yesterday either.”

“I was doing homework,” Peter said and then because he was curious. “But what did you want me to see?”

Peter finally found his homework and he pulled it out. The problem with living at the tower was that Peter did his homework everywhere from the kitchen to the workshop to his room and the living room and he didn’t often put it back in his backpack. There were just a lot of distractions. But at least this time he hadn’t left it behind. He turned to look at Ned and just then spotted Michelle by her locker. She turned to look at them in that exact moment and it would be just seconds before she just approached them because lately she’d been doing less of hovering and more of trying to be a part of the conversation. Peter didn’t really mind -- he actually liked Michelle. She was weird but it was a good thing. It made her interesting. Not to mention that while she occasionally dropped a hint about knowing about Spider-Man, she never actually asked Peter outright.

“Actually, nevermind. I’ll look at what you sent me when we get to class.”

“Look at what?” Michelle asked

“Some article on Tony Stark,” Peter said because it was easier to tell the truth than try and come up with a lie on the spot. Learning to lie better was apparently an important part of training with Natasha. Peter didn’t think he’d ever be good at it. But either way, Michelle would have seen right through him.
Michelle nodded thoughtfully. “Is it about the whole thing about his parents? It was on the news this morning, I think.”

“About his parents?” Peter asked before he closed his locker with a frown. “You mean Howard Stark?”

Ned nodded and he looked like he wanted Michelle to stop talking which meant that it was probably something bad and Ned had been trying to warn him about the whole thing. Of course because Michelle didn’t know that Tony was his dad, she didn’t realize that whatever was out there about Howard and Maria Stark was personal for Peter even though he obviously hadn’t known his grandparents. Tony didn’t even really talk much about them. The three of them walked towards their first class as Michelle started to explain.

“Yeah,” Michelle said. “It’s to do with The Winter Soldier. I guess he’s still on the run, right, since that stuff that happened the that UN meeting or whatever a few months ago so someone’s compiling a case against him although I’m not entirely sure what the point is when they haven’t actually caught him. Anyway, it came out that he killed Tony Stark’s parents.”

Peter went cold. He stopped walking in the middle of the hallway and he felt like all the noise around him faded and he could only hear his own heartbeat. The Winter Soldier was Bucky -- he was Steve’s friend. Steve had told him stories about the war and his best friend. It was the guy that Steve spent an hour every Thursday night talking to.

“Peter? Peter?”

“I think you broke him.”

“Hey, Peter? Peter? Parker, hello? Are you in there?” Michelle poked his chest hard and he gasped in a breath and then shook his head, blinking at them. Both Ned and Michelle looked worried.

“I -- I’m good. I’m good. I was just shocked,” Peter said.

Ned gave his arm a squeeze and Peter tried to smile at him but it was hard because this was kind of crazy. He sort of remembered Bucky Barnes from the airport -- he was the guy with the metal arm. Peter had webbed him up. He’d managed to hold his own against him.

“Hmm, I guess you would be,” Michelle said.

“Why do you say that?” Ned asked and narrowed his eyes at her while Peter tried to not react.

Michelle stared at Ned for a moment and then looked back at Peter and Peter just shrugged.


Michelle gave him a look again and Peter just wanted to strangle Ned. One of these days, Peter just knew that Michelle was going to figure out that Tony was his dad and it was going to be Ned’s fault that she did.

“It is kind of crazy,” Michelle said

“Do you think Tony Stark knows?” Ned asked and it took Peter and minute to take in the question.

“If he didn’t before, he must by now,” Michelle said.
Peter nodded. “MJ is right. He probably does know.” Peter just didn’t know if he had known before someone unearthed the truth or not. After all, Howard and Maria Stark had been dead for longer than Peter had been alive and just because it had been reported as an accident to the whole world that didn’t mean that the real cause of their deaths had been kept secret from their family and friends.

Chapter End Notes

There's a lot of minor plot points that the next few chapters are going to hit as we make our way to Infinity War and this is the start of that with some Bucky related stuff.

Who else is still dead from that Endgame trailer? I'm still not sure about how I feel about the title but I have lots of feels over the trailer and in particular Tony. Since I'm heading into writing my version of what comes post-IW it was interesting to get to see an actual trailer for the movie.

I have the next chapter almost ready to go and it will be up by Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“Are you going to go?” Tony asked through a yawn.

“I wish you’d go to bed,” Steve responded. The file was open on one of Tony work benches, but Steve had been more focused on the book he’d brought to read while Tony worked. “Friday isn’t letting you have any more coffee.”

“Not like I can sleep with Peter patrolling,” Tony pointed out.

There was a screen with Peter’s GPS location up and Tony glanced at it more than his work. Steve was actually surprised that Peter had even decided to patrol after school than come home to be a part of whatever Tony was working on. It wasn’t like Tony was doing much, anyway, aside from reading up on things that Shuri had sent him and making his own notes.

“If she weren’t so busy with that whole outreach center I would have her come and work on this with me,” Tony had said earlier.

“You know,” Steve said, “Sam told me once that even just lying down is better than not resting at all.”

“You haven’t answered my question.”

Steve sighed. “I think I will go,” he said. “Sam is coming too. It seems too important to not be a part of.”

That and it was personal. It was Hydra -- a small faction of them that had been left to try and bring the whole thing back. Steve couldn’t not go.

Tony nodded and turned to look at him. “Don’t get caught and come back to me,” he said and he was serious and Steve could tell that Tony wasn’t entirely pleased with the idea of him going on a mission. “I know Fury is trying to keep things underwrap like the spy that he is but I don’t like that I’m not involved. It would be easier if I was.”

“The public can’t know that there’s even a hint of Hydra,” Steve said and he ran a hand through his hair. It was back to a normal length, but Steve had kept the beard. It was lucky that he did because it would help with hiding his identity.

“You know, there was a time when you did not understand the whole PR aspect of this,” Tony said.

“That was different,” Steve said.

“It wasn’t. Anyway, I don’t like that you’re going in without your shield.”

Steve rolled his eyes. “I haven’t used that since Siberia and you know it. Anyway, it’s too
recognizable. It won’t be a long mission. Fury knows he can’t keep us away for too long.”

“At least there’s that,” Tony said.

Peter’s dot was moving on the map and it didn’t seem like he was too far from the tower. Maybe he’d be returning soon.

“Anyway, a part of me is glad you’re doing this. Keeps you from getting bored.”

“I’ve said it time and time again -- I’m not bored,” Steve said. “Not when I have you.”

Tony actually laughed but he looked happy at the answer. “Well, I expect that if you do get into any trouble that I’ll be able to go and help you. You’ll call me if anything goes wrong.”

“I will,” Steve said, “but we still have until tomorrow so no more goodbyes today.”

“Okay. But can I get at least one cup of coffee.”

“Decaf.”

“It’s like you don’t even know me.”

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Tony was only a little surprised when Pepper showed up in the workshop. She was dressed elegantly as always in a green dress with matching heels. If he hadn’t spent most of the day with Steve, Tony might have been convinced that he had something to do with her showing up.

“I didn’t realize you were coming,” Tony said when he saw her.

“I texted,” Pepper said. “You really don’t keep up with the news, do you?”

Steve who had given up on his book and was leaning over a drawing with a cup full of colored pencils stood up and grinned at Pepper. “It’s nice to have her here, Tony. Don’t question her motives. And anyway, you haven’t slept in over 24 hours.”

Tony shot him a glare. “Don’t tell Pepper that.”

“You’re incorrigible, Stark,” Pepper said and hugged Steve when she reached his side and Tony noticed when she got distracted by the drawing on his notepad.

“Oh, this is amazing,” she said. “Tony, have you seen this? It’s perfect.”

“Considering you’re the one that curated my art collection, you would know best,” Tony said with a grin. “That said, Steve is very talented.”

“I’m not. I dabble.”

“Yes, and I remember you selling most of it,” Pepper said with a sniff.

Tony rolled his eyes. “You’re modest,” he said to Steve and decided to ignore Pepper.

“You should go to art school,” Pepper said suddenly and there was a glint in her eyes of a new idea unfolding within her mind. “I mean it, you’re on house arrest which means you can’t leave the tower but it’s still doable. It’s what you were doing before the war, right? Art school?”
Steve didn’t seem to know what to say and Tony was too exhausted to jump in and try and help him.

“I -- maybe I could do that?” Steve said sounding unsure. “I don’t know. I’d never thought about it-”

Pepper smiled at him. “Well, think about it. Or were you planning on being Captain America forever?”

“It’s something to consider,” Steve said.

Tony turned away from his notes and walked over to join them, stopping next to Steve. He grabbed his hand partly to offer some support, but mostly because he just wanted to.

“So did you come here to persuade Steve to go back to school...or?” Tony asked.

“No, actually,” Pepper said, “that was not my original motive. Something happened. Ross is making a case against James Buchanan Barnes. He’s gathered evidence on many of the assassinations that were committed while he was The Winter Soldier as well as a few other crimes. He must have been working on it for a while now.”

“What’s the point of that?” Steve asked. “Bucky’s in Wakanda. It’s not like Ross knows where to find him.”

But it wouldn’t matter. Ross wasn’t calling for a court to pass judgement on Barnes. He was calling on the public court of opinion. He was going to shove all of the horrible things that James Barnes had been made to do while under brainwashing and make the whole world know about them. It wasn’t like the information wasn’t already all out there in the Hydra data dump, but most people hadn’t cared before.

“I think he’s trying to make it impossible for Mr. Barnes to clear his name when the time for that comes around. Ross must be upset that everyone else got off easy from all that Accords business,” Pepper said.

Tony scoffed. Leave it to Ross to go after Barnes once Steve was unreachable. Tony should have known to expect some reaction other than ranting about it on CNN when Steve and the others were given house arrest. It had kind of been funny to see Ross showing up on all the major channels including WHIH World News where Christine Everhart had interviewed him and despite her own views of The Avengers and The Accords the two of them had still managed to butt heads.

“Everyone knows he killed your parents,” Pepper added.

His breath caught and it was a moment before he let it out. Steve held his hand tightly and it was something to focus on in the moment. He had not expected Pepper to say that. Tony hadn’t exactly kept the whole thing a secret, but he certainly hadn’t talked about it to anyone and the way that Pepper was looking at him worried him. He could tell that she was genuinely concerned.

“I -- I know about that,” Tony said.

He could tell that Pepper wanted to talk about it. Tony shook his head at her and that was that for the moment. He was sure it would come up again later.

“Right now, t’s all everyone can talk about especially since they know Steve and Barnes are friends. It doesn’t make Steve look all that great either. Just imagine if they knew about the two of you. This could get bad.”
Tony knew he wasn’t over it yet. He didn’t think he would ever be truly over knowing that his parents were murdered. What Tony had started to get used to was the separation between The Winter Soldier and Barnes because there was a difference. One was Steve’s best friend, a Sergeant in WWII who had been noble and charming and tragically brainwashed into becoming someone else. Something else. The Winter Soldier had killed and followed orders and been tortured and broken and they were the same person but they also weren’t.

“What -- what do we do?” Tony asked.

“I don’t know,” Pepper said and she looked between the two of them as if they had answers that she actually didn’t for once.

Tony could tell that Steve was holding back his anger a bit -- that fierce protective anger that seemed to come out whenever Barnes was involved. His free hand was clenched tightly at his side and his lips were sort of pursed a little and Tony couldn’t tell if he was holding back for Pepper’s benefit or for Tony’s.

“We have to clear his name,” Tony said. “Barnes was a Howling Commando. He served this country and gave his life and mind for it for decades. I don’t believe that Barnes and The Winter Soldier are one and the same.”

Pepper nodded in agreement. Next to him, Steve moved, turning so that they were facing each other. Steve reached up to touch Tony’s face — a caressing touch. Tony let himself lean into Steve without a care that they had an audience. He needed that reassurance that Steve was there and that they were together on this.

“I’ll see what I can do to get started on that,” Pepper said after a moment.

“Thank you,” Tony said. “You, um, you should stay for dinner. We can start working on this after.”

Pepper shook her head. “I have dinner plans, actually. But I’ll email you my thoughts. We might not have to do anything quite yet.”

Pepper didn’t hang around long after, giving each of them a hug and admiring Steve’s art once more before she left. They listened to her heels click on the floor as she walked away and then slowly the sound faded the further away she got.

“Thank you,” Steve said.

“I do get it, hon. I get who he is -- what he’s been through. It’s not fair. He doesn’t deserve to take on all the blame for something he technically had no control over.”

Steve nodded. “Has to be hard on you anyway. I can -- I don’t have to go tomorrow. I can stay.”

“No. No. You go. Anyway, I don’t think we’ll have much to do until you’re back. I think Ross is trying to scare us into making us act early and we can’t do that.”

Steve nodded but Tony could tell that he wasn’t fully sold on Tony wanting him to go. In truth he would have preferred for Steve to stay especially in light of the new development, but he also just couldn’t ask that of Steve and take away his first outing from the tower. It didn’t matter how much Steve denied it, he was going to get sick of the house arrest eventually.

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Peter found it just a little on the odd side how normal everything seemed that night. He had expected
for his dad to be a little put out about the whole thing with his parents but maybe this was confirmation that he had known about it already but even then the press coverage didn’t seem to bother him much. Everyone seemed to be just the same as always and no one brought up the whole thing at all. After dinner, everyone went their own way, but Steve stopped Peter before he followed his dad to the workshop.

“I’m going to be gone for a few days,” Steve said.

“What do you mean? Aren’t you on house arrest?”

Steve nodded with a smile. “Yeah. We’re kind of cheating the system a little so Sam and I can help out with something.”

“Like a mission?” Peter asked and stared at him for a while and then it dawned on him -- maybe this was more to do with the whole Winter Soldier thing.

“Did you know?” Peter asked before he could stop himself.

“Know what?” Steve asked.

“About your friend killing Tony’s -- I guess they were my grandparents.”

Steve’s smile dropped. “I guess if you know about that then everyone knows. Yeah, I know. Your dad knows too.”

“Oh,” Peter said. He didn’t know what he’d expected.

Steve ruffled his hair and smiled at him and it was so affectionate that it threw Peter off a little because sometimes he remembered that this wasn’t just some guy who happened to be his father’s boyfriend but Captain America. But also, it was just a tad weird because of the videos that Midtown insisted on showing them for every occasion.

“It’s admirable,” Steve said, “that you want to protect your dad. He’s had some time to take the information in. Actually, he should have known for longer but I was a coward and didn’t tell him when I found out. I thought that I was protecting him but I think keeping secrets just has a way of just making things worse. We never thought it would be public knowledge like this. I guess it shouldn’t be surprising.”

“But what — what’s going to happen?”

Steve shrugged his shoulders. “Bucky doesn’t deserve this. He didn’t do any of this of his own volition. He was brainwashed. We want to clear his name but Tony wants to wait to do anything.”

Peter nodded. He sort of knew about Bucky’s brainwashing from a few things that Steve had said and then a few questions he’d placed on Friday. He also knew that Bucky was back to normal and it was part of the reason he was living in Wakanda aside from the fact that he was a fugitive.

“Anyway,” Steve said, “you shouldn’t worry about any of this. Hydra was really the ones responsible for all of this. Bucky -- Howard and Maria’s deaths. But it’s better to not give them the power to tear us apart.”

“Right,” Peter nodded.

Steve smiled at him in a ‘what can you do’ manner. “I probably won’t see you until I’m back. I know your dad is working on some project that’s keeping his mind occupied but do me a favor and
make sure he actually gets some sleep while I’m gone.”

Peter let out a laugh. “I’ll try but I don’t promise anything.”

Steve’s lips quirked up a little. “I’m going to come back to a couple of zombies aren’t I?”

“Maybe.”

Chapter End Notes

I've been trying to post this chapter all day and getting interrupted. But on the upside I've gotten a lot more edited over the last two days which means I'm closer to getting back to writing.

I can't believe we're on the cusp of ch. 100. This is crazy. What's also crazy is that somehow I managed to time Christmas in-story with the holiday irl because next chapter begins Christmas at the tower. I'll probably have it up by Saturday.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 100

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading!
Ch. 100! This is crazy...especially for something that was meant to be a one-shot...and I think at this point we’re about 2/3s of the way through this fic. Eek.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It felt weird to not have Steve around all the time even if he knew that Steve wasn’t going to be gone more than a few days. So, in all truth, Tony barely had a chance to miss him -- mostly because he was busy working -- before Steve was back and he was dragging Tony out of the workshop and to their bedroom and tucking him into their bed. Tony didn’t protest as Steve moved around the room for a few minutes before he got into the bed behind him and pulled him into his arms.

“Missed you and this bed,” Steve muttered.

Tony yawned through his laugh and Steve ran his fingers through his hair and everything just seemed so right and warm and perfect and he dozed for a while just enjoying being held and being in a proper bed for the first time in a few nights.

“Did you tell Peter to force me to go to sleep?” Tony asked after a while.

“Yeah. Guess that didn’t work.”

Tony turned and kissed Steve’s clothed shoulder. “It didn’t. Have you met Peter?”

Steve laughed and pulled Tony closer. “I sort of knew it wasn’t going to work which is why it was the first order of business once I got back. Not to mention that I’m actually kind of tired myself. Now go to sleep.”

“Hmm, only because I have such a nice bed-buddy,” Tony muttered as he closed his eyes.

With Steve there, sleep came easily as it nearly never did when he was on his own. Still, even with Steve next to him, it didn’t stop Tony from having nightmares. He didn’t have nightmares every night these days or even every week, but sometimes they still came and they plagued his sleep. It was what told Tony that he still had cause to worry. Most of the time, it helped when Steve was with him. Other times it didn’t matter.

He dreamt of something odd at first -- a huge cake that needed to be eaten but just kept getting bigger and bigger until suddenly it just disappeared and Maria was there, singing and smiling until hands wrapped around her neck and Tony couldn’t get to her -- couldn’t move or do anything but scream and scream...until he was falling into darkness and she faded from view and Tony screamed as he came up out of water and darkness surrounded him big and encompassing and horrible...

“Tony. Tony, wake up. Come on, it’s a bad dream.”

He heard Steve calling his name and he shot up in the bed, almost headbutting Steve as he did and he gasped for breath.
“Tony are you--”

Steve reached for him and Tony fell into his chest. His breathing came quick and he felt sweaty but none of that mattered.

“You’re okay,” Steve said. “Just a bad dream.”

“Yeah,” Tony whispered and he closed his eyes. Maybe he’d been affected by all the media coverage of Barnes and his parents more than he’d realized especially since he’d been looking at some of it earlier. “I don’t think I’m going to be getting any more sleep.”

“Are you alright?” Steve asked.

“Yes. Yes. I’ll be okay.”

“Do you want to talk about it? Will that help?” Steve asked as Tony slowly moved out of his arms.

Tony shook his head and slowly got out of the bed. “I -- it was my mom and just everything jumbled up together. I want to be over this but I’m just not. He killed her and I know -- I know it wasn’t him. I know that logically but he still did it.”

“Tony, I--”

“But it’s not just that,” Tony said and he searched for words as he peeled off his t-shirt. “It’s that it never seems to end. I thought after Siberia and finding out the truth that it’d be about getting past it and all of that but now everyone knows and...and I know that whenever Ross really tries to land some charges on Barnes that I’m the one that will need to speak up and say how much I truly believe he didn’t do it and I don’t know if I can do that at least right now.”

Steve didn’t respond for a moment, but then he got up and wrapped his arms around Tony and it was enough.

--

To take his mind off of everything, Tony built Peter a new suit. It was going to be a Christmas present. One of two. The other being a robot dog. The only reason that Tony wasn’t getting Peter a real dog was that there was a question about who would actually take the dog outside. After all, most of the inhabitants of the tower were on house arrest and with Peter in school most of the day it just didn’t seem responsible. It seemed even less responsible to have Happy do it especially since Tony had finally let Happy in on who Peter was.

It had happened the week when Peter moved in. Tony had had Happy take Peter to school and while Happy grumbled about it, Tony had figured it was the perfect time to tell him especially since he’d been meaning to let him in on the information since the whole Vulture thing had happened. Despite how amusing keeping him in the dark had been, it had become a security problem.

Tony had had Happy drive Peter to school on the third day since he’d moved in and Happy had barely shown how put out he was about it.

“He’s going to be living here for a while, Hap, so it’s a route you should get used to. You might even have to pick him up from time to time.”

Happy had been ready to ask questions about why Peter was living at the tower but Tony hadn’t let him. Continuing on with, “And don’t be so grouchy about it, that’s my kid you’re dealing with.”
“You’re really taken with him, then, Boss,” Happy said. “And I guess I get it with the whole Spidery thing.”

It was really Steve that gave it away when he stepped out of the kitchen and handed them both mugs of coffee. “Your son is insisting on doing the dishes so he’ll be a few minutes.”

Happy hadn’t reacted at first and then he’d stared at Tony’s growing grin. “He’s not just some kid?”

“Of course not,” Tony said.

Happy didn’t actually change how he interacted with Peter, because he was still Happy, but Tony could tell that he was actually making a bigger deal out of Peter’s security and that he didn’t see him as just some kid that could possibly hurt Tony in some way. Happy had also made it a part of his job to drive Peter to school every morning unless Peter specifically asked him not to which Peter rarely did mostly because Midtown was further away from the tower than May’s house and it was just easier to let Happy drive him.

So, because he didn’t want Happy to learn to dislike dogs, Tony had opted for an easier option when it came to Peter’s Christmas present.

Steve thought that he was trying too hard, but this was the first Christmas that Tony was going to have with his son -- and Peter was even living with him -- and he just wanted everything to be perfect. Anyway, the suit was more for his peace of mind since it was almost like one of his own suits with some added features that Peter definitely wasn’t going to see coming. But really, Tony had also created it to test out his work with the nanonites.

In the meanwhile, things were happening on the Barnes front. More and more lists full of his victims were coming out. People were being interviewed about it left and right and Tony couldn’t stand it. He couldn’t stand the people that wanted Barnes to be convicted and he also couldn’t stand those that were quick to forgive. Steve for his part didn’t push Tony and Tony was glad that Pepper was the one dealing with Ross because he didn’t know if he would have been able to handle that. He was glad to have Christmas to focus on.

With everyone on house arrest, it was surprisingly easy to rope everyone into decorating for Christmas. Tony had a huge tree delivered as well as tons of ornaments, lights, garland, and even stockings and they had spent an entire weekend getting both the communal floor and the penthouse looking festive. The last time that Tony remembered actually doing so much decorating was back when he was a kid and he and Jarvis spent a whole weekend getting the house ready. Maria had loved it. Howard hadn’t even noticed.

“Is it always like this?” Peter asked over hot chocolate a week before Christmas. Natasha was on her stomach on the floor reading a magazine and she looked up.

“Not to this extent,” Steve said from his spot next to Tony. “We were always kind of busy for all of this but we made time to exchange presents.”

“Oh,” Peter said.

“Back when I lived in Malibu Pepper always hired someone to get a tree set up and a few things but it was just me and I never appreciated it much.”

Peter nodded and then. “Is it -- can I invite May over? On Christmas day, I mean.”

“Of course,” Tony said and he was glad that Peter had brought it up because he would have suggested it otherwise.
Peter didn’t often talk about May, but Tony could tell that things had settled between them. He didn’t expect that May would ever be truly okay with Spider-Man, but she hadn’t pushed Peter away again and Peter spent enough time with her that Tony knew they were going to be okay.

“Good. I -- this is the first Christmas without Ben. I didn’t want her to be alone.”

It was coming up -- the anniversary of Ben’s death. Tony hadn’t really thought about it. Hadn’t even considered how Peter still had to be grieving. It was just that Peter didn’t really talk about Ben much or even really show that he still grieved his uncle and Tony had never asked mostly because it hadn’t felt like Peter wanted to talk about it.

---

On the last day of school before they went on break for Christmas, Peter actually invited Ned over to the tower. Ned hadn’t pushed Peter too much on having him introduce him to The Avengers but he’d hinted at it enough times.

“You know, I consider this part of your Christmas present,” Peter said as they left Midtown. It was a half-day so they were out earlier than usual and the balmy winter air hit them as they walked to the nearest subway station.

“Um, best present ever,” Ned said.

Peter laughed.

The whole trip there, Ned couldn’t hide his excitement. “But, what am I supposed to say to him, Peter?”

“To Steve? He’s really chilled out, dude, you’ll be fine.”

“And they know you’re bringing me, right?”

“Yes. Well, Steve does for sure.”

Ned couldn’t really get over how casually Peter spoke about Captain America and the other Avengers. It was weird and he just didn’t know what to do with the information.

Avengers tower was kind of really impressive. Ned knew that it was self-sustaining due to Tony’s Stark work on clean energy but Ned couldn’t be fully amazed by it due to how distracted he was about meeting Captain America and the other Avengers too.

Peter took him through an entrance that didn’t look like a real entrance at the side of the building. No one even seemed to notice them going in, but then Ned supposed that that was the whole point to begin with.

They took an elevator up and Ned was in awe of everything that he didn’t even have words.

“You alright?” Peter asked.

“I -- yeah. I’m meeting The Avengers.”

Peter just laughed.

When they finally made it up, Ned felt like he couldn’t even move. It was just -- it was happening and he couldn’t believe it. He was going to actually meet The Avengers.
“This is insane,” he whispered to Peter when the elevator doors opened.

There was no one there and Ned didn’t know if he had expected someone to be there or not but no one was there.

“Hey, Fri, where is everyone?” Peter asked.

The disembodied voice of Tony’s Stark’s AI answered, “Mr. Stark is working and Captain Rogers is with him. I believe the others are in the training room.”

“Thanks,” Peter said and then to Ned, “come on.”

Chapter End Notes

So one thing that some of you might know if you follow me on tumblr is that I love dogs. I have four. And I've wanted to give Peter a dog basically this entire fic. I think way earlier on Ben and Peter were trying to convince May to let them get one...and there was an instance of Peter rescuing a dog. Anyway, I had a hard time coming up with a Christmas gift idea for Peter and then it just made sense for Tony to make him a dog. But there was also this thing about Homecoming that I didn't do which was Tony offering Peter the new suit so that's the suit that he builds him now.

Next chapter will probably be up on Tuesday.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 101

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter was entirely entertained by bringing Ned home with him. Of course, Ned had no idea that these days Peter was calling the tower his home. He led him to the workshop and he could tell that Ned was trying to take everything around him in as they walked. Friday opened the doors as they approached and Ned gasped.

“Hey, kiddo,” his dad said without even bothering to look up from his work, “you’re home early.”

“Half-day,” Peter said. “So I figured I’d finally bring Ned over.”

Ned seemed to have lost his ability to speak and it was such a first that Peter almost laughed. Instead, he watched as Steve stood up and walked towards them. He smiled at Peter quickly, but then turned to Ned.

“I hear you’re a fan,” he said. “It’s nice to meet you.” Then, he extended his hand out to Ned and it took Ned a moment to actually take it and shake it.

“Oh,” Tony said, “you’re the one I spoke to on the phone that time. I really am impressed with how you helped that night. But also, you hacked into Peter’s suit.”

“I--”

Peter rolled his eyes. “Don’t mind him. He was impressed by what you did.”

Tony nodded. “Yeah. I was. Not just anyone can hack into my tech.”

“Anyway,” Steve said.

“Peter, this is crazy,” Ned whispered to Peter. “I’m -- I must be dreaming. I’m...I’m talking to Iron Man and Captain America.’

Steve was nice enough to pretend that he hadn’t actually heard him and to make it easier on him, Peter grabbed Ned by the arm. “Do you want to see what we’ve been working on?”

“Sure,” Ned said. “This place is so cool.”

“I just figured you needed a moment,” Peter said back. “Just, relax, okay. They’re -- they’re people and they’re kind of my family. Think of them like you think of May.”

Ned rolled his eyes at Peter. “That’s easy for you to say.”

Peter showed him a few of the things that he and Tony had worked on for SI and Ned seemed interested enough especially when it came to some of the new tech. Steve approached them after a moment and this time Ned seemed a little more relaxed.
“Tony’s a little put out he’s not your favorite,” Steve said.

Ned laughed. “I -- I do like Iron Man. I just think the shield and just everything. It’s just really cool. And I guess it’s because you’re a legend. Learning about World War II was only interesting because there’s a whole section that’s all about you.”

Peter stepped back and let them talk. Steve had a way of getting people to calm down around him and even Ned’s excitement quieted down some.

“You weren’t kidding about how big a fan he is,” his dad said while Ned was in conversation with Steve.

“Nope. I really wasn’t.”

His dad ruffled his hair. “It’s good that you have good friends like him. And I’m especially glad that you have him watching your back.”

Peter grinned back at him.

It was a little while later when Peter took Ned to the kitchen to get a snack, that he got to introduce Ned to Sam and Natasha. Natasha put on her intimidating face and Sam just gave Ned a high five before Peter got distracted by looking for food and he found Ned listening to Sam.

“I was starting to think that pipsqueak over here didn’t have any friends,” Sam said to Ned, “he never brings any over.”

“Maybe, I don’t want them to meet you,” Peter responded.

Ned’s eyes widened, but Sam laughed.

Overall, he thought the whole day went well and Ned seemed happy about it all, especially after Tony showed him the Iron Man armor while claiming that he was doing it because he wanted to change Ned’s mind about who his favorite really was and Peter just loved and appreciated how nice everyone was to Ned and Peter hadn’t even had to ask.

“It’s weird,” Ned said afterwards, “him being your dad. But also, it’s so obvious that he is when you’re both in the same room.”

---

May hadn’t expected for Peter to invite her over to Avenger’s Tower for Christmas although she hadn’t been expecting to spend Christmas with Peter at all. She had been dreading the holiday especially once they were in December and there was no avoiding it since it was everywhere. It was just hard to face such a big holiday when just a year prior she had had a husband and Peter had been just a few steps down from her room. This year she had resigned herself to being lonely and just staying in pajamas watching Christmas movies. She had expected to see Peter at some point, but she also was well aware that he had Tony and all the Avengers that lived in the tower with him and that this was their first Christmas together. May hadn’t wanted to make a fuss about it. But, then Peter invited her to join them.

For a moment May had considered saying no and sticking to her plans to be sad and alone, but Peter had given her a look and that had been that. He’d probably guessed that she had no real plans. People are work had asked her to join them and their family. A couple of friends had wanted to see her as well, but all of it felt like a lot of effort. Peter was family -- that was different. So on Christmas Day she’d been picked up by Happy and driven to the tower and Peter actually met her down at the
entrance to ride the elevator up with her. He hugged her tightly when he saw her and May felt warm and welcome and she was glad to be there. The whole thing was insane and Peter just -- he seemed at home there even as Happy told him off for waiting for them.

“You never know who might have shown up, Peter,” Happy muttered.

Peter rolled his eyes and waved his hand at Happy in a Tony-esque manner that almost made her laugh. “I’m Spider-Man. I think I could have handled it and I wanted to bring May up myself. Alright.”

May for her part didn’t mind that Happy worried despite how capable Peter was due to his powers.

They made it up to the penthouse and when the elevator doors opened, May found herself faced with Christmas carols and tons and tons of decorations. It was like someone had gone and bought out everything from the decorations aisle at a store the way that there was not an inch of space spared from Christmas. It didn’t look bad exactly, but just over the top.

In the living room a few people were hanging out in Christmas sweaters, Santa hats, and all kinds of festive-wear and May recognized them as The Avengers after a pause which was just crazy after all the years that May had followed what they were up to through the news and articles and interviews and there they were acting like a normal family at Christmas.

“Come on, May, I’ll introduce you to everyone,” Peter said.

Before they could move, Captain America stepped towards them and May couldn’t hide her shock at seeing him. He was taller than she’d imagined and his shoulders were broad. He wore a green sweater with a reindeer on it complete with a red nose that stuck out on his chest. It looked a bit ridiculous but he pulled it off somehow.

May was reminded of how Ben had been such a huge fan and this man had even saved Ben once and there he was just a few feet away and he smiled at Peter and then May and put out his hand.

“You must be Peter’s aunt,” he said. “I’m Steve. I’m glad you could join us.”

“I -- yeah, I know who you are. I’m May.” She shook his hand.

Steve smiled at her and then looked towards Peter. “Tony said he’d come back from the workshop when you got back. Want to remind him of that? He might listen to you. I’ll make introductions.”

“Uh. Okay,” Peter said.

Steve ruffled Peter’s hair and Peter shot him a look before trying to fix his hair as he walked away. He turned a few feet away to look at May and gave her a thumbs up.

“You raised him really well,” Steve said as Peter left. “I know there’s been a bit of tension over the Spider-Man thing and I know it’s been hard with him here but everything he is he owes to you and your late husband and I wanted to thank you for that. I’m really fond of Peter. He’s a great kid.”

May hadn’t expected that. “I -- thank you.”

Steve nodded and he seemed to realize that she didn’t have much else to say, so he led her into the room and introduced her to everyone else. It was hard to not think of them as The Avengers with the monikers and everything as Steve introduced her to Natasha, Wanda, Sam, Vision, and Colonel Rhodes. By the time she’d finished with introductions, Pepper appeared and it was nice to have a familiar face. Steve left her with Pepper and he disappeared the way that Peter had left.
“I’m so glad you came,” Pepper said. “I heard a bit about what happened, May, and I -- I do understand how hard this is. It’s why Tony and I couldn’t work. I was worried all the time and it just didn’t want to stop.”

“I’m still trying to get used to it,” May said.

“I know. I’m going to get a drink. Want me to get you something?” Pepper asked.

“Um...sure. I don’t care what it is. Anything is fine.”

“Okay,” Pepper said and touched her shoulder before she left.

Steve returned a few moment later and he had Peter and Tony with him.

“I’m sorry that I was just putting finishing touches on it,” Tony was saying as they walked back.

“He really was,” Peter said in agreement.

“I don’t even want to know what you could have possibly been working on because Christmas is happening and it clearly was not Peter’s present.”

Peter grabbed Tony’s arm. “Wait is the secret for me? The file -- the one I couldn’t open?” His eyes were wide and excited and he leaned into Tony’s side and Tony just wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders and May could just see it in both of them, how happy they were.

“Maybe,” Tony said.

May watched them and she was amazed and surprised at how close they were. How much affection was there in the way that Tony looked at Peter and how Peter looked at Tony, too. It was how he used to look at Ben and a part of her -- a small part of her didn’t like it even when she knew that Peter deserved to have it. The worst -- or maybe the best -- thing was that no one could have denied that Peter and Tony were related. What did surprise her was watching Peter turn to Steve, looking up at him even as he kept his contact with Tony.

“You know what it is and you kept saying you didn’t. That’s so unfair.”

Steve smiled down at Peter and his face told her everything -- he really did care about Peter. Not just in an offhand way that any friend might care about their friend’s child but in a fond and appreciative way. In a way that told her that Steve probably loved Peter.

“Considering you won’t tell me what Tony was putting finishing touches on, I think we’re even,” Steve said.

Peter rolled his eyes and then he looked over and found May just as Pepper returned and handed May her drink.

“Ah, good, Tony’s here,” Pepper said. “It’s hard getting him out of his workshop even on holidays.”

May was glad to have Pepper next to her. She had always been easier to talk to than Tony and she made it easy to ease into conversation with everyone else that was present. It became clear to May that everyone there was considered family or -- if not family -- then they were certainly trusted.

Peter spent a lot of time with Tony and Steve, but he didn’t leave May out, sitting with her on the couch for long periods of time or bringing her with him when he had to go get something from another floor. At one point, he’d even taken her to see his room. It was Peter all over down to how
even one corner seemed to be destined to become a mess. She could tell that he was happy there and that mattered so much more than anything else. A part of her had to wonder if maybe she and Ben had been wrong to keep him from Tony all those times. Maybe -- maybe they should have spoken to Tony from the start. It wasn’t that Peter had been unhappy with her and Ben -- or even with just her -- but Tony was his father. It was different, maybe. Still, the past was the past and there was no changing it, but more importantly Peter had her and also Tony. He had family. He was happy.

After they had dinner -- something clearly catered because no one in that room looked like they would actually do very well in the kitchen -- Tony declared that it was present time. The casualness of dinner with The Avengers had felt a bit odd but nice all at once. May had also gotten a bit confused when Peter was given such a huge portion of food. It had been even stranger to see him and Steve trying to eat more than the other.

“They do that all the time,” Sam said as if knowing exactly why May was so confused. “I guess that’s what happens when you have their type of metabolism.”

May hadn’t even known. Or maybe Peter had mentioned it -- she couldn’t remember. But of course, this was a part of his powers.

“It gets even worse when Thor is here,” Natasha said. May could only imagine.

There had been a lot of presents under the huge tree wrapped in at all levels of skill. Some of them looked so good that May thought it was a shame the wrapping paper was going to be ripped up.

She was looking forward to seeing what Tony had gotten Peter. Over the years there had always been presents from Tony. Science kits and books and toys and gift cards. He’d sent all kinds of things and as he and Peter had started writing to each other the presents had become more and more personalized and less about what a boy his age might like. May had always felt a little guilty for not telling Peter about the origin of those presents. Most of the time she and Ben just said they came from Santa and when Peter had stopped believing May had still just the Santa tag on and Peter had never said anything most likely just assuming they came from May and Ben.

To have Peter finally have a Christmas with his dad meant a lot. May was glad it was happening and that Tony could actually finally do what all parents did with their kids at Christmas. She was happy to be there to witness it.

Tony had demanded that everyone opened his presents first because of course he had presents for everyone including May. He wasn’t a billionaire for nothing. Still, she was touched that he’d thought to get her something at all. Mostly, though, she and everyone else seemed excited to see Peter open his present.

Chapter End Notes

I really wanted to bring May into this different world that Peter is living and having her experience a bit of it and I think they really are getting back to what their relationship used to be.

More Christmas in the next chapter and we get to meet the dog! I think it will probably be up at the earlier Friday and at the latest Saturday.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 102

Chapter Notes

Thank you for everyone reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The box barked. Or rather, the thing -- the dog -- inside the box barked and Peter just glanced up at Tony and he was sure that his surprise was written all over his face. This was the absolute last thing that he had expected when Steve brought out the box. He especially was surprised because the box was all wrapped up and also didn’t have any breathing holes. May next to him looked shocked too.

“Go on,” Tony said.

They were all watching him. Sam was grinning, Natasha smiling slightly, Steve had a huge grin on and his dad seem entirely too excited.

Peter took the ribbon off and pulled the lid of the box open and sure enough there was a dog inside except that it was a robot dog. And it barked and threw it’s robot paws on the side of the box at the sight of Peter.

“How is -- this is -- I--” Peter had no words.

Tony walked over and he reached into the box and pulled the dog out. “It seemed more suitable. I’ve been calling him K-9 but you can name him whatever you want.”

Peter laughed as Tony set the dog on the floor. “No,” he said. “No, that’s actually perfect. I love him.”

The dog stayed in front of Peter for a moment before he moved forward with his head close to the ground as if he were actually sniffing him out like a real dog.

“K-9,” Peter said and the dog looked up and gave a bark. His bark was like that of a generic dog and Peter had to wonder about how that worked. Really, he wanted to know how the dog worked as a whole.

The dog was no clunky robot, but he wasn’t one of those sleek out of a movie robots either. His design was more similar to a dog’s form with curves and edges and a tail and ears that didn’t just stay down by his head or stood up but seemed to move. He emoted. Peter could hardly believe that K-9 was real. He was just too amazing. It was clear that some amount of work had gone into creating him and making him so dog-like. But his design was one thing — it was something else entirely to think about the programming. Tony supposed that only Tony Stark could have created him.

“That’s pretty cool,” May said as Peter reached down to touch the dog’s head and he responded like a real dog, leaning into Peter’s hand.

Touching him was not like touching a real dog, it reminded Peter of Dum-E, U, and Butterfingers a little, except that K-9 responded to touch as if it were really alive.

Steve moved everything along, passing out more presents and since he was the only one moving, K-
9 moved to follow him around and it was almost amusing to watch the robot dog walk a few paces behind Steve and then stop for a moment just to keep following him. Tony took that moment to put a hand on Peter’s shoulder.

“So, what do you think?” Tony asked and Peter was surprised that despite Peter’s reaction, Tony still seemed nervous about his response.

“I love it. I can’t believe you did that. You -- you made me a dog. Thank you. It’s amazing. But, can I also look at all the coding and programing and design? Are you going to make more? People would go crazy for these.”

“I’m glad. I was going to go down to a shelter and pick out a dog for you but we’re busy around here and those who aren’t can’t exactly leave the tower so it didn’t feel right to bring a dog into this place that wouldn’t have the right care. I didn’t know if you’d be happy with this but--”

“I am!” Peter said. “I love K-9. It’s the perfect gift, dad.”

Tony grinned. “Well, good. And he’s one of a kind, kid. I don’t think just anyone could be prepared to have this kind of tech. Maybe a different version down the line.

“That makes sense,” Peter said and turned to watch as K-9 stole a piece of ribbon from someone’s gift. He pulled it as he followed Steve. Eventually, he headed towards Tony and Peter and it was amazing how dog-like he was. When Peter reached down to grab the ribbon K-9 still had in his mouth, K-9 actually tried to tug it away. Eventually he let it go to bark and ran around the room.

Peter sat back down next to May and kept watching his new dog. Around him the others were still unwrapping the gifts that his dad had given them.

“See,” May said, “this is the type of dog that is definitely acceptable. Ben would have loved it.”

Peter smiled and nodded. “He would have. He would have loved all of this.”

Peter could tell that it was hard on her -- to not have Ben there when important things were happening. He missed him too and had often wondered how Ben would have taken him being Spider-Man and also his relationship with Tony. He imagined that things would have been entirely different with Ben still around and he would have given anything to have Ben back if not for himself then for May.

“I miss him,” he whispered to May and she smiled tightly and pulled him into a quick hug.

“Me too, Pete,” she said.

Peter stayed pressed up against May for a long moment until he saw that May hadn’t opened her present from Tony yet.

“What did he get you?” he asked.

“Don’t know,” May said and then reached for the neatly wrapped box.

Inside the box they found that Tony had gotten her gift certificates for a few spa days as well as the newly released Starkphone.

“I don’t think he should have gotten me that,” May said. “I can’t possibly accept it.”

“He won’t take it back,” Peter said knowingly because it was true. It was also true that Tony went a little crazy with Christmas presents. He had seen what he was getting a lot of The Avengers so it
wasn’t much of a surprise that he’d given May a phone. “Anyway, he has a whole box of them in
the workshop just sitting around so you might as well.”

Everyone around them seemed happy with what Tony had gotten them and Peter knew they would
be, but he was mostly excited to see Steve’s reaction especially since Peter had gotten to help Tony
with them. He was probably only going to give him one in front of everyone but that was fine by
Peter. Because Steve had been the one distributing presents, he was the last one to go without
opening his gift from Tony and they were all interestedly watching him open the thin box.

It was fingerless gloves like the type that Steve already used as Captain America except that as they
went down the wrist they started to look a little more like Peter’s webshooters. It wasn’t web fluid
that they housed. Instead, there was a version of the nanotech Tony was working on. Steve looked
confused as he looked at the gloves.

“Put them on,” Tony said. Tony was excited to see what came next.

Steve did and Tony grinned.

“What now?”

Tony reached over and showed Steve where to press and at once the nanotech formed a shield and
Steve gasped.

“It’s vibranium,” Tony said. “Shuri helped with getting me some as well as getting it to blend with
the nanonites. It’s a lot like the Black Panther suit. But this way if you really get into a tight spot you
have a way to get to your shield. I know you can’t carry the other one so—”

“Wow, Tony, this is really something.”

It really really was. When Peter had first figured out what Tony was trying to do he still hadn’t
grasped what it meant or what he was trying to accomplish and it was still simply amazing.

More presents were passed out and Peter ended up with a small pile. Nothing compared to K-9, but
he appreciated everything that everyone got him nevertheless. It was a bit crazy that he could actually
say that he had presents from The Avengers. Not just that but he’d spent Christmas with them.

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“One of my favorite things about you,” Steve said, “is how much you do for everyone else.”

Tony smiled at him. The nanotech shield had been an idea that Tony hadn’t been able to ignore once
he had it because while he was well aware that Steve could handle himself without the shield that it
made a difference when he did have it. It had also served as a distraction for Peter from all the other
things that Tony was working on for him like K-9 and the new Spider-Man suit.

“I have the means, so why should I?” Tony asked and he looked at the framed drawing that Steve
had gotten him.

It was of him and Peter working side by side and Steve had just captured the moment so perfectly.
Peter’s head was tilted towards Tony and Tony was smiling at him. As far as presents went it was
one of the best he’d ever gotten. Steve hadn’t stopped there, he’d shown Tony a huge sketch pad full
of pictures of himself.

“I think I drew you almost every day when I was in the run,” Steve said.
“I don’t even know what to say to that,” Tony said.

“You don’t have to say anything. I just wanted to give you this to show you how I see you.”

“Oh,” Tony said. “Thank you.”

Steve smiled at him and Tony didn’t hesitate to press a kiss on his lips. “Love you,” he whispered as he pulled back.

It was when May started to say her goodbyes that their party started to break up. Everyone picking up their things and going to their own floors or like Pepper leaving the tower entirely. Once May was gone, Tony felt comfortable giving Peter his second present. He hadn’t felt like he could give him the suit while May could see because it was still a bit of a sore subject.

“Come on,” he said to Steve, “I think it’s time to show Peter his last present,” Tony said.

It was clear to everyone how much Peter loved K-9 from the way he played with the dog who seemed to be keen on playing with nearly anything but was especially fond of balls. At the moment he was trailing Peter as he moved his presents into his room so Tony waited for him to return.

“There’s one more, Pete,” Tony said.

“One more what?” Peter asked. He rolled a ball and K-9 ran after it.

“Present, kid. Come on,” Tony said.

“But you already…”

Tony tried to ignore him and Peter followed with K-9 at his heels. The dog did well on the stairs, moving like a real dog would. It really was impressive work.

“You already got me a dog. I don’t need anything else,” Peter said as he caught up to Tony in the workshop.

Tony grinned at him. “Then consider this for my peace of mind.” Then, he opened up the display case and Peter gasped.

“That’s -- you built me another suit?”

“The Mark II,” Tony said.

K-9 walked in a circle around Peter and Peter leaned down to pet his head even as he stared at the new suit with awe. “It looks really cool.”

“It is,” Tony said and gesticulated towards it. “It’s not vibranium but it has some aspects of nano tech in there. There’s also a hidden surprise to it that I’ll let you find out when you wear it.”

Peter nodded and Tony could tell that he couldn’t wait to use it. He seemed on the brink of asking, but Steve coughed.

“It’s late. I don’t think trying a new suit out tonight is a good idea. Not to mention that I’d personally like it if Peter trained in it a bit before just jumping into using it.”

“But I won’t go far,” Peter said. “Just on the roof. It won’t even be long.”

Steve seemed a little amused as he shook his head and Tony agreed with Steve. It wasn’t that the
new suit was all that different, but just that there were some changes that Peter would need to get used to.

“Tomorrow,” Tony said.

“Yeah, alright,” Peter said.

They headed back out of the workshop and Peter had lingered to walk with Tony while Steve who had found a shoestring started teasing K-9 into playing with him.

“Thank you,” Peter said. “For everything.”

“You don’t have to thank me. And anyway, I love the mug you got me. It’s perfect.”

It really really was. It was one of those novelty “#1 dad” mugs except that it was clearly custom made because on one side it read:

**Superhero**

**Genius**

**Philanthropist**

**Dad**

There was a rendering of the Iron Man mask next to the word superhero. Then on the other side it said “Iron Man” but the “Man” was crossed out and instead replaced with “Dad” right underneath. Tony had been touched when he first saw it especially since the gift was accompanied by a striped tie and Tony really couldn’t have asked for anything better from Peter.

“You do?” Peter asked.

“Of course. I’m going to have Steve make us hot chocolate so I can use it.”

Peter smiled and Tony pulled him against his side as they walked and it just felt perfect. Steve looked back at them with a fond smile as Peter began to ask about the new suit and Tony answered his questions. When Steve ran ahead with K-9, Peter stopped walking and Tony was forced to stop with him.

“What?” he asked.

Peter gave him a look. “When are you going to ask him? You said Christmas. It’s Christmas.”

Tony took a deep breath. “I think it might have to be New Year’s.”

Peter just sighed and Tony was a little disappointed too but things didn’t feel quite right yet and he needed the right moment. He just didn’t know what that might entail.

Chapter End Notes

Couple of things: K-9 is a Doctor Who reference because if my icon didn't give it away I'm a huge Doctor Who fan. Time-travel as a trope will get me every time and I'm actually writing a book that has a lot of time-travel (which I'm procrastinating on by writing this fic...). I did consider Peter re-naming the dog BB8 as a Star Wars reference.
Also, Peter's present to Tony. I really had no idea what Peter could get Tony and then I figured he'd go for the classic dad gifts. But the mug happened because my default gift for anyone last minute is a cute/funny mug because everyone drinks coffee or tea and mugs can be very personal if you find the right one so it felt like the perfect thing for Peter to do.

I don't expect that I will post before Christmas as I am working through Dec. 24 and then obviously Christmas. So Merry Christmas to anyone that celebrates it and Happy Holidays to everyone else. I think the next chapter will be either late on Tuesday otherwise definitely on Wednesday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Peter swung up and threw himself into the air. It was one of those really amazing feelings to fly through the air until he could shoot out another web and then he was swinging again. He shot another web to make a turn onto the next street. There was a thrill to going fast but Peter wasn’t doing it for fun. He was following a police car chase because some crazy person had decided to actually try and pull off a bank robbery in the middle of the day on New Year’s Eve Eve. Maybe they thought it was a good way to end their year.

“I’m not getting anything from running his plates,” Karen said.

“It’s probably not even his car,” Peter said and he threw another web to change direction. Maybe if he was fast enough he could just drop down in front of the getaway car and stop the guy.

“More than likely,” Karen said.

“Hey, Karen, can we cut this guy off?”

“If you take the next left we should be able to catch up faster,” Karen said.

Peter followed her directions as they came. He ended up on a roof and he ran the length of it and jumped off, shooting off a web so he could control the fall and just swing down to the ground. It didn’t take long for the car to appear and Peter had somehow timed it perfectly to drop down in front of the car. He put his hands out and stopped it and the car only lifted off the ground a bit. The driver tried to reverse but by then the police had made it. Some of the police officers gave him wary looks when they spotted him, but they approached the car just as the two guys decided to try and get out of the car and run for it but Peter webbed the one up as he was getting out and the other one stopped when an officer pointed a gun at him.

“Good job, everyone,” Peter said.

He didn’t wait for the police officers to respond or for the robbers to say anything for that matter and instead he just threw a web at the stoplight and threw himself up and ended up on a nearby roof to watch as the two guys were arrested and put into a police car.

“That was easy,” Peter said.

“You’re getting better at this, Peter,” Karen said.

Apparently, he was getting so good that the suit had started to give him access to some of the features that he’d had only after Ned hacked the suit but which had been taken away again once Tony undid everything Ned had done. He blamed getting better at being Spider-Man directly on Steve who was an excellent teacher and trainer. Peter had been spending a lot less time out as Spider-Man since he’d
started doing more training with Steve and the other Avengers but it helped that Karen kept an ear out for anything that he could help out with and when there was something, Peter would jump into action. Friday did something similar on a larger scope but lately things had been kind of quiet.

“Ned’s texting,” Karen said, “would you like to see his message on the HUD?”


“Michelle texted too,” Karen said.

“I’ll answer her later too,” Peter said. Michelle’s text was probably completely unrelated to Spider-Man and more to do with school or decathlon. It didn’t matter that they were on winter break. Michelle was if nothing else dedicated.

Peter hung around only until the police all left the scene and then he headed in the direction of Avengers Tower. Karen was always scanning for anything that might need his attention, but there didn’t seem to be anything going on which Peter didn’t really mind because he wanted to be home more than he wanted to be out on patrol.

It didn’t take long to get back and it wasn’t until he was home that he checked his texts.

**Guy in the chair:** Omg. Peter, that car chase was crazy!

**Guy in the chair:** and you just swung in and stopped the car. So cool!

**Guy in the chair:** everyone is talking about it online. I think you might be trending on Twitter. Well in the States.

**Guy in the chair:** what were they trying to steal anyway?

**MJ:** I was thinking about themes and how we can do practices around subjects and maybe even certain concepts. What do you think? I just want us to be on our game for the next competition.

Peter didn’t answer them as he continued into the penthouse.

“Hey, Spidey,” Sam said. “Nice work with those bank robbers. It’s all over the news. Who even robs a bank in 2016?”

Peter shrugged his shoulders and he took off the mask. “Yeah, I don’t know. People are nuts. I don’t think they even got away with a lot in the first place.”

“Either way,” Sam said, “it’s smart to have someone looking out for people on the ground.”

Peter grinned at him. “Thanks.”

He sat down next to Sam and as soon as he did K-9 came running towards him. Sam laughed.

“That thing is so real. I think he actually missed you.”

Peter knew well how much emotion Tony somehow managed to impart with his creations and this was no different. K-9 was more advanced than Dum-E and the other bots not quite on par with Friday or Karen, but Tony had made the dog capable of learning. There was coding to ensure that he acted like a dog as well but he was forming a personality and the whole thing was quite impressive.

“That’s because he’s a good boy,” Peter said to Sam when K-9 jumped up on his lap Peter laughed
and he pet him. “Where’s your ball, K-9?”

The dog barked in response but then got off him and went to find it.

—

Tony had had no choice but to tell Peter about the ring mostly because he’d been asking Shuri for vibranium and Peter had had a million questions about what he was going to use it for. But really, he’d done it because he wanted Peter to know and he wanted Peter to be okay with it.

“I -- marriage was never...I never thought I would ever consider it. Partly because of SI but also because I don’t think it’s for everyone and for a long time I didn’t want to settle down. At all. Pepper was -- she could have been it if I wasn’t Iron Man or if I had managed to give it up. And I don’t know. That could have been something. But Steve understands that part of me and most of the rest which is enough and it just makes sense. But I love him, too, and I think it can work. I want it to work.”

It had felt a little like he was over explaining himself but Peter had just smiled at him and nodded. He was excited about it and it made everything feel even easier

“You’re making him a ring, then?” Peter asked.

“So you approve?”

“Duh,” Peter said. “Steve’s the best and I can tell he really loves you too. I think looking back I can sort of tell you really missed him when he was gone.”

“I did,” Tony said.

Tony had once given Pepper a necklace with the shards of the shrapnel that had been in his chest. It had been his way of giving her his symbolic heart and really showing that he was serious about quitting being Iron Man. He had definitely been serious about it at the time but maybe he should have known that he was kidding himself by doing that.

That necklace had eventually been returned to him when they broke up and Tony had kept it and hadn’t really considered what he might do with it. It was a reminder of how quitting hadn’t been possible. Once the ring idea came to mind, Tony had decided to make the shards even smaller and imbed them into the vibranium ring. It was better than any words that he might engrave in the ring. Those shards were his heart and his heart belonged to Steve.

Peter helped him make it and was the one that sneakily got a ring size for him as well by managing to get a measure of Steve’s finger using his webbing while training with him. Steve hadn’t even noticed. His kid really was brilliant.

The ring was simple and understated but beautiful and it was exactly the kind of ring that Steve would wear if he wore rings. But even if the ring ended up on a chain around his neck, Tony just wanted Steve to have it.

Ever since it had been completed, Peter had been urging him to ask Steve, but he’d put it off until Christmas and then New Year’s after that. Tony just wanted the perfect moment. He knew that he probably wouldn’t find it without creating it but it wasn’t really that he wanted perfection or everything to be a certain way -- he just wanted the moment to feel right.

It shouldn’t have surprised him, then, that the moment happened while he was on a work binge in the workshop. Although he’d had some success when it came to the new Spider-Man suit and Steve’s
gloves what he wanted for the new Iron Man armor was different and he was still trying to get it right. He was also ignoring all the paperwork that Pepper had sent him and hoping that she wouldn’t nag him about it any time soon.

Steve hadn’t followed him to the workshop like usual in favor of actually using his art room to keep working on his portfolio. Pepper’s idea about going back to art school hadn’t gotten Steve to decide to go back to school, but it had made him a little more aware of his talent. So while he wasn’t going to school, he’d started really studying art on his own again which meant that he was trying all kinds of different things. Thing that Tony didn’t fully understand but could tell he hadn’t been able to do back in the day. It was nice to see him excited about it and Tony had encouraged him to order more supplies and books and whatever else he might need.

Still, Tony wasn’t too surprised when Steve did eventually join him. It must have been well past midnight, but Tony didn’t really notice the time. With Peter on winter break none of them really noticed the time anymore since the usual sign that it was getting late was Peter needing to get to bed so he wouldn’t fall asleep at school the next day.

“Hey,” Steve said and he sounded tired. “I was hoping to find you in bed, but I should have known better and come straight down here.”

“Yes. Dum-E, hold that. Don’t move.”

Dum-E beeped and he moved a little but Tony had expected that and it didn’t really matter all that much. He did what he needed to and took the tool back from Dum-E before turning to look at Steve.

Steve had pastel on his right cheek right above where his beard began and there was some on his white shirt too. His fingers looked to be a little stained too and Tony thought that he looked every bit the picture of an artist and Tony loved it. He loved seeing this different side of Steve that was a little soft and a little bit in love with the world and not the soldier or Captain America but perhaps who Steve used to be when he was tiny and sickly.

“I love you,” Tony said.

Steve stared him. “I love you too,” he said and it sounded like a question, like he was wondering why Tony said it in the first place.

“I have something for you,” Tony said and he rubbed the back of his neck because no amount of preparation made this easy even though it should have been. Tony rarely got nervous, but this had him nervous. “I should have -- I guess it was supposed to be a Christmas present but that didn’t really work and then I thought maybe tomorrow night but--”

“What is it?” Steve asked eyebrows burrowed and yet he didn’t look worried. Mostly, he looked curious and open and there was so much to love about him and suddenly it just -- it wasn’t all that hard anymore. This was Steve after all.

Tony reached for Steve’s hands and he let himself smile a little “Steve, I, I never thought this would happen. That I would want this even with anyone and I think you know I want nothing more than to spend the rest of my life with you,” Tony said, “if it means we’re heroes together or that we retire to a farm I don’t really care as long as you’re at my side--”

“I know, Tony. I know. I feel the same--”

“Good. That’s good. It’s really good.” Tony said and he could feel his smile getting wider. “But I figure before we get to do all of that maybe we have one more step.”
“What do you--”

Tony interrupted him. “Will you marry me?”

Steve gasped audibly and his mouth fell open. His eyes glinted and showed his obvious surprise and it took him a few seconds to move past the shock.

“Yes. Of course. Yes, Tony, I--”

Tony was swept up into Steve’s arms. He wrapped his own around Steve’s neck and laughed because Steve actually picked him up off the ground. It was so easy with Steve -- so absolutely easy -- at least this part of it. The being in love part.

Steve set him back down and pulled back long enough to look at him and then he was kissing him and Tony melted into the kiss, letting himself get lost to sensation of having Steve there and knowing that he’d said yes and that they really were on the same page.

“I have a ring,” Tony whispered in between kisses, their foreheads pressed together.

Steve kissed him again, a deep but quick kiss before Steve just pulled him into a hug that Tony broke out of only a few minutes later. He grabbed Steve’s hand and took him to the other side of the workshop where he’d hidden the ring.

“What are you doing?”

“I told you, I have ring,” Tony said and he found it at last in one of the drawers of a tool box inside a small leather ring box. He thrust it towards Steve who opened it slowly and Tony watched him.

He watched the emotions pass over Steve’s face -- his interest and curiosity and how he seemed to consider the ring for a long moment before he reached in to take it out.

“Vibranium,” Steve said.

“Felt fitting. Shuri was very happy to provide it. She said something about shipping us which I really didn’t understand. But Peter laughed and said he agreed -- but he wouldn’t explain. Anyway, there’s also -- those specs -- they’re the shrapnel that was in my chest.”

That tore Steve’s eyes from the ring and they met Tony’s. “You kept that,” he said.

“Yeah, after I got it taken out. It just -- it made sense, it kind of represents how much I’ve gone through and survived and how much I want to keep on living. With you at my side.”

“Oh,” Steve said and then grabbed Tony’s hand, holding it palm out and placed the ring there.

“What? Steve, I--”

Steve extended his left hand out to Tony and wiggled his fingers. “I think you should do the honors.”

Tony laughed and took Steve’s hand with one of his own and then lifted the ring towards Steve’s ring finger and put it on and the moment felt right -- the ring fit Steve’s finger perfectly and Tony almost couldn’t believe that the ring he’d made was actually Steve’s now.

“I’ll have to get one for you,” Steve said as he admired his ring.

“You don’t have to--”
“I do. I want to.”

Steve’s hands reached out to cradle Tony’s face and feeling the cold ring on his skin next to Steve’s warm fingers was unsurprisingly thrilling and then Steve was kissing him again. His future husband was kissing him so Tony kissed him back.

Chapter End Notes

As a lot of you guessed: a proposal happened!
Next chapter we finally make it to 2017 and if I remember correctly we have quite a bit of Michelle in it. I should have it up Saturday or Sunday.
Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Peter couldn’t contain his excitement. So much so that he hugged his dad and then Steve and jumped up and down. Steve who had never been hugged by Peter before was a bit surprised but he didn’t really mind getting a hug from Peter. It was kind of nice actually.

“I’m so happy for you,” Peter said. “Is it going to be soon?”

Tony laughed and Steve knew he had to look a little bit dazed still. He had been since Tony had asked because it had been the last thing he expected when he went into the workshop in the early hours or the morning to persuade Tony to get some sleep. Steve hadn’t even considered that Tony was thinking about marriage at all, after all Steve hadn’t really thought about it much. Mostly, he supposed, that it was to do with how growing up it had been illegal for two men to get married -- for them to even be in any kind of relationship. Still, Steve had known for a while that he wanted nothing more than to remain with Tony for as long as Tony would have him.

“No. I don’t think so. Steve can’t even leave the tower. Although it could be here. Or maybe there’s a special pardon if someone’s getting married. I don’t know.”

“Who’s getting married?”

Steve turned and found Natasha and Rhodey there. It was Rhodey that had asked the question.

“Me,” Tony said at the same time as Peter said, “them.”

There were more hugs and more congratulations. Rhodey pat his back and Steve grinned back at him because he couldn’t not. His happiness couldn’t fade and even in the moments when he had a moment to himself the ring sat on his finger like a reminder that he had everything to be thankful for and happy about. Steve had figured that the feeling would fade after a few days, but it didn’t.

Tony had taken to calling him “my fiancé” when he was talking about Steve which made him warm and pleased the first time he heard it. Wanda who had been the person Tony was talking about had nudged him when she passed him.

But somehow, the one most touching thing to come out of it came while he and Peter were training —using Peter’s new suit and his new shield.

“I guess that makes you my stepfather,” Peter said.

“Yeah. You okay win that?”

Peter just smiled. “Yeah. I could always use more parental figures and anyway you’re already kind of filling the role so…”
It was the most important thing, to know that Peter was completely supportive of it. The only other person whose opinion mattered to Steve -- and in comparison to Peter in such a smaller degree -- was Bucky. He was the last remaining piece of his past and who he used to be. Steve didn’t get around to calling him until a whole week had passed, but Bucky actually whooped and cheered when he heard.

“About time that happened,” Bucky said.

“So you approve, then?”

“Yeah, Stevie, I do. As long as I don’t see that Sam guy trying to take my best man spot.”

Steve certainly hoped that Bucky would be able to attend the wedding. He knew that Tony wouldn’t put up a fuss about it no matter what his feelings on Bucky were -- it was just a question of how they might manage it legally seeing as Steve couldn’t leave the tower and it’d be a bad idea to bring Bucky into the states while all that stuff with Ross was happening.

The sad part about all of the Ross stuff was that Tony had been getting past everything. He was getting used to the idea of separating Bucky from The Winter Soldier. And Steve knew for a fact that Bucky and Tony would get on -- probably better than he and Tony had at the beginning.

So, considering all of that, Steve was surprised when Tony showed up in his art room one afternoon almost a month after they’d gotten engaged. He seemed to be covered in motor oil and who knew what else but he looked determined.

“I have to go to Wakanda,” he said and Steve removed his charcoal from the paper to turn around.

Tony was standing just within the room but he turned his face this way and that as he took in the room which had become a bit messier of late due to use. Although Steve spent a lot of time in the workshop with Tony, Tony rarely ventured into his art room.

“This place looks good,” Tony said and grinned and pointed at one of the canvases that Steve had been painting and was still unfinished. “I want that one hung somewhere.”

“When it’s finished maybe. But what are you saying about Wakanda?”

Tony shook his head. “Oh. Yes. I have to see Barnes.”

Steve actually dropped his charcoal then. “You what? Did something happen?” He stood up quickly almost knocking over his stool.

“No. No. I just think…it’s time we finally get to talk about all of this. It’s also — this Ross thing,” Tony said.

“I should be there,” Steve said at once. “I should — I should come with you and—“

Tony seemed to hesitate. “Is that a good idea? You were gone last week on that thing for Fury and I’m sure he’ll have something come up again soon. You can’t be gone from the tower all the time.”

“So I decline the next mission,” Steve said.

Tony walked around the room. Grabbing a canvas here or a drawing there and Steve waited on him. “I kind of — I want to do this on my own. Talk to him, I mean. I won’t be gone long…but if you really do want to come then I wouldn’t be entirely opposed to it.”
Ned got the flu and his mom made him stay home for three days because that’s the kind of mom that
Ned had not because she wanted to fuss over him, but because she didn’t want anyone else to get the
flu on account of Ned going to school sick. Peter found that his days at school were quieter without
Ned, but that Michelle was suddenly there filling in for Ned.

Michelle didn’t talk as much as Ned, but she talked more than usual perhaps because Ned wasn’t
there to make conversation at Peter.

“It’s coming up, isn’t it?” Michelle asked during lunch.

“What?”

“The anniversary of your uncle’s death.”

Peter had tried not to think on it too hard, but she was right and it was coming up in a few weeks. It
was crazy to think that a whole year had already passed since Ben died -- that it had been a little over
a year since Peter had gotten his powers too.

“Yeah,” Peter said.

“He was really nice. I remember meeting him once. I liked him.”

“Most people did,” Peter said. It was a bit surprising that Michelle would remember when most
people just didn’t, but Peter didn’t mind that she brought it up, especially since she seemed to sense
that he didn’t want to say more about it and she turned back to whatever textbook she was studying
from.

For a while they were both quiet and it was nice to have silence for a change. Peter didn’t get lost to
thoughts about Ben but instead he thought about Tony and Steve who had both left for Wakanda that
morning. They’d be back in a couple of days but it felt weird to think about going home and not
having them there. There would be everyone else including Rhodey who had essentially moved into
the tower since he’d come to stay for the holidays, but it just felt odd. He would have gone to stay
with May while they were gone, but May was actually on a week long vacation using up one of the
spa vouchers that Tony had gotten her for Christmas. Peter thought she deserved the rest.

After school he went out on a patrol but despite how often the news reported on one crime or another
happening in New York City, Peter didn’t actually come across a lot of them. Sometimes he did end
up helping people with silly little things like when he helped move someone’s sofa into their
apartment for them or when he ran to catch up to someone that dropped a wallet. Sometimes he
managed to catch someone trying to pick-pocket someone and once he’d managed to swing in when
a motorcycle going too fast almost ran over an elderly couple on a walk. So after not finding much to
do, Peter decided to call it quits for the day.

He was heading to the tower when he spotted a protest. It wasn’t entirely surprising to spot Michelle
in the midst of protests. Peter had seen her at plenty and yet this time he decided to stop. He was
perched on the rooftop of one of lower buildings and he watched as the picket signs moved in the
crowd. It was hard to tell what they were all chanting because there didn’t seem to be just one chant
and Peter suspected that it was also in another language.

“What are they doing?” Peter asked.

“Seems to be something to do with immigration,” Karen said. “Doesn’t look like Michelle is
staying.”
Sure enough, Michelle actually started saying goodbye to a few of the people there and she passed the sign she’d been holding to someone without. With Michelle leaving, Peter was less interesting and something compelled him to follow her as she walked to the nearest subway station.

It happened as she was walking down the stairs. Some guy in a hoodie tripped her and grabbed the canvas bag that she had over her shoulder. Michelle luckily grabbed the railing and didn’t fall but the guy ran back up the stairs in that time with her bag clutched in one hand. Peter swung down as the guy began to run away but Peter didn’t even chase him, he threw out a web at his back and he fell back onto the pavement when he tried to keep running because the web acted like a cord. Everyone around them stopped and people were staring but Peter didn’t care. He rushed forward and took the bag away and for good measure webbed him to the ground.

The crowd of people on the street started to clap and Peter spotted some people taking pictures, but he didn’t care. Instead, he looked around for Michelle and was only a tad surprised when he found her just a foot away. Peter jumped back and she smirked at him and then extended out of hand. Peter handed her back the bag and because a crowd was starting to form, he saluted her and then ran for it, throwing a web up at a nearby awning and another at a building before he was up and away.

“MJ is calling,” Karen said.

“Karen, what should I do? Should I answer? I shouldn’t answer.”

“There’s a text,” Karen said.

Peter stepped onto a nearby roof. “Read it to me?”

“MJ says: Peter, I know it’s you. Thank you. Can we talk? I can meet you somewhere.”

Peter had known that Michelle knew about his secret identity for months now, but it had been like an unspoken thing that neither of them was going to actually bring it up. Apparently saving her bag changed things and Peter couldn’t leave her hanging.

“Ask her where,” Peter said.

“Message sent,” Karen said and then, “Peter, do you like this girl? Do you like her like you liked Liz?”

“No,” Peter said at once and scoffed. “Michelle is just Michelle. She’s MJ. She’s weird and cool all at once and I don’t really know her that well.”

“Yes, but your heart rate went up when I asked,” Karen said.

“Karen, I don’t like Michelle like that.”

“Okay. But she seems nice and I don’t think she’s related to anyone that would try to kill you so that’s a plus.”

Peter had to laugh at that. “Karen, you’re not actually helping right now. And I don’t like MJ.”

Michelle texted back quickly and Karen had it pop up on the HUD.

MJ: Anywhere is good? Where are you now?

Peter pulled out his phone because it was easier to text while typing rather than telling Karen what to write to her.
Peter: On a roof. Can you meet me at Avengers tower.

MJ: Okay. You’re lucky it’s close.

That was exactly why Peter had suggested it because he figured that Michelle probably hadn’t gone too far and because he didn’t think that they could talk about Spider-Man anywhere else.

Chapter End Notes

We have finally made it to 2017.
I actually forgot about what happened in this chapter until looking at it tonight and all I can say is that I love Michelle. There will be more of her in the next chapter.

I think next chapter should be up by Thursday.
Thank you to everyone reading and I hope everyone has a Happy New Year!

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“Ned told me you knew,” Peter said. He was still in his Spider-Man suit sans mask. He’d taken Michelle up to the roof of the tower which had felt like the right place to go because he knew bringing her inside to the penthouse would bring up more questions. It was kind of cold up there, but Michelle didn’t seem to mind.

“I was going to use that knowledge eventually,” Michelle admitted. “Not sure what for but I guess I was waiting for the right situation. So, you’re Spider-Man.”

Peter nodded and Michelle just stared at him for a while which made Peter feel weird. As if she was trying to figure it all out.

“You know, you could say that Spider-Man is your fursona,” she deadpanned.

Peter shook his head at once. “Nope. Nope. That is not what this is at all. You can shake that thought right now.”

Michelle just smirked at him. “I’m joking. Kind of.”

He gave her a look and she smiled at him. “But seriously, how did that happen?”

Michelle was so calm and just pragmatic in how she asked him anything that Peter didn’t feel the stress that he’d felt when Ned found out. Then again, Michelle had also had time to think on it before.

“Spider bit me,” Peter said.

“Okay and the whole web thing -- is that coming out of you?” Michelle said. “I’ve been wondering.”

Peter shook his head, “No, no. That would be ridiculous.”

“You’re a teenage superhero we’re past ridiculous.”

Peter nodded his head and looked down at his suit. “Yeah, I guess. Ned freaked out when he found out.”

“I bet,” Michelle said and then she reached out to touch the suit. “Whatever it’s made from — seems really durable I guess? I’m guessing Tony Stark made it for you?”

“Yeah.”

“I...this is kind of crazy,” Michelle said. “I mean, The Avengers themselves always felt a bit fantastical but you’re -- you’re Peter and I’ve known you forever and you’re sort of one of them. Anyway, I really just wanted to thank you. All of my books and my phone are in this bag and my
mom would have been really mad if I got it stolen.”

“I’m glad I was there,” Peter said.

The sun was going down which cast the sky in a nice orange-yellow, but it also meant that it was getting a bit colder out. Peter wouldn’t really feel it with the suit, but Michelle would.

“So, Tony Stark knows and Ned knows. Does your aunt know? Does anyone else? Did you tell Liz?”

“The rest of the Avengers know too,” Peter said. “May knows and I don’t think she’ll ever be happy about it. I didn’t tell Liz. Turned out her dad was the bad guy in the end so that was probably a good call. That’s it, really.”

Michelle nodded and then, “I’m glad it’s you. I mean, anyone else our age wouldn’t be a hero. Could you imagine if it was Flash? He would be lording it over everyone. He’d be even more insufferable.”

“Oh, god,” Peter said because he could just imagine it. “You’re right. And Ned would just use it to get popular or something. He hated that it was a secret when he first found out. It was hard to keep him from giving me away.”

Michelle laughed at that. “The two of you are such dorks.”

“You’re friends with us,” Peter pointed out.

She smiled. “Guess I am. But, okay, if the web doesn’t come out of you, what is it? I’ve seen you swing on it which means it’s strong and it’s sticky too? Did Stark make it?”

“I made it,” Peter said and he was happy to see how impressed she was because he could tell that Michelle had expected it to have come from Tony. “Took me awhile to get it right and Tony -- he helped to improve it a bit. I built the original web shooters too but the ones on the suit were made by Tony.”

Michelle gave him a long look. “You call him Tony,” she said. “I guess you’re close, then? I sort of figured considering the ferry thing and the night of the dance.”

“He’s my mentor,” Peter said and he was glad that it didn’t come out like too much of a lie. Peter just -- he didn’t want her to know about Tony being his dad quite yet. It was enough that Ned knew.

“The internship,” Michelle said.

“I’m glad you know,” Peter said. “Ned gets a little too excited. He doesn’t realize what this is all about sometimes and maybe it might be good for him to have someone else to discuss it with.”

“Or you,” Michelle said. “I mean, who else do you have to talk to other than Ned and a bunch of superheroes if your aunt isn’t actually supportive of your activities?”

“I have Karen,” Peter said.

“Who is Karen?”

“My AI. Well, she’s in the suit and in my phone.”

Michelle hummed in response, but she shook head. “Right, so another of Tony Stark’s creations.”

She shivered as a gust of wind hit them and Peter motioned for her to go inside, lightly touching her
arm to lead her in and Michelle turned back to look at him and smiled at him.

---

Wakanda was the same as the last time that Tony had seen it. T’Challa was unavailable to greet them since he was in some kind of meeting, so Shuri did instead and she immediately began to ask Tony questions about his work on Steve’s shield.

“He can show you himself. We brought it with us,” Tony told her and then with a grin shot at Steve: “He can also show you the ring.”

At that, Shuri made an excited noise and she swung her attention towards Steve. She demanded to see it and Tony laughed at the surprise on Steve’s face except that he also seemed quite pleased about it.

“In fact,” Tony added, “why don’t you and Steve look at the shield while I go find Barnes.”

Steve knew better than to ask to go with him since Tony had made it clear that he wanted to do this on his own. It was important. Tony had never been one to go forth and face his demons -- not when he could find a reason to avoid them -- but this one was one that he needed to. For one thing, the man was his future husband’s best friend and for another he was an innocent man that had been tortured and used and Tony needed to forgive him. But for that, they had to talk. Tony needed to see him with his own eyes and finally meet James Buchanan Barnes.

“All right,” Steve said.

Shuri grabbed him someone to lead him to Barnes and then dragged Steve away probably towards her lab. Tony had known he could count on Shuri.

Barnes was apparently staying in a hut a small walk away from the palace and he seemed to be happily assimilating to life in Wakanda. When Tony and his guide came upon him he was actually in the middle of playing with some boys and girls.

“Thanks,” Tony said to his guide. “I’ll head over on my own.”

Tony didn’t move forward at once and instead just watched for a while. It was kind of surprising that Barnes hadn’t realized he was being watched for one and for another -- well, he seemed different from the man that Tony had seen in that bunker in Siberia. He was more like the man that Steve had described to him from back in the 40s. Barnes was smiling and laughing and he seemed to be at peace. Barnes was still down to one arm and Tony felt a modicum of guilt because he’d been the one to blow the other one off and because he had also never offered to get him a replacement. Granted, despite his prosthetic division, Steve had never asked. Maybe he thought that Tony wouldn’t want to give Barnes an arm. Or maybe Shuri was already making him one.

After a moment, Tony moved closer and he coughed in order to give Barnes some warning, but as he had moved closer, Tony had noticed that Barnes tensed up some and he’d realized someone was approaching. Barnes looked up and the kids paused in the middle of their game and then after a nod from Barnes just left with quick goodbyes. One little girl hugged Barnes before she scampered off.

“I didn’t expect to see you,” Barnes said and he sounded careful. “I saw the jet come in but I didn’t think it was--”

“Yeah,” Tony said, “I’m kind of the last person you probably expected to come looking for you.”

“Well not the last but yeah,” Barnes said. He tilted his head and Tony could tell that he was trying to
get a read on the situation. After a moment he said, “Congratulations, by the way. I heard you put a ring on it.”

Tony laughed. “So you listen to Beyonce.”

“Sometimes. I think between me and Steve I was always going to be the one more suited to the future. I bet he still doesn’t really listen to anything current.”

Now that Tony thought about it, despite how much Steve read and watched and had caught up on about the world, music was one of those things that he never really spoke about. Tony knew he’d checked out famous and important parts of music history but modern music didn’t give him much interest.

“I guess he doesn’t,” Tony said.

It was surprising, how it actually wasn’t all that hard to talk to Barnes. Maybe it was the easy topics and that they were talking about Steve and not all the hard stuff that Tony had actually gone to the trouble of flying to Wakanda for.

“That’ll make it easier to pick a song to dance to at the wedding,” Barnes said.

Tony laughed, a little surprised at the comment. “I hadn’t even considered that we’d have to dance,” he said.

“He doesn’t know how,” Barnes said. “It was one of those stubborn Steve things. He wanted the right dance partner and no one was ever interested. Not until Peggy and with the war they never really got anywhere.”

“Sounds like him,” Tony said and then, “I came to clear the air. In light of the engagement and mostly everything else. Steve filled you in, right? Ross and everything he’s doing. I want -- I’ve tried my best to move past it all and I have. I really have. You didn’t have a choice and everything that happened to you was terrible. And still, I won’t ever forget that video and what The Winter Soldier did even if it wasn’t really you.”

Bucky looked taken aback at Tony’s words. “I -- I feel guilty all the same. Not as much as I used to but it’s there and I can’t change anything that I did when I was the Winter Soldier but I want to. I wish I could.”

“Steve doesn’t get that. The guilt, I mean,” Tony said. “I do. They called me The Merchant of Death for a long time but I didn’t care because my focus was on the engineering and on the construction of newer and faster and it wasn’t just the double dealing because that was one thing that was done without my knowing -- I still made weapons and created bombs and missiles and so much else with the knowledge that all of it would be used to kill people. I allowed my creations to kill people and it shouldn’t have mattered that we were at war. Of course, it was all made worse when I found out everything I built was being used on both sides. So, I get it, Barnes, I really do. You know, I’ve just been making up for it since I stopped weapon manufacturing in a way and it was a long time before I truly felt like I could move past it. I think the start for you is to get better and live your life and make your own choices now that you can and you’re not in danger of becoming The Winter Soldier anymore.”

Tony hadn’t realized how alike they were. He hadn’t thought about it much because it had been easier to not consider those parts of Barnes and realize that they had both been held and tortured and that they had both done horrible things. Barnes had had it worse. Tortured and brainwashed for decades. Kept frozen when he wasn’t needed. It was horrible.
“I want to clear your name,” Tony said. “Ross has been trying to make it impossible for you to ever come back. He wants to hold you accountable for everything Hydra ever made you do. Probably his attempts at getting you and study the serum.”

“Yeah. I’ve seen the news,” Barnes said.

“Well, I’m going to clear your name, Barnes,” Tony said and then because he had to he reached out his hand and Barnes didn’t hesitate to take it. “We’re good, okay? I -- I didn’t react well in Siberia which we can both blame on Steve’s attempts at protecting me. Backfired on all of us.”

Barnes took back his hand and he grinned. “Nobody said Steve was smart.”

Tony shook his head. “He’s not smart when it comes to protecting those he loves. And you’re the last piece of his family left. I do get it -- I’ve been alone for most of my life and I don’t think that I could ever get in the way of your friendship. You’re going to be his best man and I’ll need to find a way to get you to New York for the wedding. Steve also told me that you really supported me and Steve. So, it’s only right that the two of us be on good terms.”

Barnes grinned and Tony knew that he would still need to get to know the man to really get over everything -- so that every time he looked at him he could purge “killed mom” from his brain and associate him with something else, but it was already becoming easier because this man was nothing like The Winter Soldier and Tony truly did believe he was good and Tony intended to help him.

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed writing both of these conversations both of which have been a long time coming. Next chapter will be a Peter and Tony chapter. It will probably be up at the latest Monday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 106

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone reading. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It turned out that having Michelle know he was Spider-Man and acknowledging that she did was a good thing. Michelle was just all that much better about covering for Peter. Just the other day when they’d gone on a small class trip and Peter had spotted a mugging happening, it was Michelle that had distracted everyone long enough for Peter to get away unnoticed and then again when he rejoined them.

The only thing about Michelle was that unlike Ned, she actually seemed concerned about what Peter got up to. She worried. It was weird especially when she pretended that she didn’t in person and then sent him long rambling texts about how he wasn’t being careful and how close he came to getting injured or hurting others.

It was all on par with how much coverage Spider-Man had started to get from the media which Peter didn’t particularly like. At first it had seemed cool to be mentioned on the news all the time and to have articles about Spider-Man popping up everywhere. His favorite were the YouTube videos since those were usually fun to watch mostly because they weren’t all made by anyone truly professional. But after a while, even those got old. It got annoying. Tony definitely disliked it.

“I just don’t like how interested everyone seems to be in finding out your identity,” his dad said while they were tinkering in the workshop. “It’s none of their business.”

Peter liked listening to him rant. It was kind of hilarious especially when one considered Tony’s own media presence basically his entirely life.

“And it’s not like we’ve announced that you’re an Avenger or anything but some reason they just seem to associate you with us.”

That’s when Steve spoke up. “That’s because they see you out and about with him all the time as Iron Man and Iron Man is an Avenger.”

“That isn’t the point,” Tony said.

“And also, Peter’s the only hero that’s popped up that has a hidden identity. Gives everyone a mystery to want to solve.”

Tony muttered some more and Peter tried not to laugh. He could tell that Steve was amused too.

Since all that stuff with The Vulture, Tony still did tend to show up when Peter needed help. He was better about letting Peter be involved in things especially when they didn’t involve alien tech. They had stopped some weird guy with what seemed to be some sort of power -- Tony said he was probably an inhuman -- just the other day from destroying a big portion of Greenwich Village. The guy hadn’t been doing it on purpose it turned out it. It was just that his powers were so unstable. Peter had been glad to have Tony there because he didn’t a single person could have handled
everything that instance entailed. Even Vision had made an appearance for that. In the end they had subdued the guy and Tony had handed him over to the new Shield.

“But also, it’s not just the identity thing,” Tony kept on, “it’s that there’s varying degrees of coverage. He’s good for the city. He’s a vigilante. He’s an Avenger. He’s not. It’s ridiculous. At least no one seems to have put together that I built your suit. Or at least no one’s written an article about it yet. And can you imagine if anyone found out I had a son? Because then they would definitely start questioning whether you were the one under the mask and then my parenting would come into question.”

It was no surprise to Peter that Ned loved it. He had a whole collection on articles written about him and he would send Peter the more outrageous ones and Peter would pass those on to Steve because Steve loved reading them too. May seemed to agree with Tony on the whole matter. But then, May also tended to try and get Peter to quit being Spider-Man altogether whenever she saw him and it wasn’t something that was ever likely to stop. She liked to bring up questions about school and girlfriends and college and how Spider-Man wouldn’t be an ideal addition to any of those as her way of asking him to stop.

As he stepped out of Midtown one afternoon, Peter was surprised when he spotted Tony complete with a baseball cap, sunglasses, a grin, and a thermal cup that probably contained coffee, leaning against a sleek black car that at least proved to be his least flashy. Still, no matter how hard he was trying, he looked out of place and people were noticing him.

Michelle who had walked out with him spotted Tony with no problem and when Peter glanced at her he could practically see her thinking. Her left eyebrow rose and she stared him down.

“Is Tony Stark actually picking you up right now?”

Peter shook his head. “Nope. It’s all in your imagination. You’re hallucinating.”

Michelle laughed -- cackled more like and Peter grinned back at her as she nudged him and rolled her eyes. Ned appeared then, busy with his backpack as he walked, and only managing to not run into anyone because anyone in his path dodged him.

“Hey, what’s going on?”

“Your boy here is being picked up by Tony Stark. Fancy that. I bet Flash will be jealous.”

“Which is why I’m going to go before anyone else notices,” Peter said and rushed away. When he looked back Michelle waved and Ned grinned at him and gave him thumbs up.

“Hey,” Peter said when he was close enough.

“Hi, kiddo,” his dad said, “I was in the area so I figured I’d come by and get you. I was also sort of craving this apple crostini this one restaurant has so we’re going to have to make a stop for that. Up for it?”

Peter rolled his eyes but nodded. “Sure.”

They got into the car and when Peter looked out the window he realized that a few people were watching them. Someone must have caught onto Tony being there. Not that it really mattered since everyone knew that Peter had a Stark Internship. Of course, no intern could have ever expected for Tony Stark himself to show up to pick them up from school. He was definitely going to hear about it.

The restaurant Tony took them to was a hole in the wall that no one would have ever noticed and yet
it was busy. A well known secret. Nevertheless, they were seated at a discrete table towards the back without much wait which told Peter that Tony had called ahead.

“Why are we really here?” Peter asked.

“I told you -- apple crostini. Also, remind me to order one to go because Steve would kill us if we don’t bring him one back. We used to come here sometimes back in the day.”

“Oh,” Peter said.

His dad never really talked about how he and Steve had come to be and Peter didn’t really have any questions or want to know details, but he loved when Tony slipped in something that hinted at a past memory. It made him realize how normal it all was in some ways. Sometimes, it was still shocking to think about Iron Man and Captain America in a romantic relationship or to consider that they were getting married until he thought about them as Tony and Steve -- his dad and his dad’s fiance.

“Truth is, I wanted to catch up with you,” Tony said. “Things have been a bit crazy lately. Haven’t really spent much time with you on our own. Steve or someone else is usually around.”

Peter hadn’t -- no, he’d noticed, it was just that he hadn’t minded. He’d never expected to have Tony to himself all the time and had felt lucky when he did even if then it had been broken up to a few hours here and there and now he was living in the tower and had access to Tony all the time and it didn’t really matter that there were other people around.

“We can start with, who was the girl?”

Peter rolled his eyes. “Who, Michelle? I’ve told you about her. She’s the one that figured out I’m Spider-Man all on her own.”

“MJ. You said someone named MJ did.”

“Michelle Jones. She likes to be called MJ. Anyway, that was her.”

Tony nodded. The waitress approached then and Tony ordered the apple crostinis and remembered to order the one to go as well without Peter needing to remind him.

“So she’s super smart and observant,” Tony said.

“Yup. Definitely knew it was you waiting for me. Actually, I think a few people figured it out.”

Tony shrugged with a grin. “And they can all wonder about what your internship entails once more.”

Tony started asking about how things were going in school next and Peter filled him in even though he was sure he’d mentioned some of it to him in passing over the last few weeks.

The apple crostini turned out to be amazing. He was in the middle of telling Tony about what they’d started working on in physics when it arrived and after one bite of the crunchy and flaky crust with the warm apple filling and the ice cream and Peter was in heaven.

“I told you so,” Tony said.

“This is the best thing ever,” Peter said.

It was nice to have some time on his own with Tony. Tony told him all about how the board members were driving him and Pepper crazy because they didn’t like that Tony’s concern wasn’t all about profit when it came to the prosthetic division even when it came to custom projects.
“It’s like they don’t understand how good the PR is although that obviously isn’t why we’re doing it.”

“But it’s your company,” Peter said.

“Pepper and I own more than half of the shares of the company, sure, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have to deal with the board of directors. It’s the side of business that I don’t particularly like. Pepper is awesome at it. It’s all stuff you’ll have to learn about if you want to take over the company one day—”

“Um, what?” Peter said and almost choked on a piece of apple.

Tony chuckled. “Won’t be for a while and it’s up to you if you want it. It’s not an obligation, you know. You could find your own Pepper Potts and have someone else run it if you prefer. I rather you do what you want than what you think I want you to do so—”

Peter had sort of forgotten about how Tony had broken the news to him what felt like ages ago even though it hadn’t even been a full year yet. He’d forgotten how Tony told him that he would inherit everything as if that had been the right way to let him know that Tony was his father. Since then, Peter hadn’t really thought about it or the reality of what it actually meant which meant that it was overwhelming information to take in.

“I -- that’s—”

“What, did you forget that I’m Tony Stark? You’re my heir, kid, to this whole crazy company and whatever else I’ve accumulated.”

“But what if -- what if you and Steve have kids?” Peter asked.

It wasn’t something he’d considered before that moment, but wasn’t that what people did after they got married? They went and had kids. Peter was aware that Tony and Steve were both men but there were ways around that -- surrogacy or adoption or other weirder things. It was possible. Peter didn’t know if -- well, he didn’t know if he’d be thrilled about it if they did have kids. He felt weird even just thinking about it.

“Not really something we’ve discussed,” Tony said and he seemed to notice that Peter seemed uncomfortable. “And even if we did decide to have kids it wouldn’t be for a long while, Pete.”

“Oh,” Peter said. But they could still have some even if Peter was fully grown when they did--

Tony grabbed his hand. Tony’s hand was warm and familiar and Peter allowed himself to calm down. “Peter, you’re my kid. I -- I love you, kid. Not something that will ever change. I’ll always be here for you no matter what. Even if Steve and I adopt a hundred kids. You’re still always going to be my son and you’re the most important person in my life.”

Peter hadn’t expected Tony to say that. Those three words. Tony had said them before, he was sure, but Peter couldn’t actually remember. He certainly hadn’t expected them in the moment.

“I don’t think even Steve will want to adopt that many kids,” Peter said.

“If he even wants to,” Tony said with a shrug. “I’m not saying I wouldn’t be opposed to another kid -- it’s just I’d be fine with just you.”

“Oh,” Peter said. “But you didn’t get to raise me. Not really. Don’t you want that -- the whole baby thing?” Peter didn’t really understand why people were so keen on babies. He knew they were cute
but they also cried and made messes and couldn’t really do anything and he actually -- he couldn’t see Tony or even Steve dealing with a baby well.

“That doesn’t matter. Clearly, it doesn’t. You’re still my kid, Peter, and as has been established you clearly need me a lot too no matter what your age is.”

Peter nodded. “I kind of do,” Peter said and then because he couldn’t say anything else, “I, um, I love you too, dad.”

He thought that Tony’s eyes got a bit misty at that and Peter realized that he’d never actually said it out loud before. But it was true. It had been true for a while. Peter loved Tony. He loved his dad and everything that he was and did for Peter. He was one of the best people he knew and Peter would forever be glad that he knew who his father was and that it was someone as amazing as Tony Stark.

Chapter End Notes

I had forgotten about this chapter until I went to post it. Well, no, I knew it was a Peter and Tony chapter but I forgot about everything they talked about and how it ended. Hope everyone liked it.

For anyone that doesn't follow me on tumblr or just hasn't seen my recent posts I spent a few days really figuring out how this fic ends. Well, I've always known exactly where and how it ends but none of the getting there necessarily especially when it came to post-IW since obviously that's all up to me which really excited me but I never planned anything. So I've come up with a few ideas to deal with this version of Endgame and started writing it and I'm super excited with how this is going to go now that the end is truly in sight for me.

Next chapter will probably be up on Friday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 107

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading! Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It wasn’t until it was almost summer that Tony actually had to speak out in Barnes’ defense. Pepper was the one to make the call on the timing and Tony agreed that it was the right time. It was mostly to do with how the public viewed Barnes and Ross. Since clearing the air in Wakanda, Tony had started to take more interest in the man that was Steve’s best friend. He’d gone as far as to offer Barnes a new arm even if the process would entail Tony returning to Wakanda to make it happen. Barnes hadn’t seemed too interested and Tony realized fairly quickly that it was because for the time being he preferred not having the arm and either way Shuri assured him she had something in the works for him.

Speaking to Barnes had made things a little easier for Tony. He didn’t blame the man anymore and he didn’t dream about him or Siberia all the time not that it stopped Tony from having nightmares all together about his mom dying but they weren’t about Barnes. Not really. Some things were never going to stop and for Tony there would always be nightmares.

In the end, Tony’s statements about how much he didn’t blame Barnes and how he didn’t personally hold Barnes accountable for the deaths of his parents had the effect of making people aware of how much Hydra had had to do with everything The Winter Soldier had done. But it wasn’t just Tony’s word but all the proof they had to show what Hydra had been up to.

It didn’t stop Ross from continuing to try to get his way and make it near impossible for Barnes to ever get out of hiding without being arrested if he did. But the arrest would only lead to a trial and Tony was confident that it was a trial that Barnes would win. Ross seemed to have figured that out too, because he wasn’t as pushy with the stuff about Barnes which just made Tony worry and he’d have something else up his sleeve. Either way, with Barnes not planning on leaving Wakanda any time soon the whole matter was put the rest and Tony had his lawyers ready for when anything changed. He was hopeful that his name would be cleared when the time came.

Tony had a million other things going on too like the planning of a wedding. The thing of it was that flashy wasn’t what they wanted or needed. In all actuality, the whole marriage thing was a bit unnecessary in and of itself. Still, they wanted to have it happen and make it official.

It was Peter that seemed to want to make a big deal out of it which Tony thought was him trying to really make it clear how okay he was with him getting married which was sweet. Ever since they’d had that discussion over apple crostini, Tony had realized that he really needed to make sure Peter never felt left out of any of it. It helped that Steve adored Peter and loved his input and probably welcomed Peter in more than even Tony did.. If it was up to Steve, he probably would just let Peter have his way with all of it.

“But you have to have a big wedding,” Peter said one morning. “Just think about all the good it will do to all the gay teens out there who look up to you. You’re Iron Man and Captain America. You’re both public figures.”
Rhodey thought the whole thing was hilarious, but somehow Peter got him on his side. Mostly, Tony suspected that Rhodey just wanted to watch him suffer.

“No one even knows we’re together, Pete,” Tony had tried to argue one afternoon while Peter did some maintenance on K-9.

“But they should. I don’t really get why you’re keeping it a secret in the first place. You’re not going to hide it forever. It’s like -- I know I have a secret identity, but one day everyone’s going to know who I am. And they’re also going to know that I’m your son. I’m not ashamed of being Spider-Man or the son of Tony Stark even if it’s easier to keep that quiet at the moment. ”

It took a few weeks of convincing and since Peter was eventually out of school for the summer he had plenty of time to harp on the subject which was a bit amusing mostly because he even had Karen and Friday piping in on how much they needed to make a big deal about the wedding. In the end, Tony figured that Peter was right. Secrets weren’t a good thing and as horrible as the media coverage could get, Peter was right in saying that they might help young LGBTQ kids and teens and adults too probably by being open about it. That was what finally truly convinced Tony -- but also, it was sort of nice to share with the world that he and Steve were going to be husbands.

But then, another reason reared its head when Tony got a call from Ross. The calls had stopped a while back, but Friday still put Ross on hold for a while before Tony picked up.

“Oh, sorry, I didn’t realize there was a call,” Tony said. “What can I do for you?”

“Stark, you’ve done an amazing job at stonewalling me time and time again.”

“Getting the right information to the people is stonewalling you? Getting our heroes back and under house arrest as punishment for their actions? General, I have followed every letter of the law and every clause within the amended Sokovia Accords. So unless you want something, I don’t understand the nature of this phone call. I’m a very busy man.”

Which was when Ross said the last thing that Tony expected him to say: “I know you have a son. Swings around New York City as Spider-Man, right? I bet the people would love to know about him -- after all, everyone seems to be wondering who he is.”

Tony went cold. It didn’t seem like Ross actually knew who was under the Spider-Man suit, but he knew that it was Tony’s son. He knew that Tony had a son at all.

“Ah, I see I found something to keep you quiet,” Ross chuckled.

The question was how did he know?

“Did you know that The Accords and who signed them are public. Even if they weren’t I would have been able to take a look and Spider-Man is a minor who needed a mentor of sorts to take responsibility for him. And you did that for him which was enough to make me interested.”

It still begged the question how he had figured it out and how he wasn’t mentioning Peter which worried him. Did he know it was Peter or not? Peter had signed as Spider-Man not as Peter Parker so maybe--

“Everyone’s been speculating,” Ross said, “I may as well give them some sort of answer. Tony Stark allowing a teenager to run around as a hero -- that would make the front pages.”

But not if Tony had a bigger story to sell.
The pictures were taken in the tower because of the house arrest and they were absolutely ridiculous. Steve didn’t know how Tony had managed to convince him to pose that way. They were both on chairs and Tony’s was balancing on two legs. Steve’s leg was resting on Tony’s shoulder and Tony was actually holding on to it. Steve actually couldn’t believe that they hadn’t fallen while taking the picture. There had been a bunch of other ridiculous poses made that day and it was lucky that not all of the pictures were used in the article. Only a few of them were of a serious nature. The one where Tony had just kissed his cheek, or the one where they had gotten a bit caught up in staring at each other and the photographer had just taken a few shots of them. There were also individual ones. Vanity Fair was running a whole issue mostly devoted to them, it was kind of insane.

The interview had been almost nice though, mostly because he’d gotten to talk about Tony a bit and because it was the first time that Steve was getting to really be public about The Accords and the house arrest. He’d even gotten to mention Bucky for a bit of it.

The one area where Steve had been surprised was when Tony decided to disclose that he had a son. Peter wasn’t mentioned by name, but he casually mentioned that his son and Steve got along really well. Steve had been sitting next to him when the topic came up and he had frozen in place out of surprise until Tony reached for his hand and griped it before he said:

“I know it’s a bit of a surprise to everyone to learn that I have a son, but since we’re announcing this other important life event I figured everyone should know that I am a very proud father to a teenager. He hasn’t always been in my life, but he’s made a difference in it in the time he has been. I am unwilling to talk about who he is for privacy concerns, but I guess it was time to be a little more open with the world.”

When the final version of the whole article and pictures arrived for their approval, Steve was a little floored by how good they both looked. How happy, too. The main picture was the chair one but it was followed by a picture of Tony fixing a strand of Steve’s hair and Steve looking down at him. Steve wanted that picture framed. Vanity Fair didn’t go out of their way to highlight the mention of Tony having a son, but everyone knew that the media was going to pick up on it and run with it.

Steve skimmed the article and it really was perfect. The writer captured them and really wove in the narrative of their story from how they labeled their sexualities to how their relationship had come about to why they had decided to come forward with the truth. It was actually kind of nice and Steve didn’t regret doing it.

--

“Tony Stark is dating Captain America?”

“Wait — they’re engaged.”

“Did you hear?”

“I didn’t know that HE was Gay? Did you?”

“This is nuts.”

“Wait, and is it true that Tony Stark has a son?”

“Do you think they’ve been together this entire time?”

“But didn’t Stark date his assistant for forever? I thought they were still together.”
“They’re getting married, though.”

“I wonder how long they’ve been together…”

The questions and comments were endless and Peter was sort of amused every time he heard something. He tried to stay away from actually discussing anything with anyone unlike Ned who was absolutely keen on getting his two cents in, but then Peter had expected that from Ned. Ned was also trying to get Peter to talk to him about how he felt about Tony mentioning that he had a son. Peter didn’t want to discuss it.

The timing of the article was perfect, though, because it came out just a day before the last day of school and Peter knew he wouldn’t get a chance to actually get tired of hearing about the article. It wasn’t just that everyone was talking about it, either, but that some of them just went up to Peter to ask him about it since he had the Stark Internship and everyone wanted to know if he’d known beforehand and if he’d met Steve. In one case someone asked if Peter had met Tony’s son. Peter tended to just give those people a shrug and a, “I’m just an intern.”

Ned’s reaction had still been the best after he’d had a chance to process the whole thing. “This -- this means that freaking Captain America is going to be your step-father.”

“Yup, Ned. That’s how that works,” Peter said.

Ned had laughed nervously for a while. “How are you not freaking out?”

“Because I’ve had plenty of time to get used to it.”

The media coverage was kind of insane after the article was released, though. Mostly it was a rehashing of what the article said but there were segments on the news, talk shows, and those celebrity news shows. A lot of them highlighted the mention of Tony having a son and everyone seemed to be questioning who it might be. Only one article mentioned the possibility of Tony’s son being Spider-Man and it was almost said in jest which was funny because everyone seemed opposed to the idea because of how secretive Tony had been about having a son in the first place.

Since the publishing of the article, Friday had also started to deal with a high volume of calls for interviews that were all declined. Peter hadn’t expected it to be so crazy, but his dad and Steve were handling it.

“But we’re talking about Iron Man and Captain America getting married. Two Avengers marrying each other. It’s crazy.”

Peter sighed. “I’m aware. They’re also normal people. You’ve met them.”

“It’s still crazy, though.”

Michelle’s response had been to shrug. “It’s nice that they’re making a difference by making their romance public. Doesn’t really concern me though.” He really should have expected nothing less from her except that then she had turned and stared right at him and said, “Peter Stark.” And promptly walked away.

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“I’m kind of glad I’m on house arrest now,” Steve said. He was playing with K-9 and Dum-E with a ball and Tony was in the middle of not watching some snapshots of the media coverage of their engagement. It had been created by Friday for them just so that they were on top of everything being said about them, but Tony had it on while he worked on something or other.
“Hmm, yes, they would be following you everywhere,” Tony said.

Tony for his part hadn’t really left the tower. They’d announced their engagement over Twitter the morning the article came out and it had been kind of funny how many people thought that Tony was joking. They thought so even when Steve tweeted about it. There had even been some that were convinced it was a misdirect from Tony and Pepper getting engaged or even full on married. Then, everyone got wind of the article and the messages changed to surprise. A lot were pleased and congratulatory but then there were the homophobes who were obviously completely offended by it but Tony didn’t care about engaging with people like that. There were fewer at first that mentioned Tony’s announcement of also being a father.

“How, um, you haven’t explained why you mentioned having a son.”

He hadn’t mentioned the call from Ross. At first because he had so much to set up to screw up Ross’ plans, but also because he knew that Steve would feel guilty about it somehow.

“Ross knows my son is Spider-Man. I’m not -- I don’t know if he knows it’s Peter but he knows something so it made sense to announce it myself in a way.”

“Which is why everything was rushed,” Steve said.

The funny part was that after the article had come out and other coverage of it by the media got all of the information right there were still a bunch of rumors and stories to deal with. It was just so much information and no one really knew what to focus on. It was sort of brilliant to mix in Tony having a son in the middle of all of it.

“Are they really saying that you made this a condition to have me back in the states?” Steve asked with a grin, looking at the screen.

“Apparently so. You know how they are — they want to paint me as the bad guy and in a lot of those people’s eyes I’m not good enough for you.”

“Those people have no idea how amazing you are,” Steve said

K-9 barked to get attention. The dog really was a great addition to the tower. Peter loved him of course, but so did Steve who was the first to just drop to the ground and roll around with the dog when he had time.

“Get rid of all that, Fri, it’s useless.” The screen went dark. “Is there anything else that needs my attention? Otherwise I’ll get back to figuring out the housing unit for the nanotech.”

Friday seemed to take a moment to search and then, “I have surveillance footage of Thor and Loki in the city. There are also Instagram pictures of Thor.”

Steve dropped the ball at his feet and he straightened up, joining Tony to look at what Friday had been able to pull up. The video wasn’t all that grainy but it didn’t show much since it was them facing some sort of demolition. The video wasn’t even centered on them but they stood there for a while and it was definitely Thor and Loki even if they were both in regular human clothing and not their usual Asgardian getup. It was also not enough to hide them from people on the street who seemed to stare at them from afar.

“What got demolished there?” Steve asked.

“Shady Acres Care Home,” Friday said.
“The real question is why they are there and why Thor hasn’t thought to contact us if he’s back on Earth,” Tony said and it was worrisome because it meant that Thor wasn’t just back for leisure but that he was after something. That Loki was with him -- that might mean more problems for everyone.

They watched as Thor was approached by a bunch of girls -- which explained the origin of the pictures on Instagram and Twitter. And then just moments later Loki disappeared. Probably one of his tricks. Even Thor seemed surprised that his brother was gone -- and wasn’t it just even more worrisome to have Loki disappear like that? They watched as Thor picked something up off the ground and then he walked off.

“He’s here for a reason,” Tony said. “Have there been any more sightings?” Tony asked.

“I’m afraid not,” Friday said.

“So what do we do? There’s still no way to contact him so…”

“We wait,” Tony said. “And we can only hope that Loki isn’t up to something. Friday be on alert for any sighting of either.”

“Sure thing, boss.”

Tony just hoped that nothing would come of Thor’s return to Earth.

Tony looked back at the unit for the nanotech. He hadn’t told anyone yet that it was probably going to mean that he was putting something back in his chest -- that this housing unit would have to be on him somehow and it’d be better for it to be in him. Thor showing up made him even more positive that he needed to do it.

“I’m sure it’s nothing bad,” Steve said. “He would have come to us if it was.”

Tony sighed. Loki had been with him and after the last time they had encountered the God of Mischief, Tony wouldn’t discount that he wasn’t up to anything. Although, it was a bit of a surprise to see him when Thor had been adamant that Loki was dead the last time they spoke about him. It made Tony wonder about what might have happened for Loki to be alive and for Loki and Thor to be together and not showing signs of not being on the same side. Tony understood that they were family, but he also knew that there was a lot of contention there. He just hoped that none of that would affect the people of Earth.

Chapter End Notes

This was an extra long chapter. Over 3k words so a bit of a treat for you guys and considering the word length of other chapters almost like two chapters in one. And a lot happened!

I also felt like I needed to have a nod to Thor: Ragnarok by having Tony realize that Thor was on Earth for a short period of time but also everyone now knows that Tony is getting married and that he has a son.

I don’t know when I’ll have the next chapter up (partly why I decided not to split this one). It’s inventory next Saturday at work which means lots of prep time and extra work hours and a wonky schedule that’s changed on me three times already and bound to
change a couple of times more. So I'm aiming for before Thursday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
They never found out what had been going on with Loki and Thor because nothing came of their appearance and then disappearance because aside from a blip somewhere in Ireland that wasn’t necessarily them, there was nothing and while Tony waited for the other shoe to drop and something crazy to happen somewhere else in the world, nothing did.

“So, do you think he was just popping in for a visit and didn’t even think to stop by here?” Rhodey asked during a team meeting.

“I don’t know,” Tony said. “And there’s no way to contact him. I called up Jane and she -- well, apparently they broke up sometime before he left the last time and she didn’t have a way to contact him anyway which is sort of why they broke up.”

“But nothing’s happened right,” Sam said. “I mean, no random Asgardians have shown up so--”

“But nothing’s happened right,” Sam said. “I mean, no random Asgardians have shown up so--”

“Not since then,” Tony said. “At least not that my satellites picked up anyway. But Coulson or Fury would have mentioned if they heard anything.”

Tony kept paying attention, but nothing outside of the usual happened. Ross’ announcement that Spider-Man was Tony’s son had been a small blip that most people didn’t pay attention to despite all the pictures that Ross had managed to get of Spider-Man coming and going from the tower. Mostly, he just sounded like a conspiracy theorist especially after Tony tweeted that his son was definitely not Spider-Man and that the theory had made Steve laugh. Still, he was sure some people did believe Ross’ story. It was also a concern that Ross was clearly keeping an eye on the tower.

There was a whole thing with the resurgence of AIM in the middle of August but it was such a disorganized mess that they didn’t get very far in even setting themselves up as a threat and Tony had them all rounded up and arrested in the course of an afternoon.

By the time that the summer was actually over, Tony was starting to relax on the Thor front. Peter on the other hand was a tad disappointed that he hadn’t gotten to meet the god yet. It turned out that next to Iron Man, Thor was Peter’s favorite.

“He’s an actual god,” Peter had said, “but also an alien. And just cool. He’s just so cool.”

Sam found the whole thing amusing. “Your kid has good taste at least,” he said, “if he had to crush on any of us.”

“It’s not a crush! I just -- he’s a god, Sam! And the lightning--” Peter trailed off as Sam laughed and Tony tried not to join in.

“He is seriously impressive,” Natasha said in Peter’s defense.

“Yes, exactly,” Peter said.
“Which is why you had a crush on him,” Sam said matter of factly and Peter threw up his arms in the air and Tony knew that he had figured out he couldn’t really say much else to make a difference to the conversation. Mostly, though, Tony loved the level of ease that Peter had with the rest of The Avengers.

But when Peter’s birthday came around, Tony decided that they needed to go on a mini-vacation. Not to get away from anyone, but because Tony wanted to spend some time on his own with Peter away from wedding planning and everything else that was going on at the tower. They went to California because Peter had never been to the West Coast and because Peter had also been interested in seeing the rebuilt Malibu house. It was fun to show Peter around and take him to a few of Tony’s favorite spots. All in all, their vacation was a nice break from the usual. They got back after a couple of weeks away and right in time for Peter to get back to school and Tony to move forward with the new suit. Everything was ready and Tony just needed to have the housing unit put in his chest.

On the night before school was starting up again, Peter was leaning against Tony’s side. There was a movie on, but Tony had long given up on watching it because the plot had changed so drastically that the movie was downright silly and either way, Tony had gotten busy answering emails because Pepper couldn’t understand why Tony was delegating everything to do with SI for the next week or two. Tony still hadn’t told her that he was going to be putting in the housing unit for the nanotech in his chest. He and Shuri both agreed that it was the only way to make it as effective as Tony wanted it to be.

“Is it going to be a long operation?” Peter asked.

Tony looked down at him. “A few hours.”

“I don’t like that I’ll be in school and I won’t be here.”

The whole thing with Thor had really hastened Tony to get the device ready faster. He wanted to be prepared for the next time something happened and things would have been dire if Thor’s return had signaled the beginning of something being wrong. Sure, Tony had his other suits, but the nanotech one was going to be better than any other. Steve and Peter for their part thought that he knew best despite the risk that the surgery would bring him.

“You’ll be here plenty,” Tony assured him. “Nothing is going to go wrong. I have the best doctors on this and we have a good plan for how we’re handling this.”

“Dr. Cho is pretty great,” Peter said with a grin.

Tony wrapped his arm around Peter’s shoulders and pulled him closer. “So why did you want to watch this movie again?”

“Ned recommended it,” Peter muttered. “I don’t think I’ll be taking his advice on movies again any time soon.”

Tony laughed. “On that we can agree, kid.”

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Steve didn’t argue with Tony once Tony decided that he needed to get the housing unit put into his chest. It was Tony’s body and Tony’s decision and while Steve did voice his questions and got Tony to think about the pros and cons, he left it up to Tony because Tony knew best when it came to his suits. The device was different than the arc reactor, anyway, in that it wasn’t working to keep Tony
alive. Looking at the ring with the shrapnel that had almost killed Tony, reminded Steve of how much Tony had gone through and survived.

He was with Tony during the operation, holding his hand while Dr. Cho and her team worked on Tony with a combination of Dr. Cho’s tech and Shuri’s as well. It brought down the risk for the procedure considerably. When it was over a few hours later and the whole thing was successful, Steve let out a sigh of relief.

“Good,” he said.

The whole thing was taking place in the compound since the facility had a medical wing and Tony had gone ahead and added an operating room to it too. It meant that Tony was going to be staying at the compound for a few days even if that was more of a precaution than anything, but it was better for him to not have to travel to the tower while fresh out of his operation. Steve had insisted on being there so his anklet was off. The FBI had only checked in on them once since putting the anklets on and the only reason they showed up in the first place was that Sam’s had malfunctioned. It was lucky that they were all in the tower at the time, not that Fury had been sending them on a lot of missions lately. Things were on the quiet side.

“He’ll be asleep for a little longer,” Helen said. “We’ll move him somewhere comfortable. You can call Peter in, if you want.”

“I’ll go get him,” Steve said and leaned over to kiss Tony’s forehead first.

Helen smiled at him.

When he returned with Peter in tow, Tony had been moved into one of the rooms in the medical wing. Tony was still asleep, but he looked peaceful all tucked into bed.

“Everything went perfectly, Peter,” Helen said. “He’ll be awake in an hour or two. Myself or someone from my team will come check in.”

“I’m glad,” Peter said as Helen grabbed a few things and walked out of the room. “I was actually a little worried,” he admitted to Steve. “I just -- I’ve lost all the father figures in my life and he was doing this and I was worried.”

Peter walked to stand by Tony’s bed and Steve moved forward and placed a hand on his shoulder. “You dad rarely does anything that isn’t for a reason. And if he had suspected that this was any riskier than it needed to be he wouldn’t have done it because the last thing he wants is to leave you. Shuri and Helen worked this out and you know how smart they are.”

“I know,” Peter said and looked up at Steve. “I just couldn’t help it. And thanks for helping me get out of school today. Dad just kept saying how I didn’t need to be here.”

“Yeah, well, he hates that we fuss about him.”

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Taking it easy was boring. At least, it wasn’t bed rest. Tony could move around and he could go to the workshop but he was limited by how long he could work and how much he could lift or really do which ultimately just made him grumpy. Steve was also hovering for most of his time in there and jumping in to do things for him which Tony had found endearing at first but then kind of frustrating. So, he was happy to be back to normal a month and a half later even if Steve still seemed a bit wary of him doing much. Pepper was worse. She had started to just show up to make sure he was okay every other day right after Tony moved back to the tower and she’d fussed and fussed over him after
telling him off for putting the housing unit in his chest in the first place until Tony had enough.

“You know,” Steve said one afternoon, “it’s almost been a year since I came back.”

“It has,” Tony said. A full year. It had been more than a year since the whole fiasco with The Vulture too. They were lucky that there hadn’t been any big villain like that popping up since but even if there had been, Tony was confident that Peter would have been able to handle it.

Training with Steve and the team in general had made a huge difference to Peter’s capabilities as Spider-Man. Peter didn’t use the Iron Spider suit often, opting for his other suit over that one most of the time, but he had gotten so much better with his powers and just his physicality because he wasn’t just following his instincts which were often good, he was doing more. Strategizing and thinking his plans through and really knowing his strengths and weaknesses and using that knowledge to do things in the best way possible.

“And it hasn’t been all bad,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Tony said. “I half expected you to get too bored to stay.”

“I’ve found that life can’t be boring when you’re in it. But, not just that, it makes a difference that we’re together. You’ve made this worth it and it’s just one more year, Tony.”

“We better hope nothing crazy happens before then,” Tony said. “I thought Thor coming back meant--”

Steve nodded. “I know. I know. I did too. I just wonder what the whole point of it was. He wouldn’t have shown up and left that quickly without there being some reason and I just don’t trust that Loki was with him. Wasn’t he supposed to be dead?”


“Jane was confused about that too. She seemed concerned -- but she hasn’t called which means she hasn’t found anything alarming. At least I have this thing now,” Tony said and tapped his chest. “It makes me feel a little better about any possible threats.”

It was Tony’s fear -- and had been since going through that wormhole -- that they’d be faced with something from outside their world again. Even if nothing came to pass, he wanted them to be prepared. After all, he’d seen what some of those aliens could do and create and it was only a matter of time before Earth became a target again. Loki being alive -- he’d been the one behind the attack in New York. Of course, helped by the stone in the scepter but nevertheless one of the reasons. Thor had said he was leaving to find out more about the stones and...and maybe it was what he was still trying to figure out. It worried Tony.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not entirely happy with this chapter for some reason I can't pin point. Also, it's really bothering me that I definitely had a movie in mind for what Peter and Tony were watching and I can't remember what it was.

The writing is going steadily along. I'm on ch. 131 and I'm loving where the story is taking me. My goal was to not go past ch. 150 which I think is a goal that I'm not going
to achieve -- this fic will be a bit longer than that and I'm just having a lot of fun working on it.

Has everyone seen the Far From Home trailer? The whole thing was amazing (how was that only a teaser) but also I died at all the MJ and Peter moments...and also are Ned and Betty going to be a thing? Because it kind of seemed that way and I would be down for it. Not so down for the possibility of Happy/May - that's just odd. I have so many more thoughts but I can't even really remember them right now.

Next chapter will be up by Tuesday.
Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Ben & Jerry’s came out with a whole bunch of new flavors that were Avengers inspired. Peter found out when Ned texted him and MJ about it in a group text. Later, when he got home from school, he found out that not only were there new flavors, but that Ben & Jerry had gone ahead and sent them at the tower a few pints of each of the new flavors.

“This is amazing,” Peter said when he peered into the freezer. “Did you know this was happening?”

“Despite your metabolism, I don’t expect that eating all of it at once would be wise,” his dad said. “And no, I didn’t.”

“How long do you think they’ve been working on this?” Sam asked. He was leaning against one of the counters and already digging into a pint box of the A Hunka-Hulka-Burning Fudge. “Don’t they take years creating flavors?”

“Not sure. Don’t care,” Tony said and reached into the freezer to pull out Cap-ilicious Triple Berry. “All I know is that apparently I’m not off dairy and that this is delicious.”

“I would have thought they’d do a more patriotic look to Cap’s ice cream,” Sam said.

Peter reached blindly for one of the containers so he wouldn’t have to make a choice and he saw his dad shrug as he took a bite of the Cap inspired ice cream. Peter had wound up with Stark Raving Hazelnuts which really was not all bad. It was certainly a nice thing to come home to. He took another bite and then took a picture of the ice cream to send to Ned.

—

“You know, I’m really glad we got a wedding planner,” Tony said as he looked through a few cake design options.

Steve who was in the middle of painting something laughed. “You mean, you’re glad Pepper got us a wedding planner even though this whole thing was supposed to be a small thing because Peter despite his excitement is still just a teenage boy that knows next to nothing about weddings.”

Tony shrugged. “Sure, what you said. But I’m still glad. Anyway, people like parties. And at this rate we just really have to make a few choices and then just show up. We can even leave early if you really want. What are you painting anyway?”

“The view,” Steve said and sure enough he was. Everything outside the window had been transferred to the canvas. It wasn’t exact -- more of an abstract, but that didn’t make it any less beautiful. Tony had never really understood art or even bothered to like it -- but that didn’t mean he didn’t appreciate everything that Steve created.
His art room had filled up with more and more art since Steve had finally focused on his hobby. He wasn’t obsessive, but he spent hours painting away or sketching. It kept him entertained and Tony was happy about it. He liked that Steve had something to do that was all his own. Tony also loved watching him do it – the concentration that he put into his art was unlike anything else. In another lifetime, it was possible that Steve would have just become some artist that everyone admired.

Tony got up. “I’ll leave you to it. I have a bit of work to finish up in the lab.”

Steve nodded. Tony pressed a kiss to his temple and walked out of the room. He found Sam and Wanda watching some odd cartoon and then spotted Vision in the kitchen.

“Hey, Viz.”

Vision and Wanda spent a lot of time on their own on their floor but it wasn’t odd to find them up in the penthouse some days. What Tony found weird about it was that Vision seemed to be more and more human-like these days. He had started dressing like a regular person a long time ago but now he seemed to not mind changing his appearance to look human. It was a little strange.

“A letter arrived for you,” Vision said.

“That’s odd,” Tony said. “We usually don’t get any mail sent up here.”

“It is possible someone brought it up and left it in the kitchen for you to find,” Vision said.

“Right,” Tony said but it all still sounded a bit odd.

Vision didn’t respond and he picked up the bowl of popcorn and went to join Wanda and Sam in the living room. The letter was in a manila envelope and Tony figured he’d take it with him, but his mind was already turning to the new designs he’d been working on. Natasha was already out of her house arrest unlike the rest of them and she’d been cleared to rejoin The Avengers officially. It also meant that she was free to do whatever Fury wanted from her and Tony wanted to give her the best gear to do that with.

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The heater in the Spider-Man suit was one of the best things ever. It meant that Peter could actually patrol without feeling the brisk cold air. It had snowed a few days earlier and there was gray and dark dirty snow on the edges of most streets. Peter also found that most rooftops were covered and useless to him. But he was still out and about for a few hours.

But it turned out that when it was cold out that there wasn’t a lot of crime to go after. Not a lot of people were out unless they needed to be. Peter did save a woman from slipping on ice.

“Anything going on, Karen? I’m kind of getting bored.”

“Not that I can tell,” Karen said.

“I should have just gone and trained with Steve. I guess it’s a good thing, right, that nothing is happening.”

“I believe so, Peter.”

He swung off of a fire escape and headed towards the tower. Maybe he’d just go and actually work on his homework. There was an essay due in a few days that he should get on top of. His junior year of high school had brought along a ton more work and college was a thing that everyone was starting...
to get worried about. Tony liked to mention MIT in passing all the time and then May brought it up in her own way too, always hinting at how Peter would need to give up Spider-Man for it and Peter just -- he didn’t want to think about that.

He got back to the tower to find Natasha was back from a mission and sitting in the living room with Sam, Steve, Wanda, and Vision.

“Hey, Peter,” Natasha said. She had a split lip and yet she still smiled at him.

“We left you food in the kitchen,” Steve said. “We also left food for Tony if you want to bring some to him.”

“Cool. Thanks. I will.”

Food turned out to be sub sandwiches so after getting back into his normal clothes, Peter just grabbed both and went to the workshop. He was expecting to find Tony working, but instead his dad was looking at paperwork.

“Hungry?” Peter asked.

His dad turned to look at him. “Oh, you’re home. I -- I must have lost track of time.”

“What are you working on?” Peter asked.

“Nothing. Nothing. Just something that got in the mail today got me a bit distracted.” He waved his hand and the display disappeared. “Anyway, food. How was school today? Patrol?”

“Same. Not much going on.”

Tony nodded. He was oddly distracted. It made Peter worry a little. His dad only tended to get weird when something was happening.

“Did I ever tell you that I can’t actually have kids,” Tony said after they’d sat in silence eating for a while.

“No,” Peter said, not sure where the conversation was going. “I mean, maybe. I kind of think I knew that already.”

Tony nodded. “I -- it was to do with the arc reactor. Anyway, there was a time when I didn’t think that I would ever meet you or that it would make a difference because you were growing so fast and I never needed my parents when I was your age -- well, I probably did but I didn’t really have them. I guess that’s what makes more sense.”

“What are you getting at?” Peter asked. He was so confused.

Tony sighed and he wiped his mouth with a napkin and then he got up and grabbed a few sheets of paper. “A while back I applied to adopt. Sort of on a whim. Sort of because I really wanted to be a dad since at the time I couldn’t really be yours. I thought I’d never get to meet you. It takes time to adopt and I had forgotten about it just because of everything that happened. Actually -- I don’t remember if I told Steve about it. Thing is, nothing came of it and then I met you.”

Peter remembered a conversation about his dad possibly wanting other kids and how much Peter just -- he didn’t know how to feel about it. He hadn’t really let himself think about any of it especially since Tony had said he wasn’t sure if anything might happen.
“But why are you -- what’s that paper?” Peter motioned to the papers that Tony was holding.

“They want to know if I’m still interested,” Tony said.

“Oh,” Peter said.

Tony let out a breath. “I don’t think this is the right time,” Tony said. “Not for any of us.”

“Oh.” Peter said again and it was as if he didn’t know how to say anything else. He just -- he didn’t know if his dad wanted his opinion or if he was just telling Peter about it to tell him. Peter was also quite sure that he didn’t know how to feel.

---

It was getting closer to the end of the school year when a school trip was announced and Peter was dismayed to hear that it was a tour of SI. MJ cackled and laughed for a solid minute once she found out and just wouldn’t let it go all throughout lunch and then later when they were walking out of Midtown. Ned on the other hand seemed as excited as everyone else. The trip wasn’t for another few weeks, but Peter was already dreading it. He just knew that it wasn’t going to go well. He had kept the fact that he was living at the tower a secret from everyone including Ned and Michelle for over a year and this was going to be thing that finally revealed that to them -- he could just feel it.

“Aha, so we finally get to find out that Penis Parker has been lying about that internship all this time,” Flash said when he walked past them.

Peter rolled his eyes.

“Or prove Flash wrong,” Ned said. “This is actually really awesome. Do you think any of the Avengers will show up?”

Peter shook his head. “It’s not a trip to the living floors. Just the labs and SI. They don’t usually go down there.”

“But wouldn’t it be awesome if Flash saw you talking to them and they ignored him.”

Peter settled him with a look. “That’s not going to happen, Ned.”

When he got back home, he almost hesitated to mention the whole thing. He was going to have to get May to sign the permission slip since she was still his guardian, but if Peter was going to go -- and he really couldn’t not without giving ammunition to Flash to make fun of him with -- he was going to have to make sure that he did appear to be an intern at SI. Peter couldn’t remember the last time he had gone down to those floors of the building. He assumed that the trip was going to be geared towards the R&D rooms. Maybe he could get Pepper to help him out with making his story seem legitimate.

He ran into Steve as he was getting out of the elevator.

“Hey, Peter,” Steve said. “Not patrolling today?”

“I might go out later,” Peter said and followed Steve to the kitchen where Sam was in the middle of taking cookies out of the oven.

“Well we were planning on a movie if you want to join,” Sam said.

“Yeah, I will,” Peter said. It offered for the perfect distraction. He would figure out what he was
going to do about the trip later.

Chapter End Notes

This is another sort of filler and set up chapter. I did want to have a moment to bring in the Ben & Jerry's ice cream into it. Coming up with a name for Cap's flavor was a task.

On another note: I've only read one of the field trip to the tower fics that make up a good portion of the Peter and Tony fics so it felt kind of amusing to me to sort of touch on that trope but let me assure you that it's not going anywhere - I mean, we all know what happens when Peter is on a bus headed on a fieldtrip so... (and yes in IW Peter's trip is actually to the MOMA) And we're headed right for Infinity War in the next chapter. Eek.

That one should be up by Friday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 110

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone reading.
We've made it to IW. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The problem was that Tony couldn’t stop thinking about it. Adopting. He couldn’t stop considering it or wondering what it might be like to actually be father to a baby or a toddler or whatever child needed to be taken in. Even a teenager like Peter that just needed a family. Because so many did. But worse, he kept thinking about Steve with a tiny baby in his arms and Steve running around with a child the way he did with K-9. He thought about Peter and Steve and how quickly they had turned into family and Tony found that he wouldn’t hate to expand it.

He hadn’t mentioned the whole adoption thing to Steve. Hadn’t responded to the agency either because despite how much Tony did feel like it wasn’t the right time, he wanted some time to really decide. At the moment nothing crazy was happening and he and Steve were good -- they were getting married. Things were going well with Peter too and maybe adding an adoption into the mix wouldn’t be a bad thing. Yeah they’d be doing it right in the middle of getting married but maybe that made it the right time to do it because Tony didn’t think that any other time could work.

While he was busy thinking about everything, Tony just kept building and creating things. Some were upgrades for the team, but there were other things for SI too. It was easier than actually discussing things with Steve or letting himself really consider his options. Avoidance had always been his way of dealing.

Another distraction came in the form of Peter’s school trip to SI. He’d laughed the first time Peter mentioned it and then when he checked on things with Pepper she confirmed that a group was coming from Peter’s school.

“IT’s kind of funny,” Tony said while showing Peter around the R & D labs a few days before the trip. “And not just because of who you are but because if I remember correctly, you once asked me if your school could tour SI. I should have said yes and prevented you going to Oscorp and meeting a certain spider.”

“I just ask that no one be there to make this worse,” Peter said on the day of the trip.

Tony had laughed at that. “I don’t promise that Pepper won’t be there, but I’ll stay away.”

The thing was that ever since the announcement that Tony and Steve were getting married, Tony couldn’t do much in public that wasn’t reported and that included spending time with Peter outside of the tower. There was some speculation about Peter in the public since everyone seemed a bit skeptical about the intern thing. So, he figured he wouldn’t make it worse by showing up at this trip.

He could tell that the whole trip was sort of bothering Peter a bit and yet he was insisting on going rather than making an excuse not to and Tony just figured that he’d let Peter do as he saw fit. He knew that Steve would have taken the approach of showing up in the middle of it, so he was somewhat glad that Natasha had taken him away on a mission. They were due to return the day of
the trip but probably closer to the afternoon so Steve was probably going to miss it altogether.

Tony had been missing him since he left even if it had given him time to really consider the whole adoption thing. He wanted it, he’d realized. Perhaps not as much as he’d wanted it when he first applied, but enough to know that he didn’t want to say no to the agency and the possible placement they had for him because how long would it take until they asked him again? Tony would just need to talk to Steve about it because this wouldn’t affect just him, but Steve too and that had him a little nervous because he had no idea what Steve was going to say. He didn’t even really know if Steve did want a family in that sense.

He spent most of the morning after Peter left for school on the day of the trip trying to figure out how he was going to bring up the topic to Steve and then, just as he was finally coming to the conclusion that he was overthinking the whole thing and he just needed to be direct, a portal opened up in the middle of his work table and before Tony could do more than take a step back from it, a man stepped out.

He wore a red cape and some sort of necklace over what Tony could best describe as blue robes with some sort of belt. The portal sparked at its edges and the man seemed completely unbothered by it or how he had just stepped into Tony’s workshop without much trouble.

“Boss, there is a portal in the middle of the workshop,” Friday said.

“Yeah,” Tony said, “you don’t say.”

“Tony Stark,” the man said, “I’m Dr. Stephen Strange. I need you to come with me.”

Tony took a step back. Come with him--

“Oh and, uh, congratulations on the wedding, by the way,” Dr. Strange said and Tony could tell that he was saying it mostly because he felt he needed to than because he actually cared about his wedding.

“I’m sorry,” Tony said and he had his bearings back, “but how did you get in here?”

Dr. Strange rolled his eyes impatiently and he stepped forward. “We need your help,” he said and Tony knew that could be enough. If this guy had powers and clearly he did if he could open up a portal inside the tower, then Tony couldn’t trust him. Not to mention that it was clear he hadn’t come forward when it came to the Accords. The new ones and the old. He eyed him.

Dr. Strange threw his hands up. “Look, it’s not overselling it to say that the fate of the universe is at stake. We need your help. I wouldn’t be here otherwise.”

Of course it was. Except -- how was Tony supposed to take this guy seriously? Of course any threat to the universe had to be taken seriously. Wait -- he wasn’t alone-- “who’s we?”

Doctor Strange didn’t answer, but then he didn’t have to because someone else stepped out of the portal and Tony almost couldn’t believe it when he saw him. It was -- it was Bruce. Bruce Banner was alive and well and he was right in front of Tony.

“Hey, Tony,” Bruce said. He looked strange -- shaken maybe. A bit dirty and certainly weary but mostly it seemed like he was afraid.

“Bruce,” Tony muttered with disbelief and then, “you okay?”

Instead of an answer, Bruce just stepped forward and pulled Tony into a hug that Tony quickly
returned and he could just tell that Bruce needed it -- he needed touch. Bruce was the last person that Tony had thought to see any time soon. There were systems and protocols in place looking for him but never finding anything. Tony had known that Bruce couldn’t be dead -- the Hulk would have prevented that -- but Tony had also known that he wouldn’t find Bruce until he wanted to be found. Tony had so many questions and he just didn’t know where to even begin.

When Bruce pulled back he stared at Tony and, “Tony, we’re all in danger -- the universe as a whole. It’s--”

It was dire, then, if Bruce looked so scared.

“So, Stark, will you come with us? There’s a lot that needs to be discussed.”

Tony didn’t understand why they couldn’t just talk about it in the tower, but Dr. Strange seemed like he wasn’t giving him much choice.

“I -- I suppose so,” Tony said and he met Bruce’s gaze. Bruce gave him an encouraging smile.

Tony followed Bruce into the portal, regretting not asking about where he was going as he did, and then Dr. Strange followed close behind and the portal closed. Tony found himself in the foyer of a house that felt weird. Tony couldn’t explain it -- and despite all the random things that were on display, Tony’s eyes were drawn to the stairs which had a massive hole right in the middle. Light fell in from above that same spot and it was clear that something had crashed right through. Something told Tony that it had probably been the Hulk.

“Right,” Tony said, “as exciting as visiting your home is, what’s happening?”

Another man appeared then, dressed a little like Strange but without the full on cape. “Good, you found him,” he said.


Wong nodded at him, so Tony nodded back and then looked towards Bruce. Strange motioned for him to sit on a bench against a wood panelled wall and after a moment of consideration Tony did. Strange stood to the side and Bruce was the one to speak.

“Thanos is coming.” Bruce said and shook his head in an agitated and worried manner that really gave Tony cause to be concerned. “It’s bad, Tony -- it’s really bad. He -- Asgard is destroyed and so are most of its people. I don’t know what happened with Thor and Loki but I think they’re probably both….Anyway, he’s powerful and--”

“So, this guy destroyed Thor’s planet?” Tony asked.

Bruce shook his head. “No, no, that was unrelated. That was Ragnarok. But the Asgardians, the ones that we could save they were -- we were on a ship and then he appeared and only some escaped but even the other guy couldn’t take him and Thor and Loki--”

A threat from space. Some powerful alien being -- everything that Tony had ever feared. He gulped.

“But what’s the point -- what does he want? Why is he coming here?”

“The infinity stones,” Bruce breathed out. Tony hadn’t heard those words since the last time he’d seen Thor and Thor was leaving to investigate them and yet he’d certainly thought about them from time to time. Thor had never fully explained them but they all knew that the stones were powerful and dangerous.
“Wait...wait, you’ve seen Thor and Loki. Where have you been exactly? Did you catch up or something when he was around last year because...wait, wait -- did you say you were in Asgard?”

“That doesn’t actually matter,” Dr. Strange muttered.

Tony sighed. Strange was probably right, but it didn’t make Tony like him any more.

“I ended up in space,” Bruce said. “Don’t really remember most of it and it doesn’t matter except that I was sent back to warn everyone and so we can prepare. He’s coming--”

“Oh okay so he wants the Infinity Stones -- what are they exactly?”

Tony had expected Strange to explain, but instead it was Wong that stepped forward and he lifted his hands and Tony was worried for a moment as he made a few movements with his hands and then the space around them changed. He tried not to show his surprise because this was -- it was something Tony had never seen before.

“From the dawn of the universe, there was nothing,” Wong said. “Then, boom! The Big Bang sent six elemental crystals, hurdling across the virgin universe. These Infinity Stones each control an essential aspect of existence.”

Five crystals appeared and floated in the air and Tony watched enraptured.

“Space,” Dr. Strange said and as he spoke each of the stones shone. “Reality. Power. Soul. Mind.” He paused and turned to face Tony as he made a hand movement and his necklace opened and inside was a green light and clearly a stone. “And Time.”

“Tell me his name again,” Tony said and he felt Bruce’s fear and worry. He knew why Strange and Wong looked so serious. One of those stones had caused chaos in New York when The Avengers had come together. Another had created Ultron and gave life to Vision. If Tony remembered correctly one of the others had been partially responsible for Thor’s thing in London too. So for this being to be after all of them -- it meant nothing good.

“Thanos,” Bruce said at once. “He’s a plague, Tony. He invades planets takes what he wants, he wipes out half the population.” Bruce looked so intense and Tony couldn’t remember the last time he’d seen him like that. “He sent Loki! The attack on New York, that’s him!”

Of course it was. Dread filled him and he stood up. This was -- it was his every fear coming true. Tony had never stopped dreading the possibility, but after how much time had passed he had thought that maybe he was being crazy to still consider that they might face a new threat from outer space. Clearly, he hated being right.

Chapter End Notes

So, IW is finally here. Dr. Strange is an odd character to write even if I stuck mostly to canon here. Hope everyone liked it.

On another note: I finished ch. 139 yesterday which is crazy and so much still has to happen. But I'm very excited about the writing that I'm doing. Thanks to everyone reading. I'm going to try and have the next chapter up this weekend - definitely will be up by Tuesday.
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“What’s our timeline?” Tony asked. Natasha and Steve were gone still but they’d be back soon -- before the end of the day definitely. Tony couldn’t stay still, he moved around the space of the foyer.

“No telling,” Bruce said. “He has the Power and Space Stones, that already makes him the strongest creature in the whole universe. If he gets his hands on all six stones...Tony--”

“He can destroy life on a scale hither to undreamt of,” Dr. Strange finished.

Tony stopped at Strange’s words and leaned against the nearest thing -- some sort of cauldron apparently. “Did you seriously just say hither to undreamt of?”

Dr. Strange gave him an annoyed look. “Are you seriously leaning on the Cauldron of the Cosmos?”

Tony looked at the cauldron and then back at Strange. “Oh, is that..that what this is--”

Bruce was sort of shaking his head at him, but Tony didn’t care. It was easy to fall back on making jokes and making light of the moment in order to give himself time to actually take in the information. They were all sort of screwed, weren’t they? Strange’s cloak hit his arm. At first, Tony thought it was Strange that had done it, but then it was clear that it was the cape.

“I’m going to allow that,” Tony said with just a smidge of interest to how the cloak worked. Then, returning to the problem: “If Thanos needs all six, why don’t we just stick this one down the garbage disposal?”

“No can do,” Strange said.

“We swore an oath to protect the Time Stone with our lives,” Wong said and he looked serious like they would be no budging him on it at all -- like he would fight Tony if he even tried.

“And I swore off dairy,” Tony said, “but then, Ben & Jerry’s named a flavor after me, so…”

Sometimes it was nice to bring that up in conversation. Most people seemed a little impressed or just completely unbothered.

“Stark Raving Hazelnuts,” Strange supplied and wasn’t it funny that Strange actually knew about it. Then again, Strange had also known about his and Steve’s wedding which meant that this man was keeping tabs on him. And somehow, Tony hadn’t heard about him before.

“It’s not bad,” Tony said. He far preferred Cap-icious Triple Berry. Maybe he was biased.

“A bit chalky,” Strange said and Tony couldn’t tell if he was saying it just to rile him up or because that’s how he actually felt.
"A Hunka-Hulka Burning Fudge is our favorite," Wong said and when Tony glanced at Bruce, he realized that Bruce actually had no idea what they were talking about. Right, because he’d been in space.

“That’s a thing?” Bruce asked.

Tony gave him a quick nod and then looked between Strange and Wong. “Whatever,” he said, “the point is, things change. This oath is--”

“Our oath to protect the Time Stone cannot change. This stone may be the best chance we have against Thanos.”

Tony agreed. Well, maybe. The thing was -- the thing was that any time any of them had tried to control or use the stone things just didn’t end well. Ultron came to mind. Messing with time -- that was a recipe for disaster and anyway if Thanos was as strong as Bruce described him to be then it didn’t matter if they had the ability to time-travel because Thanos already had two other stones and keeping it was like welcoming Thanos to come at them. Of course, Vision had the Mind stone. Strange and Vision were both going to be targets. And if Thanos got to either then--

“And still conversely, it may also be his best chance against us,” Tony said and stared straight at Strange.

“Well, if we don’t do our jobs.”

“What is your job exactly? Besides making balloon animals?”

Dr. Strange stared right back at him. “Protecting your reality, douchebag,” he said and Tony could tell that the dislike was mutual which was just perfectly fine by him.

Bruce stepped forward and he gave Tony a sort of reprimanding look. Tony had missed that look -- it only ever came when Bruce thought that Tony was pushing too hard. He couldn’t believe that Bruce was back -- that he seemed to be alright. There was a whole story to still get from him but he was back even if it was with news of their impending doom.

“Okay, guys, can we quick table this discussion right now? The fact is that we have the Time Stone. We know where it is. Vision has the Mind Stone and I assume you know where is is, Stark.”

Tony was almost a little surprised that Strange hadn’t just appeared in front of Vision and pulled him into this discussion in the first place. Maybe he hadn’t wanted both stones in one place which Tony could admit to being smart.

“He should be at the tower. Or maybe the compound.”

“How do you not know where he is,” Bruce said.

“He’s his own person. I’m not his keeper,” Tony said.

Bruce stared at him. “He’s an android with an Infinity Stone on his forehead and--”

“And he could lift Thor’s hammer,” Tony pointed out. “He’s grown and changed and become more like a person. Anyway,” Tony tapped his glasses. It was a new model that he’d been trying out that morning. So far, he liked it more than the last. “Fri, can you find Vision? He’s probably with Wanda.”

“He is at the Avengers compound,” Friday said a few seconds later.
Tony nodded. “There you go. We know where he is.”

“Yes, and he’s going to be a target for Thanos,” Strange said as if Tony wasn’t taking the whole thing seriously enough. “You should get the rest of that team of yours together. I don’t think anyone will care if they break their house arrest now. This is bigger than that.”

Strange was right. If anyone gave them trouble for breaking it under these circumstances then there truly was something wrong with the world. It was just that Steve and Natasha were still gone and there was no contacting them. Wanda was probably with Vision and it was likely that Rhodey was there as well. Sam was probably at the tower.

“House arrest?” Bruce said. “What?”

“Yeah, you’ve been gone a while,” Tony said and winced. “I guess you could say that The Avengers sort of broke up.”

“Broke up? Like a band? Like The Beatles?”

Tony shook his head. “I guess more Fleetwood Mac. Anyway, this could be worse. We’re all on speaking terms and everyone’s technically on the team again. It’s just that most of the team is also technically on house arrest and so not officially back on the team.”

“Which means nothing now in light of recent events,” Strange said and Tony nodded. “At least it means everyone’s in one place.”

Tony shook his head and he could see that Strange was glaring at him. “Steve and Natasha went on a mission for Fury. Should be back later today but I can’t -- there’s no way to reach them. Well, I have a phone that could but it’s back at the tower. I wasn’t exactly planning on leaving my penthouse today.”

“I think you should go get it, then,” Bruce said. “Thor is gone. Thanos is coming. Whatever Fury sent them on -- that doesn’t matter. We need Captain America and...and Black Widow.”

Bruce winced a little and Tony tried to give him a smile before he turned back to Strange. “So, go on, Doc, create one of your portal things…” Tony trailed off and stared at Strange for a moment and his hair which was moving as if a breeze was pushing it except that they were indoors and this house wouldn’t have been capable of that.

“Say, you wouldn’t happen to be moving your hair, would you?” Tony asked, almost a little hopeful.

“Not at the moment no,” Strange said.

It all became more clear as soon as they all heard the noise coming from outside. And when Tony looked up at the opening through which the Hulk had crashed into Strange’s house it seemed like things were flying past at high speeds. It could have been the start of a huge storm but Tony knew otherwise. It was supposed to be nice and sunny out but really they all had their suspicions on what this was. They had even less time than they had expected. Tony made the decision for all of them and he ran towards the heavy front doors and opened one.

---

Somehow, and James didn’t really think that Tony had done it on purpose, he had ended up doing all the paperwork. At first it had been because Steve was gone and Tony was busy with just about everything else including bonding with his son and James just hadn’t been able to do much aside from his physical therapy. So he’d picked up on the workload that usually landed on Steve’s desk.
At first he’d enjoyed the work. But it was getting tiring. Friday helped a lot, but even with her help sometimes things just got boring. He would have given Steve the workload back except that he really couldn’t.

At least once a week he spent long hours working through Accord related things and other Avengers things. Sometimes he had to deal with Shield and the UN and the Accords council and the president and it was a lot.

When Vision wasn’t at the tower hanging out with Wanda, James tended to get his help and together they would get a lot of the work done. But when Wanda came with Vision -- and James wasn’t a fan of Wanda leaving the tower without a good reason -- there was no getting Vision to help him and so when he saw them together early in the day, James just left them be and kept to his work.

It was a while later that Friday put up a message. There was an alien ship in New York.

“Mr. Stark says to stay put,” Friday said. “Vision is in danger. The Mind Stone is in danger.”

“Well, shit,” James said. “What’s happening in New York?”

Friday brought up a feed. There was an alien ship hovering over the city. But if Vision was in danger then why was the ship in the city? Did they not know where he was?

Suddenly there was a loud noise and Friday gave him video feed of that without being asked. There was another alien ship and it was outside.

The facility alarm went off.

“Friday, alert Sam about what’s happening. We might need him here if Tony didn’t ask for his help in the city.”

“Will do,” Friday said.

Wanda and Vision entered the office at a run. “What is happening, Colonel?” Vision asked.

“Aliens. They’re here for that,” James said and pointed at the stone.

Chapter End Notes

One small change that I had to make for IW is obviously Vision's location because he wouldn't be meeting up with Wanda in Scotland which changes the timeline of events a tiny bit.

Next up we have a Peter pov and more Tony. Should have it up by Thursday.
Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 112

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“I just think that it’s going to be a whole lot of fun,” Ned said. “I mean this is Stark Industries.”

Peter nodded along. They were on the bus on the way there and the whole thing was a bit redundant for him since he’d left the tower that morning to go to school. Michelle who had just smirked at him on the way onto the bus sat next to him and Peter had made that happen primarily so that he didn’t have to deal with Ned except that Ned constantly leaned over to talk to them from his seat right in front of them.

“It’ll be better than the Oscorp trip anyway,” MJ said.

“That’s a good point,” Peter said. “No radioactive spiders to worry about.” He whispered the last so only MJ and Ned could hear.

“Do you know what they’re going to show us?” Ned asked.

A few of the other kids around them seemed interested in their conversation. At least Flash and his friends were seated closer to the back of the bus. Not that Flash had let up on teasing Peter before they’d gotten on the bus.

“But the best part is going to be showing Flash up on his claims that you’re not an intern there,” Ned said.

Peter nodded with a smile. He was sort looking forward to that. MJ rolled her eyes and went back to read her book so Peter grabbed his phone. It happened while he was a little distracted. He knew something was happening -- something bad. This was his spider-sense. He and Steve had been working on it for a while and Peter knew not to ignore it. MJ seemed to realize that something was up with him because she nudged him.

“Peter…”

Peter looked out the window and that was when he saw it -- a big circular thing that had to be some sort of ship, an alien ship, was coming down upon New York. Michelle spotted it too.

“I have to--”

MJ nodded. She grabbed his hand and squeezed it and when he glanced at her, her eyes were wide and full of fear. She was usually better at hiding when she was worried about him being Spider-Man.

“Be careful,” she said. “That looks--”

Peter nodded. “I know. I -- hopefully my dad--”

Michelle let go of his hand and Peter reached over and tapped Ned. “Ned, hey. I need you to cause a
distraction."

Ned turned and he looked out the window and— "Holy shit! We’re gonna die! There’s a spaceship!"

Around them everyone was freaking out and not paying attention to Peter as he opened the window. Michelle watched him and looked around to be sure no one else was watching as well. He shot her quick smile as he put on his mask and jumped out of the bus and then he swung away.

“Karen, what’s going on? Are we being invaded or something?”

“Looks like,” Karen said. “Authorities are evacuating the area on Mr. Stark’s orders.”

“Good. Good. Then he knows it’s happening.”

Peter had to stop to get into the rest of the suit but then he kept swinging, hoping to get there in time to be of some use. He didn’t ask Karen any more questions, preferring to just get there as quickly as possible. People were fleeing the area, running from where the alien ship was floating because it hadn’t quite touched down on the ground. There was already debris everywhere and abandoned cars and bikes and who knew what else. But Peter didn’t have time to look at any of that, instead he rushed towards where he could hear the fight happening and he arrived just in time to block a huge thing -- an alien -- from hitting Iron Man.

“Kid,” Tony gasped. “What are you -- where’d you come from?”

“Field trip, remember. I was on the bus -- saw the space ship,” Peter said just as the alien grabbed him. Peter instinctively tried to read out to his dad but it was no use and then the alien threw him aside. He hit the ground hard but he fell like Steve had taught him to. Peter stood up at once. “What’s this guy’s problem?”

“He’s from space. He came here to steal a necklace from a wizard.”

Peter thought that was super simplified and there was a bigger story there but it was good enough for the short moment Tony had to explain and still Peter didn’t really get it -- was the wizard from space too? Or was he human? Since when were there wizards? How had so much happened since he’d left the tower to go to school?

---

It was good and bad having Peter there. Peter was great -- he was strong and brilliant and they needed to keep the Time Stone away from the aliens but Tony would have preferred to have him stay on his field trip. He hadn’t called for the others because they would need to protect Vision and he wasn’t sure if that had been a great idea considering how this fight was going. Tony just hadn’t expected for the Hulk to not want to come out. Bruce seemed a bit thrown by it too and Tony needed to know more about how he was having a bit of a problem.

He and Peter worked together against the one alien who seemed to have just continual stamina. Tony didn’t even know where Strange was with the stone and that was what mattered. They needed to subdue this guy. It was just a question of how--

Strange suddenly flew past them wrapped up in his cloak and Tony pointed at him. “Kid, that’s the wizard. Get on it.”

“On it,” Peter said and swung away and Tony could only hope that Peter could get to Strange. They couldn’t lose the Time Stone.
Minutes passed and Tony was managing against the alien but he wasn’t making it easy.

“Dad? I’m being beamed up—”

“Damn it,” Tony muttered. “Hang on, kid.” The alien was coming at him and Tony couldn’t -- a portal opened up in front of him and the alien fell through it and Tony got up

“Wong, you’re invited to my wedding,” he said as he got to his feet.

Tony took off at once and it didn’t take him long to realize that the circular ship had truly taken off. In the time since Peter had mentioned beaming up the ship had gained altitude and Tony couldn’t even see Peter or Strange. They were both gone.

“I’m coming, Pete,” he said.

“Hurry,” Peter said. “The alien has the wizard. He’s taking him into the ship. I’m -- I’m on the ship.”

“A little juice, Friday,” Tony said and he hadn’t ever done this before, but he was ready for when the suit changed and it propelled him faster.

“Friday, deploy the Iron Spider,” Tony said.

“Dad?” Peter asked and he seemed out of breath. He was too high up and the ship was just going higher and higher. It was leaving Earth.

“Pete, you gotta let go. I’m gonna catch you,” Tony said because even if the suit didn’t make it, Tony would certainly catch Peter.

“But you said save the wizard,” Peter said and he sounded like he was panting. “I can’t breathe.”

“You’re too high up. You’re running out of air,” Tony muttered and he was trying not to freak out. Why hadn’t Peter let go yet? He heard the Iron Spider-Suit coming and he let out a sigh of relief.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” Peter said, his voice getting faint and then he started to fall. Tony was getting closer, but the suit was there and it caught him and formed around Peter. It took a moment -- seconds, really -- and then Peter was on his feet again granted he was on the alien ship. “Oh, this is much better,” Peter said.

Tony had made it to the ship and he hovered and looked over at Peter in the suit and Tony knew this might be the last time he saw him. He didn’t have much time.

“Dad, what do we do? He took the wizard inside the ship. It’s -- we’re so high up.”

“Peter, I love you. Remember that always, kiddo.”

“Dad?”

He sort of hated doing it -- but it needed to be done.

“Friday, send him home.”

“No! Dad!”

The parachute opened from the Iron Spider suit and pulled Peter back and off the ship and Tony could hope that it would send him right down to Earth. It was for the best -- Tony didn’t know what was going to happen but he knew that this trip was probably one way. It was a trip into space and
Tony wouldn’t be able to face it if Peter had to go up there with him. There were matters to attend to, so Tony cut a hole into the ship and got inside. He closed it back up and only when he was inside did he let himself wonder if this was the right thing to do -- if leaving everyone behind to chase after an alien and Dr. Strange was the way to go.

The last time he saw Steve had been right before he went off on that mission. It was way too early in the morning and Tony had actually gone to bed the night before but he still woke up when Steve did and he watched him as he got dressed and then Steve sat down by him on the bed. His hand had reached over to touch Tony’s forehead and cheek, his fingers warm as they left a trail on Tony’s face.

“Hey,” he’d whispered. “I’m going to head out.”

“Okay,” Tony said. “You’ll be careful?”

Steve’s eyes met his and they were just so blue and earnest and wonderful. “I’ll come back to you,” Steve said and he leaned down and kissed Tony -- just a sweep of his lips on his. Perfect. Gentle.

“Love you,” Tony muttered.

Steve kissed his forehead. “Go back to sleep. I’ll see you in a few days.”

“Okay.”

And that had been that because Steve was supposed to come home and Tony was supposed to be there waiting for him to return. It wasn’t -- he should be there when Steve got back and not on some alien ship rescuing a wizard and with no knowing that he was going to get back down to Earth. No knowing if he would even be able to manage rescuing Strange. If nothing else, maybe he could send a message while he still could.

“Friday, pass a message along when Steve gets back.”

“Sure.”

Tony gulped. This was going to be hard. “Hey, Steve. I’m -- I’m sorry. So, so sorry. It isn’t fair that it’s come to -- I love you. You and Peter. Our family. Happiest I’ve ever been is with you both. But this is the fate of the universe we’re talking about so...anyway, I always knew the fight wasn’t over and I’ve prepared as much as any of us could. I didn’t know it would entail going to space and I’m -- I don’t know what’s coming next. Take care of Peter -- he’ll need you if I’m--”

“Boss I’m -- I’m going...I..”

Tony let out a breath and he closed his eyes. Now he’d lost Friday too.

Chapter End Notes

This was one of my favorites to write. I really liked expanding on the bus scene and adding MJ to it (she's not in it in the movie) but here they're much closer friends already so it felt only natural to add her in.

The hard part was that last scene with Tony. I didn't want to dwell too much on the details of the fight as they remain the same as the movie but obviously the message had
to change and I think I wrote three versions of it before settling on this one.

Next chapter we have a Bruce POV as well as some Steve. I don't think it will be up until Monday or Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“What does he mean wedding?” Bruce asked.

Wong gave him a long look. “He’s getting married to Captain America,” he stated after a while and that was not what Bruce had expected at all.

“I -- what? I would have thought he and Pepper...but--” Bruce spluttered. “Him and Steve? Really. That’s--”

Wong didn’t really seem interested in continuing their conversation. He was an odd guy. Bruce thought that he’d met odder while with Thor. Oh, god, he could only wonder about the rest of the Asgardians left on their own without Thor or any other leader. He had to remind himself that it had been necessary to let Valkyrie go and take Korg and as many Asgardians as she could away. They hadn’t had much time once it was obvious that they were encountering a threat. Loki and Thor had moved quickly to try and save as many as they could and even then it hadn’t mattered once Thanos and his children were onboard. Bruce had barely been able to handle being a part of that -- the massacre.

“The wedding is supposed to be soon,” Wong said. “Big to do.”

Bruce shook his head in disbelief. Tony Stark and Steve Rogers were getting married to each other. It was insane.

There was destruction everywhere around them and no one left. Everyone had fled the area or gone inside any of the buildings around which was good. It reminded him a lot of when the Chitauri attack had happened and how quick people had been to flee. The alien ship was barely even visible anymore and Bruce felt like things were only falling in line with what Thanos wanted. Tony hadn’t returned and neither had the guy that had shown up to help Tony. Bruce had to suppose they were on the ship. Strange had to be on there too and this wasn’t going well at all. Bruce could only hope that Vision and the Mind Stone could be protected. Tony had been right in saying they might need to destroy one or more stones. Bruce just didn’t know how that would be possible with this particular stone being in Vision’s head but they’d need to figure that out.

Wong did his magic thing with his hands and opened a portal. It had been weird the first time he saw Dr. Strange do it when Bruce suggested they get in touch with Tony Stark. He’d been able to tell how much it infuriated Tony to have Dr. Strange show up in his lab.

“Where are you going?” Bruce asked.

“The Time Stone has been taken. The Sanctum remains unguarded.” Wong was all about following his duty apparently and Bruce didn’t blame him.

“Wait,” Bruce said. “I have to -- I have to contact the others. Steve. Can you take me to the tower?
Tony said — he said there’s a phone there.”

Wong nodded and he dropped the first portal to open another.

“What will you do?” Wong asked.

“Get the rest of the team together. Protect the Mind Stone,” Bruce said. He almost wanted to ask Wong to come along and help because what was more important than this. After all, Wong had been plenty useful in this last fight whereas Bruce had been mostly in the way.

The Hulk was being a brat -- refusing to come out and Bruce didn’t know what the problem was especially when they had been faced with a fight which was something that the Hulk loved to partake in. Maybe something had happened in the time that Bruce had remained as the Hulk but it had seemed like Hulk just wanted to hide. None of it made any sense.

“Good luck,” Wong said after Bruce stepped through.

Bruce was in the workshop where he and Strange had found Tony earlier. So much had happened since he met Strange and Wong and yet it had been precisely where he needed to be. After all, Wong and Strange knew more about the stones than Bruce did.

The workshop was mostly unchanged from the last time Bruce had seen it. As he moved forward one of the bots beeped but didn’t move from the charging station. Now where had Tony left the phone—

Tony had left a few things up on display and there were tools on a bench but Bruce didn’t have time to figure out what Tony might be working on. He needed to find that phone. It would have been so much easier to just have Jarvis there but he was gone and—

“Dr. Banner, could I be of any assistance?”

Bruce jumped. It wasn’t Jarvis, but he should have known that Tony would replace Jarvis. This AI had a female voice.

“Hi. Yes. A phone. Did Tony leave a phone anywhere? One that contacts Steve Rogers?”

“I believe Mr. Stark left it in one of the drawers.” There was a long pause. “I am unable to connect to Mr. Stark. He is not within satellite range. I have -- there is a message for Captain Rogers.”

Bruce opened everything until he came upon an old flip phone and he almost doubted that it was what he was looking for.

“That’s it,” The AI said, helpfully.

It took Bruce a moment to figure out how to use to phone since it turned out to be a flip phone which was entirely not like Tony. It made Bruce curious about its origins.

“Hey, is there anyone in the tower right now?” Bruce asked. Hadn’t Tony said someone had to be there?

“Sam is currently preparing to depart for the Avengers compound. There is a situation.”

“Shit,” Bruce said. “What’s happening?” He asked even though he already knew what was probably happening.

The AI brought up a display and there was another alien ship and that had to be the Avengers
compound that had been built in the time that Bruce was gone.

“Vision’s there,” Bruce said, “Tell Sam I’m coming.”

“He’s already aware that you are here. I will pass the message along.”

“Good. Good.”

Bruce grabbed the phone and he walked out of the workshop and the AI seemed to know to lead him towards Sam. Halfway there, Bruce thought he spotted a robot dog, but he didn’t have time to focus on that. He was busy focusing on the phone and making the call to Steve.

Steve picked up after a few rings. “Steve?” Bruce asked, to be sure.

---

The call came while they were in the air flying back to New York and Steve was surprised because that phone rarely rang anymore. Steve took it with him on missions solely because he needed to know he could reach out to Tony at any time no matter where he was. The only other person that could call that phone was Bucky -- he supposed Shuri could too considering she was the origin of the phones in the first place. So when it started ringing he knew it could be Bucky unaware that Steve was on a mission or it was Tony and something had happened. He answered and moved away from the front of the quinjet and Natasha so he had no distractions.

“Steve?” Bruce Banner said.

Steve almost dropped the phone from his shock. “Bruce?” he asked.

“Hey,” Bruce said. “So, I’m hoping you’re on your way back to New York. There’s been -- something happened.”

Steve didn’t know what to say. Bruce had been missing for almost two years and now he was calling Steve and using Tony’s phone. He was using Tony’s phone!

“Where’s Tony?” he asked. “Why -- why isn’t he the one calling?”

Bruce seemed to hesitate and Steve sat down slowly, bracing himself. He could tell that Natasha was about to leave the front to check on him but it didn’t matter -- not if something had happened to Tony.

“He -- there was an attack. There’s a lot to explain. Better to do it in person but--”

“No, no, tell me now. Is Tony okay? Where is Tony?” Steve knew he sounded frantic and panicked but he needed to be sure that Tony was alright --

“There was an attack,” Bruce repeated, “this alien ship came down in New York. They were after the Time Stone and we were trying to protect it. Tony -- he went after Strange and the stone. I’m pretty sure he must be on the ship. His AI can’t reach him.”

“Oh god,” Steve said and he dropped his head into his hands because this was too much. Tony was--

“Hey, hey,” Bruce said and Steve snapped back to attention. “I was in space for the last two years or so and I came back. This is Tony we’re talking about.”

That wasn’t a comforting thought. Steve knew what Tony feared the most and it was this -- the unknown in outer space and the threat that it meant to Earth and everyone living in it and he was on
some alien ship and not even Friday could connect to him.

“There’s another alien ship -- at the Avengers facility. Going after Vision. Sam and I -- we’re headed there now. This is what this is all about. Thanos -- he wants all the Infinity Stones and he won’t stop. It’s bad, Steve, it’s really -- Thor and Loki couldn’t...they didn’t--”

Bruce didn’t have to finish and for Steve that made everything even worse. If Thor and his brother who were gods couldn’t face this Thanos then who could? Tony was Iron Man but he was still just human. Steve didn’t want to think about it or consider it but it would be a reality he would need to face eventually especially with how unreachable Tony was at the moment. He would -- he’d be the one that would have to tell Peter about it and oh Peter. Peter who had lost so much already and…

Natasha touched his shoulder and Steve closed his eyes tightly. He hadn’t even heard her move.

“You alright?” Natasha asked. She sounded a little stiff, like she was trying to keep her emotions at bay.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said and then he shook his head.

“Yeah,” Natasha said and she squeezed his arm. “Me too.”

“How long until we get back?”

“We’re close. Twenty minutes at the most.”

“Okay.” So he had twenty minutes to lose it and let himself have a moment, but after that he had to Captain America.

---

Peter regretted finding a way to stay on the ship almost as soon as he lost contact with Karen and that was when he knew that he was going to be in trouble because Karen had been built into the suit but she was also reliant on the Stark satellites and she was gone.

“Well then,” Peter said. “I guess we’re not on Earth anymore. I should have just stayed on the bus.”

When there was no response, he sighed. He missed Karen.

He thought about MJ and Ned and how fearful MJ had looked when Peter was leaving them and what her reaction might be when she found out that Peter had gone and gotten on an alien ship. And May! Oh god, May was going to kill him when he --

Was he going to return back home? Peter hadn’t -- he hadn’t had the time to think or consider his options. He’d just known that he couldn’t just leave, not when his dad was there on the ship and when it was so clear that this was important. Saving the universe kind of important. Because if they didn’t manage to stop that alien from taking the wizard’s necklace or whatever it was he was after,
then it wouldn’t matter would it if Peter stayed behind because maybe everyone would perish anyway. This way -- this way at least he could say that he tried his best to make sure nothing happened. He was a superhero. He was Spider-Man. This is what it meant. He just hoped that his dad would see it his way. More than likely he wouldn’t.

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed writing the Bruce POV. I also really wanted to do the phone call since it's something we don't get in the movie.
Next chapter we get more Steve. Should have it up Friday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“Are you okay?” Steve asked.

“Probably should be asking you that,” Natasha said. “He filled me in. Tony is--”

Steve nodded sharply. He didn’t want to dwell on it -- to let the possibility of losing Tony fill him up and make him next to useless. He couldn’t afford the distraction, not now and he’d have to be strong for Peter too. He probably had no idea. Or Maybe he did -- maybe the media was talking about the whole thing already because they tended to know everything as it happened these days. Steve didn’t know. He just knew that even if he wasn’t the one to break the news to Peter that it wasn’t going to be easy.

“Bruce is back.” Natasha said and Steve could tell that she was trying to take it all in. “He said something about being in space. He was with Thor.”

“Apparently,” Steve said. “Crazy, isn’t it? And we all thought he was just hiding somewhere in India.”

They were close. Maybe twenty minutes away and Steve was trying to focus on what they had to do once they got there. According to Bruce aliens were after Vision and the stone in his head -- the whole explanation was still to come, but their goal was keeping Vision and the stone safe. Bruce thought the aliens were already at the compound. He was on his way there with Sam.

“Bruce sounded scared,” Natasha said, “and with Tony gone to -- I just wonder if we can do this.”

“We’ve faced a lot,” Steve said. “If Tony is doing what he’s doing then we can do this. We have to. If we fail and Tony...we can’t fail.”

It was so hard to consider and think about -- how much was at stake. Bruce said it was the fate of the universe and clearly Tony had thought that it was important enough for him to sneak aboard an alien ship and that -- no matter what it meant for Tony’s fate -- they couldn’t let that be for nothing.

“He’ll be okay, Steve. This is Tony we’re talking about.”

“I -- I hope so, Nat. Let’s just -- we should focus on what we need to do.”

“Okay,” Natasha said and she returned to the controls.

It took them a little less than twenty minutes to arrive -- something closer to fifteen -- and they knew as they approached that they were arriving to a fight. The alien ship was something circular that just seemed to be floating above the compound. They weren’t worried about being detected because they were in stealth mode, but still Natasha was careful as they landed. Steve was ready to exit at once and Natasha followed.
They ran towards where Wanda’s red magic seemed to be glowing from and in time to see Vision be thrown into the air towards the building behind him and when Steve expected him to phase right through or catch himself he didn’t. Instead, his body hit the side of the building and broke pieces off as he kept falling. Wanda’s magic caught him and lowered him, but she couldn’t do much more as the same alien came towards her, running with a spear like weapon held in hand.

Steve got there before Natasha and he jumped in to help Wanda just as War Machine flew down with a different but similar looking alien trying to shoot at him. The alien seemed to change course once it saw Vision.

“Why is Vision out here?” Steve asked and he activated his nanotech shield and their comms linked up. “They’re after him.”

“We know. We were trying to get him away from here,” Rhodey answered. “Clearly that didn’t work.” Rhodes sounded just on the side of irritated and Steve figured that part of that was his frustration with Tony being gone and the rest to do with the situation at hand.

The aliens were strong and fast and they were relentless. There was little chatter on the comms as Steve tried to take the situation in and decide on what they needed to do. Their priority needed to be keeping Vision and the stone safe. Wanda seemed entirely intent on doing that on her own as much as possible.

Steve found that he could hold his own against the aliens, but not without having to try and even then he had moments where he came close to being injured by the one he was fighting. It worried him. Because if these were just Thanos’ cronies, then he could only imagine the power that Thanos wielded...and if he had the stones then--

He kept the attention of the one alien for a while, keeping him from leaving to go after Vision by continuously keeping their fight going.

“Just give me the stone and we’ll leave the rest of you alive,” the alien hissed at Steve after landing a blow on Steve’s shoulder.

“I’m afraid that isn’t possible. That stone is not for you to take.”

The alien seemed to make a guttural noise at him and his anger made him faster and more agile and Steve struggled to block him every time he came at him. Without his shield to help take the shock of some of those hits, Steve was sure that even he would have bruised up. As it was he could feel a few bruised ribs from where the alien had managed to kick him.

Natasha arrived in time to pull Steve out of the way of a spear, but the alien didn’t even care, because the moment gave him time to jump away towards where Wanda was pulling Vision away. Wanda stepped in front of Vision, hands glowing red and her feet just a few inches off the ground. She was ready and when the alien came towards her she used her magic to hold him back. It didn’t seem to matter much to the alien who just got out of her hold and held the weapon out towards Wanda. It did something and Wanda screamed. Vision moved towards Wanda, but she seemed to sense his movement because she turned and ignoring whatever the alien was doing to her managed to send him a few feet away. She fell to her knees just as Sam dropped from the sky.

Sam was going feet first and he went straight at the alien who didn’t even see him coming. Sam kicked the alien dead on and he fell on his back but was on his feet at once and didn’t pause before throwing his spear at Sam who only narrowly dodged it. His dodge still managed to send Sam up a ways. The alien turned back to Wanda who looked shaken. Steve made it to her side and distracted the alien a moment with a throw of his shield.
“Where’s Bruce? We could use a bit of the green guy,” Steve said.

“No can do on that, Cap,” Sam said.

Steve didn’t have time to ask why.

Natasha was fighting one and Sam joined in while Steve tried to keep the other distracted from getting to Vision and Wanda. They were getting very close to getting to one of the doors. Not that it would matter if they weren’t able to stop the aliens, but Steve was hoping it would offer some protection. The one fighting Steve managed to throw Steve to the side and he didn’t lose a beat before he pressed the tip of his weapon to his neck. Steve wasn’t what they wanted, though, so he didn’t linger long before he was jumping up into the air and going after Vision and Wanda. Rhodey managed to shoot a repulsor blast at the alien and it fell and Steve was pretty sure that it was injured. A combination of the small amount of damage that Steve had been able to do and the direct shot from Rhodey.

The one fighting Natasha suddenly stopped fighting and Natasha almost fell mid-kick in surprise as the alien ran towards its companion with some level of worry.

“We don’t want to hurt you,” Natasha said and she moved towards them. “But we will protect our own.”

The alien turned and seemed to snarl at Natasha. “This is not over,” the alien said. But apparently the injury was enough to have them both leave. It seemed almost too easy, so Steve was sure that they’d be back. It wasn’t over -- they were just getting some kind of reprieve. Steve pushed his hair out of his face.

They watched the aliens be beamed back up to their ship and then the ship just left and Steve let out a sigh. “Let’s get inside. They’ll be back and we have to be prepared when they are.”

“You know, sometimes it sucks to know Tony is always right,” Natasha said.

“I just wish he were here to tell us all he’s a paranoid mess for a reason,” Steve said.

Natasha touched his elbow as they walked towards the doors to the compound. Bruce was just beyond the door and Steve heard when Natasha’s breath caught. No one really knew what had gone on between Bruce and Natasha. There had been some sort of mutual attraction there and Hulk liked Natasha too -- calmed down because of her faster and more consistently than he ever did with any of the others. But then, Bruce disappeared and somehow -- somehow he ended up in space.

Natasha had looked for him for months. Steve remembered how hard and fast she had searched for months after he was gone. Tony had searched too and there had never been anything because apparently Bruce had somehow ended up in space. Tony was gone to space too, now, and Steve would never stop searching for him no matter what it took even if it meant going to go out into space himself to do it. First there was the reason that Tony had ended up in that spaceship in the first place.

“We can do this,” Natasha said as Rhodey landed behind them with Sam.

Wanda and Vision had already made it inside past Bruce.

“Yeah,” Steve said and he stepped forward. “Long time no see, Bruce.”

Bruce did that thing where he half-smiled and rubbed the back of his neck. “Yeah, you could say that. I hear -- well, congrats on the wedding.”
“I -- thank you. I guess it’s better to think that it might still happen than not.”

Bruce nodded quickly. “I was surprised when I heard about the two of you but it made sense. A lot of sense, actually. And I’m sure Tony will be alright.”

Steve clapped a hand on Bruce’s shoulder. “It’s good to have you back, Bruce. You’ll have to fill us in on what happened to you but for now we should probably focus on what’s happening presently.”

“Sure. Sure,” Bruce said.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was a bit of a slightly different version of the attack on Vision and Wanda which obviously couldn't happen in Scotland like it did in the movie. It does end up in a similar place although of course we're cutting a bit of time here because they're not having to fly back to the compound.

Next is another Steve chapter and will probably be up on Monday.

On another note: I've done quite a bit of writing over the last few days. I'm finishing up with ch. 148 today and am so so close to the end I can taste it. I'm hoping not to go over 160 chapters so wish me luck. What I'm not looking forward to: all the editing I'll need to do once I finish writing.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“They were different,” Bruce said.

They were inside the compound and Bruce had pulled up images from the surveillance and while they were a little bit fuzzy, Bruce was still bothering with looking at them.

“They’re not the ones that came after the Time Stone,” Bruce said.

“No,” Bruce said in agreement and then, “they were there when Thanos found us. He calls them his children.”

It was weird but good to have Bruce back. He looked mostly the same and yet definitely like he’d gone through something life-altering as well. Steve supposed that being in space as he had been would change anyone. Steve didn’t like thinking about the possibilities of that because of Tony. Instead, he tried to focus on Wanda patching Vision up at the other side of the room.

“They’ll come again,” Bruce said. “They’re not going to give up. Thanos isn’t going to give up.”

“Yes, but the question is how do we face that?” Rhodes asked.

Someone turned on the tv. Steve thought that it had been Natasha and they all turned to look. The news was covering what happened earlier in the city. There wasn’t a lot of footage of the fight itself but plenty of the destruction that had been left behind. Cars cut in half and overturned, garbage everywhere. They were lucky that very few injuries had gotten reported.

“I’m sure Maria and Pepper are dealing with a lot of calls about this right now,” Rhodes said.

“We have bigger things to worry about,” Sam said.

The coverage suddenly turned to talking about Tony -- they claimed he was missing. Suddenly it changed to some sort of interview and Steve barely paid it any mind. It was some couple talking about how they had watched most of what happened from their apartment. Steve was about to ask Natasha to just turn it off when--

“And Spider-Man was there too, remember? We saw him swing past our window.”

The anchor came back on. “As we reported earlier no one knows the identity of Spider-Man and without that we cannot be sure that he hasn’t disappeared with Iron Man. No word has come from the remaining Avengers.”
The world seemed to stop. Steve’s hold on himself that kept him from truly dwelling on what Tony might be doing or how he might be doing came undone because if Peter had been there with Tony then--

“Steve?”

“Steve?”

A hand touched his shoulder but he shrugged them off, coming to. He dug for his phone in his pocket -- his regular phone -- and he turned it back on. He didn’t even bother to check for any notifications and instead he called Peter’s phone at once. But it rang once. Then twice. Then it went to voice mail and Steve knew. He just knew because even if Peter was too busy to pick up, Karen wouldn’t be and she wouldn’t ignore his call which meant that she was disconnected from Peter’s phone and likely the suit as well.

“Steve are you--”

None of them had been there to confirm for him. None of them but -- Bruce!

“Spider-Man. Was he there? Did he go with...with Tony?”

Bruce looked a bit taken aback by the question, but then he nodded.

“I -- yes,” Bruce said.

Steve tried not to let out a sob, choking on the sound instead. That was his family gone, then. Tony and Peter. And Steve had been freaking out about having to tell Peter when it turned out that he didn’t have to at all. It wasn’t even a comforting thought to think of them out there together. But maybe -- maybe they were both brilliant enough to come back to him...Steve just, he knew better than to give himself too much hope.

“He’s just a kid,” Steve whispered.

It was only then that the others seemed to realize. Natasha’s eyes widened and she let out a small gasp. Rhodey hung his head and Sam’s lips tightened, his hands balling up into fists. Natasha rubbed his shoulder

“I’m sorry, man,” Sam said.

Steve nodded. “Me too.”

“Tony will look after him,” Natasha said. “He won’t let anything happen to him. And vice versa. You know how Peter is -- he has his powers and his instincts and he’s so smart. They’re both--”

Steve didn’t know if it was supposed to be comforting or not. He just -- he felt mostly defeated and there was still so much to do to protect the world.

“Spider-Man is a kid?” Bruce asked, looking aghast.

“My kid,” Steve said because he was. “Well, Tony’s son but…”

“Oh,” Bruce said and no one said anything until Bruce spoke again. “From what I saw of him -- he’s very good.”

Steve barely listened as the rest of them began to plan, letting himself just adjust enough that he could deal with all the consequences later. After they had figured out how to stop Thanos and his cronies.
“Where’s Clint?” Bruce asked eventually.

Natasha shook her head. “I don’t know. I tried to call -- it’s possible Fury has him on something.”

“What about Scott?” Sam asked.

“Who’s Scott?”

“Ant-Man,” Steve said and smiled a little. He hadn’t had contact with him in a while. He knew that Scott was under house arrest. His was probably ending soon actually. “Has anyone tried to contact him?”

“No use,” Rhodey said. “He’s busy with Pym. Tony gave him his hack for the anklets a few days ago because they needed Scott for something. I sent a message earlier but didn’t get a response.”

“Damn it,” Steve said. He leaned against the wall and crossed his arms.

“Wait, wait, there’s an Ant-Man and a Spider-Man?” Bruce asked and he looked a little confused and incredulous.

Steve nodded.

“You’ve missed a lot,” Natasha said.

It was the first time she had addressed him directly and they were all watching them but Bruce just nodded and then after a moment he cleared his throat.

Someone turned off the tv and the news broadcast that was repeating again. It probably would for a while until they got new information and that was unlikely since no one had anything to add to it.

“Okay, look,” Bruce said and they were reminded yet again that Bruce was the only one that had actually faced Thanos. “Thanos has the biggest army in the Universe. And he won’t stop until he -- until he gets all the stones -- until he gets Vision’s stone. That’s what we’re facing and I don’t -- I don’t see this being easy at all.”

Vision was sitting up and Wanda had perched herself on the arm of the chair. He was fixed up again and he looked pensive. Steve was sure that he’d been trying to find a logical solution to the problem.

“So we protect it. That is our main priority,” Natasha said. “If we just don’t let him get to it then he can’t do what he wants to do, right?”

“No,” Vision said and he got to his feet and when he looked at them there was a serious look on his face. “We have to destroy it. I’ve been giving a good deal of thought to this entity in my head, about its nature. But also, its composition. I think if it were exposed to a sufficiently powerful energy source -- something very similar to its own signature, perhaps it’s molecular integrity could fall.” With his last words he faced Wanda and Steve felt a pang of regret. This wasn’t -- it shouldn’t come to this. Sacrificing one of their own just like that.

“And you with it,” Wanda said, her voice heavy with emotion. “We’re not having this conversation.” She shook her head and Steve could tell that she was close to tears. She got to her feet and reached out for Vision as if by touching him she could assure herself that he was still well.

“Eliminating the stone is the only way to be certain that Thanos can’t get it,” Vision said and even though his voice sounded like it always did -- logical and to the point, there was a tremor there that told Steve that Vision didn’t really like the plan all that much either.
The thing was: this was the only way to make it impossible for Thanos to not get all the stones. Destroying one would destroy his whole plan.

“That’s too high a price.” Wanda said. “Viz, we can’t…”

Vision despite not being human had become so much more -- he’d evolved into something else. He had a higher understanding of humanity and emotion. Enough so that he could love and it seemed he truly did love Wanda. He was also a lot more insightful and understanding of others. Vision wasn’t just an android anymore -- he was a person. Giving him up and sacrificing him -- it didn’t feel like the right thing to do.

“Only you have the power to pay it,” Vision said and he was looking at Wanda. “Thanos threatens half the Universe. One life cannot stand in the way of defeating him. You know this.”

Steve gave a cursory glance at all of them and it seemed like no one knew how to respond. Wanda had started to cry and Steve hated seeing those tears crawl down her cheeks. Sam didn’t look particularly happy at the prospect either -- none of them did.

“But it should,” Steve said. “We don’t trade lives, Vision.”

Vision turned to look at him. “Captain, seventy years ago you laid down your life to save how many millions of people? Tell me, why is this any different?”

But it was different. Steve hadn’t had a choice -- he hadn’t been able to take a moment to figure out another way. It was go down into the ice or be responsible for the death of millions -- for the destruction of too much and too many. But with Vision it was different -- they had a choice to make. They still had time -- Thanos might be coming but he wasn’t here yet and his lackeys had left for the time being. Thinking about it that way made him remind himself that Tony had gone on that other ship because he had seen no other way. The team was just so full of self-sacrificing idiots.

“Because you might have a choice,” Bruce said before Steve could explain himself. “Your mind is made up of a complex construct of overlays. Jarvis, Ultron, Tony, me, and the stone. All of them mixed together. All of them learning from one another.”

Wanda wiped at her cheeks and she turned immediately to look at Bruce. “You’re saying Vision isn’t just the stone?”

Steve could sort of tell that Wanda being there bothered Bruce a little. He’d sort of forgotten what Wanda had been able to do to Bruce. He seemed only mildly wary of her, as if it were enough that the rest of them trusted her. There was also of course the situation at hand and all that that entailed.

“I -- yes, I am,” Bruce said and he paced around the room, clearly still trying to figure out what he meant. “I’m saying that -- that if we take out the stone, there’s still a whole lot of Vision left. Perhaps even the best parts.”

“Can we do that?” Natasha asked.

Bruce looked around and he shook his head. “Not me. Not here. That’s -- Tony probably wouldn’t even know quite how to -- maybe if I had Helen.”

Doctor Cho had left after Tony’s operation. They didn’t expect her back for another month and Steve couldn’t be sure that they would be able to contact her in time.

“So is this something that can be done, then?” Rhodey asked.
Then, Steve realized that he had the answer. He nodded. “Yes. It can be done. We just -- we have to go. Probably for the best to not be here for their return. I know just who can help us with this. We’ll have to leave at once. We’ll met at the jet in ten.”

Steve wanted to give himself another moment to compose himself. He touched his ring and it was like pain coursing straight to his chest because that ring represented everything. The future he and Tony were supposed to have and the promises they had made to each other -- promises about the two of them being together and facing everything together. Apparently not this. Why had he gone on that mission? That had been his mistake and yet he couldn’t have known about everything that was going to happen. He should have been right there with Tony -- helping him. Maybe he would have made a difference in keeping the Time Stone and his family on earth. But it was more likely that Tony wouldn’t have even bothered to call him in since he hadn’t actually called any of the others. It was all just a giant mess.

Everyone scattered to get themselves ready -- grabbing weapons and whatever else they might need to take with them. Steve already had the nanotech shield on him and he was in his stealth uniform. He didn’t need anything else. He tried to prepare himself instead and was surprised when Friday suddenly spoke.

“Captain, there is a message for you from Mr. Stark,” Friday said.


“Hey, Steve,” Tony said and he sounded so absolutely emotional. “I’m -- I’m sorry. So, so sorry. It isn’t fair that it’s come to -- I love you.”

“I love you too,” Steve whispered even though he knew that Tony wouldn’t hear him.

“You and Peter. Our family. Happiest I’ve ever been is with you both. But this is the fate of the universe we’re talking about so...anyway, I always knew the fight wasn’t over and I’ve prepared as much as any of us could. I didn’t know it would entail going to space and I’m -- I don’t know what’s coming next. Take care of Peter -- he’ll need you if I’m--”

Steve closed his eyes and he tried not to cry. He hated it -- hated the way that Tony just sounded so resigned and like he was trying to impart some sort of last goodbye. Steve hated him for it -- hated him for his need to save the universe and put himself on the line. And yet -- that was why he loved him too. His need to always help and always do something even if it meant destroying himself. It was as he’d finally reached some composure that he realized Tony had asked him to take care of Peter. It was as if he didn’t know Peter was with him. Or maybe -- maybe he wasn’t--

“Friday, where is Peter?”

For a moment he held his breath, waiting the long beat before Friday spoke and letting himself hope just a little that Bruce had been wrong.

“Karen lost contact him at the same time I lost Mr. Stark,” Friday said. “His last coordinates show him to be where Mr. Stark’s last coordinates show. He’s on the ship. I failed to bring him down to Earth as Mr. Stark requested.”

“Oh,” Steve said and any hope that Peter wasn’t actually on the ship dwindled.

Chapter End Notes
While this was a hard one to write, I really quite liked what this chapter became and how I could expand on this scene from the movie.
Next up more Peter and Tony. I think I should have the chapter up on Wednesday - at the latest Thursday.

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Sneaking inside the ship itself turned out to not be too difficult a task. The new suit definitely had even more new capabilities that made the whole thing easy. Peter could tell that his dad had made even more improvements on it since the last time he’d used the Iron Spider. The thing about the suit was that it reminded Peter too much of the Iron Man armor and it made him feel like he was fueling the fire of the rumors about Spider-Man being Tony’s son. There were so many articles speculating about that among with the ones that wondered about who Spider-Man was and then also who Tony’s son was. It was a giant mess that was going to blow up on their faces one day.

He got a little lost after he got into the main part of the ship because it was kind of huge and like nothing Peter had ever seen or been inside. Eventually, he managed to find his dad and when he found him, the wizard’s cape had just reached Tony too and wasn’t that thing just weird? It was weird.

“Wow, you’re a seriously loyal piece of outerwear, aren’t you?” Tony asked.

Peter dropped down. It was like his dad was giving him the perfect opportunity to announce his presence. Well, maybe not perfect, but Peter was going to take it. “Yeah, uh, speaking of loyalty--”

Tony turned. “What the--”

Peter could see it in his eyes -- the anger and disbelief and disappointment and was that fear too? Mostly, he could tell that his dad was angry and Peter hadn’t really planned for that all too well although he probably should have. After all, Tony wasn’t exactly happy when Peter did the opposite of what he wanted.

“I -- I know what you’re going to say,” Peter said with some caution. “It’s just that I couldn’t just...abandon you here and--”

Tony didn’t say anything immediately. Instead, he stared Peter down with incredulity and a look that Peter had only ever seen on May before -- that signature parent look when their kid had done something wrong. It meant that he was probably in more trouble than he’d ever been before and it shut him up promptly.

“You should not be here,” Tony said and the words came out hard and was he gritting his teeth?

“I--” Peter cringed a little. “I was gonna go home--”

Tony waved his hand. “I don’t want to hear it,” he said.

Peter had to explain. Tony just -- he needed to understand because Peter couldn’t have him be angry with him. “--But it was such a long way down and I thought about you on the way--”

Tony sort of shook his head. “And now I gotta hear it.”
Peter kept going. “--and I kind of stuck to the side of the ship.” He watched his dad closely, watched how his expression didn’t really change. Peter motioned down to the suit. “And this suit is ridiculous intuitive, by the way. So if anything, it’s kind of your fault that I’m here…”

Those were the wrong words -- he shouldn’t have said that. The look that his dad settled him with was murderous. Peter was sure that if his dad had still had a way to get him off the ship and back down to Earth he probably would have used it in that moment.

“What did you just say?” Tony asked.

“I -- I take that back. Not your fault. Mine, it’s completely mine -- I...but anyway, now I’m here in a spaceship with you.” Peter tried to smile, but he was sure it came off as more of a grimace than anything. He really should have probably just gone home.

Tony closed his eyes and reopened them a moment later and he looked so tired -- not physically maybe, but mentally. It was a strange look on him. “Yeah, I guess you are. You are -- right where I don’t want you to be, Peter. This is serious this is-- this isn’t a field trip and we go home at the end of the day. It’s a one-way ticket. And it’s one thing for me to be--” he trailed off and shook his head. “Pete, you had to go back home. You should have and don’t pretend like you thought this through. You could not have possibly thought this through in the seconds that it took you to decide to stay on the ship.”

While he spoke, Tony had walked closer to where Peter was standing and Peter could see how much it did bother his dad to have Peter there. He almost felt bad about it except that he didn’t regret it all that much.

“I did, dad. I did think this through,” Peter said and he hoped to be convincing because he knew deep down that his dad was right and he really hadn’t -- he just hadn’t wanted to leave his dad on his own and-- “it’s just that you can’t be a friendly neighborhood Spider-Man if there’s no neighborhood.”

Tony shook his head. “Unbelievable,” he muttered and Peter was glad to see that there was fondness in his eyes despite everything.

“That didn’t really make sense,” Peter offered, “but you know what I’m trying to say. I couldn’t stay behind when the world could just end or whatever it is that will happen. But I can help and maybe...maybe you need my help. Maybe the world -- the universe needs my help.”

They stared at each other for a long time until his dad sighed. The thing of it was that there was no changing anything anymore. Peter was on the ship. He couldn’t somehow get off and head back to Earth. It was done -- he had snuck on and that was that.

“Fine, fine. You’re here, there’s nothing I can do about it now, kid. Although I think we might need another lecture on when you gotta just listen to me and do what I want you to do. If we make it--” he trailed off and there was a painful grimace on his face that Peter kind of hated. Tony opened his arm and motioned him closer. “Come on. We have a situation.”

He followed Tony until they could look down at something going on below them. The wizard was floating, tied up, and clearly being tortured by what looked to be a bunch of needles.

“See him down there? He’s in trouble. What’s your plan? Go.”

Tony tended to do that whenever they were training together. It was his way of getting Peter to really stop to figure out a plan before jumping into any situation. This time, it sort of also felt like Tony
deciding to accept that Peter was there and that he might actually be useful in the situation. He just -- he needed to give Tony the right answer. They needed to save the wizard from the alien. And then, Peter remembered the last movie he’d watched with Sam--

“Um, okay. Okay. Remember when we watched that movie Alien with Sam?”

His dad rolled his eyes and then he nodded. “Yeah. I remember. That was a waste of time -- all of those movies are all the same. But why?”

“They’re not all the same,” Peter said, “and you watch like fifteen minutes of it.”

Tony fixed him with a look. “That is not the point? Why does that movie matter?”

“Right, right. Well, okay, if we create a hole on the ship then everything will be pulled out like in the movie. We just -- we have to make sure it’s just the alien that goes and not us or the wizard. We’d have to close it up too because depressurization...”

Tony nodded slowly. “The cape could be useful in getting Strange and keeping him in the ship,” Tony said and he seemed to be thinking it over. “Okay. Sounds like a plan.” They both glanced at the cape and the cape seemed to agree. “I’ll go and distract him, okay, kid, you just have to make sure Strange doesn’t get sucked out when I make the hole.”

Peter nodded. No pressure, then.

---

Tony should have known. He should have known that Peter was going to find a way to go against his wishes and not get off the ship. He hated that that was who Peter was. Maybe Tony should have told him to go home and protect Vision -- given him something to do which would have motivated him to actually go home. Instead, he was a stowaway and Tony hadn’t found out until it was too late. At least his plan to protect Strange was sound enough.

Tony didn’t want to admit it, but he was glad to not be all alone. Of course there was Strange -- but he was hardly company and he was a bit tied up at the moment. The only thing that Tony hated more than the prospect of being in outer space was that Peter was with him and that Tony just couldn’t be completely certain that they would make it out of this alive. And if they did -- could they make it back to Earth? Tony vowed to himself that if nothing else, he would certainly try.

He dropped down and the alien didn’t even notice him -- he was too focused on Strange and those weird needles that surrounded him. Tony caught some of what he was saying to him as he approached.

“--originally designed for microsurgery. And any one of them--” the alien noticed Tony, then, and actually turned completely to face him “--could end your friend’s life in an instant.”

“I gotta tell you,” Tony said, “he’s not really my friend. Saving his life is more of a professional courtesy.”

The alien seemed a little amused at that. “You’ve saved nothing. Your powers are inconsequential compared to mine.” And as he walked forward, he lifted his hands and just twitched his fingers and heavy metal objects moved forward.

“Yeah, but my kid’s seen more movies,” Tony said and fired the missile.

It went straight for a side of the ship tearing the metal or whatever the ship was made out of open and
immediately the vacuum of space started to pull and suck anything and everything out including what the alien had been threatening to use on Tony and then the alien himself who hadn’t expected Tony to do that.

The cape did what it needed to do, grabbing Strange, but it didn’t manage to hold him and Strange was ripped away from it, flying after the alien. Peter was there to shoot a web at Strange and catch him. It happened way too fast – one minute Peter had Strange and was pulling him away and the next it was Peter being pulled after Strange and Tony couldn’t seal up the hole fast enough before Strange was suddenly out of the ship. Peter threw a few webs back but they didn’t land and then the suit opened up the legs, they braced Peter on the edges of the hole before Peter could fall out through the hole and Peter who had had plenty of practice with them didn’t even react even though Tony was sure that he’d probably forgotten about them since the suit rarely had to bring them out except for when Peter was training. In seconds, Peter used his strength to pull Strange back inside and as soon as he was, Tony let out a sigh of relief and he closed up the hole.

“Yes!” Peter said. “Excellent.”

Tony gave a small shake of his head. This kid was going to be the death of him. But they were fine. Peter was okay and Strange was okay. He closed his eyes tightly and took the moment to himself before he let the suit pull back the face plate. He did admit to himself that he wouldn’t have thought of getting rid of the alien in this particular manner. Maybe -- maybe it would be worth to have Peter around. Tony just had to be sure that even if he didn’t make it out of this alive that Peter would. That and saving the stone -- that was his goal.

Chapter End Notes

I actually ended up going in and doing a few minor edits to this chapter before posting. It's very close to canon - and I kept it that way because this is one of the scenes where we see Tony being a complete dad within canon and one that I wasn't expecting when I saw the movie and that I did love. Next one is more Peter and Tony. I will try and have it up this weekend but it might end up being up on Monday.

In other news: I am on ch. 152 currently and I'm writing the ending...well, I'm closing lose ends and such...I'm so close to finishing!

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Strange was on the ground but he was awake and Peter stood a few feet away, the iron legs gone back into the suit and his mask pulled back. The cape flew away from Peter where Peter had been greeting it to Strange as Tony approached and let the nanotech in the suit pull back entirely as he walked towards them.

“We’ve got to turn this ship around,” Strange said.

It was Tony’s first instinct too. Figure out how to turn the ship around and go back home. It was sort of his main instinct because Peter was on the ship. The only thing was that he didn’t know if they could or if it was the right thing to do. Maybe there was something to the idea of catching Thanos unaware because the last thing that he was probably expecting was for them to show up wherever the ship was headed. After all, they were already headed to space so maybe they just needed to stick with that trajectory since Strange had gotten them into this situation in the first place by not leaving when he could have.

“Stark, we have to turn the ship around.”


“No,” Strange grounded out. “I want to protect the stone.”

Tony really just -- he hated how arrogant Strange was even after Tony had gone to the trouble of saving his life. He headed towards what looked to be the controls of the ship.

“And I want you to thank me. Go ahead. I’m listening,” Tony added as he walked away.

“For what? Nearly blasting me into space?” Strange asked as if he hadn’t been surrounded by needles just a few minutes earlier.

It was as if he wasn’t taking into consideration at all that Tony and Peter had had to leave Earth to save him because he and the Time Stone around his neck had gotten captured and taken onto an alien ship.

“Who just saved your magical ass?” Tony asked and he turned because he knew that Strange had walked after him. “Me.”

“I seriously don’t know how you fit your head into that helmet,” Strange said and Tony thought that he must have said it solely to irritate him. He really couldn’t stand this man.
If Strange had only listened to Tony while they were on Earth when Tony told him to leave it was possible that they wouldn’t be in the situation they were finding themselves in now on some alien ship in space headed to -- well, Tony had no idea where they were headed.

“Admit it,” Tony said. “You should have ducked out when I told you to. I tried to bench you. You refused.”

Dr. Strange scoffed and it was clear that he was too arrogant and too determined to disagree with Tony and at least bickering with him took his mind off of worrying about Peter and the outcome of the situation they were in. From the looks of it the ship was on some sort of autopilot. Tony had no way of knowing where it was headed but there was certainly a destination.

“Unlike everyone else in your life,” Strange said, “I don’t work for you.”

“And due to that fact, we’re now in a flying donut billions of miles away from Earth with no backup.” That was the part that really rankled Tony if he was honest. He had no way to contact the team -- to let them know what was going on or that they were okay. No way to figure out a plan together and really decide what their best choice would be. They were on their own. He and Peter were on their own with Strange.

“I’m backup,” Peter spoke up from behind Strange.

Tony didn’t want to be angry with Peter. He didn’t want to be upset at him for staying on the ship when Tony had been sending home and yet it was there under the surface because Tony had to think about the universe as a whole and his mind just kept going back to protecting his kid because to him that was the most important thing and yet -- Peter’s well being couldn’t be the priority. Not this time.

“No,” Tony said, addressing Peter, “you’re a stowaway.” And for good measure he pointed at himself and Strange. “The adults are talking.”

Peter’s shoulders dropped a little and he looked like he was ready to argue back, but he seemed to rethink it.

“I’m sorry,” Strange said. He was looking between him and Peter with some interest. “So, I’m a bit confused as to the relationship here. What is he? Your ward?”

“No,” Peter said. “I’m Peter, by the way.”

“Surprised you don’t already know,” Tony said. “After all, everyone knows I have a son.”

Granted, most people didn’t know that his son was Peter and that his son was Spider-Man, but Strange wouldn’t care one way or another.

Strange grunted. “I don’t actually follow your media coverage, Stark,” he said. “So this is your son, then?” Strange looked Peter over, seemingly taking the moment to really look at him before he let out a breath. “I’m Doctor Strange,” he said directing it at Peter.

Tony busied himself looking at the controls of the ship, trying to figure out how they worked and what they might need to do to get control of the ship and maybe get it off of autopilot too.

“Oh,” Peter said, “we’re using our made-up names. Um, I’m Spider-Man, then.”

Tony tried not to laugh. He wasn’t sure if Peter had said it because he was serious or because he was getting some amusement out of confusing Strange.
“The ship is self-correcting its course,” Tony informed them. “It’s on autopilot.”

Tony still wasn’t sure if they should head back home. The father in him said yes -- that it was the best thing to do. It would mean being back somewhere familiar where they could figure out what to do with the Time Stone. It would also mean having Peter back on Earth and having the option of trying to keep Peter out of trouble. But he couldn’t make that decision based solely on what was best for Peter. He couldn’t be a dad -- he couldn’t be Tony Stark about it. He had to be Iron Man -- he had to be an Avenger.

“Can we control it? Fly us home?” Strange asked.

Tony didn’t answer. What were the better odds? Thanos would come for the stone no matter where they were and with him destruction and death.

“Stark?”

“Yeah?”

“Can you get us home?” Oh, but he wanted to. He wanted to badly.

“I heard you,” Tony said. “I’m -- I’m thinking -- well...I’m not so sure we should go back.”

Tony knew that as soon as he said it that Strange didn’t agree and that he didn’t understand what Tony meant by it.

“Under no circumstance can we bring the Time Stone to Thanos,” Strange said. “I don’t think you quite understand what’s at stake here.” He got in Tony’s face, anger and fear so obvious in the way he stared at Tony and it was so demeaning and pushy and of course Tony understood. He understood better than anyone.

“No, it’s you who doesn’t understand,” Tony shot back. “Thanos has been inside my head for six years! Since he sent an army to New York and now he’s back and I don’t know what to do. So, I’m not so sure if it’s a better plan to fight him on our turf or his, but you saw what they did. What he can do. At least on his turf, he’s not expecting it. So, I say we take the fight to him.”

He had decided. He was sure it was the right thing to do. The only thing to do. Tony stared at Strange and at least the man was smart enough to take Tony’s words and think on them and not just shove them aside like everything else Tony had said.

“Doctor, do you concur?”

Strange took a moment and then there was a slight nod even though Tony could tell that Strange wasn’t entirely sure. “Alright, Stark. We go to him.”

Was it a good plan? Tony wasn’t sure -- it just seemed like the thing to do. Because if they could turn the ship around -- assuming they could even manage that -- it wouldn’t exactly lead them away from the fight. Tony started to turn away from Strange, but Strange stopped him and he looked almost apologetic in the way he stared at Tony. He glanced back towards Peter once before speaking.

“You have to understand,” Strange said, “if it comes to saving you or your son or the Time Stone -- I will not hesitate to let either of you die. The fate of the universe depends on it.”

Peter let out a gasp. Small and almost silent. Tony tried not to react with anger.

“Good,” Tony said. “Nice moral compass you got there.”
Strange looked away and Tony stepped back too and then he looked towards Peter. Too loyal and too wonderful Peter who should have been back on Earth safe and sound. Tony would have felt so much better about this decision if Peter wasn’t there. He hated the idea of bringing Peter along to this fight -- to face a threat worse than any they’d ever faced before. Peter had moved over, closer to the controls which he looked at with curious interest.

Tony dropped a hand to Peter’s shoulder and Peter just moved into a hug almost instantly as if it were instinct to him and Tony didn’t mind it at all. Peter’s arms wrapped around Tony’s middle and he was warm and breathing and alive and Tony could hear his heartbeat and it was enough. Tony pressed a kiss to Peter’s head and he closed his eyes and let himself imagine that they weren’t on an alien ship and instead back home and none of it was true.

“Love you, kid,” Tony said.

“I’m sorry I didn’t listen,” Peter whispered.

“I know.” And he did. He could tell that Peter felt sorry -- he maybe didn’t regret his actions completely, but he hated disappointing Tony. “It’s -- I don’t know if I’d say it’s okay but there’s nothing to be done now.”

“I know,” Peter said.

When Tony looked up he found that Strange was watching them.

Chapter End Notes

This one is almost a bit filler but I did like the idea of exploring Tony's thoughts about not turning the ship around and heading home immediately. Although I almost have to believe that he wouldn't have been able to do it even if he did try.

Also: Strange is definitely lying when he says he claims to have not heard about Tony having a son. He did however forget about it...but I mean, he knew about the upcoming wedding so there's that...

Next up we have some more Tony and Peter and a bit of Steve too. I'm going to aim to have it up on Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

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“How long do you think it’ll be until we get there?” Peter asked.

It turned out that being on a spaceship was kind of boring when there was nothing to do and they didn’t really have any idea as to their destination. Peter supposed that they were travelling with some sort of speed to get them far enough away from Earth and their solar system, but he didn’t really want to think about the implications of that. It was enough to know that there was intelligent life in space and that they clearly had advanced technology.

“No idea, kid,” Tony said.

Peter could tell that his dad was a bit impressed by the space travel too even if he didn’t say it -- mostly he’d spent a lot of time trying to figure out the ship.

“Do you think Vision is okay?”

“I hope so,” his dad said and Peter nodded. Not sure if there was anything else he could say about that because they just couldn’t know for sure what was happening back home.

It sort of bothered Peter to not know how everyone back home was faring. He worried about May and Ned and Michelle and Steve and the other Avengers and it sucked to have no concrete answers. Peter knew it was probably bothering his dad even more than it was him. And while his dad had called the whole thing a one-way trip, it was as much a suicide mission as anything. They couldn’t know if they would be going back -- if they would even be alive to try and make it back. Peter hated thinking about it. It was him, his dad, and Dr. Strange against Thanos -- a threat that Tony had explained as worse than anything they had ever faced.

Tony had filled him in just a little while ago. Told him about the Infinity Stones and their power -- Dr. Strange had even shown him the stone that was on him -- a green glowing gem that apparently had the power to control time. It was insane. The whole thing was unbelievable like something out of a book or movie and not real life. And yet it was. And really, with the lives they led, Peter shouldn’t have been surprised that something like the Infinity Stones existed.

“If Thanos gets them all,” Dr. Strange had said, “the universe as we know it can be altered. Destroyed. He could do anything--”

“Bruce said something about him wanting to destroy half of life -- that he’s been doing that all along without the stones. Having them, it will make him capable of anything.”

It was scary. Scarier than anything.

He felt Tony pull at his hair. It was a gentle tug and Peter looked up, trying to bat his hand away and Tony just smirked at him and his fingers smoothed Peter’s hair back. A part of Peter was glad that at least they were together. He wouldn’t have minded having more of the team there too. Except that
maybe it was good they weren’t there. They could protect Earth and Vision.

“You okay, kiddo?” his dad asked.

“I guess so. I just hope everyone back home is okay.”

“Me too,” Tony said and he wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders. Peter leaned into Tony and Peter just -- he knew they could do this as long as they were together.

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Wakanda was as beautiful as ever. It was an observation that Steve had every chance he got to return there. He was glad to be welcome in Wakanda. He’d managed to call Shuri as they prepared to leave to let her know they were coming. There hadn’t been too much time to explain, but both Shuri and T’Challa welcomed them even knowing that it meant the fight would be coming to Wakanda with them. Steve felt bad about that and yet he also knew there were no other options left. Vision needed Shuri and they all needed to protect the stone for as long as it took to destroy it. Steve wouldn’t admit it, but he knew that having Black Panther -- and Bucky too, he supposed -- made him feel a little better. They needed all the help that they could get.

Steve tried to keep his mind off Tony and on the matter at hand but it was difficult. It was hard on the flight over because there was only so much that they could do. So, Steve tried to catch up with Bruce.

Bruce told him about how he’d been stuck as the Hulk since leaving them and only recently been able to get back to being Bruce and it had all been down to Thor finding him. It sort of explained the lack of assist from the Hulk earlier.

“Now. I’m having a bit of a problem with bringing the Hulk out,” Bruce admitted.

They all had questions for Bruce. He had told them what he could of his arrival back on Earth earlier and how he’d met someone called Doctor Strange. They had contacted Tony and then that alien ship arrived in New York City. He filled them in a little more on Doctor Strange and the Time Stone. The reason that Tony had gone after that spaceship and Peter with him.

And yet it was just like Tony to do that and put himself in danger to protect just about anyone else. Steve loved him for that even if it meant that at the moment they were as far away as possible from each other.

They arrived without trouble, and it was clear that T’Challa had started to prepare. Shuri was ready for them too and it didn’t take long for her to start working on Vision and the stone. Bruce seemed blown away by all of Shuri’s tech and just Shuri as a whole. Steve was just glad that Shuri seemed to think that she would be able to do it. It was just a matter of her having enough time.

T’Challa had someone monitoring the skies, awaiting notice of the alien ships. They also had the news coverage on and it just kept going back to New York and Tony’s disappearance. Even hours later they didn’t seem to know about what happened at the Avengers Compound. However, there was something about San Francisco but it didn’t seem to be as important to the reporters. But while the news media didn’t know much, the U.S. Government sure did.

Steve was sure that Pepper and Maria Hill were probably getting a bunch of calls over it, but some were also going straight to Rhodey who was answering as best he could and trying to keep each conversation short. The only thing that mattered was that the U.S. didn’t seem to care that they’d broken their house arrest specially with Iron Man gone. Steve was glad that he didn’t have to take
care of those calls and he could tell that Rhodey was glad when he had finished with what seemed to be the last one. He joined him as they walked outside where Bucky had remained.

“They want answers,” Rhodey said. “I think they’re finally understanding there isn’t much we can give them.”

Steve nodded and Rhodes walked towards Sam who had also stayed outside.

“I’m sorry about Tony,” Bucky said when Steve approached.

“He’s strong -- he’s --” Steve couldn’t even say it--

Bucky’s hand landed on his shoulder and squeezed. “He’s Tony Stark. If anyone can do anything that impossible it’s him. He’ll come back to you.”

Steve nodded and he tried not to fiddle with the engagement ring too much.

“How’s it going up there?”

“Shuri’s working to take the stone out of Vision,” Steve said. “The best option is destroying it. Make it so that even if he gets all the others he won’t get this one.”

Bucky nodded. “Makes sense.”

“We were finalizing plans for the wedding,” Steve said after a long while. “Tasted some cakes and everything. I just -- it’s like we can’t get to just live…”

“Stevie--” Bucky began, but it was clear that even Bucky didn’t know what to say.

Rhodey who wasn’t too far away turned to both of them turned to them. “The thing about Tony is that he’s prepared. He’s been preparing for this for a while...that’s why he has the nanotech. I don’t think he knew he’d be going to space or that this was going to happen because none of us could have predicted this but his suit and Peter’s new suit they’ll work out there. We can just hope for the best and believe in Tony.”

Steve nodded. It was one thing to know something and to truly accept it.

He spent some time with Bucky, watching as the people of Wakanda were preparing for a possible attack. Some were evacuating while others were gathering weapons. Steve filled him in with Sam chiming in from time to time. Rhodey received another call and walked away to answer it.

It was a while before Steve decided to check up on Vision. Shuri was working still, doing something complicated that Steve would never understand. Even Bruce seemed mostly amazed.

“How’s it going?”

“It’s going to take some time,” Shuri answered.

The alerts came not long after. There was something coming their way. The first alien ship hit the forcefield a few minutes later and it wasn’t alone. Beyond the borders there were more and more ships. Steve didn’t know what he had expected, but he certainly hadn’t expected that.

“That doesn’t look good,” Bucky said.

“And I don’t think Shuri’s even close to finishing,” Steve added.
“At least the city was evacuated,” Bucky said and Steve was reminded that this place was Bucky’s home and that the people in it were people he knew and probably cared about.

“How long is it going to take, sister?” T’Challa asked.

“I’m not even close. All the time you can give me, brother.”

T’Challa nodded. “We will try.”

Steve followed him but not before turning to Wanda. “When that stone is out, destroy it.”

Wanda gave a short nod. “I will.”

The others followed Steve and T’Challa out and they were all preparing themselves for what was to come.

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Tony didn’t think that he’d ever imagined piloting an alien ship or any ship into space. Tony supported and respected NASA and everything they did, but he had never -- even before everything that happened with the whole Loki thing in New York -- wanted to go into space or be involved in any of that work. He and Peter had attempted it anyway, their landing had ended up being more of the crashing variety with Dr. Strange really being the one to keep them all in one piece as the ship broke around them which meant that they wouldn’t be using it to get back to Earth.

“That was close,” he said to Strange as the shield Strange had created fell down around them. “I owe you one.”

He was trying to make nice. They hadn’t spoken much while they were travelling through space. Tony had made Peter take a nap and then made the same attempt to get some sleep himself but it just hadn’t worked and Tony had been sure that he would have had nightmares if he did manage it. Tony just knew that at least when it came to Peter that napping even for a bit would help in the long run. So, Tony had ended up watching Peter sleep for a little while, until Peter was awake again and then he and Peter had tried to figure out just how the ship controls worked.

Strange on the other hand had been a bit more preoccupied with his magic. At least it was something that would come in handy even if Tony didn’t really understand it or want to understand it.

Not being attacked right off the back of arriving made Tony feel a slightly bit better especially since their crash landing would have announced their presence to anyone around.

“Let me just say,” Peter said suddenly, “if aliens wind up implanting eggs in my chest or something...and I end up eating you, I’m sorry.”

Tony really didn’t understand his kid sometimes. “What does that even mean, Pete?”

Peter probably rolled his eyes under the mask. “I’m trying to say,” he said, “that something is coming.”

Tony knew to trust Peter’s spidey sense and sure enough something or someone was coming and it began with some sort of explosive. Then someone was yelling and Tony regretted not actually scanning for life earlier.

There were a few minutes of confusion where even the cloak was getting in on fighting. Whoever these guys were they were nothing like the aliens that they had faced back on Earth which either
meant that Thanos had a wide variety of followers or they were unrelated but still hostile.

When the one guy grabbed Peter, Tony felt his heart stop. The suit changed and his hand became a gun and Tony pointed it at the nearest possible target, a buff looking guy with odd skin markings and wild eyes. He spotted Strange near the one that had antennas. It was a stalemate and Tony needed Peter to come out of it unharmed.

“Everybody stay where you are. Chill the F out,” the one holding Peter said and he reached up to click at his mask and it disappeared and Tony was confused -- he looked human. But human looking or not, he had a gun pressed to Peter’s head.

“I’m gonna ask you this one time,” the guy continued. “Where’s Gamora?”

Tony was even more confused. Gamora? Tony’s let his mask come off too. Maybe this was a whole misunderstanding. “Yeah, I’ll do you one better. Who’s Gamora?”

“I’ll do you one better,” the one Tony had a weapon pointed at said, “why is Gamora?”

Because that made things make even more sense. Tony was really -- who were these people? And what was their whole deal?

“Tell me where my girl is, or I swear to you, I’m gonna French fry this little freak,” the human looking one said. He looked wild, eyes a little crazy and desperate and Tony was positive that he would do it if he didn’t get the answer he was looking for.

“Let’s do it! You shoot my guy, I blast him. Let’s go!” Tony yelled back, hoping that it would make a difference and that the guy cared about his friend enough to not do anything to Peter.

“Do it, Quill. I can take it!”

Who was this guy -- he didn’t seem to have any kind of life-preservation or for that matter sense. He seemed almost eager to have Tony shoot him as if he found the idea fun. Or maybe -- was it possible that he couldn’t get hurt?

The one with the antennas spoke for the first time. “No, he can’t take it!”

“She’s right,” Strange said, “you can’t.”

“Oh yeah,” Quill said, “you don’t wanna tell me where she is? That’s fine. I’ll kill all three of you and beat it out of Thanos myself.” Tony didn’t like the way he glanced at Peter then. “Starting with you.”

No one was going to hurt his kid -- that was not how this was going to go. But...wait, were they not with Thanos? Was this all some crazy misunderstanding? Strange seemed to have picked up on it too and he spoke before Tony could.

“Wait, what? Thanos? All right, let me ask you this one time,” Strange said and Tony almost found it funny how Strange seemed to be trying to follow Quill’s pattern of speech. “What master do you serve?”


He was from Earth. That had to mean he was from Earth. Tony was more confused than ever because this was the last place that Tony had expected to run into someone from Earth.
“You’re from Earth?” Tony asked, for confirmation.

Quill denied it. Adding, “I’m from Missouri.”

Tony gaped at him. “Yeah. That’s on Earth, dip-shit.”

Quill seemed to think on it and already his grip on Peter had loosened some.

“So, you’re not with Thanos?” Peter asked.

“With Thanos?” Quill scoffed. “No, I’m here to kill Thanos. He took my girl -- wait, who are you?”

“We’re the Avengers,” Peter said as Quill actually let him go altogether and Tony tried not to outwardly show how relieved he was.

It seemed to actually mean something to them which threw Tony off. Quill seemed surprised too. But it was antenna girl that spoke up. “You’re the ones Thor told us about.”

Tony was taken aback. “You know Thor?”

It shouldn’t have surprised him all that much because of course these random people knew Thor. It seemed like everyone knew Thor. Even Strange had apparently met Thor.

“Yeah,” Quill said. “Tall guy, not that good looking. Needed saving.”

Peter made a face at the description and Tony loved that even in that moment Peter could still just be Peter. But there were more important matters at hand.

“Wait, saving? When was the last time you saw him? Where is he?”

Quill seemed to think on it for a moment. “He was headed to Nidavellir -- looking for a weapon.”

“So he’s not dead,” Tony said and relief filled him. Bruce had been so absolutely sure that Thor was gone, that he had perished at the hands of Thanos. But if he wasn’t and if he was off trying to find a weapon then they might just have room to hope yet. But also, that meant that Thanos hadn’t killed Thor or hadn’t been able to and in either case, it was a good thing. And if Thor was somewhere out there looking for a weapon...well, it was very possible that they might just beat him yet.

Chapter End Notes

Look at that: a slightly longer than usual chapter. I really liked this one and how much I got to add to moments within the movie. Next up we have more Titan including a small Strange POV. I think I’ll have it up Friday or Saturday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Stephen wasn’t exactly amazed by where they had ended up. Since learning the mystic arts and becoming the Sorcerer Supreme, he’d seen a lot. Experienced a lot. Being on a foreign planet was par for the course in a way. Stephen wasn’t even mourning the fact that he hadn’t even been able to have lunch. Or that he’d allowed Tony Stark to make the decision to not turn the alien ship around and go back home. A part him thought that maybe that was a good idea.

Back on the ship, he had been a little more focused on shaking everything that had happened off -- to just move past all the needles and how his entire day had gone from boring and average to the fate of the world being in his hands. Or rather around his neck. He’d been trying to just ignore that Stark was there and that he’d brought his kid along for some reason. He’d watched them for a time, seen how much Stark seemed to care about the boy. That had come to a head once they crash landed and Peter had been grabbed with a gun to his head and Stark had looked like he was going to kill the weird skinned alien on the floor. It had been so easy to see how absolutely serious Tony was.

Once it turned out that they were friendlies, Stephen had relaxed a little. One of them was even human which had been a crazy reveal and yet he supposed that it was a welcome one. But Stephen couldn’t concern himself with them and how they might help or hinder them since none of them seemed to be all that capable. Instead, Stephen had more important things to worry about. He needed to know if Stark’s plan to not return to Earth was a good one and if they would be able to protect the stone.

They were lucky that they hadn’t encountered anyone that actually did work for Thanos upon arriving, but there was no knowing when they would -- or when Thanos himself might arrive. Stephen suspected that the alien that had captured him had come to this planet to meet Thanos and give him the stone so it was a matter of time before he appeared and they didn’t have a plan on how to deal with that when it happened.

Before a plan, Stephen just needed to look at all the possible futures from this moment forward. Stark didn’t understand the importance of the Time Stone and how much of a difference it could make to have it and use it.

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Being on a different planet was weird. The gravity was different which was odd once they got off the ship and onto the planet’s surface and Peter took a few steps. Mostly, Peter felt like his weight had changed. He stuck close to his dad, but Dr. Strange walked past them looking like he was in deep thought.

Tony placed a hand on Peter’s shoulder and steered him forward as Peter looked around and took everything in. Wherever they were, it was odd because there was oxygen and yet no visible life. It made Peter wonder about whether the planet had water. What it did have was a few moons and a sun. The planet had to be outside of their Solar System and possibly even their galaxy and while
Peter didn’t know much about astrology, he knew that there were few planets that could sustain life and this one seemed like it could -- maybe. Or maybe they were breathing in something undetectable that would poison and kill them. The more he looked around, though, the more obvious it became that the planet seemed to be made up of ruins.

“Why do you think Thanos was coming here?” Peter asked.

His dad glanced at him. “Not sure but if those guys are here to go after Thanos then he’s coming here. They knew to come here looking for him.”

“Right,” Peter said with a nod. He was still a little bit annoyed by how easily he’d been grabbed.

“Quill,” Tony said.

“Star Lord,” he said.

“Sure sure, whatever,” Tony said, “what do we know about this planet? Where are we?”

Peter could tell that his dad hated having to ask but Star Lord would probably know more about it. It was also nice to know that his dad had probably been wondering the same things he was about the planet.

“This is Titan,” Star Lord said.

“Like Saturn’s moon?” Peter asked dubiously.

“No,” Star Lord said and shook his head. “We’re on the planet Titan.”

Peter was actually really curious about how someone from Missouri could end up in space travelling with some aliens and with clear knowledge of space and how it all worked. There had to be some sort of story there. Peter watched as Star Lord took out some sort of device that he waved around. A few seconds later he was frowning and looking a bit confused.

“The heck happened to this planet? It’s eight degrees off its axis. Gravitational pull is all over the place.”

Peter almost wanted to ask about how Star Lord could know that -- and what he was reading exactly to get that information or why it mattered so much. He had a whole bunch of questions but he was distracted from asking when one of Star Lord’s companions started jumping up and down, clearly enjoying the low gravity. They really had found a group of strange people.

“We got one advantage,” his dad said and Peter turned to him. “He’s coming to us.”

No one else reacted and it sort of seemed like his dad was mostly talking to himself and Peter. His dad seemed to have noticed the same thing because he started walking towards Star Lord. “We’ll use it,” he said. “Alright, I have a plan. Or at least the beginnings of one. It’s pretty simple. We draw him in, pin him down, get what we need. Definitely don’t want to dance with this guy. We just need the gauntlet.”

Tony had told him about the gauntlet earlier -- what Bruce Banner had described to his dad anyway. It was a little unfair that Peter had only managed to catch a glimpse of Bruce Banner during the fight in New York. It wasn’t exactly the biggest thing to worry about, but the man was brilliant and Peter would have loved to actually meet him.

If everything that his dad had told him about Thanos was true, getting the gauntlet off of him was
going to be so absolutely difficult. Peter didn’t even -- he didn’t know if he believed they could do it.

He watched in surprise as the big alien with weird markings made a show of yawning and Peter watched as his dad who had been stressing out probably since this had all started turned and Peter didn’t have to look at him to know he was annoyed.

“Are you yawning?” Tony asked and his voice was taking that tone that meant he was trying to hold back his anger. “In the middle of this, while I’m breaking it down? Huh? Did you hear what I said?”

“I stopped listening after you said we need a plan.”

Tony turned to Star Lord. “Okay, Mr. Clean is on his own page.”

Star Lord sort of gave a half-shrug. “See, not winging it isn’t really what they do.”

Peter was sort of starting to figure out that they had somehow come upon some really useless people. They weren’t just weird but down right incapable.

“So, uh, what exactly do they do?” Peter asked.

The one with the antenas spoke up before Star Lord could. “Kick names. Take ass,” she said and both she and the other guy tried to look fierce. Peter didn’t even know how to respond to that.

When he looked at his dad, he could tell that Tony felt even worse. There was disbelief mixed up with maybe confusion and annoyance and Peter was surprised when his dad decided to just not comment on it. Maybe he felt like there was nothing that could be said.

“Alright, just get over here please. Mr. Lord, can you get your folks to circle up?”

“Mr. Lord. No, Star Lord is fine,” Star Lord said and Peter was tempted to ask him what his real name was because that just couldn’t be it. One of them had called him Quill earlier, but he seemed to prefer Star Lord.

They ended up in a sort of circle.

“We gotta coalesce,” Tony said and he seemed look at all of them, “cause if all we come at him with is a plucky attitude--”

“Dude, don’t call us plucky,” Star Lord said as if that was important in that moment. “We don’t know what that means.”

Peter wondered if it was worth it to stick with them. Then again, Star Lord had managed to bring him down and hold a gun to his head earlier and they didn’t really know what the other two could do. Peter had to suppose that they had some level of skill to survive in space.

“Alright, we’re optimistic, yes,” Star Lord said when no one said anything. Then, he motioned at Tony. “I like your plan. Except it sucks. So, let me do the plan, and that way it might actually be really good.”

Peter had thought that the posturing he’d seen from Dr. Strange and Tony earlier had been bad. Although in retrospect it had mostly just been funny. This was a whole other thing altogether and Peter didn’t know what to make of it because the whole interaction just kept getting worse and worse especially once a dance-off came up. It made Peter want to ask a bunch of questions that he also sort of didn’t want any answers to because how had these people saved the universe by dancing? And why did Star Lord seemed upset that Footloose wasn’t considered a great movie? No one thought
Footloose was a good movie.

Peter -- and probably Tony -- were grateful when their attention turned to Dr. Strange and whatever weird thing that he was in the middle of. Strange was glowing and floating and his face moved from side to side really fast.

---

Tony knew he was getting frustrated and he hated it. Hated that he didn’t have a team he trusted around him or that trusted him as well for that matter. Well, he might trust Strange -- at least he seemed to have a recognition for how serious it all was. After all, these jokers had been there looking for Gamora whoever that was, and while they seemed to have a notion for who Thanos was, Tony had to wonder if they knew what the stakes of all this were.

Tony had to remind himself that it was them or nothing. That they clearly understood Space better than he or Peter and Strange did and that they clearly did have some skills. If they managed to help him keep Peter alive, Tony would let them say whatever they wanted however they wanted to say it.

Tony hadn’t noticed that Strange went off on his own and that he had gotten lucky enough to not listen to Star Lord and his team. It wasn’t until one of them asked about Strange that Tony even thought about him and then he was rushing towards him.

Strange was jerking rapidly and yet floating with his legs folded as if he were in the middle of some weird meditation which Tony wouldn’t have put past him. Tony could tell that he was using the Time Stone because it was glowing and there was green mist surrounding him.

“Strange, we alright?” Tony asked as he approached him and Strange came out of the trancelike state. He jolted forward as his eyes opened.

Tony rushed towards him, grabbing his arm as he dropped out of the air looking mostly confused. “You’re back. You’re alright,” Tony said, trying to find out if there was anything wrong just by looking at Strange’s face. “Hi.”

For a moment they stared at each other and Tony couldn’t decipher what Strange was thinking or maybe trying to figure out.

“Hey, what was that?” Peter asked, taking Tony’s words before he could get them out. He came up behind Tony and Tony was glad. He wanted to keep Peter as close as possible.

Strange seemed a little winded and he looked a little dishevelled. There was a cut on his forehead from earlier as well as dried blood on parts of his face. It took a moment to answer. “I went forward in time to view alternate futures. To see all the possible outcomes of the coming conflict.”

Of course he did. Tony didn’t know how the Time Stone worked exactly, but Strange had said that it would help them and this was good -- it was what they needed. Strange was thinking like him -- trying to plan ahead.

“How many did you see?” Star Lord asked.

Tony wanted to roll his eyes every time he thought about the name. They’d called him Quill earlier which was probably his real name -- maybe a last name. But Tony didn’t need to concern himself with that. Instead, he focused on Strange.

“Fourteen million six hundred and five,” Strange said and Tony could tell that whatever he’d seen in all those possible futures some of them must not have been good. But not all of them could have
been bad--

“How many we win?” Tony asked and he wasn’t sure that he actually wanted the answer.

Strange looked back at him. Their eyes met and there seemed to be some sort of apology there even if Tony didn’t really want to think about what it could mean.

“One,” Strange said.

Oh, were the odds ever in their favor.

Chapter End Notes

I really wanted to expand on Titan a little bit with this chapter and I really enjoyed writing that Dr. Strange POV because it was a little bit of a challenge as far as tone with writing him. I think there is another Dr. Strange pov in the next chapter and also some Bucky.

I think I will probably have that chapter up on Tuesday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Natasha could tell that Steve was a bit distracted and she didn’t blame him. She was a bit distracted too. Bruce was back. He was back and he was -- well, he was certainly different. Everything was a little different and Natasha was well aware that things between her and Bruce would never be what they once were, but she hated the awkwardness of it all. So mostly she’d been staying away -- keeping her distance and just worrying about Vision and the alien invasion that they were on the fringes on. It was easier to do that instead of thinking about what could have been and maybe what could have never worked in the first place.

There were carriers that were supposed to take them out onto the field. Everyone was getting ready and Natasha was just sort of waiting.

“Hey,” Steve said. “Ready?”

“Sure,” Natasha said. “How do you think Tony is fairing?” It kind of felt unfair to bring up Tony and she regretted as Steve’s face fell a little.

“He’s -- he’ll fight until the very end. I just -- I wish we could communicate. Know what’s happening -- know if Thanos got the Time Stone.”

He didn’t add that they both wanted -- more than anything -- to know if he and Peter were alive. Maybe not saying it was them trying to keep their hope alive.

“Bruce is getting into the Hulk-buster armor,” Steve said.

“He’s never been in one of Tony’s armors before,” Natasha said.

“Rhodey’s giving him some pointers,” Steve said with a shrug. “This is Bruce we’re talking about -- if anyone can do it, it’ll be him.”

It really was just too inconvenient that the Hulk was choosing this moment to not want to come out. From everything Natasha had heard on their way to Wakanda it wasn’t surprising. Bruce had left from Sokovia as the Hulk and he’d stayed that way while in space. If Thor hadn’t found him it was likely he’d still be the Hulk and in space.

“Come on,” Steve said and motioned towards the carriers, “we should get up there. I think they’re ready to go.”

Natasha nodded. She just hoped that Shuri would have enough time to get the stone out of Vision’s head while they held off the alien threat.

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“That’s a lot of possible futures,” Peter said.
Stephen glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. Peter was sitting on the ground, mask off and his hair flopping on his forehead. There was certainly a resemblance to Stark there. It was the eyes and the way he formed expressions. He was so young.

“Yes,” Stephen said.

“So, you can do magic, then? I mean -- how does it work? Is it innate like powers or because of something like the stone?”

“It’s learned,” Stephen said and left it at that.

He didn’t like children. He liked teenagers even less. Although, he had to admit that Peter wasn’t all that bad and he could tell that Peter was only talking to him because he was trying to keep himself busy or from thinking about the upcoming fight. Really, Stephen would have preferred to be left alone and really think about everything he’d seen -- all the possible futures and how everything could oh so easily go wrong. He needed to consider what had to happen -- what needed to happen. The only way that they could actually win. It was going to be hard and it was going to hurt and looking at Peter made it that much harder.

Stark had been trying to compile a list of everyone’s skills to continue to form his plan and Stephen was glad to let him -- because a plan was fast forming and Stark really was the best one to figure that out for them. It was the way that things needed to pan out. Already, things were going the way they needed to and Stephen just had to make sure that they wouldn’t get off track.

The cape lifted up and touched Peter’s shoulder and Peter jumped. “Oh,” he said. “How does it do that?”

“It just does,” Stephen said.

Peter sort of squinted at him and looked like he was getting ready to another question when--

“Peter, come here,” Stark called and Stephen let out a sigh as Peter walked off.

He watched them for a while as they spoke. Stark had his arm around his son and the two of them were far enough away that Stephen couldn’t actually hear what they were talking about. Mostly though it made Stephen regret what was coming.

When Stark was done with Peter, he called all of them gather and it seemed that he had formulated a plan. Stark was trying to use all of their skills to their best benefit. It was smart. Stark wasn’t even hesitant to use his own son but then Peter was Spider-Man and he was stronger than everyone else probably and also quite agile. He was an asset. Stephen really didn’t like what was to come and yet -- and yet he also knew that it had to. It was for the best.

“He’ll come at any time,” Star Lord said, “he has the Space Stone.”

“And the Power Stone,” Stark added.

Star Lord nodded. It was Mantis that spoke next. “The Reality Stone too.”

He would have them all--

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Aliens. It was -- Bucky really had no words. He’d been having a normal morning before T’Challa was suddenly giving him the gift of a new arm -- sleek and beautiful and carrying so much weight to
it not because it was heavy but because of everything it represented. Shuri had promised him an arm back when she’d first seen him and Bucky had declined it even after she showed him a few different versions of what she was trying to design for him. Later on, Tony Stark had offered to make him one and Bucky had declined that too. Life had been simpler with just one arm.

Seeing Steve again even though the circumstances weren’t great was a nice change of pace for him -- Bucky hadn’t been expecting to see him until...well, until the wedding. It was easy for Bucky to read Steve and see all the anxiety that was just beneath the surface. Bucky had to admit that he was worried about Tony. He had a great deal of respect for him -- respect that had grown after Tony came to speak with him. More than that, though, Bucky knew how much he meant to Steve and what it would do to his best friend if Tony was lost.

“We got two heat signatures breaking through the tree line,” Colonel Rhodes said over comms. Bucky had noted that he too seemed to be anxious for word on Tony Stark. He was flying over all of them with Sam and sure enough he was right because Bucky spotted movement.

Bucky wasn’t surprised when Steve, Natasha, and T’Challa ran out to the edge and they all waited while the three of them spoke with the aliens. Bucky could sort of make them out. One of them was smaller than the other one but they both looked other-worldly. When the three of them returned, Bucky was sure nothing had come of the conversation. None of them expected it to.

“Did they surrender?” Bucky asked, anyway when Steve returned.

“Not exactly,” Steve said.

That was when the alien ships started to open up and Bucky didn’t know what he’d expected, but he hadn’t expected what came out to be like something out of a horror flick. He’d gotten acquainted with a lot of movies due to Shuri and some of the other occupants of Wakanda, and the huge grotesque creatures that bounded out of the alien ships looked like they belonged more to one of those movies than to the real world.

“What the hell,” Bucky said as the creatures actually ran against the barrier.

They were killing themselves trying to get in. It wasn’t at all what he’d expected to happen and they didn’t seem to care seeing as they just kept going for the barrier and eventually a few did get through and they ran on four legs towards them like rabid wolves out for a kill. Bucky lifted his gun like everyone else around him and pointed. He was good at this, at finding the target and firing. This was familiar ground as much as he might hate it.

“You seen the teeth on those things?” Sam said over the comms.

More and more were breaking through but there were lost limbs and other body parts all along the barrier. It was almost hard to watch and yet there were so many that it didn’t even seem to matter. Bucky had no idea how they were going to be able to take them. Probably having realized the same, War Machine flew over the creatures and dropped some bombs over the ones entering. It took out a lot, but it didn’t even make a dent on the numbers that the aliens had with them. He heard him warn Sam over the comms and then there was a bit more chatter until:

“Cap, if these things circle the perimeter and get in behind us -- there’s nothing between them and Vision.”

None of them had thought about that, but the creatures were running to surrounded the barrier. Vision was the priority. Keeping him alive and destroying the stone. He looked towards Steve and it didn’t take Steve long to figure out what they had to do.
“Then we better keep them in front of us,” Steve said.

Steve had his Captain America face on all seriousness and bravery masking all the fear and the worry that he had to be feeling where it came to Tony and his time in space. Bucky hated that even he couldn’t really see through the mask and know what Steve was thinking -- time had changed Steve and had made him just that bit harder and if something happened to Tony and he never returned Bucky couldn’t imagine that Steve would ever be the same again.

Steve and T’Challa seemed to be of the same idea because T’Challa made the decision to open up a portion of the barrier which meant that now they really did have to fight the creatures.

“Wakanda Forever!” T’Challa yelled and then they started running. The barrier opened at T’Challa’s signal just as they were approaching it. And Steve and T’Challa ran ahead of everyone because they were so similar that of course they would. Bucky should have expected nothing less. He joined the fight as well, a part of him happy to do his part.

Bucky shot a couple down but physically fought others too. Around him it was chaos. The creatures just kept piling in and rushing at them and no matter how many got taken down there were more there to replace them. Even the Hulk-buster armor seemed to keep getting piled on by them which was almost a funny sight. It seemed like Bruce Banner still didn’t quite have the hang of the suit. It seemed neverending. They could only hope to hold them off long enough for the stone to be destroyed and none of them knew just how long that was going to take.

Time passed slowly and fast all at once and Bucky was doing what he could -- keeping as many of the alien creatures down and trying to help the others around him too. He knew some of these Wakandan warriors and they were all good men and women. But as good as they all were, they were outnumbered and Bucky could tell that things weren’t going well for everyone. Too many of the creatures came at each person and they seemed to only have one motive which was to kill.

One of the creatures lunged at him, throwing him on the ground and Bucky fought back until he had destroyed it and torn it apart but then there was another. He managed to grab his gun and he shot at a few more even getting shot didn’t stop them unless they were shot in the right place.

When the two aliens from earlier stepped inside the barrier things went from bad to worse. Where the creatures lacked in finesse, these aliens made up for it. They were powerful and strong and they came ready to fight. They had alien weapons too that weren’t going to make things any easier and Bucky was sure that they weren’t going to be able to keep holding on for much longer.

Of course, that’s when bring light fell from the sky and Bucky couldn’t imagine that it would be anything good. Lighting shot out across the sky which had been clear seconds before and all of Bucky’s worry faded when the lighting struck the creatures, killing them as it touched them and then the air cleared. He hadn’t been able to make it out, but it wasn’t just lightning but some sort of axe which flew around the field and then back to a trio that was made up of a racoon with a gun, a twig-tree looking thing, and a man that Bucky recognized as the God of Thunder. Thor.

They had a moment of respite where all of the creatures around them were on the ground and although more were coming, Bucky had a chance to look on at Thor. He was more impressive than Bucky had expected him to be.

“Bring me Thanos!” Thor yelled and then he turned and ran towards the barrier and he just seemed to lift up into the air. The sky around and above him crackled with lightning and the clouds turned dark and then the man -- no, the god -- dropped to the ground and slammed the axe and all the creatures around him fell.
This chapter focused a bit on the POVs of the other characters around mostly because I wanted to give a bit of a different perspective and move the scenes along.

I also really wanted that moment for Strange and Peter because Strange knows now and I did want it to be a little hard on him. But I have to say that one of my favorite moments in this movie is Thor's arrival and the change of energy that he brings when he arrives.

Next chapter we'll be sticking to Titan. Not sure when I'll have it up but I'm hoping before Saturday (latest: on Saturday)

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
They were all in position mostly because they didn’t know when Thanos would arrive and they all just wanted to be prepared. Peter hated that he was basically on his own hiding in wait. Granted, his dad had tried to have him close to him. Only Dr. Strange was out in the open, waiting. Peter both wanted the wait to be over and for it to go on for a while so they didn’t have to face Thanos right away.

Peter felt it -- his spidey sense making itself known -- a few seconds before Thanos arrived. Then, Thanos arrived. He stepped out of a purple and grey cloud that appeared out of nowhere. Thanos himself was impressive -- huge and purple and so absolutely alien. Everything about him looked intimidating and Peter was genuinely fearful and he was becoming less and less sure that they would actually be able to pull it all off.

“Oh, you’re more of a Thanos,” Dr. Strange said. Peter had to wonder if Dr. Strange was feeling any kind of fear at facing Thanos essentially on his own.

Peter listened and waited just like he was supposed to. Dr. Strange needed to stall and keep Thanos from finding out about the rest of them long enough for his dad to bring some wreckage on top of Thanos to slow him down. Peter was actually kind of impressed with the plan that they had ended up with. Tony figured that if they all went at Thanos all at once that they might be able to take him and more importantly take the gauntlet away from him. Mantis was the last piece of the plan and boy was it such a good thing that she had the abilities that she had. Making anyone fall asleep with her touch - - it was kind of amazing. They were all just hoping that her powers would work on Thanos. Star Lord seemed to think that they would and he and his team hadn’t explained why they felt that way.

“I take it Maw is dead,” Thanos said. “This day extracts a heavy toll. Still, he accomplished his mission.”

“You may regret that. He brought you face-to-face with the Master of the Mystic Arts.”

Dr. Strange really was an odd one and Peter still didn’t really understand his powers or what his whole thing was with the cape and the clothes -- but his powers were also really interesting. Magic, but not just magic. It was learned magic.

“And where do you think he brought you?” Thanos asked.

“Let me guess,” Strange said. “Your home?”

Peter was a little amazed when Thanos actually used one of the stones and everything around them changed. For a split moment he was afraid that Thanos would figure out they were there, but he seemed distracted by their new surroundings. Everything that looked like mere ruins had become
buildings or just a part of the planet and it was kind of amazing because this was what it had looked like at one point and now it was in complete ruin. Peter was almost too distracted by everything there was to look at to actually listen to what Thanos was saying to Dr. Strange, but then he tuned back in.

“Titan was like most planets. Too many mouths and not enough to go around. And when we faced extinction, I offered a solution,” Thanos was saying. Peter couldn’t imagine that his solution could have meant anything good for anyone on that planet.

It didn’t take long for Dr. Strange to respond. “Genocide,” he said.

Peter almost gasped. How was that a solution? It seemed to Peter like the opposite of one.

“But at random,” Thanos said. “Dispassionate, fair to rich and poor alike. They called me a madman. And what I predicted came to pass.”

“Congratulations. You’re a prophet,” Strange said.

“I’m a survivor,” Thanos said.

“Who wants to murder trillions.”

It was -- he was horrible.

“With all six stones, I could simply snap my fingers and they would all cease to exist. I call that...mercy.”

That was his plan then -- to collect the stones and just kill a bunch of people and pretend that he was doing the right thing and helping everyone. He was trying to play god but in an un-godlike manner.

“And then what?” Dr. Strange asked.

“I finally rest -- and watch the sun rise on a grateful universe. The hardest choices require the strongest wills.”

He really was crazy. But the worst part was that Peter could tell that he really did believe everything he was saying -- he thought that he was doing what was best for the universe. He thought himself some sort of hero and he was deluded enough to think that there was no other way to save the universe but this convoluted idea.

“I think you’ll find our will equal to yours,” Dr. Strange said and Peter knew that Iron Man was incoming.

Peter looked up and he saw the thing flying down towards Thanos but Thanos hadn’t seen it yet. Dr. Strange brought out his magic circle things and Thanos watched him for a moment before his eyes narrowed and he seemed to realize--

“Ours?” Thanos asked.

Peter looked up and he could see the wreckage that his dad was bringing, but Thanos seemed to realize at the same time that he was about to be crushed.

“Piece of cake, Quill,” Tony said on the comms.

Star Lord flew out of his hiding spot. “Yeah, if your goal was to tick him off,” he said.

They all knew that this wouldn’t be enough to hold Thanos and it wasn’t. That wasn’t the point.
Thanos erupted out, purple light surrounding him and the pieces of what had come down on him and Peter could tell he was using another one of the stones. They really were powerful. Thanos moved too much for Peter to be able to tell how many stones he had on the gauntlet but he knew that it was at least two. He watched as the pieces changed into something that looked like a flock of birds that went after Iron Man and propelled him away.

Peter was tempted to follow and grab on to his dad before any harm came to him, but he knew he couldn’t. He had to follow the plan even if his dad wasn’t there to help for the moment. Tony hadn’t wanted Peter too involved with facing Thanos directly. He didn’t want Peter to make a target of himself, but because his dad wasn’t there to fight Thanos as was supposed to happen, Peter swung in. He shot Thanos in the eyes with the web. He kicked him in the face for good measure and swung away, hoping the web would hold while the others did their part.

Thanos tore the web away, but Peter didn’t go back against him despite how much he wanted to. Star Lord was just taking too long getting the electric mine on Thanos. Strange kept Thanos distracted. Peter was distracted by trying to see if his dad was coming back.

“You okay, Pete?” Tony asked via comms and hearing his voice was good.

“I’m good. How are you?”


Dr. Strange was thrown off, but Star Lord finally ran towards Thanos and he jumped up and Dr. Strange created steps for him with his magic and Peter saw Star Lord drop the electromagnetic mine. They didn’t know if it would work or how it would react with Thanos but depending on how it went, Peter had to be ready.

“Boom,” Star Lord said as he fell through one of the portals created by Dr. Strange and away from Thanos.

The cloak flew to Thanos, then, wrapping around the gauntlet. The mine went off and it was Peter’s turn to jump in again. Dr. Strange already had a portal for him to jump into and Peter did--

“Magic,” he said and kicked Thanos before falling back into another portal and coming at him from another side. “Magic with a kick.” He kicked Thanos again and it was so satisfying even if it didn’t seem to be doing much to him.

The next time he came out of a portal, Peter didn’t even get a chance to kick him before Thanos had grabbed him and Peter couldn’t get him off as he was lifted into the air and then slammed to the ground and Peter knew he was going to have a few bruises. Thanos’ hand around his neck.

Peter wanted to yell for Tony -- for anyone to help him. He couldn’t though, not while Thanos was holding him down and he couldn’t even breathe. It felt like when he’d been trapped under that building and he was lucky that Thanos didn’t keep a hold of him for long.

“Insect!”

Stupidly, Peter thought to correct him. Spiders weren’t insects. They had eight legs--

Suddenly, Peter was flying through the air.

“Dad!”
Tony had been thrown off so far which would have been bad enough but then he’d had to deal with the bat-like things that had come after him and pushed him further and further away. Away from Peter and away from Thanos and everyone else. Eventually, they’d fallen off and he’d flown back, but he’d kept out of the way and managed to watch as Peter went against Thanos. At least Quill’s test of his electric mine meant that the rest of the plan would work. Tony had been skeptical about Quill’s tech despite it being alien. The electromagnet would hold him. Maybe not for long -- but long enough. They just needed it to be long enough.

Then, then Peter was grabbed and Tony moved quickly, preparing to throw himself into it and get Peter away, but Thanos moved fast and Tony didn’t want to hurt Peter by shooting at Thanos. Thanos threw Peter and--

“Dad!” Peter yelled.

Tony moved just as Thanos ripped the cloak off and Tony could see his intention -- he was going to do something to Peter--

Tony shot down at Thanos, dropping mines and causing explosions that almost touched him but didn’t seem to do anything to him but they kept him distracted which was enough. Then, Thanos actually seemed to harness the fire from the explosions and Tony tried and failed to get out of the way as it came at him and Thanos seemed keen to keep sending it his way. He flew away and at the last second saw Peter appear again. He looked like he was alright, but Tony was his dad and he couldn’t help but worry. The whole situation had him worried.

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Peter threw a string of web at Thanos and more specifically the gauntlet, stopping him from the attack he was holding on Iron Man. Before he could do more though, something happened -- something huge came out of nowhere and Peter had to pull back.

Thanos was taken by the thing which appeared to be some sort of ship and Peter had no idea where it came from.

“Well, well,” Thanos said as he got up from the debris.

Peter was distracted by Dr. Strange motioning him as a blue alien jumped out and struck at Thanos. She was yelling something, but that didn’t matter because she clearly considered Thanos an enemy and that was important.

“We have to end this,” his dad said on the comms, “we have to pin him down and take that gauntlet.” The basis of their plan -- it needed to happen and soon.

The alien fighting Thanos didn’t last long, thrown aside by the use of one of the Infinity Stones.

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Stephen used a rope made up of energy to wrap around the gauntlet. The time that the new arrival had given them to regroup was more than enough to get back on track and when he’d gotten a chance, Stephen had gone for it. Thanos fought back, pulling and pulling but Stephen held on. Quill moved fast to throw his electromagnet and with perfect aim because it took hold of Thanos’ gauntlet free hand.

Spider-Man swung in and as planned he too took hold of Thanos with his webbing, pulling him back and holding him in place which was what mattered the most. Thanos kept trying to pull away but somehow they were managing to hold him. Stephen hadn’t known that they would be able to pull it
off and once he was sure that Spider-Man and Star Lord could hold him, Stephen let go and it was just in time for Iron Man to arrive and grab the arm with the gauntlet. He pulled at it.

Without Mantis, Stephen didn’t know how they could have considered managing this. He opened a portal above Thanos and Thanos didn’t even see it coming as she landed on his shoulders and her hands went to his head immediately and in seconds she had him.

Thanos let out a muffled scream.

“Is he under? Don’t let up?” Stark said.

“Be quick,” Mantis said through gritted teeth. “He is very strong.”

Stark was pulling but the gauntlet wasn’t moving.

“Peter, help! Get over here,” Stark called and his son dropped his web and moved. It made no difference to the hold they had on Thanos due to Mantis. “She can’t hold him much longer. Let’s go. We got to open his fingers to get it off.”

It was all happening like it was supposed to. Stephen hadn’t known that it would -- but he’d wanted it to. Needed it to. It was hard -- watching them and knowing what was to come. Knowing that it was all kind of pointless.

Chapter End Notes

This was more of rehashing what happened in the movie with a few additions and I’ve been trying to post it since Thursday and failing to do so. But at last. (This is what happens when a mixture of friends and coworkers have birthdays to celebrate and take up my time).

Next chapter we catch up with MJ, Ned, May, and Pepper because I felt like we needed something from their perspective.

Thanks for reading. I should have the next one up on Tuesday.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Tony understood the pain of finding out something horrible at the wrong time. He understood the emotions that crossed Quill’s face and he knew even though Quill had never explained who Gamora was that she was important. Important not just to Quill either but apparently to Thanos and the blue-android person that had arrived. She confirmed that Thanos had the Soul Stone which was -- it meant that there were only two left. The Time Stone and the Mind Stone -- Vision’s stone. It was good to know that the stone in Vision’s head still hadn’t made it to the gauntlet, but that there were only two left for him to collect -- that was hard to swallow.

Either way, understanding what Quill was going through and the emotional shock that he took, it didn’t make it harder to hate him for giving in to his emotion.

“Okay, Quill, you gotta cool it right now. You understand?”

Quill wasn’t listening. His eyes were wild.

“Don’t. Don’t. Don’t engage. We’ve almost got this off.”

They were so close. He and Peter almost had it.

“Tell me she’s lying,” Quill said and then he was yelling, “Asshole! Tell me you didn’t do it!”

Quill was past being reasoned with. He didn’t care whatsoever for the plan or what they had spoken about earlier or any of it. He just cared about Gamora and the implication that she was gone. Tony had to wonder if he might have reacted the same way if it was Peter that Thanos had killed or Steve.

Even through the hold that Mantis had on him, Thanos could answer. “I...had...to,” he grunted out. It made it even more clear to Tony and the others that Thanos was breaking through and that Mantis wasn’t going to be able to hold him for long.

But the answer was enough to make Quill angrier and Tony knew there was nothing to quell that rage. He had felt it himself when he found out Bucky had killed his parents and he knew -- he knew how destructive it was.

“No...you didn’t -- you didn’t--” Quill hit Thanos. “No, you didn’t!”

Tony had to stop him. Mantis was losing her hold fast and the movement that Quill was causing wasn’t helping.

“Quill!!”

The gauntlet was almost off--

“Hey, stop. Hey, stop. Stop. Hey! Stop!” Tony said and he let go of the gauntlet and tried to hold Quill back. Peter was stronger anyway -- he could take it off--

Peter tried, Tony could tell that he tried but once Mantis started to really lose her control--

“It’s coming! It’s coming! I got it. I got it.” Peter said and when Tony glanced over the gauntlet was almost off. Maybe -- but no, Thanos was waking.
Mantis was thrown off and despite how close Peter was, he lost his hold and the gauntlet went back on Thanos’ hand. Peter didn’t go back at Thanos but instead after Mantis who was flying through the air.

“Oh, god,” he heard Peter say.

Strange was thrown off -- everyone was pushed aside but Tony wasn’t willing to give up. They had been so damn close! The nanonites created a weapon for him and Tony went at him with it but it didn’t even matter as Thanos just headbutted him away.

Tony got up, a bit shaken and went back at it until a shadow fell over him and it looked like the moon was moving towards him--

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New York was a mess. Whatever had happened in Greenwich Village had everyone shaken up. Most people still remembered the last time that aliens had attacked New York. At least this time it hadn’t been a prolonged fight, but it had lasted long enough to create quite a mess. Still, all anyone could talk about was how Iron Man and Spider-Man had disappeared in the aftermath. It meant that Michelle couldn’t do anything but watch what had been uploaded to the internet.

Some of it came from security cameras but a few things came from people with their phones out and all of it was a ridiculous mess to sort through and full of messy shaky angles which cut off at odd places. Still, Michelle was kind of obsessed with watching any and everything she could find. It was easier than worrying about Peter. Not that it did much to stop her from worrying.

Her phone rang and Michelle picked it up at once. A part of her had hoped it would be Peter to finally answer all the texts she had sent and to tell her it was a lie and that he hadn’t gotten on that spaceship but -- no, it was just Ned.

“Hey,” Ned said.

“Hi,” Michelle said and waited for Ned to tell her why he’d called.

“I, um, I contacted Peter’s AI. I figure I’d try Karen. She lost contact with Peter -- she said that Peter was on the ship. It’s the only reason she would have lost contact with him.”

Michelle knew that already -- well, she’d put the pieces together despite how much she wished it wasn’t true. It was different to hear a confirmation despite how much the media seemed to be reporting on it with complete surety. Some of them seemed to think that it meant they might as well put Iron Man and Spider-Man as missing and likely dead. Only one video from a YouTuber had wondered about Tony Stark’s son and how he was handling it. Of course, they had no idea that Peter was his son and that Peter was Spider-Man.

“So, he’s in space,” Michelle said.

“Yeah,” Ned said and there was a sad tone to his voice.

Michelle suddenly remembered that Ned and Peter were huge Star Wars nerds. Maybe that would help...but probably not. Fiction and the real world were different things.

“Do you think he’s--” She trailed off and took a deep breath. “He’s with Iron Man. Maybe they’ll both be okay.”

“I don’t know,” Ned said. “I hope so. I, um, I was thinking I would go see his aunt. She doesn’t
really have anyone else so she’s probably freaking out. Do you want to come with me?”

Michelle didn’t really know Peter’s aunt — although she really wasn’t his aunt was she? Michelle had seen May in passing over the years and maybe said hello to her, but she knew how much she cared about Peter. There wasn’t much else that she and Ned could do, though, so it made sense to try and help in a way that they maybe could by supporting Peter’s family.

“Yeah, alright. I -- we can do that.” Then maybe they could be together through all of this because Michelle couldn’t imagine that this was going to be easy for any of them.

“I’ll meet you at yours,” Ned said, “I’ll call when I’m outside.”

It was a good thing they lived so close.

She clicked onto Twitter for a moment checking to see if there was anything new. For the most part, Twitter was the most accurate and if not accurate then certainly it had the newest information. People were more likely to tweet or post something online in the moment before the big news media could pick up on it.

Sure enough some sort of thing had happened in San Francisco. Michelle couldn’t tell if it was related but there were pictures and some guy had become giant. It seemed like the whole world was having some sort of crisis.

Then there was something else -- an attack in Africa. Not ships like the round thing that had come down in New York City, but similar enough that it had to be connected.

And when she kept clicking there was more. Not many of the news sites had been reporting on it but apparently another circular ship had come into Earth and more precisely it had arrived in upstate New York. It had happened almost around the same time as the other attack in the city — maybe a little later — but there was only a couple of tweets about it so it had probably gone overlooked. It made Michelle a little suspicious though because she knew from Peter that the Avengers facility was in upstate New York and it was probably likely that the attack had happened there. So it was clear that the aliens had probably come after The Avengers for some reason or another.

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May was a little drunk. It was -- she didn’t really drink all the time but since Ben’s death she’d done it more often. A glass of wine here or there -- sometimes she’d get a few drinks with friends from work. But even then, her reasons had never been this dire.

Pepper was the one that had called her in the aftermath. Reaching out because that was who Pepper was and May had heard the worry and fear in her voice and May had known then that she needed to prepare for the worst. Damn it -- this was exactly why she hadn’t wanted Peter to be Spider-Man. Her boy. Her Peter.

The kitchen had a few shattered plates and glasses from the moment when May had just lost herself to her anger. It had been a long while since May had gotten upset about Peter being Spider-Man. She had gotten used to it, actually, and come to understand why Peter felt like he needed to do it, but this -- this wasn’t Peter just helping the regular person after school. It was dangerous and off planet and it felt like losing Ben all over again.

Pepper had called again a bit later, asking if May needed anything. What she needed was Peter back. If he did come back May would demand he move back and she would demand that he give up his silly notions of being a superhero. If -- when Peter returned. He had to come back to her.
Time passed oddly. Fuzzy. The news anchors seemed scared too -- worried about what it meant for Tony Stark to have disappeared. Gone with the alien ship. People just had so much faith in Iron Man and to have him gone...

There had been another attack too, apparently. People were only just finding out about it -- another alien ship had shown up and left quickly from Upstate New York and May knew what that meant. Maybe more Avengers were missing...or worse.

Other reports had started coming in -- attack in Africa.

May just drank more. Maybe she would pass out and when she woke things would be back to normal. But -- no, they couldn’t be, not if Peter wasn’t around.

“Damn you, Tony Stark,” she muttered. “Damn you, you better protect my kid.”

His kid. May took a swig of the tequila -- it didn’t really burn as it went down anymore.

When a knock came, May ignored it at first until it came again and again and then she opened the door and it was Ned and some girl whose name she couldn’t remember but that had to be one of Peter’s friends.

“May,” Ned said.

May gulped. “Peter’s gone,” she said.

“I know--”

“We know,” the girl said and stepped forward. “Mrs. Parker, can I get you some water? Maybe coffee? Or food -- you should eat. I can tell you’ve been drinking and it probably helps if you have something to eat.”

May sobbed and Ned -- good old Ned who looked like he’d been crying wrapped an arm around her and led her inside.

“I miss him,” May whispered.

“We do too,” the girl said.

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Work was the easier thing to face than everything else. Pepper just -- she had to hope. Tony had come out of worse things. The cave -- the wormhole -- even the palladium poisoning. This was going to be one more thing to add to the list of things that Tony survived and maybe still left some damage behind. It was better than the alternative. It was easy to tell herself that and yet so much harder to actually believe he might make it back from this. Worse -- Peter was with him. Sweet and lovely Peter who Pepper adored. She wished she’d spent more time with him. She’d gotten to know him a little better since Peter had moved into the tower, but SI kept her hard at work and she had all kinds of business trips on top of all the other Avengers business. Still, Pepper had made time to have dinner with everyone at the tower from time to time. She loved the family that Tony had -- loved that she could be a small part of it and that Tony was finally getting what he deserved.

SI stuff was pushed aside after the attack and after Tony disappeared with Peter in tow. Instead, Pepper was dealing with the media and the government and the UN. Tons and tons of questions were being asked and she didn’t really know the answers. Was she aware that all The Avengers had left the tower? Yes. Did she know where they were currently? No. And on and on and on. The UN
was being good about it -- they saw the threat for what it was. Pepper had even gotten to talk to The President of the United States for a quick moment. That had been surreal. Then, there was Ross who didn’t even have a reason to be concerned. He wasn’t on the UN council and he wasn’t even Secretary of State anymore. Pepper didn’t actually know what he was doing these days -- she just wanted to be rid of him.

It was a good distraction. Perhaps the only reason that Pepper didn’t break down into tears when she thought about Tony gone up into space and the rest of them in Wakanda fighting another attack. Everyone knew where they were by now -- there was coverage of what was happening and Pepper was avoiding watching any of it. Thing were a little insane. Maybe more than a little and somehow Pepper was left to try and clean up the messes. At least it gave her something to do.

“You better be okay, Tony Stark,” she muttered. “You better bring your kid home.” She wouldn’t forgive him if he didn’t.

Chapter End Notes

So as it turns out I did make a small mistake and that first scene in this chapter was supposed to be in the last chapter. For some reason I didn’t move the chapter label and completely didn't notice it when I posted last chapter. Not that it really makes much of a difference.

I really did enjoy getting to a different perspective with this chapter. Especially MJ. I really love writing her.

Next up we have more Wakanda and more Titan and yeah the next few chapters are going to hurt. I'll have it up by Friday or Saturday.

Thanky you to everyone reading. :)

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
They just kept coming. And once the two aliens had gotten involved in the fight, things only got worse. The arrival of Thor and his two odd friends made a difference, but it just seemed like the fight was never ending. It was nice to have Thor among them again, though. Although, Steve would have preferred if Thor had gone to Tony instead -- joined him out there and brought him home.

Thor looked different -- part of it was the haircut -- but he also seemed a little more intense somehow and Steve just knew that it was to do with everything that he’d gone through -- losing his home and his people and whatever else Bruce hadn’t managed to fill them in on.

After a while, Steve ended up near Thor who was fighting with what looked to be an axe and not his hammer. It was likely Thor was the only one that could lift the axe. It made Steve curious about where it had come from -- it was yet another change. Lightning came and went from Thor, taking down the beasts.

“New haircut?” Steve said, only a little out of breath.

Thor glanced at him. “noticed you’ve copied my beard,” he said and because he was Thor he was grinning. “By the way, this is a friend of mine. Tree.”

The tree-creature was really pulling his weight in the fight with the way he just seemed to stab the creatures and lift them up. It was impressive. Steve really didn’t want to know a whole lot about how he worked or why he could grow out his extremities -- branches -- really the alien made very little sense to Steve but that didn’t mean that he didn’t appreciate Tree.

“I am Groot,” the tree-creature said and he had put his arm/branches through a bunch of the creatures and waved them about.

Steve responded in kind, touching his chest. “I am Steve Rogers.” He was unsure if the tree was called Tree or Groot, but it didn’t matter because the fight just went on. And it kept getting worse somehow.

When Steve next saw Bucky, Bucky seemed to be working with the other of Thor’s companions -- the talking raccoon who had a weapon that seemed too big for him but which he could use with no trouble. Steve really was going to need a full story on how Thor had befriended a tree and a raccoon.

One of the alien creatures jumped on Steve’s back and Steve turned and slammed his shield on it, sending it to the ground. He hit it once more for good measure before taking out a few more that came at him.

“That raccoon looking thing -- it keeps looking at my arm,” Bucky said when they got a moment.

Steve didn’t get a chance to reply as Thor landed next to him. His axe landed in his hand, flashing lightning.

“So what, do you have to be worthy to lift that too?” Steve asked.

Thor just chuckled and then he threw the axe at oncoming aliens. They all fell and the axe returned. And then, the ground started to shake. Huge metal wheels broke through the ground, destroying the
terrain and moving forward without pause.

“Fall back! Fall back, now!” T’Challa yelled and everyone was moving, running out of the way.

Steve felt a bit lost in the commotion but when he glanced up he spotted Sam and Rhodey and he could only hope that they would be able to figure out how to take them down from the sky because Steve couldn’t imagine they would be able to do much against one of those from the ground.

Wanda was forced to come down, but Steve was too busy dealing with creatures that had come at her to pay her much mind. He just knew that she’d be capable of helping. He just hoped she would be able to get back when she was needed to destroy the stone.

“Guys, we got a Vision situation here,” Sam said.

“Somebody get to Vision!” Steve called out in the comms. Bruce and Wanda responded.

The creatures kept coming at him and Steve for all his stamina was getting tired. Some of them had gotten too close to comfort and he was sure that he sporting a good number of injuries. The creatures were just so vicious and single minded and they didn’t seem to have any fear at all.

“Where is Iron Man?” Thor asked eventually, landing next to him.

“Space,” Steve managed to answer as he threw his shield. It came back to him momentarily and then he glanced at Thor again.

“Space?”

“This is not the first attack -- they came to New York and Tony -- he went with them.”

Thor didn’t respond and then they were separated again and just as Steve decided to run in the direction that Vision had fallen, Bruce’s voice came in over comms.

“Vision needs back up, now!”

He sprinted, running past Groot and the raccoon. It wasn’t long into his run before he heard an explosion from above and something had crashed into the barrier. Steve didn’t think on it, he had to get to Vision.

One of the aliens was with Vision. The one they’d faced back at the compound and Vision was being overpowered which shouldn’t have been able to happen easily. Maybe -- maybe Shuri had gotten some of the connections to the stone off. Steve ran towards them, not stopping to even think as he pushed the guy back and away from Vision.

“Go! Get out of here!”

The alien was stronger and relentless. He kept coming at Steve, pushing hard and Steve tried his best against him but it was hard to hold him at bay. He just hoped that Vision would be able to get away while Steve had him distracted. That was the most important thing. Vision needed to get back to Shuri.

Steve fell onto his back and fought to push the alien off but it was no use and then suddenly someone had stabbed the alien from behind and the alien fell off and Steve found Vision just behind. He looked like he was in some deal of pain. This wasn’t good.

“I thought I told you to go,” Steve said as he got back to his feet and Vision swayed on his feet.
“We don’t trade lives, Captain,” Vision said.

Steve let his shoulders fall. He glanced at Vision’s forehead where the stone still sat and then moved to help him. He’d been injured -- probably by that alien. He helped Vision to sit down and wondered if there was any way to get him back up to Shuri and if that would even help at all? Had they already run out of time?

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Peter managed to catch everyone that was sent flying into the air, making it his duty to make sure that everyone would be okay. Peter had seen Thanos pull the moon out of the sky but he hadn’t realized the purpose was to bring it down on his dad. Peter was more distracted with making sure that no one was struck with any pieces of the moon, but then Iron Man was crushed by the moon and Peter gasped even though he knew that it probably wouldn’t keep his dad down for very long at all so he wasn’t too worried. He was more concerned about what Thanos might do next.

Things were not going at all as planned. Star Lord had screwed up and they had come so close to getting the gauntlet and it was clear that the near success that they had was squandered and that Thanos was none too pleased by it. Peter kept himself out of the way, waiting, and worrying because Iron Man wasn’t back yet.

“Dad?” Peter asked in the comms but got no response.

Doctor Strange stepped out to face Thanos, then. Peter was a bit distracted, but he was still impressed by what Strange could do. He made multiples of himself and Peter couldn’t actually tell which the original was. Thanos destroyed the illusion with the use of one of the stones and Strange was dragged to Thanos. Peter could do nothing but watch as Thanos took hold of the necklace that Peter knew to hold the stone. He made a move to throw a web and snatch it away, but Thanos crushed it in his hand instead. It was a fake. Strange was thrown and Peter was in too much shock to actually try and catch him before he hit the ground hard just a ways away.

Thanos didn’t stop there, making his way towards Strange. Peter made to move, arm outstretched to get swinging when instead he spotted his dad. Peter let out a breath of relief as his dad threw something at Thanos and it landed right on the gauntlet, keeping Thanos from using it for the moment. Tony landed not far from Thanos and Peter was glad to note that he didn’t look like he’d just had a moon thrown at him.

“You throw another moon at me, and I’m going to lose it,” his dad said.

Thanos turned slowly. “Stark,” he said.

Peter was surprised. Thanos knew who his dad was? This huge alien who shouldn’t have known anything about any of them knew exactly who his dad was.

“You know me,” Tony said and Peter could tell that he was surprised as well.

Peter wanted to get down there and join in the fight. He needed to help his dad before Thanos threw something worse than a moon at him. Just a few feet away, Doctor Strange was still splayed out on the ground. The others were still getting themselves back to sorts -- none of them were being useful at all. It was up to Peter to jump in--

“I do. You’re not the only one cursed with knowledge,” Thanos said

“My only curse is you,” Tony said and that’s when missiles shot out of the Iron Man armor, heading at Thanos.
Peter moved, then, motivated by what his dad was doing. He needed to help. But instead, the cloak wrapped around one of his arms and pulled him back. Peter tried to fight it off, but it held fast and when he looked towards Dr Strange, he found that the wizard was coming to. He gave a small shake of his head, face twisting in pain. Peter suddenly remembered that Doctor Strange had seen the possible outcomes. He gulped. What did that mean -- that he knew how things needed to go? That Peter couldn’t get involved in fear of changing the good outcome? But it was his dad on his own against Thanos…

“No,” Strange said.

His dad and Thanos fought and the cloak let up as soon as it realized that Peter was going to hold back, but Peter was frozen on the spot even though every instinct in his body was telling him to help, especially once Thanos actually just broke the helmet portion of the suit with his free hand like it was nothing. His dad just kept on fighting because he was Iron Man and he would never stop fighting.

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The thing about it was that Tony was actually a little surprised when Thanos addressed him by name. It was the last thing that he’d expected for Thanos to actually have any kind of notion to who he was by name.

Everyone else was down -- their plan hadn’t gone according to plan but they had been so nearly there. If Quill hadn’t lost himself to his temper -- but then, wasn’t it also just human nature? Tony couldn’t blame him, he’d seen the pain in his eyes and Thanos seemed to share it somehow. Whoever Gamora was she had been important to both of them.

Tony kept fighting. He tried his hardest to find any kind of weakness but even without access to his gauntlet, Thanos was formidable and Tony could only imagine what the use of the stones could have made him even worse. By the end of it, Tony had managed to at least draw some blood but it just wasn’t enough. Nothing was enough.

“All of that for a drop of blood,” Thanos said and then truly came at Tony, coming at him when he was on the ground.

Somehow, eventually he got up and they were still fighting. It all came to a head when Thanos removed the piece of tech that Tony had thrown at the gauntlet and then the power stone was in use and Tony barely managed to create a shield and even then it wasn’t holding -- falling apart until Tony just dropped it and dodged out of the way. His suit was in tatters -- the remaining nanonites trying their best to keep him protected and only just managing. Tony had known this was a possibility of creating a suit out of nanotech. He just had never expected for it to get this bad.

He went against Thanos, fighting him hand to hand and then when he could, he created a weapon even if it meant that he leaving more of himself unprotected. Getting close to Thanos wasn’t all that difficult and even then it was no use --

Tony gasped in a breath as the sharp nanotech weapon went into him, tearing him apart the pain so hot and sharp. Faintly he heard someone yell, but mostly Tony could just hear his blood rushing to his ears and his own gasps. He stumbled back and Thanos pushed him and then he was on the ground and all he could think about was Peter on this desolate planet.

“You have my respect, Stark,” Thanos said and he seemed to mean it and then his hand was on Tony’s head, keeping him from crumbling to the ground and he could have just crushed his skull and have it be over with. Thanos didn’t do that. Instead, he let go and Tony wobbled. He was shaking all over and there was blood.
Thanos stepped back. “When I’m done, half of humanity will still be alive.”

Tony couldn’t help but gasp partly due to surprise but mostly because there was blood coming up. His head was spinning.

“I hope they remember you,” Thanos said and he sounded like he meant it.

“NO! No! You can’t!”

Tony could barely turn, but he knew it was Peter. And, oh, god, Peter was there. Peter was watching. Tony was going to die and Peter was--

Thanos was looking around, but he had his gauntlet lifted towards Tony and it was going to happen. Tony turned, looking for Peter, but he couldn’t find him.

“Dad!”

Tony found him, then, and he had stepped forward. His mask was off and his hair was plastered to his head and forehead and Tony wanted nothing more than to push him aside and hide him from sight but he couldn’t even move and Peter had a desperate look in his eyes that meant he was going to do something very stupid that he maybe considered heroic.

“Pete,” Tony whispered and Peter’s eyes landed on him. Tony shook his head.

“You have a son,” Thanos said, and Tony’s attention went back to him.

“You will not harm him,” Tony said, voice hard.

Thanos stared down at him and Tony felt blood dribble down the corner of his mouth. This was going to be his end apparently.

“I know what it is to love a child,” Thanos said, “but no matter -- yours must learn what it is to lose.”

Peter let out a loud cry. Tony felt his heart break. Peter didn’t need to see this -- he shouldn’t have been a part of any of this but Tony couldn’t say anything and Thanos was--

“Stop,” Strange said suddenly.

No. No, he couldn’t. He’d said -- he’d said he wouldn’t...that their lives didn’t matter in comparison to the stone and yet it seemed like he was going to--

“Spare his life,” Strange said, “and I will give you the stone.”

Tony felt like he’d been stabbed all over again.

Chapter End Notes

That last scene guys...the moment where Thanos acknowledges that Tony has a son, it was not difficult to write but it was one of my additions into this and I really truly hated Thanos. I read it back before posting and I had to take a step back. And yeah, we're here...we're at the moment so prepare yourselves for the next chapter is the last Infinity War chapter. Eek. I'll have it up by Tuesday.
Thanks to everyone reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“We’re in the endgame now,” Doctor Strange said as Peter rushed to his dad’s side, dropping next to him and looking him over from his pallid face and the blood stains on his lips and then down to the wound.

Tony did something to the wound, using nanotech that sealed it up. Peter helped him stand and his dad didn’t seem all that weak or injured anymore. The shock of being stabbed seemed to have worn off some and they both turned to Dr. Strange. Peter had to wonder if he had done it because he wanted to save Tony or if it was because this was what needed to happen? Had they done everything in vain?

“What’s going to happen next?” Peter asked.

Dr. Strange stared at him and then he looked away without answering.

Tony grabbed his hand and Peter closed his eyes tightly. He was glad that his dad was alright and yet it felt like they had lost. The stone had been taken and Thanos had just left probably in search of the last stone -- the one in Vision’s forehead.

“Are you -- are you going to be okay?” Peter asked.

His dad nodded. “I will be.”

Peter couldn’t tell if he was actually telling the truth, but he could see the color returning to his dad’s face and it seemed like enough to Peter. Still, he stayed close to him. He didn’t want to think about Thanos possibly on Earth going after Vision and the stone. Peter had never spent much time with the android mostly because Vision was always coming and going and spending all of his time with Wanda, but Peter did like him. He hoped he’d make it out of this. Peter knew that the rest of the team was on Earth and that it was likely they were doing their best to keep Thanos or his alien buddies from getting it but Peter just didn’t know if it’d be enough seeing as Thanos now had all the stones save one and he was more powerful than ever.

When he looked at Strange, Peter had to wonder about what he had seen and what he knew about what would happen next.

Tony wrapped an arm around his shoulders and Peter leaned into his side, trying to not put too much of his weight on Tony. He felt his dad press a kiss to his head and Peter was so so glad that Tony was okay.

---

Steve felt it in the air even before he heard Vision say it. It was just -- the wind seemed to be shifting somehow.

“He’s here,” Vision said.

Thanos.

“Everyone, on my position,” Steve said. “We have incoming.”
Wanda was with Vision and Steve had needed to give them some time because he knew what she needed to do now and he couldn’t be the one to force her or force Vision into that sacrifice. They just hadn’t been able to do take the stone out in time and Steve didn’t know if they would be able to hold off Thanos. Sam and Natasha stood by, waiting with him, and Steve could tell that they also knew that there was a choice to be made.

“Cap. That’s him,” Bruce said.

Steve turned and there he was and he was huge and purple and everything that an alien threat needed to look like and Steve had never before faced anything like this. Bruce stepped forward first and he was still not The Hulk. Seeing the red and gold made him ache a little to think that someone else could have been there at his side. So, he and the rest, they needed to be sure to eradicate this threat and stop Thanos.

Bruce phased right through Thanos and then into a rock and it was all courtesy of one of the stones. Steve ran forward but a force hit him and threw him aside mid-run. He dropped like a rag doll and his head spun as the others tried to go at Thanos but found the same fate.

Steve was back on his feet as quickly as he could and when he glanced back he realized that Wanda had actually made a decision. She was destroying the stone. They just needed to hold Thanos back long enough for her to do it. Steve rushed back at Thanos and this time he wasn’t just brushed aside like an errant fly. He managed to get a few blows in with the shield not that he felt like they did anything and then the gauntlet was in front of him and he dropped the shield to grab it. It was futile of course, but it had been the obvious thing to do to even try and yet it was at the same time absolutely devastating. There was only one stone left for Thanos to collect. The other five had already made a home on the gauntlet which had to mean--

No -- no, he couldn’t think that way -- he had to -- something hard collided with his face and he saw stars. The world spun and he was falling. Dust hit his face and he heard leaves crunch and for a moment he lost himself to darkness. He could see Tony like a memory. Oh god, Tony--

---

Thanos lifted his hand and his fingers moved against each other and--

Snap.

“No!” Thor screamed.

Time seemed to slow down and then things started to feel weird. Different. Thanos had all the stones. He’d--

“What did you do!” Thor yelled. His axe was still firmly in Thanos’ chest but it didn’t even seem to bother him as much as it had moments before.

All the anger, all the pain...everything that he’d been feeling since Loki and -- well, everyone -- it was right there at the forefront and Thanos was to blame. He was--

“What did you do!” Thor screamed at him again and Thanos just stared at him before he fell back into a dark purple cloud. The axe fell out of him to the ground and...and it was over. It was over.

Thor was -- he felt like the entire world had finally and truly fallen apart. Ragnarok had felt like the end of everything except that the important things and people had been salvaged only to be destroyed not much later and now there was this and Thor couldn’t have imagined this. The wind brushed his face and there were leaves falling but the fighting had all but stopped. Somewhere behind him was
Vision’s corpse and Thanos had won. He snapped his fingers. What did he do?

Thor was waiting for something to happen -- for the worst to happen as if he hadn’t already had everything taken from him. His home. The last of his family. Everything.

“Where did he go?” Steve asked.

It had been good to be back on Earth despite the circumstances, to see his friends again and to know that in truth he wasn’t actually completely alone but he hadn’t expected that they would lose this battle --

“Thor, where’d he go?”

Thor couldn’t answer. He didn’t know how to say it or explain it.

“Steve…” Someone -- Steve’s friend said. He was walking towards them.

Then, Thor remembered. Gamora back on the ship -- the daughter of Thanos who’s distress had been equal to his own and who had explained what Thanos was all about. A snap of his fingers she’d said to cut by half the population of the universe. It was exactly what Thanos had done.

Steve’s friend dropped to the ground as particles of dust. Others would be doing the same. He won. Thanos won.

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“Something’s happening,” Mantis said. She looked scared and she looked around but there was nothing to see. Thanos had left and there was no new threat. It was over--

She turned to dust, disintegrated and disappeared.

Peter hadn’t expected it, none of them had. They’d been moving, walking towards where Strange was to regroup and decide what came next. Peter was trying to determine if his dad was actually alright and from the way he moved Peter knew that while he was still feeling the effects of being stabbed it wasn’t going to keep him down. All of them were sort of bruised and battered anyway.

“Dad,” Peter whispered.

There was a change in the air...and seeing Mantis turn to dust--

Next went Drax, disappearing where he stood. Peter didn’t know what to do...his dad looked like he couldn’t believe what was happening either. Star Lord looked--

“Steady, Quill,” Tony said.

Quill looked at them and Peter moved a few inches closer to his dad.

“Oh, Man,” Star Lord said and then he was gone too.

Peter felt something. It was like premature pain, a weird feeling in his gut not unlike his spidey sense. There was danger coming it was -- he didn’t feel good. He felt like his insides were churning as if he had eaten something that didn’t settle well with him. His head was spinning. Someone was talking but it wasn’t registering for Peter and then it just got worse and Peter knew. He knew--

“Dad! Dad! Dad, I don’t -- I don’t feel so good,” Peter said.
His dad’s face swam in his vision -- blurry multiples -- had Doctor Strange duplicated his dad…

“Dad,” Peter said and it came out like a sob. His skin felt stretched out and tingly and nothing was okay.

“Pete. It’s okay, it’s okay. You’re going to be okay.” He reached for him and Tony was there as Peter stumbled forward. He caught him -- and Peter needed that, he needed to be held. The panic and pain didn’t go away.

He was afraid and he’d seen -- Peter knew -- “I don’t -- I don’t know what’s happening. Dad -- I--”

His dad clutched at him, held him tight as close as he could and Peter couldn’t really feel any of it. Not even when Tony’s hand was in his hair and a thumb was under his eye wiping away a tear. It just -- it was all faint and far away and it hurt, sort of, a weirdly dulled pain.

“Pete,” his dad whispered, anguished.

“Dad, please…I don’t -- I don’t want to go. I don’t want to go.” He had to say it, to let his dad know because he was going to...

“You’re alright. You’re -- I love you, Peter. I love you.” His dad was sobbing and Peter’s heart broke apart literally or figuratively, Peter didn’t even know…

His dad’s fingers were in his hair and Peter was pressed tight into his chest. His dad was crying, trying not to let Peter know but he was shaking.

Finality. It was -- “I’m sorry,” Peter said and it was hard to get the words out...he felt like he was choking.

“You’re okay…you’re -- I got got you, Pete. I love you. I love you.”

It was already starting. It was scary and horrible and--

“I don’t want to go. Dad, I--”

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“There was no other way.”

“There was no other way.”

“There was no other way.”

Strange fell into dust. Peter fell apart in his arms...crying and upset and Tony fell to the ground. His knees hit the ground hard. Peter’s ashes were around him. On him. In his hands. He sobbed into them--

His son was gone. He was gone. He was gone and--

“There was no other way.”

Tony screamed. Guttural, loud and harsh and pointless but necessary all the same and his knuckles split on the hard ground as his fists fell. He couldn’t see anymore -- everything a blur of tears. How could this be the only way? How could letting Thanos take the stone be the only way? Strange should have let him die. He should have protected the stone and let Tony die. Kept Peter alive instead.
“Peter,” Tony whispered and his chest ached -- felt so tight that Tony didn’t know if it was the injury or his heart. All he knew was pain.

The others had gone too. One by one. Everyone but him…

Was this his fate? To always end up alone?

Someone tapped his shoulder. Tony turned quickly, ready to fight but it was the blue android woman.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “But this planet won’t be safe for much longer. We need to go…”

Tony wanted to scream again. Go! There was nowhere to go. Nowhere they needed to be. It was over -- it was all over and--

“You’re injured,” the android said. Tony didn’t even know her name. “We can’t stay here.”

Tony didn’t understand why she couldn’t just leave him. She could leave -- they were nothing to each other and yet she seemed to be waiting on him. He glanced at her and there was pain in her eyes. She knew loss.

“We need to--”

“I know,” Tony said. His fingers gathered the dust and most of it slipped through his fingers. It was hard to stop his tears. Tony had never been much of a cryer but this was Peter just slipping through his fingers. His son. His Peter.

He had a bit of the nanotech create a small cup and he gathered some of it. His hands shook and so the dust just fell right out. The android crouched in front of him and reached out with one blue hand and one that looked like a prosthetic. She gathered dust into the cup and their eyes met.

“I’m sorry,” she said and there was genuine sympathy there. “We have to go.”

“Okay,” Tony said. He wiped his tears. “I’m Tony by the way.”

“Nebula.”

Chapter End Notes

And so concludes Infinity War. This was a hard one. Even doing some last minute edits a few minutes ago to get it ready to post was hard. I won't say this won't be the last hard thing we face in this fic but we're going into Endgame (my version) and I'm excited for that.

On another note: I have not edited anything past this chapter for this fic as I've been busy working on my book but getting to this point means that now I really do have to get back into editing the remaining chapters. I'm hoping it won't affect how quickly I can update and as of now I'm aiming at Saturday for the next chapter.

Thank you to everyone reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 125

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone reading this. You guys are amazing. Last chapter was certainly a hard one on everyone. I can't believe we've made it past Infinity War already. We're going AU from this point onward following my version of what happens next with some educated guesses and inspiration taken from rumors and the first trailer (and probably the second as well as I'm still editing). Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

They walked to the ship that Quill and his team had arrived in and Tony just couldn’t even focus as they walked. It was a good thing that Nebula was there to lead him because following was just about as much as he could do. It was like he was there but he really just wasn’t and instead he was caught in a daze. He didn’t even properly remember how long the walk to the ship was or how he got in or even when he sat down not until his chest lit up in pain from where he’d been stabbed. He was kind of numb to the physical pain...it didn’t compare to the other. The loss and the grief and just--

“How is your injury?” Nebula asked.

“Fine,” Tony said.

Peter had turned to dust. So had Strange.

“It was the only way,” Strange had said -- his words meant everything and nothing. Peter was gone.

“We have medical equipment,” Nebula said. “Do you want me to check it?”

He grunted, hearing the words but not processing. What did it matter? What did any of it matter? Peter was gone…

Cold fingers touched his wrist and then his chest. He didn’t even really notice. “Whatever you did, you’re not bleeding,” Nebula said.

Tony grunted. Strange’s words wouldn’t leave him. The only way--

“Doesn’t mean that it’s in a good state,” Nebula added.

None of it mattered. It was -- it was pointless. They had lost. Peter was gone. Going after Thanos was pointless because Thanos had already won. Tony had to imagine that things weren’t looking good back on Earth if Thanos had managed to just take the soul stone so quickly after he’d left them with the Time Stone.

“We need to leave,” Nebula said. Tony looked up. If things were different he might have been more interested in her composition. She was so obviously not all organic and aside from that she was blue and alien and she should have piqued his interest.

He was in space. It was -- they were on an unstable planet and home was far away and Tony didn’t even know what he’d fine there. Who he’d find there. His son was gone. He was in space. This was every single one of his fears coming true and Tony didn’t know what to do.
“I need to go home. I need to go back to Earth.”

But who would be left? Would Steve still be there or had he turned to dust as well? What about the others? Rhodey and Natasha and Bruce who had only just returned to them. Wanda. Vision. Oh, god, Vision was probably definitely dead.

Nebula stared at him.

“My team is there,” he said. “I don’t -- I don’t know what we can do but what’s left of them -- they’ll be there.”

At least, he hoped so. He hoped there was someone left. If there wasn’t and he alone was left then the universe itself was really out against him.

“They will help us against Thanos,” Nebula said.

And maybe they did need to. Maybe it was stupid to think that it didn’t matter.

“Yes. Whoever is -- the ones that are left.”

When Tony looked at her he could see the same determination in her eyes -- the same need to face Thanos again and this time come out on top. Tony was an Avenger and he would avenge his son. He would do anything and everything to get rid of Thanos. But he and Nebula would not be able to do it alone. They would need everyone else. Everyone that was left.

“Earth,” Nebula said. “It’s a good thing this is Quill’s ship -- we have some coordinates.”

Tony nodded. He was relieved. Hearing that he might actually make it home meant more than he’d expected. Nebula didn’t remain with him, she left him seated and started looking around the ship. Tony might have been more interested in the spaceship at any other time but Peter wasn’t there at his side to wonder and rant and ask questions and Tony couldn’t find any interest, at least not in that moment. Mostly it all felt like a lot. Too much.

“It was the only way,” Strange had said...the only way for their only path to victory. Tony hated him for it -- for the way that he’d known what would happen and yet he hadn’t warned Tony or tried to make it any easier. Maybe he had thought -- and he’d thought it rightly so -- that Tony would have stopped him from giving up the stone and giving Thanos the win. Tony would have done anything as long as Peter remained alive including letting Thanos kill him.

No victory -- and they hadn’t even achieved it -- was more important than Peter’s life in his eyes. Tony didn’t even want to think about it or consider if there could be any kind of winning after what had just happened. Peter had turned to dust in his arms.

Suddenly, the lights inside the ship turned on and it felt like it was humming around him. The light let him see more of it and it was fascinating. It was a lot like a quinjet but just more. Bigger certainly and probably more technologically advanced too. It took a few minutes and then Nebula had them in the air. Tony felt it as they moved and left the planet. He clutched at his cup full of Peter’s ashes and he only hoped that there wasn’t another pile waiting for him back home made up of all his friends. He couldn’t handle this alone.

—at

Steve was on the ground. He had just dropped down next to Vision as it all sank in. It was over. Truly over and he couldn’t even really face the ones that were left — the ones that hadn’t turned to dust. Bucky had just...Steve couldn’t even close his eyes without seeing it. Seeing Bucky as he fell
forward except that his body didn’t meet the ground and instead it was just his ashes. And then there was the other component of his devastation. Tony and Peter. Oh, god, they were his family — they were everything and Steve didn’t even know if either was alive or dust or if Thanos had—

No, he couldn’t think like that. He couldn’t let his mind take him in that direction even though Steve knew deep down that Tony would first sacrifice himself than allow the opposition to win -- let Thanos win. Which had to mean that...

“Steve,” Natasha said. Her voice was tinged with emotion.

“He won,” Steve said. His voice came out a little broken and rough.

“I know,” Natasha said.

Vision had gone grey. Wanda was gone. Bucky was gone. Sam was gone too. And who else — how many more…

—

He was there. Then he wasn’t.

It hurt but it was abstract like pain that wasn’t felt but known and things were yellow and orange like a sunset but there wasn’t anything to see. Vast space went on and on and on…

Peter thought he heard something...whisperings but they were gone as soon as they came and nothing made sense. It was as if his head had been dunked into water and the water was moving so fast that he couldn’t see. His hearing was muffled though there was very little to hear.

---

Nebula warned Tony when they made the first jump.

“Jump?” Tony asked even as he came to his own conclusion. They were going through a wormhole. Of course they were. Space travel sort of required it.

Tony hadn’t given it much thought before that moment but it made sense and suddenly their trip from Earth to Titan seemed impossible and yet it had happened. He was so far away from home.

“It won’t be too many,” Nebula said, “and they’re not too close together.”

It felt weird. The spaceship probably did a lot to shield them from being directly affected by the fold in space, but it still felt weird. The only good thing about it was that it distracted him from thinking about Peter.

Eventually, Nebula put the ship on autopilot. She stood up from the front chair and although she didn’t say anything to him, Tony could sort of tell that she maybe wanted to. Tony stayed in his seat as Nebula walked past. His wound ached and his heart ached and it was just easier to stay still. Peter had never been still. He wouldn’t have been if he were with them. He’d be looking at everything, asking questions and throwing out suggestions and just -- he’d been so alive.

Tony wiped off a lone tear and he closed his eyes. He could see him in the moments before and it was worse than anything else. When he opened his eyes again, Nebula was back. He was grateful when she didn’t say anything and instead handed him an odd looking thing that looked sort of like a mix between a fat green carrot and a pear. On one end there there was a pink bit that looked like hair.
“What is this?”

“What’s this?” Nebula said and took a bite out of the one she was holding. “It’s delicious. I figured you hadn’t eaten anything in a while.”

He hadn’t eaten in a while, she was right, but he was also hesitant to eat something that he’d never seen before, had grown somewhere in space, and that might not agree with his stomach.

“I think I’ll pass for now,” Tony said.

“Suit yourself.” She continued on to her seat. She piloted the ship for a while and Tony wondered how long it would take for them to get back to Earth and what they would find when they got there.

It was that whole Shrodinger’s cat thing: until he actually arrived back home, Steve was both dust and not dust. There was the other option of something else having happened to him and Tony hoped desperately that Steve would be back home waiting for him because he couldn’t face another loss. Not after Peter.

Nebula took them through another jump and that time Tony thought that he felt the effects of it more. It was like being compressed. He felt a headache begin right on his forehead afterwards.

“Come,” Nebula said. “You have to eat. Get some water too.”

He followed her and despite the headache managed to take in some of the ship as they walked. It was beautiful and a part of Tony wanted to explore it and see everything about it, but he restrained himself. Nebula took him to an area that seemed to make up some sort of kitchen and then they started opening up drawers and cabinets.

“There should be something in here you can eat,” Nebula said.

They found something that looked like protein bars and he figured that was probably his safest bet. It tasted a little off but Tony had eaten worse things. He watched as Nebula kept looking through the drawers and cabinets until she started going faster. Rifling through boxes as well and Tony hadn’t thought that he would ever get to see her show any emotion. But in that moment she looked panicked.

“There’s nothing,” she said. “Nothing.”

“What do you mean nothing?”

“Water,” Nebula said. “We don’t have a lot of water. A lot of anything. There’s -- they didn’t stop to get more provisions.”

It was a worry, sure, but Tony supposed that they might be able to get back to Earth before that became an issue. Tony was used to long periods of time without food and water and rest so he wasn’t worried. Not to mention that the trip the other way had taken hours.

“So, do we need to stop somewhere? Do we need something?” Tony asked.

Nebula didn’t respond for a while. She was checking something else, looking at some sort of screen.

“If they didn’t stop to get supplies that means they didn’t refuel. I didn’t -- I didn’t bother to check,” Nebula said.

That -- that was a problem.
Okoye eventually came to them. “King T’Challa is gone,” she said.

Okoye had always seemed a bit serious to Steve but she was also someone that he could admire and respect. She was an important part of Wakanda -- important to T’Challa. Now, she looked like she was a few seconds away from breaking apart. Her King was gone. It was likely a lot of her friends were gone too.

Steve didn’t know how to respond, but Natasha stepped forward and she grasped Okoye’s arm. “A lot of people are gone.”

It was a silent walk back to the palace and none of them knew what to say or what to do. Rhodey and Bruce walked behind them but Thor and his racoon friend stayed behind. Some of the Wakandan warriors joined them. Everyone was mourning someone. And it wouldn’t just be there in Wakanda but everywhere. In fact when they arrived at the palace it was in chaos in a way that Steve had never seen it before.

They were trying to figure out their casualties from the battle from the casualties of the dusting and Steve felt out of place. He was worried about Tony and Peter and his team -- the ones that had turned to dust and the ones that were left too. He didn’t know how to help Okoye and the others. It was Natasha that eventually touched his elbow to catch his attention.

“I don’t think we are needed or wanted here any longer,” she said.

Steve figured that she was right but even then it felt like they were abandoning Okoye and Wakanda and all the people that had been so ready to help them when they brought the threat of Thanos to their home.

“I think, Captain, that Ms. Romanov is correct,” Okoye said. “Things would be better if you left. The whole world will be in chaos now. It will need your help. We can take care of Wakanda even if our king is gone.”

“We -- I am sorry for your loss,” Rhodey said. “If you or anyone needs anything we will be happy to help.”

She nodded but didn’t respond and then someone was calling her name and she was off.

It didn’t take long for them to go after that and they didn’t even get a chance to see Shuri to thank her for everything she’d done even if their plan had failed. Steve supposed that she was probably going to have to step up into leading Wakanda. It wouldn’t be an easy task. The whole world -- the universe -- wasn’t facing an easy time.

Natasha got up front and Steve let her, not sure if he could focus on flying after everything. Thor sat next to Steve and Steve could sense his melancholy. Next to Thor was the racoon, Rocket, who seemed a lot more subdued than before.

The silence was broken by Bruce a half hour into their flight.

“Thor, how are you here? Last I saw -- you were--”

Thor looked at Bruce almost with some surprise to find him there. “Banner,” he said, “I lived to see my brother perish at the hands of Thanos. Got rescued by Rocket and his team. There was only one thing I could do and that was to get a weapon that could destroy Thanos. I did not think I would see you again, Banner.”
“I didn’t think I’d see you either,” Bruce said. “I’m sorry about Loki.”

“It seems this time he truly is dead,” Thor said and his lips seemed to quirk up a little but there was still so much sadness there. Steve didn’t like seeing him sad.

Nobody brought up Tony and Steve was glad for it. He didn’t want to talk about him or wonder out loud what might have happened to him. Worry was ever present but Steve was also trying to intermingle that with hope that Tony could surprise them all and come home. He’d woken up after he fell from the wormhole and he’d come home from the cave -- Steve just hoped desperately for one last Tony-esque surprise and that he would come home. Him and Peter both.

A few hours later they flew into New York and landed at the tower.

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“How far will we get?” Tony asked. “Is there any hope we can make it somewhere to refuel or to Earth?”

Nebula didn’t answer which was answer enough.

“We’re closer to your solar system now,” Nebula said, “but we won’t make it to your planet. If we go back I don’t know that we could find somewhere to refuel.”

So, they were screwed either way. It was kind of funny, the irony of not being dusted and not being killed by Thanos just to die drifting in space. Tony had had to watch his son disappear in his hands and now he was adrift in space. It was a nightmare playing out. Tony took a few deep breaths, trying to keep himself from panicking. He knew his heart was beating fast and the whole idea of being trapped in a spaceship in space terrified him. Strange should have just let Thanos kill him -- he should have protected the stone. He was going to die anyway.

“Calm down, Stark,” Nebula said with maybe a touch of concern although he couldn’t tell from looking at her.

He wasn’t all that far gone into panic, but focusing on Nebula helped.

“We will ration out the water. We’re better off when it comes to food. I think we should head to your planet. Maybe -- maybe we can make it close enough to it. Your team, could they help?”

They would. Tony knew they would. The quinjet wasn’t designed for space travel but it as Bruce had proven it was capable enough. It was just a matter of them knowing where to look. If the Stark satellites could somehow connect with what was left of the suit or even the ship itself then sure, they might be able to get word. Maybe the ship could amplify his signal or something. It was an idea, at least. Their best hope in some ways because it was clear that Nebula didn’t seem like the type to have friends. Maybe Quill and the others had been her friends and they were all gone. Just like her sister was also gone.

“We can try,” Tony said.

Nebula gave a nod. “I’ll try and modify our route to get us as close to Earth as possible.”

It was all such a long shot. But maybe it would work -- maybe they’d be rescued. If they weren’t then Strange’s sacrifice for him would have been pointless. Either way, Peter was gone. Nothing mattered while Peter was gone.

---
It was still very orange, but he’d gotten used to it somehow. It felt normal. It didn’t make sense, but it felt normal. Which was of course when he started to hear voices. Peter thought that he was going crazy because there was no one around. No one that could be talking to him.

He was hesitant to go anywhere, afraid that he might not find his place back in the vast orange space. Although -- that was a worry he didn’t really understand very well. He pushed it out of his mind and started moving. It felt weird like floating and walking all at once.

Peter wandered for a while but it all looked the same. Orange or yellow and hazy. The voices continued. Then, he bumped into something or someone.

“Hello?”

“Hi?”

A hand touched his arm and then a familiar person was there, just visible through the orange fog and it was Steve’s friend.

“Bucky?”

“Yeah,” Bucky said and Peter could make him out better. “Who are you?”

Chapter End Notes

This was a slightly than longer chapter which I felt was sort of necessary just to set up where we're going from this point onward. I really loved including Nebula in here and I am so looking forward to seeing what Endgame does have to offer with those two together. The Tony parts of this chapter were extremely difficult to write for me as grief is just hard to portray I think while also holding on to a plot. But I think it hits a balance that I ended up liking.

I did want to make a note of Peter. One of my biggest problems with planning post-IW was the lack of Peter. This story in my eyes has always been more about Tony but Peter obviously has a major role and the idea of basically dusting Peter and then not having Peter in the story until he returned really didn't sit well for me so I found a way to involve him. I told one of you a while back that I had written some Peter and Bucky stuff so we're finally getting it.

I also mentioned a while back that I was not planning on including Captain Marvel in this. I am reconsidering. Now that I have seen her in action and understand her a bit more I am very tempted to add her in so we'll see if I can manage that change to the plot of the remaining chapters. (But yeah, loved the movie. If you haven't seen it already please do.)

I don't know when the next chapter will be up as it is isn't ready! It's so weird to be posting while I don't have the next chapter ready. Definitely will have one up by next week. It all just depends on how well my editing goes. Thanks so much to everyone reading.
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 126

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The tower seemed emptier without Tony. Friday was still there, the bots were still there, and K-9 ran to meet them when they entered the tower. Steve barely had the energy to bend down and pet the robot dog and Steve had to wonder if K-9 had noticed the absence of Tony and Peter. The dog followed him as they all crowded into the living room of the penthouse and stayed by his side. It was a little sad.

None of them knew what to do.

“We can’t -- we can’t just sit around and do nothing,” Natasha said eventually. “I’m going to try and contact Fury and Hill.”

Steve nodded.

“I’ll call Pepper,” Rhodey said.

None of them said it but they hoped that the three of them hadn’t been dusted. Steve didn’t really want to think about who else they had lost.

Steve didn’t know who turned on the tv, but the news came on and immediately it was obvious that things were worse than they could have imagined. There were accidents everywhere. People disappearing in their cars or worse while flying helicopters or airplanes. Everywhere there were people missing. A bunch of celebrities were mentioned in passing before the newscaster focused on the number of important world leaders that had become dust. There was a picture -- a horrible picture of a pile of dust in the oval office just in front of the President’s desk. All over it had happened. No one seemed to know what to do or how to handle it and worse no one knew who should handle it or how to get answers. Even the newscaster seemed emotional as she spoke and Steve expected that things were like that all over.

“Damn,” Rhodey said, phone in hand, clearly not having called Pepper just yet.

“Neither of them is answering,” Natasha said.

“Try Coulson,” Steve said, already fearing the worst. If Fury was gone--

“Coulson is -- didn’t Coulson die?” Bruce asked.

Thor looked towards Steve with the same question in his eyes.

“Turned out he didn’t. Well, it’s complicated. He has a team. Nat?”

“I’ll try,” Natasha said.

The news just kept going showing more and more images from around the world. The confusion and the mess that had been caused. So much that they had allowed to happen. Steve closed his eyes tightly. K-9’s paws landed on his legs and Steve reached down for the dog who climbed on his lap.

“Looks like Shield is off the grid again,” Natasha said after a few minutes. “We’re not going to get any help there.”
Rhodey did get through to Pepper. Steve let out a sigh of relief. With everything going on, they were definitely going to need Pepper. Rhodey spoke to her for a while and Steve was sure that Pepper was freaking out. Steve kept watching the news, unable to stop because he needed to face the reality and he needed to feel like he needed to do something. Anything. It was just a matter of figuring out what that something was.

Rhodey pulled his focus away from the news.

“Pepper has been conversing with UN representatives and some US officials. They reached out to her before this. She said she heard from Maria Hill before -- what did the news call it? The decimation?”

“And?” Natasha asked.

“She said that she didn’t know what they were doing but that they had some sort of plan -- it’s likely they got dusted. Everyone’s still trying to figure out how to keep track so who knows but…”

“Right,” Steve said. It made sense. Everything was a mess. It was worse than anything Steve could have imagined.

“My team is still out there,” Rocket said suddenly. He was seated next to Thor who was keeping relatively quiet. “Whatever of it is left.”

The raccoon had introduced himself to Steve at some point during the flight. It was weird to talk to a raccoon and yet maybe that wasn’t the weirdest thing to ever happen to Steve.

“At least I hope they are,” Rocket said. “I -- I need to find them. I need to know who else--”

Steve understood the distress that Rocket felt.

“The quinjet will work in space,” Bruce offered.

Which meant that if they wanted to, they could go look for Tony and Peter. Natasha seemed to realize what he was thinking and she shook her head because Natasha was always logical and she was a few steps of him. The problem was they didn’t have any way to know where in space to look for them. And what if they weren’t -- well, then, it would be pointless. Steve hated thinking about it that way.

“I cannot accompany you, Rabbit,” Thor said.

“I know,” Rocket said.

Steve didn’t know if this was a goodbye and if Rocket was going to just disappear and never be heard from again, but Steve hoped that it wouldn’t. If they did figure out a way to go against Thanos, they were going to need all the help that they could get. Steve didn’t know if it would even be possible to go up against Thanos or if that would even fix anything, but it would definitely make Steve feel better to avenge everyone they had lost.

---

“I’m Tony Stark’s son,” Peter said.

Bucky’s eyes widened. “You’re -- you’re the kid. You’re Peter! Of course, of course. You kind of look like your dad. And Steve’s told me a lot about you. But you’re -- you’re here--” His excitement fell into a sad look.
“I am,” Peter said.

Bucky kept looking sad and maybe a little annoyed and then he shook his head. “This isn’t right. This isn’t right at all.”

Orange vastness surrounded them and not much else. He was sort of getting used to it which was strange. Peter didn’t see anyone else even though there had to be other people. He couldn’t even be sure how much time had passed or much of anything else and it was entirely disconcerting.

“Stick with me, kid,” Bucky said, “whatever this is -- where ever we are, you stick with me.”

Peter nodded. “Sure.”

They walked for a while even if it seemed like they weren’t getting very far because everything seemed the same. Eventually they came upon a bench and they sat down. Things changed then. It was less orange tinged and it seemed like there was more noise -- more people.

“We turned to dust,” Peter said and suddenly remembered Star Lord and Strange and Mantis and Drax. They would all be here too and maybe his dad…but no, if he was he would have seen him already. Probably. “So what is this place?”

“We are in the Soul stone, Peter,” Dr. Strange said, appearing in front of them.

Peter frowned at him and then looked towards Bucky and back at Strange again. “You knew this was going to happen. You knew.”

---

Ned watched the news first with May and MJ and then with his dad. His mom had turned to dust. Watching the newscasters try to make heads or tails of the situation could have been amusing but mostly it was just sad and scary. No one had any answers. No one knew anything. All they knew was that it had to be alien related. It had to do with the attacks and the battle that had occurred in Wakanda and whatever else had happened.

There was some sort of statement from Pepper Potts about Tony Stark still being missing. It meant that so was Peter. Ned just didn’t know how much more he could cry. His mom was gone. Peter was essentially gone. MJ had lost her entire family. None of it made any sense. Ned just wanted all of it to stop and for someone to explain what was happening.

Seeing May and MJ and the empty look in their eyes was as difficult as anything else. His dad’s eyes were so red and Ned couldn’t handle it.

But what made the whole thing worse was that everything had turned into chaos. It wasn’t enough that people had turned to dust because that had had the added effect of other casualties and accidents and making all of it an even bigger mess. MJ was completely broken up about it.

Worse, the President was gone. So were other world leaders. So until things were set to some kind of order no one knew what to do or think and the media just fueled the fire with their speculation and with bringing on guest speakers that knew nothing and just wanted a platform. It was all such a mess. All everyone was waiting was to hear from The Avengers and get an idea as to what had happened in the first place.

---

It turned out that there was less food and water than Nebula had expected. What was worse was
finding out that their oxygen was going to run out too. Probably around the same time that they lost all power. They were headed for certain doom and Tony had no idea how to feel about it.

Nebula piloted the ship with as much power reserved as possible which meant that they didn’t have the heat running and that any non-essential function had been turned off. Tony had had to go through what seemed to be Quill’s clothing to find something to keep him warm. At least that had served as a distraction. Tony had also gotten to go through a few of Quill’s belongings which was how he found the cassette player. It had amused him for a while, mostly because Tony hadn’t seen one of those in longer than he could remember. It made him just a little sad about Quill being turned to dust.

During the fight on Titan, a lot of his nanotech suit had gotten destroyed but Tony had had just a small bit left. It was enough to reform it into his helmet. He could even power it still, but Tony just didn’t know if that would actually help them or not. Tony was just glad to have a piece of the Iron Man suit to hold and look at. It made him feel a little more hopeful. The helmet still did power on but it wouldn’t be useful unless Tony could get it to connect to one of the Stark Satellites and they were too far away for that to work.

They took a few more jumps through space and Nebula seemed confident that even despite their low fuel that they would make it close to Earth. Tony didn’t want to consider that it wouldn’t matter how close they got if they couldn’t somehow alert anyone to rescue them. It was all a matter of how close to Earth they could manage to get and Tony was hoping for the best. He had to. It wasn’t even a closeness to Earth, it was more about getting into range with his satellites. If he could send a message, it would make all the difference.

Although the trip from Earth to Titan hadn’t taken all that long, the trip to Earth seemed longer. Tony couldn’t tell how much time had passed, but he knew it had been almost a full day. When he asked Nebula, she confirmed. Almost sixteen hours had gone by. It had been sixteen hours since Peter--

Tony took a breath.

There would be a time to mourn. Once he was back on Earth. He just had to hold on.

“Stark,” Nebula said, “I expect we just have another twelve hours at the most. We’ll be as close to Earth as possible.”

They just had to get close enough.

---

Rocket left after he spent a few hours working on one of the quinjets. Steve didn’t really follow any of his tech babble although he was sure that Tony probably would have. Tony would have definitely found a way to help too if he were around. Essentially, Steve got the gist that Rocket was trying to make the quinjet more space friendly before he left.

“I don’t know how Hulk managed to take one into space at all,” Bruce admitted. “Or how I ended up where I did.”

“Wormhole,” Thor said, “that’s how you ended in Sakaar. It’s kind of a dumping ground for anything that gets lost”

“Oh,” Bruce said.

Thor was sad. His devastation was so obvious to all of them and Steve couldn’t tell if it was because of the snap, the loss of, Loki, their loss against Thanos, or if it was something else altogether. He just knew that Thor was not acting like himself. He was withdrawn and sad. They were all some
variation of that, it was just stranger to see it on Thor.

Although things were still a bit of a mess, people had started to organize and figure out what came next. People were reporting their missing family members. In some cases they knew for sure that they had been dusted, in others they had no idea. The numbers just kept rising and rising and Friday had started to compile her own list, pulling the people they knew -- Shield agents and friends and acquaintances and anyone that could be of use so that they could keep track. It was a hard list to look at. They made the list accessible online so that others could see it and know if their loved ones were on it. Steve hated looking at it, but he also wanted to keep watching it. Hating that the numbers never seemed to stop.

Keeping an eye on the list became the one thing he could do when there was no immediate task at hand. Natasha had taken on communications -- reaching out to anyone and everyone. She had friends in all kinds of places. Not all of them answered or responded. Natasha also reached out to Scott and to Clint but neither responded back and no one wanted to think about what that might mean.

Their one constant was Pepper who was still dealing directly with the UN and so much else. Steve was extremely grateful for her and everything that she was taking on when she didn’t even need to. It wasn’t even just Avengers stuff that she was taking on, but she was using SI as Tony would have wanted -- putting all resources on helping with search and rescue and rebuilding and things that Steve wouldn’t have even thought of. Pepper was also still the only one to speak out to the press on behalf of The Avengers and Steve was glad that he hadn’t been the one with that particular task. Pepper was the strongest person he knew.

After Rocket left, Steve wished he’d gone with him. The thought snuck up on him just a few minutes after he and Thor saw Rocket off.

“I don’t know if Tony’s out there,” Steve said to Thor, “but if he is, shouldn’t I be looking for him?”

Thor tilted his head. “If we knew where to start looking this would be different, but we don’t.”

“I know. I know. I just can’t do this -- this not knowing.”

Thor’s heavy hand landed on his shoulder. “Stark is a survivor.”

“Yeah. I just don’t know if this is one thing he can survive. Him and Peter.”

“I hope to meet yours and Stark’s son,” Thor said.

Steve didn’t correct him. It didn’t feel worth correcting...maybe Thor wasn’t even wrong.

It was when they got back into the penthouse that Friday caught their attention.

“Captain,” she said.

Steve figured it was Rocket. Maybe he was giving them a goodbye before he left Earth altogether. It wasn’t.

“There is a message,” Friday said. “It’s -- it’s from Mr. Stark.”

Chapter End Notes
I did not mean to take a week between chapters...but I can admit that some procrastination and then working on my book took a lot of my time away from working on this...but at last...

I'm not entirely happy with this chapter...but I don't know exactly what I don't like about it. Hopefully it won't take me a full week until the next chapter but certainly will have it up by Saturday. Thanks for reading.

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Chapter 127

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was figuring out that he didn’t just have to use the remainder of the suit to try and get a signal out that really made Tony believe he could get a message to someone on Earth. The ship had its own communication system and it was something a little more advanced and technologically savvy. Tony spent a fair amount of time messing with it. Nebula knew a lot more about engineering than she’d let on, so between the two of them they got the ship connected to his suit. It would amplify the signal which meant that at the very least they might have a better chance at sending out distress signals and then also a better chance at connecting with one of Earth’s satellites. It was just a matter of whether anyone would get it or answer or even be capable of helping. Tony’s best bet was if Friday picked it up. Or Shuri.

“I’m -- what is that in your chest, Stark?” Nebula asked.

“Housing unit for nanotech not that there’s much left now.” He pointed at the Iron Man helmet. “Kind of wish I’d put in a whole new arc reactor instead. Would have powered this ship probably.”

“Your suit is impressive, Stark. I saw you in action.”

When they had made it into the Solar System and a bit past Mars, Tony almost asked Nebula to land on Mars. Despite the possibility of being able to communicate with someone on Earth -- Tony thought there was about a 40% chance of them actually getting through --, he didn’t think it’d be a half-bad idea to actually land the ship rather than drifting in space. The idea also came to him in part because Peter had made him watch that movie with Matt Damon -- and Peter would have suggested that if he were with them. Going off of movies hadn’t exactly been a bad strategy.

Tony also knew that Spirit and Opportunity were on Mars and it might have been their only other way to try and get a message down to NASA or even just to the space station. Anyone that could pass on a message to The Avengers.

In the end, Nebula telling him how close they’d be making it between Earth and Mars had made the decision for him because it let him hope that they might actually manage to get a message down to his team on their own. Either choice felt like a gamble and Tony was picking the better odds of survival. After all, they couldn’t know that they would actually be able to find the rovers and they had neither the skills or the tools that Matt Damon had had in The Martian. Not to mention that they were out of water and there was very little food that he could actually stomach.

He could tell that Nebula was worried about him. She could tell that he wasn’t doing well. It wasn’t even just the grief and sadness because that was a constant. Keeping busy and working helped, but he was tired. His chest was a constant reminder of everything that had happened because the wound hurt. It ached. It didn’t help that he was dehydrated and hungry. Sleeping was nearly impossible because he was always just reminded of where he was and space was still one of the scariest things to him -- dying in outer space terrified him. Not knowing if he would ever make it back home terrified him. Closing his eyes just brought images of Peter disappearing in his arms and then there was Thanos. Always Thanos and “I hope you remember”. Strange too always saying the same thing: “It was the only way.”

Nebula tried to help. She gave him more than his portion of water and she tried to make him eat her weird alien food and there was just something about how someone like her who came off almost
unfeeling, still had so much compassion. Tony was growing very fond of her. She was a lot like Natasha in some ways and he could tell that she had been through a lot -- things that had made her hard. There was also of course her determination to see Thanos destroyed. Tony loved that about her.

“My sister,” she’d explained at some point while she ate another of those weird fruits and he tried to stomach a bland rice like thing, “she was always his favorite. We were not his real children -- we were his trophies. He pitted us against each other and every time she won I had to be upgraded. I needed to be more like Gamora. He wanted me to be more like Gamora. He’s a monster and I -- I let him capture me and he used me against her. It’s how he got the Soul Stone.”

Tony hadn’t known quite how to reply, but Nebula just dropped her shoulders.

“We were both so stupid,” Nebula said with a shake of her head.

“You were victims,” Tony said. “He took you as children, you said. He would have killed you if you didn’t do what he wanted. How did he get the Soul Stone?”

Nebula didn’t know everything about it. She just knew where it had been and that someone was guarding it. She also knew that Thanos had killed Gamora there even if she didn’t know how or why. Tony remembered when Mantis mentioned that Thanos was in pain and distressed. It must have been over Gamora’s death which meant that he probably hadn’t wanted to kill her, but he’d done it anyway.

“We’ll figure something out,” Tony said. “We’ll find a way to make all of this right.”

Nebula didn’t respond. Tony didn’t know if like him, she didn’t think that it’d be possible. Because even if they did manage to go up against Thanos and they won their losses would still remain. Gamora and Peter and who knew who else.

They were down to very little fuel and very little oxygen and they were close enough to Earth that Tony had been trying to get any connection he could. It was when Nebula had gone to go through the bedrooms in search of anything she’d missed that Tony managed a connection. It was a Stark satellite

“Record message,” Tony said immediately. The helmet came to life, lit up and ready to go but Tony didn’t know what to say. “Is this thing on?” He asked.

“I guess, I’ll get to it. I -- I hope this makes it to you. I don’t really know who you is or who is left. If anyone. I’m -- if you get this too late, don’t feel bad about it. This whole thing is a long shot. Part of the journey is the end and I’ve avoided my end enough times that it’s only right it catches up to me eventually.” He paused there, taking a breath. This wasn’t getting to the point. “We’re adrift in space. Not the kind of thing I’d consider fun especially this close to home. We’re -- we’re not going to make it. We’re out of water and food is running low. We’ll be running out of oxygen soon. I don’t know how long we have -- a few hours, maybe a whole day if we’re lucky…”

Tony trailed off. He couldn’t be sure that Steve would get this message but if it was his last chance to have any kind of last word this would be it.

“Steve, if you are there. If you get this and god, I hope you get this. I love you. Peter’s gone...he turned to dust and I don’t--” Saying it out loud hurt more than Tony had expected. He wiped away a tear and willed himself to stop crying. He was too dehydrated to cry.

He heard movement behind him and turned. Nebula stood a few feet away. She didn’t say anything,
but she nodded encouragingly and Tony closed and opened his eyes. He didn’t know how much longer he would have before they disconnected.

“There was a farm I was eying up,” Tony said, knowing it wasn’t relevant but needing to get it out. “It’s all secluded and out of the way and I wanted it to be ours. I don’t know when or...well, after all of this was over. Once we--” He coughed. “--There’s adoption papers in my lab. I -- it would have been -- Peter would have made a good big brother. I’m kind of rambling a little but I just wanted you to know I had plans and if this is it, I just...I love you. I love all of you and I hope Friday gets this message to you in time. If I -- if I drift off, I’ll be dreaming about our farm and you and Peter…”

The signal disconnected. Nebula put a hand on his shoulder and he leaned into her as he let out a sob. Her hand pressed a little harder on his shoulder and Tony felt lighter in some ways and heavier in others. He hoped they got the message. He hoped they would be rescued. Tony didn’t know what would happen in the next few hours and he didn’t want to dwell on the options.

“Tell me about him -- about Peter,” Nebula said, bringing him out of his thoughts.

Tony took a few deep breaths and he brushed away the few tears that had fallen. He really couldn’t afford to cry. His body needed the water and it’d be foolish to give in to tears even if that’s also what he needed.

“My kid would have liked you a lot,” Tony said. “He would have had a million questions. He was just a kid, you know. Sweetest and most caring and strong. Peter just brought this joy with him and he made everyone happier. He deserved to have the rest of his life -- he would have done amazing things.”

Nebula gripped his hand and he squeezed back as he began telling her more about Peter and Spider-Man. Eventually he got sidetracked and started talking about the others. He told her about Steve and Bruce and then Natasha and Pepper and Sam and Rhodey. He mentioned Wanda and Vision and then back to Peter again and it felt nice to talk about his family even though he knew that at least some of them would be missing if they did make it to Earth.

---

“There is only one way for us to win,” Strange said, “and that is this way. This had to happen in order for us to have victory against Thanos.”

Peter didn’t even really care. Well, no, he did care. Strange kept explaining himself even if he still didn’t say what he’d seen or how things had to play out for that version of the future to happen. He was still keeping so much close to his chest. Strange was just paranoid and Peter was a little more understanding of why his dad had been so frustrated with the man.

When he looked towards Bucky, Bucky didn’t seem entirely happy with Strange either. It kind of looked like he had a yellow halo of light around his head because of the changing orange and yellow around them. Strange had said this was the Soul Stone. Peter didn’t know quite what to make of that information.

“What does that mean, that we’re in the Soul Stone?” Bucky asked. “Is that one of the Infinity Stones?”

“We are in the stone,” Strange said, “it means we are not dead.”

“So we’re in limbo,” Bucky said and sighed. “As if that’s much better.”

“It will be once we make it back out of the stone,” Strange said. “And we will. Things are happening
like they are supposed to.”

Which meant that that was exactly what would happen. It just sucked that everyone out there in the real world probably had no idea that their loved ones might return. Oh god, what did that mean for his dad? And Steve. And May. And Ned. And MJ. So far none of them had appeared inside the stone. Then again, maybe they just hadn’t seen them yet. After all, it had felt like forever before he ran into Bucky and then Strange had just appeared. Maybe others were in the stone as well.

“Right, and how long do we think that’s actually going to take,” Peter said. He couldn’t imagine it would be fast.

“How much time has already passed?” Strange asked.

Peter had no idea. Great. So, it was possible that time moved differently inside the stone. He felt Bucky shift next to him and sigh. Peter followed suit.

“This is for the better. It’s what needed to happen,” Strange said.

Peter shook his head. “You might be right, but maybe you could have shared more information with all of us.”

“And that would have changed things, Peter.”

Maybe. Probably. Strange was probably right. Peter just didn’t have to like him or the situation.

Chapter End Notes

First: So the only reason that I actually headed in the direction of Tony and Nebula stuck in space was that I wanted to make a The Martian reference. It's one of my favorite books and one that I picked up mainly on a whim and that I would recomend to anyone. The movie was also very good and I feel like Peter would have definitely seen it. I also wrote this chapter before we said goodbye to Spirit and Opportunity which still makes me sad to think about. That part was also kind of a little inspired by the tweets from NASA after the first endgame trailer came out (like a tiny bit).

Second: I am posting only half the chapter! So I spent some time last night editing this chapter and kept it going this morning. The Tony scene got longer and longer the more I edited (I just love writing Nebula so much). This chapter originally had three scenes. I was also supposed to add another scene in which I haven't yet written so I decided to split the chapter and not have the wait for the chapter be longer...and then I can also really figure out that new scene I'm adding in (which was actually supposed to be in ch. 126 and one of the reasons I think 126 felt off to me).

Third: That message was so hard to write. omg.

Next chapter Steve receives the message. Not sure when it will be up seeing as work, my book, and baking is going to take up some of free my time. Hoping to have it up by Sunday? Maybe Monday. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“Have you heard anything?” The words were hard to get out. The call had been hard to make in the first place.

“No,” Pepper said. “I haven’t. With everything going on we don’t even know if they’re…”

“Yeah,” May said.

It was hard to not know anything. There were lists upon lists of everyone that was missing. The world had gone topsy turvy and no one knew what came next. May couldn’t imagine that things were even going to be the same.

“May, we don’t know anything either. Not really. I spoke to Rhodey. They’re all shaken up. The whole world is…”

“How are you holding up?” May asked.

May had gotten to know Pepper well over the years. She knew her well enough to know that Pepper would be doing more than her part to help the world move forward. Tony wasn’t around -- and who knew if he would be again -- but Pepper Potts would do all the she could to help people in light of everything. The decimation. It was a horrible term -- something to remain in everyone’s thoughts for far longer than it needed to.

“Keeping busy. Following protocol,” Pepper said.

“And you’ll let me know if anything happens. I just -- I can’t give up hope that he’s alright just out there in space. I don’t know if that’s better or worse.”

When the call ended, May dropped her phone on the kitchen counter. She was trying not to let her emotions get the better of her and yet it couldn’t be helped. It was her Peter out there in space. Or maybe he had turned to dust. Or maybe something worse had happened. Not knowing was killing her. Worse was watching the news or going online because everyone in the world was mourning someone and May didn’t know what to think anymore.

---

Friday played the message in the living room. Thor stood at Steve’s side and the others appeared too, putting whatever they were working on off to listen. Bruce clutched his hands together. Natasha stood with Rhodey. None of them said a word.

“I guess, I’ll get to it,” Tony said and his voice was everything. “I -- I hope this makes it to you. I don’t really know who you is or who is left. If anyone. I’m -- if you get this too late, don’t feel bad about it. This whole thing is a long shot. Part of the journey is the end and I’ve avoided my end enough times that it’s only right it catches up to me eventually.”

Tony paused and Steve was worried for a moment that it ended there. Then, Tony’s voice came back.

“We’re adrift in space. Not the kind of thing I’d consider fun especially this close to home. We’re --
we’re not going to make it. We’re out of water and food is running low. We’ll be running out of oxygen soon. I don’t know how long we have -- a few hours, maybe a whole day if we’re lucky…”

Tony trailed off again and Steve felt like he’d been punched in the gut. It wasn’t fair. Tony wasn’t supposed to...

“Steve,” Tony said.

Steve gasped.

“--if you are there. If you get this and god, I hope you get this. I love you. Peter’s gone...he turned to dust and I don’t--”

Steve could hear it in Tony’s voice. There was a slight tremor and such resigned sadness. He felt completely shocked. The only thing that kept him standing there was that the message wasn’t over.

“There was a farm I was eying up. It’s all secluded and out of the way and I wanted it to be ours. I don’t know when or...well, after all of this was over. Once we--” He coughed. “--There’s adoption papers in my lab. I -- it would have been -- Peter would have made a good big brother. I’m kind of rambling a little but I just wanted you to know I had plans and if this is it, I just…I love you. I love all of you and I hope Friday gets this message to you in time. If I -- if I drift off, I’ll be dreaming about our farm and you and Peter…”

It was a goodbye as much as it was a plea for rescue. Steve didn’t even realize he was crying until it was over and his eyes blurred. Hearing Tony’s voice was everything even if it was a goodbye. That’s all the message was and it hurt. And then there was Peter. Peter was -- Steve could barely think it. And if he felt this way, he knew it would be ten times worse on Tony. And Tony was out in space and he was running out of oxygen--

“Friday, how old is this?” Bruce asked, speaking first.

Steve waited with baited breath.

“It was transmitted a few minutes ago,” Friday said, “it was a very loose connection to a Stark Satellite that allowed the transmission.”

“He said he was close,” Bruce said.

Which meant -- could they do it? Could they rescue him and bring him home? Steve wiped away his tears.

“Is it -- can we--”

He looked towards Thor, but it was Natasha that spoke instead. “Rocket!” She said.

Rocket couldn’t have gotten far. He was already on a quinjet headed for space and it might be their only shot.

“Friday?” Steve asked.

“On it, Captain,” Friday said and on the screen a video feed came up and then a few seconds later they could see into the quinjet and at Rocket.

The camera was pointed a little too high, but they could still see the top half of Rocket’s face. Steve was still trying not to think about him as a raccoon, but it was kind of hard even as he looked up.
“You guys checking in on me or something? I guess I should be touched.” Rocket kind of smirked, a weird smile with his very sharp teeth showing.

“No, Rabbit,” Thor said, “we need your help.”

“Kinda busy here,” Rocket said. “I’m leaving Earth’s atmosphere right now so…” he trailed off and then a few seconds passed. “Well, what do you want?”

Thor explained about Tony and the message and how he was in need of rescue.

“You’re kind of our only hope,” Natasha added.

“Well, when put that way,” Rocket said with a sigh. “I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thank you,” Steve said. “He said he’s running out of fuel and oxygen.”

Rocket grumbled something to himself but he nodded and then the video sort of shook and Steve supposed that that had something to do with leaving Earth’s atmosphere. They watched as Rocket handled the quinjet, his raccoon hands touching controls and buttons without much trouble. It made Steve wonder a lot about his origins.

Suddenly, there was a loud sound like an alert, except it wasn’t what Steve was used to hearing.

“There’s -- I’m getting a distress signal,” Rocket said and he seemed to be frowning. Then, he laughed. “It’s the Benatar.” He laughed again.

“The Benatar?” Steve asked his hands were twisted together and he was having a hard time not fidgeting. It was hard not being able to do anything. He had no control here and it was driving him crazy.

Tony was adrift in space on a ship that was running out of oxygen. A talking raccoon was the best option for rescue. Natasha’s hand landed on top of his, drawing his hands apart from each other. He looked down at her and she smiled slightly at him.

“My ship,” Rocket said with a grunt. “Maybe your friend met up with mine. Small universe.” The image was becoming fuzzy, static taking up part of the screen.

“Oh, the one I crashed into,” Thor said.

Rocket nodded and then the video froze.

“Must be out of range,” Bruce muttered.

The video dropped and Steve let out a breath. He didn’t know what to think or do and it was going to be a waiting game. But Tony was alive. He was alive and Rocket was going to rescue him. Steve had to believe that things were going to turn out alright.

None of them moved for a moment, but then Natasha pulled and pushed Steve to sit. They didn’t know how long it would be until Rocket got to Tony or for Rocket to return with Tony. Steve just had to believe that it was definitely going to happen.

“You know, he’s right about all the times he’s managed to survive. This is just going to be another one,” Rhodey said. Steve looked towards him and he could tell that Rhodey had let out a few tears too.

“Only Tony,” Bruce said with a small watery smile.
K-9 climbed on the couch next to Steve, head leaning into his leg. Steve pet his head and realized that Peter wouldn’t get to do that again. Peter was gone...turned to dust. Another loss. One of the worst losses.

“Steve?”

“Peter,” Steve whispered and his voice broke a little.

“I know,” Natasha said. “I know.”

It was kind of unbelievable, like Steve couldn’t imagine not having Peter around. Not having Peter come home. He was a part of the tower and their lives -- one of the best parts.

“I guess now we wait,” Natasha said.

Steve nodded. He didn’t want to think about the possibility that Rocket wouldn’t find Tony or that somehow the message had been old and he would find Tony but-- No, he had to let himself hope. Tony was going to come home and that was that. And once he did they would figure out a plan and if they couldn’t undo what Thanos had done then at least they could make sure that they avenged everyone they’d lost.

In the meanwhile, Steve wanted to hear Tony’s voice again.

“Hey, Friday, can you play the message again,” Steve said.

“Sure thing, Captain.”

Tony’s voice was a little rough, maybe from the lack of water that he mentioned or just because he was tired or too emotional. It was the sob after he mentioned Peter that made Steve’s breath catch because it was just so painful to hear. But then he talked about the farm -- that old joke because of Clint’s farm. Maybe Tony was serious, though, maybe he had been looking. Steve wouldn’t have put it past him.

It was the adoption papers that gave him pause. He hadn’t noticed it on the first listen. Tony had mentioned it once in passing but that was back when Tony hadn’t even met Peter yet. They had never spoken about it after and it was a bit of a shock and Steve didn’t know what to think. Things were different now and with Peter gone maybe it was pointless to even consider it but Tony had been thinking about it when he sent the message. It was something he wanted. Or maybe he was just being nostalgic because he thought he was dying and he was trying to say goodbye. Steve just wanted Tony back. And if their life held a farm in the future or not it didn’t matter, not as long as Steve had Tony back at his side.

Chapter End Notes

I have had a very long weekend between work, friends, and family and while I had this chapter ready days ago, I didn't have the time to actually post it. But here we are.

On another note that first look endgame trailer was a surprise. I'm still quite shocked by it. At one point I had hoped to get this fic all posted before the release of the movie but editing is taking me forever so we'll see. I'm hoping to get some editing done over the next few days and have that next chapter out this weekend.
Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
If he were being honest, Tony hadn’t expected to be rescued. Nebula seemed to be of the same mind even if she tried not to show it to Tony. With the ship just drifting and their oxygen getting down to dangerous levels, he and Nebula weren’t doing much but sitting around. Nebula told him about space and wormholes and how much there was to see. She told him about the Guardians of the Galaxy even while making it clear that she wasn’t one of them but how her sister despite all her past misdeeds had found a place there. She had found love.

“Starlord,” Tony said.

Nebula scoffed at the name. “Quill. He named himself that. It’s ridiculous.”

Everyone one of them was gone now -- dusted. All but two whose whereabouts she didn’t know.

“They must have taken the emergency pod,” she said.

Things might have been different if they had that pod. They might have been able to make it to Earth on it. He remembered when she discovered it was gone and how angry she’d been.

“Do you think they got your message?” Nebula asked.

“I connected to the satellite. My guess is that Friday delivered it. It’s a matter of them coming to find us now and doing it before…” He waved his hand.

Nebula nodded.

By Tony’s estimation he had sent the message about an hour earlier. Even if there was a delay with the message arriving to the satellite or the satellite and Friday’s communication and then the delivery of the message to whoever was left, Tony didn’t expect that the delay would be more than ten or fifteen minutes. But then there was them figuring out how to find them and get to them and that would take more time.

Space was kind of beautiful in a way -- it was still scary, but there was a beauty to it. It was dark and so so huge but Tony could understand why it had such an appeal for so many. There were probably countless people down on Earth who would have loved to have the view they had. Maybe they wouldn’t have wanted to be in their situation exactly, but they would liked the view of the stars.

Tony stood up to look from the front of the ship, taking it all in and trying to come to peace with it. He was going to die in space. It was kind of poetic in a way, to think that he’d die in the place he had always sort of expected to. The last thing he expected was to see was one of his quinjets. He gasped and laughed in quick succession.

“What happened?”

“I guess they got my message,” Tony said.

---

Peter didn’t feel hungry or tired or much of anything at all. He just kind of was. It didn’t really seem
“Who was that guy?” Bucky asked, motioning back towards Strange.

“He’s a wizard,” Peter said. “Doctor Strange. He looked at all possible realities and whatever ended up happening -- it’s supposed to lead us to beating Thanos.”

“Big purple guy,” Bucky said and then shook his head.

Peter nodded. “That one. So, Doctor Strange had the Time Stone and he got captured by an alien so we went after him. Didn’t really matter because he gave him the stone in exchange for my dad’s life.”

“And then he came and took the stone from Vision,” Bucky said. “He won. So, what does this wizard think is going to happen next?”

“He gave it to Thanos after seeing the possible futures,” Peter said.

“Right. That makes a lick of sense. I’m not sure I trust him.”

Peter shrugged. All he knew was that Strange had seen the future so he must have known exactly how it was all going to pan out including this -- them being in this weird orange limbo and his dad left behind on Titan with all of them gone. But if Strange had known that he himself was going to turn to dust then it was likely that it wasn’t going to be permanent.

When he told Bucky, Bucky just grunted. “Hope so.”

“Me too. My dad was -- Thanos stabbed him. I hope he’s okay.”

“He’s Tony Stark. Of course he will be,” Bucky said.

“Yeah,” Peter said and sighed.

---

It felt like hours before Rocket started a video call with them. Steve had been rooted to the couch since Tony’s message had arrived. He’d listened to it too many times to count while waiting just because it meant hearing Tony’s voice.

Slowly, the others had all gotten back to what they were doing. Bruce had gone to the lab and Steve didn’t know if he was keeping busy or actually working on something. Natasha had mumbled something about calling Pepper and then Rhody had prepared Steve a sandwich, excusing himself as he suited up and left for the compound. Thor had given him a pat on the back before he wandered off. Steve just stayed on the couch with K-9 at his side and he didn’t know what to do. Or if he could do anything. Mostly he felt useless and despondent and waiting on Rocket was almost painful. He had lost Bucky and Peter and that was enough to send him into a depressed spiral but then there was Tony. Tony who was in space and who may or may not make it back home.

When the video feed finally came up, Steve could see just the inside of the quinjet and then a few seconds later Rocket came into view.

“I have him and my ship,” Rocket said without preamble. “I’m going to tow them down to Earth. I’ll need a place to land. That tower of yours won’t do.”

“He’s -- Tony’s okay?”
Rocket nodded. He seemed more distant than before and it was then that Steve realized he’d mentioned his ship.

“Is -- are your friends with him?”

“Only one,” Rocket said and left it at that. Steve bowed his head. “We’ll be there in an hour or two, Captain. Where am I going?”

“The Avengers facility. The coordinates should already be on the GPS. I -- thank you. Thank you.”

Rocket gave a nod and without a goodbye just shut off the video feed and Steve didn’t know what to think or feel. Tony was coming home. Rocket had found him. For the first time since realizing that Thanos won, Steve began to feel some hope. Tony was alive. He was coming home.

He had Friday send a message to everyone with the news and it began to feel more and more real. Rocket had said an hour or two. He needed to get to the compound.

“Rocket found him?”

Steve found Bruce was back. He was wearing a lab coat and he looked a little messy, but he seemed just as hopeful as Steve.

“Yes,” Steve said and couldn’t help his smile. Bruce returned it.

---

It was a rocky entrance into Earth’s atmosphere and Tony kept himself strapped to one of the seats as they went but even then it felt like he could go flying at any moment. His knuckles were turning white from how hard he held onto the armrests.

When the quinjet had called into the ship earlier, Tony had expected a familiar voice of a fellow Avenger. Instead, the voice was gruff and belonging to someone that Tony didn’t know. His excitement had deflated a little until Nebula perked up.

“Rocket?” she’d asked. “Is that you?”

“Yeah. It’s me. Anybody else aboard? Some guy named Tony Stark perhaps? Or...or the others?”

Nebula’s lips were pressed together hard and she winced before answering. “Stark is here. The rest of them -- they’re gone. Turned to dust.”

“Oh,” Rocket said. “So is Groot. Not that you probably care.”

“I liked the tree,” Nebula answered.

Tony let Nebula deal with Rocket. It took a while to attach the Benatar to the quinjet but somehow, Rocket managed it and when they heard from him again he told them to strap in and then they began to move. Their oxygen levels were still quite low and it seemed like they were being rescued just in time. Tony had no idea how they had managed it so quickly or how Rocket had ended up with one of his quinjets but he wasn’t complaining.

After they crossed Earth’s atmosphere and the ship stopped shaking as much, Tony finally felt like he was going to be safe and that only intensified with how much he could see of his home planet.

“Your planet is very odd,” Nebula said. “Very green.”
Tony laughed. “It’s gorgeous is what it is,” Tony said.

The ship had enough power that Nebula could control their landing to an extent which meant that it was smoother than it could have been if they were just tugged along by the quinjet. Tony still felt a bit jostled when they landed.

“We made it,” he whispered as soon as they stopped moving.

“We did,” Nebula said.

Tony groaned. His chest hurt and his lungs burned and he was parched. None of that really mattered and he hadn’t been paying it much mind while they were in space but now it was almost like he could feel all of it again. It felt relevant. He unstrapped himself with shaking hands, but Nebula was there to help him to his feet and then she wrapped an arm around his waist and together they made it to the back of the ship.

---

The wait was sort of killing him. He and Bruce had gathered anyone that was still in the tower and flown a quinjet to the compound. The others they had sent messages to. Steve had called Pepper directly, letting her know what was happening. He was sure she’d want to see Tony herself and Tony would want to see her as well. It had been surreal to get the message and then to have Rocket out there actually find Tony and now to know that they were coming home.

Thor boarded the quinjet slightly more uplift but still there was an aura of regret and grief about him that wouldn’t leave. It probably surrounded all of them. Steve knew he wasn’t faring much better. Knowing he’d be seeing Tony soon made him lighter but it didn’t change what had happened. It didn’t change that Peter was gone.

Steve couldn’t stop touching his ring. For a while he hadn’t been able to look at it. He’d been tempted to take it off even to save him the grief of not knowing if that was the last piece of Tony he would ever have. Now, it was a promise of the future again. His eyes wouldn’t leave it. Their future was so uncertain, but for Steve the ring and Tony -- those were the things he could hold on to.

The compound was still in need of some cleanup from the last time they were there and the fight with the aliens. It was a worry for another day. It was lucky that the main building was still in tact. Rhodey was waiting for them when they arrived, looking just on the side of anxious. He clapped Steve’s back when he reached him.

“Friday is keeping an eye on the skies,” Rhodey said.

“Good,” Steve said.

Rhodey looked relieved and anxious all at once. They couldn’t be sure that everything would go well. They didn’t know what state Tony might be in but he was coming home and that mattered more. Everything else could be dealt with.

“Do we have a medical wing?” Bruce asked. “He’s at the very least dehydrated. If there is no one else available then I’ll have to--”

“We do, and you’re right we don’t have anyone else,” Rhodey said. “Anyone left was sent to help at hospitals. Lots of missing doctors and a lot of casualties.”

“Right,” Bruce said. “I -- I want to be prepared.”
They were all hoping that a lot of medical assistance wouldn’t be needed, but none of them knew what had happened in space. Steve and Rhody went with him to the medical wing but Thor stayed outside, looking up at the sky. Inside, Bruce prepared what he could. He was ready for anything.

It was almost an hour before Natasha and Pepper arrived.

“Thank you for the call,” Pepper said to Steve.

“Of course,” Steve said and hugged her. Her eyes looked rimmed red.

“I -- you said it was only Tony? I didn’t -- I didn’t want to ask over the phone…”

“He -- he was dusted,” Steve said. It was hard to get the words out and Pepper gasped and sobbed.

“No,” she said.

Steve gave a short nod. Pepper gripped his hand and the next few moments felt like they were going on and on forever.

When Friday alerted them to the quinjet coming in through the atmosphere, Steve felt both relieved and worried. He almost couldn’t believe it. They headed back outside and Steve had no idea how much time passed until the quinjet and the Benatar came into view and both ships landed just a little harder than necessary but unscathed.

Steve’s focus was on the alien ship and as the dust began to settle around it and the quinjet, the ship opened at the back. Steve rushed forward and he was the first to see Tony leaning on a blue alien woman but walking off the ship.

“Tony,” Steve said and Tony looked up. His brown eyes met Steve’s and his lips quirked up. Steve’s heart skipped a beat. Tony was home.

Chapter End Notes

Look at me with a new chapter just days after the last one. It reminds me of how when I first started posting this fic I posted almost every other day...good times, those. I managed to get some editing time last night and got this one done earlier than I expected.

And Tony is back on Earth. Next up we’ll have reunions and whatnot. I actually went and skimmed over the next chapter and boy oh boy does it need editing. I’m aiming at having it ready for Tuesday.

Thanks to everyone reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“How long do you think it’s been in the real world?” Peter asked. He was sitting cross legged on the ground. Bucky was standing a few feet away and he’d been staring out at all the orange.

“I don’t know, kid,” Bucky said as he turned to look at Peter. “Maybe your wizard friend knows.”

Peter leaned back on his hands. “Probably. But, you know, he’d also tell it to me in a riddle. I’m starting to see why my dad doesn’t really like him.”

Bucky actually laughed at that and it was a full on laugh which was a bit startling to Peter since Bucky always seemed a bit on the serious side.

“You do realize that Strange and your dad are kind of alike. They even have the whole goatee thing going for them,” Bucky said.

“They are not,” Peter said at once but then...actually, Bucky probably did have a point. It also explained why they didn’t actually get along all that well. His dad tended to clash with people that had a similar ego as he did.

Although, Peter definitely understood now why his dad didn’t like Strange when it came to all his wizardiness or whatever.

They were both silent for a while and Peter took yet another look around. Not much about the orange tinge had changed. He didn’t know what he was expecting every time. Maybe to see more people. They saw some every once in a while -- sometimes so far away they were barely silhouettes. But aside from Strange, Peter had yet to see someone else he recognize.

“I guess time is probably moving differently in here,” Peter said.

“Could be,” Bucky said. “Not exactly much that could surprise me now.”

Bucky sat down on the ground across from Peter.

“Hey, how about you tell me some good stories about Steve from back in the day,” Peter said. He’d been sort of trying to build up the courage to ask.

Bucky shrugged. “Can’t hurt, can it. Not much else we can do.”

“Exactly,” Peter said.

“Well, he was really little, you know. Skinny and sick and it was kind of a miracle a bad cold didn’t do him in when he was a kid. It would probably be easier to list the things that weren’t wrong with him. But it didn’t mean he wasn’t strong. Strong of character and strong minded. He’s probably the most stubborn person I’ve ever met. Well, it’s possible your dad can rival that a bit.” Bucky chuckled and Peter couldn’t help but grin back.

“You’re probably right about that. I’ve, um, I’ve seen pictures of him from before.”

“Tiny, right?”
Peter nodded.

“And you’d think that would stop him. But no, he got into so many fights because he used to say that things needed to be fair. He just -- his morality was always his downfall and his inability to see how grey the world is. I think that’s changed with him since all the accords stuff. I don’t know.”

It was different to hear about Steve from Bucky who had arguably known him best that it didn’t even matter if Peter already knew what he was saying.

“So the day I met him,” Bucky said, “I was just walking to pick up something from the store. Couldn’t tell you what -- but I hear yelling and it’s this scrawny boy who’s been backed into a wall and a bigger kid was just standing over him and you’d think that Steve would be pleading with the bully or just trying to get away but he just stands there and yells at the other kid’s face. His tiny fists ready to do and I just knew it wasn’t going to end well. So, I had to help him and then that just kept happening again and again.”

“Sounds like a handful,” Peter said.

Bucky laughed. “Yeah, like you wouldn’t imagine.”

Peter thought about Ned and how much of a mess his best friend was and he smiled back. “Worth though?”

“Of course. So, this one time--”

---

Steve reached them before they had even made it off the ship and Steve reached for him and Tony didn’t even notice Nebula stepping aside, but he did notice when Steve pulled him into his arms gingerly and carefully as if he were afraid to hurt him and Tony pressed himself into Steve’s chest. He gasped out a breath and his nose pressed into Steve’s neck. Steve didn’t wear cologne but he did smell distinct. Earthy and like the grapefruit shampoo they shared.

“You’re home,” Steve muttered. “You’re home, Tony. You came back to me.”

“Always,” Tony whispered. His arms wrapped tighter around Steve’s neck.

Steve was alive. He was there just under his hands and he was real. Tony closed his eyes and he felt Steve’s hands rub up and down his back.

“Steve,” he whispered.

“I know,” Steve said.

Tony took another breath. Another moment to just lose himself in Steve and what it meant to have him in his arms. Then, he looked past and his eyes landed on Pepper. She stood next to Rhodey and Natasha. Just a few feet away were Thor and Bruce.

“We should get you inside. Are you -- are you alright? Are you hurt?” Steve asked.

“I’m okay,” Tony assured him at once but winced when Steve moved.

“Bruce is still going to look you over,” Steve said and he gave him a skeptical look. “You’re at the least dehydrated.”

“He’s not okay,” Nebula said, “considering he was stabbed.”
“You were stabbed! Tony!” Steve pulled back and Tony groaned and kept an arm on Steve’s shoulders, not sure he could properly hold himself up.

“I’m fine. It’s fine,” Tony said. “Just sore and yes I was stabbed but it’s not--”

Steve rolled his eyes and before Tony could protest, he picked him up, one arm under his knees and the other at his back. Tony figured it was probably for the best to not make a fuss about it. Instead, he leaned his head on Steve’s shoulder.

Natasha reached out and touched his shoulder when they passed her. Pepper sniffed into a tissue, but she was smiling. Rhodey just shook his head at him but he couldn’t hide his smile either.

“I guess I get to play doctor again, then,” Bruce said. “Nice to have you back, Tony.”

“Good to be back,” Tony muttered.

When he looked back over Steve’s shoulder he saw the Benatar and the quinjet. Both a little worse for wear. Nebula had hung back and Tony almost felt bad. Here she was on a foreign planet and he was just leaving her behind like she hadn’t been instrumental in getting him home. Then, he saw that she was actually talking to a raccoon. The raccoon was standing on two legs and wore clothes, but it was still a raccoon.

“Hey, Steve, what’s with the talking raccoon?”

“That’s Rocket,” Steve said. “He rescued you. You were on his ship. His team -- I’m guessing they’re gone.”


Steve shrugged his shoulders. “He doesn’t like being called that. Don’t think he actually knows what a racoon is but anyway Thor said he’s genetically modified or something. If it weren’t for him I don’t think we would have gotten you back so--”

“I’ll have to thank him later, then,” Tony said. “Nebula recognized his voice when he got to us. He’s one of the Guardians. The rest of them are gone. They turned to dust. Just like--” He couldn’t say it. Couldn’t get the words out.

“Peter,” Steve supplied and his voice was so full of emotion.

“Yeah,” Tony said.

“I’m so sorry, Tony.”

They were almost to the hospital wing. Tony pressed his face against Steve’s neck and he took deep breaths but that didn’t make any of the pain go away. His son was gone. He was gone and it just wasn’t fair. None of it was fair.

“Thanos is going to pay for that,” Tony said eventually.

--

“He’s okay,” Natasha said.

Pepper nodded, still wiping away tears. Tony was alive. He was home and he was alive and Pepper didn’t know if she could handle it if Tony made her wonder if he were alive or dead again. Tony was like some sort of cat with nine lives, always landing on his feet and Pepper loved him and kind
of hated him for it.

They all trailed after Steve and Tony and she could tell that Tony wasn’t actually alright. He looked pale and his face was marred by a cut. There were heavy bags under his eyes and the way he clutched at Steve spoke of how much he needed the contact and the comfort and the last time she remembered seeing him like this was right after Afghanistan. Of course, then, he hadn’t had a Steve to cling to. Actually, he hadn’t been very interested in human contact at all. He’d been so ready to pull away from everyone and Pepper just hoped it wouldn’t be the case this time.

“He looks like he’s been through a lot,” Rhodey said.

“Losing Peter and who knows what else,” Bruce said.

There was a Peter sized hole in Tony’s heart -- in his very soul. It was only too easy to see it and Pepper hated it. She hated it more than anything because after everything they had gone through this was not what they deserved. Losing Peter was hitting her hard too. Pepper had tried and failed to get in contact with May. Not sure how she should break it to her or if she should even be the one to tell her.

Steve put Tony down in one of the cots in the medical wing, but he stuck close to him, holding his hand. Tony wiped away tears and Pepper could tell he’d been holding them back. She stepped forward and Tony looked up.

“Hey, Ms. Potts,” he said. Smile a little watery.

“Mr. Stark,” Pepper said. “I was kind of dreading all the paperwork it would entail if I had to get a new head of R and D.”

Tony laughed. It was a little harsh and there was almost no humor in it, but he smiled at her and he reached out a hand. He was cold and his skin was dry and brittle. Right, they’d mentioned that they were running out of water.

Pepper leaned over and hugged him. She held him for a long moment and pulled back, pressing a kiss to his cheek. They didn’t really need words. She wiped at her eyes again and squeezed his hand once more before letting go.

Natasha gave him a hug too and whispered something that made him laugh and then wince. Rhodey ruffled his hair before hugging him quick and easy.

“I’ve missed you, Stark,” Thor said but didn’t step in to hug him.

“You got a haircut,” Tony said.

Thor grunted. “It wasn’t my choice.”

“Doesn’t look bad,” Tony said.

Thor smiled but it wasn’t his usual smile. They were all so broken. This was not who they were and Pepper hated it. She hated it more than anything. As Bruce stepped around them, she let out a breath.

“We’ll give you some privacy,” Pepper said.

Steve stayed behind with Bruce and Tony and as soon as she was out in the hallway, Pepper’s mind went to other things. There was a lot to do. Pepper had needed to see Tony with her own eyes and it was everything to know that her best friend was back and that he would be okay, but there was so
much else to do.

People needed to know that Tony was alive. There was probably already speculation about the Benatar because someone was bound to notice the alien ship entering Earth. Maybe they could release a press release and leave that at that. It felt safer but the only thing was the Peter of it all. Not only would people be speculating about Spider-Man not returning but there was May to consider and Peter’s friends and there was no way they could learn about any of this through a press conference or the news or worse on Facebook.

She followed Rhodey to the conference room. She heard Natasha talking to their alien allies. The one that had accompanied Tony and the raccoon that had apparently come with Thor. No one had bothered to check that the blue alien was actually okay but it seemed like the raccoon was doing that for them. They knew each other, apparently.

Pepper listened in to some of their conversation.

“He took Gamora. Thanos killed her. Quill lost it and he compromised their plan. They almost had the gauntlet off of him. It would have worked but—”

“Just like Quill to screw up like that,” the raccoon said.

“Is this as weird for you as it is for me?” Rhodey asked.

Pepper nodded her head. But, no, this was fast becoming normal which wasn’t really okay except that the past few days had shown her that things could only get weirder. “Half of the population of the world -- no, the universe is gone. I don’t think it gets weirder than that. Unless you consider that your best friend just came back from space and that some huge purple alien is to blame for all of this.”

Rhodey nodded. “Yeah, I guess when you put it like that.”

Pepper snorted and Rhodey pulled her into a hug.

“He’s back, Pep. I didn’t think we’d ever see him again and yet—”

“He’s Tony. Of course he’s back.”

She held onto him and he held on back and Pepper thought that she might start crying again. Tony Stark just had that effect on her and she was kind of getting sick of it.

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Bruce started an IV line to get him fluids and Tony reluctantly let him even if he was kind of annoyed by the whole process. Steve stood off to the side, watching with an odd look on his face.

“We should probably get you something to eat too,” Bruce said. “Steve do you mind--”

He hesitated, but then he nodded and rushed out. Tony missed him the moment he was gone, but he let Bruce check him over. There was so much that they all still needed to talk about. Tony didn’t know about anything that had happened since he left and Bruce was sort of the last person he saw before he chased after Peter and ended up on the alien ship.

“Do I even want to know what happened after I left,” Tony said.

“I could ask you the same thing,” Bruce said. “What happened to Strange?”

Bruce helped him take off his shirt and he let out a whistle when he got a look at Tony’s chest. He was probably black and blue all over -- he certainly felt like he was made up mostly of bruises. Then, there was the stab wound. Nebula had wrapped it, but that hadn’t exactly lessened any of the discomfort.

“What did you plug that up with?” Bruce asked.

“Nanonite spray,” Tony said. “Couldn’t really do much else to close it up. Well, I guess I could have gotten Peter to web it up.”

It was hard to say Peter’s name. Hard to not have him there with him. His chest ached and it wasn’t a physical pain -- it was a missing Peter pain. His son was gone. In his pocket was a collection of his dust. Being back on Earth and being reminded that he hadn’t made it back with Peter at his side hurt.

“Smarter to use the nanonites then,” Bruce said.

Tony shook off the thoughts about Peter.

“Especially since I was stabbed with a nanonite sword made from my own armor,” Tony said.

Bruce shook his head. “Of course you were. Well, at least we’re not dealing with some weird alien weapon or something.”

It still kind of pissed him off that he’d left himself unprotected to create the very weapon that had then ended up stabbing him. The irony of it wasn’t lost on him and it mostly just annoyed him.

Bruce looked him over entirely, giving him the physical that Tony hadn’t had in a while -- probably since the last time he’d been majorly injured which was probably sometime after that fight in that Siberian bunker. Tony imagined that he probably would have been in a much worse state if it hadn’t been for his armor. As it was the only major injury was the stab wound.

“Hey, is Wong still around?” Tony asked. Thinking about the last time he saw Bruce reminded him of Wong.

“No one’s tried to find him,” Bruce said. “Kind of forgot about him.”

“We should let him know what happened to Strange and the stone and maybe -- maybe Wong might be able to help us.” He’d been sort of thinking about that a lot. Trying to figure out why Strange would change his mind about protecting the stone at all costs.

“Help us?” Bruce asked.

Tony nodded. Bruce’s hands moved over his chest and it was only mildly uncomfortable.

“This -- it’s not the end and Strange knew what was going to happen. He must have known I was going to make it back here in one piece. It’s why he saved me.”

Bruce stopped what he was doing to stare at Tony.

“What do you mean, Tony?”

“I mean he saw the future. Like, he used the time stone to look at possible futures and he saw the one in which we win. He said there was only one. Then, he saved me even though he knew it meant
he’d turn to dust. So what does that tell you?”

“What? That he’s not really dead?” Bruce asked.

“Exactly,” Tony said.

Bruce stared at him and Tony stared back. It was kind of crazy and a long shot but the more that Tony thought about it and the more that he knew about Strange made it all the more possible. Strange would never trade the stone unnecessarily. He was also far more interested in staying alive than not and if Tony believed what he’d said about there being just one possible future in which they won, then this had to be it. Strange had sacrificed the stone, himself, and Peter in order to make it happen.

“And if he’s not dead then neither is Peter -- neither is everyone else,” Tony said.

Chapter End Notes

So this one ended up on the longer side. I know none of you will mind. And Tony is finally back on Earth with the rest of the team. Things can only move forward from here.

I have a lot of editing to do and rewriting for the next few chapters but I’m hoping to get some time to actually work on it this week.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“That’s. Tony, that’s kind of—” Bruce trailed off.

“Crazy,” Tony said. “Yeah, well, I made it out of space in one piece and back here when the odds were that that just wasn’t going to happen. And Strange’s actions don’t make sense. He knew what winning might entail. Bastard didn’t bother to share with the class, but what can we expect for a magician.”

“You know, he actually is a doctor,” Bruce said.

“So am I, but I don’t brag about it,” Tony said.

Bruce laughed at that. “You don’t.”

“That is, I have to believe that. I have to believe that this all happened for a reason. It was my kid, Bruce. My kid. And so many others too.”

Bruce nodded. He was working on Tony, moving him over to The Cradle to knit his wound back together. It felt weird but it happened quick, before Steve got back even. So that when Steve did return, Tony was back in the cot. He still felt sore and Bruce wrapped up his chest before letting him put a clean shirt on.

“I brought soup and crackers. Some toast too if you’re up to it,” Steve said.

“And here I thought you’d get me a more welcoming meal,” Tony said.

“From what Nebula told me you haven’t eaten in days. You’re not up to eating a cheeseburger right now, Tony.”

Tony was really too hungry to argue and the chicken soup did smell good. There was steam coming off of it and Tony could tell that it had been freshly made.

“Thank you,” Tony muttered.

“And after this you need sleep, Tony. I won’t keep you here in the medical wing. You’re surprisingly not that badly off but you need to rest. Everything else can wait right now. We’ve got this, Tony, because we need you and we need you at a 100%.”

He ate slowly, trying to pace himself a little in part because the soup was hot but also because he wanted to drag the moment out. Since being back it had been about seeing everyone and being happy to be home and alive. It had been about letting Bruce check him over and take care of the stab wound. It was about starting to voice the things he’d been thinking about and hoping to be true and it was finally getting a moment to truly let everything sink in. Peter was gone. His son was gone. Tony didn’t know how he was supposed to sleep when that was fact and when Tony truly had no idea how they were to proceed.

“Nebula. Is she alright?” Tony asked.

“Fine. She’s with Rocket. She said she felt fine.”
“Right. They know each other. That’s good she’s got him.

Steve nodded. “You don’t have to worry about her.”

He finished eating and Steve placed his empty plates on a table. He moved with caution and looked at Tony like he might disappear in front of him. Tony couldn’t blame him, really, because a part of him felt exactly the same.

“Do you want to sleep here or--”

“Proper bed might do me good,” Tony said. “Any chance I can get rid of this thing.” He motioned at the IV line and the plastic bag it was attached to.

“No chance. You need those fluids, Tony. Just tonight.”

He was too tired to argue. Bruce helped them get to Steve’s room. Tony couldn’t remember the last time he’d slept at the compound, but Steve’s room was closest and someone had cleaned it up a little.

Bruce gave him some painkillers and Tony took them without protest and then Steve helped him get under the covers.

“Get some rest, Tony. I’m glad you’re home;” Bruce said before he left.

Steve lingered by the bed, fixing Tony’s pillows and his sheets.

“Are you -- do you have something to do or--”

“I have nothing else to do but to be here with you,” Steve said before Tony could finish. “I’m not letting you out of my sight.”

“Oh. Okay.”

Steve sat down next to him and Tony reached for his hand. It felt grounding to hold it even as all the adrenaline from the trip back home and seeing everyone was fading. Everything that had been keeping him together disappearing because he was home in a bed and Steve was just within reach. He didn’t need to be strong and hold himself together.

“Bruce did mean you should get some sleep,” Steve said. “You’re kind of -- you’re not doing that.”

“I don’t know...I keep seeing--”

His eyes. Peter’s scared tear filled eyes that had realized what was happening and that felt it before it did. Peter who didn’t want to go and who fell into his arms but became dust.

Steve’s arms slid around him and Tony felt grounded. He felt like there was something else to draw focus to. He was tired. Too tired and sore and hurt and Steve’s fingers were in his hair.

“Peter’s--”

“Oh, Tony,” Steve said.

His eyes felt wet and they stung. He curled himself into Steve and Steve held him back just as tightly.

“I wish it had been me,” Tony whispered. “I wish -- it should have been me. Not him. Never him.”
Steve didn’t respond. He held Tony tighter and Tony knew that Steve understood. It wasn’t a death wish. It was a wish that Peter hadn’t had to go -- the admittance that Tony would have given anything in order to take Peter’s fate away.

“It’s not fair,” Steve whispered eventually.

“It’s not.” He wasn’t crying anymore, but the emotions were still there. It hurt. It hurt more than anything. He pressed a kiss to Steve’s shoulder. “You’re allowed to feel this too. You were his dad too, Steve.”

It was true. Probably had been true before Steve even properly met Peter because Steve had always been interested and engaged in Peter long before Tony had gotten a chance to meet him. And then after -- after they had fallen into a family unit without even trying.

“I--”

“You were,” Tony insisted. “He was ours. Our Peter.”

Steve pulled him even closer and Tony could hear Steve’s heartbeat -- steady and not too much faster than what was supposed to be normal. Soothing, though, to listen to. Steve’s fingers threaded through his hair gently and it was slowly that Tony let his fatigue take over. He felt a press of a kiss on his forehead and faintly heard:

“Thank you. I love you.”

Tony let himself smile even if it wasn’t enough and it didn’t take away all the pain. “We’ll get him back.”

---

Bruce considered everything that Tony had said and implied and it was hard to just accept. Tony thought that somehow they were going to win. But not just that, he seemed to think that everyone that turned to dust could be returned. Bruce didn’t know if it was Tony being delusional and holding onto hope. Mostly, he just knew that if the snap had been able to erase people, then the stones would probably bring them back too. So, maybe Tony wasn’t too farfetched in saying they could get them back. It was just -- Bruce couldn’t just believe that they were going to somehow win. He had seen Thanos and he knew the kind of power that Thanos wielded and the team wasn’t even all there. Thanos had already defeated them once.

It was hard to look at the list Friday had compiled. She’d gone as far as to get as much of a profile as she could for everyone that was missing. Most importantly those that were in some way related to The Avengers or Shield. The list had finally stopped growing like crazy. The governments of the world were getting a little more organized and things were calming down as much as they could. Still, there were always new additions and Bruce looked at the list as much as he could even though he hated it.

Natasha was sitting with Thor at the table, but Bruce ignored them and looked at the display of the list. Bruce was surprised when Shuri’s name popped up.

They hadn’t seen her before leaving Wakanda, but no one had implied that she had turned to dust like her brother and yet she was on the list which meant somehow that no one knew where she was. He wondered for a moment what that would mean for Wakanda, but it was something that the people of Wakanda would figure out on their own.

Friday brought up another and paused it. Scott Lang.
“Who is Scott, again?” Bruce asked.

Rhodes answered, walking up behind him. “Ant-Man. I guess he’s gone too, then. Shame. Explains why he hasn’t gotten back to us.”

Rhodes came to stand next to Bruce and he looked at the list and shook his head. “I don’t know what we’re meant to do now. How was Tony doing?”

“He’s sleeping, hopefully. He’s a bit bruised up and we took care of the stab wound. He’s going to be fine. Well as fine as he can be after losing his son.”

Peter’s name was up on the list. Bruce had barely gotten to meet him -- had seen him only with the mask on and hadn’t even known who he was at the time since everything happened so fast. He could see how his loss hit everyone. Steve’s devastation had been the worst but then of course there was Tony and how he seemed to hardly be holding himself together. Bruce remembered when he’d first learned about Tony and Steve and their upcoming wedding and it had been a shock but seeing them since Tony’s return -- it felt so right and natural for them to be together. Bruce almost couldn’t believe that he hadn’t seen it coming.

“Did he say anything about what happened while he was in space?” Rhodes asked.

“Not much. He mentioned Doctor Strange getting a view of possible futures. He thinks it means we’re on the path to victory.”

Rhodey scoffed. “And what is this, then?”

Bruce pursed his lips. He wanted to believe that Tony was right. “Tony thinks -- he thinks that this is our path to winning. Doctor Strange had the Time Stone and he gave it up to save Tony’s life. Which, if you know anything about Strange shouldn’t have happened. It’s what made it possible for Thanos to turn back time and take the Mind Stone even after it was destroyed. Strange must have known that would happen and that he would turn to dust when Thanos snapped his fingers but he saved Tony anyway.”

“What does that mean?” Rhodey asked.

“Tony thinks that Strange did it knowing what would happen -- that he did it because it needed to happen so that we can find a way to defeat Thanos now.”

Rhodey rubbed the back of his neck. “It’s a little crazy. We’re not all exactly rushing to go find Thanos. Not sure we could take him especially now that he has the stones.”

Bruce shrugged his shoulders. He stared as Friday moved through the missing profiles. Fury had officially been added to the list. Someone from Shield had found his car and presumably his dust next to a pager. It was supposed to be brought to them because Fury had sent a message and no one knew who he’d been trying to contact and with a pager no less.

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Tony managed to sleep for a few hours, head pillowed on Steve’s shoulder, but Steve couldn’t sleep. He was too wired and too focused on Tony for sleep to be an option. Instead, he watched Tony and let him sleep. Tony needed it. His face was more relaxed in his sleep, but even then his fatigue was obvious. Steve thought that Bruce had to have snuck in something to help him fall asleep along with the painkillers because he doubted that Tony would have fallen asleep the way he did otherwise.

Steve didn’t know what to feel. He was happy to have Tony back, of course. But Peter was gone. So
many people were gone...

Tony had called Peter theirs. Their son. Steve had never thought to consider Peter that way -- he was always just Tony’s son and yet maybe he’d already been thinking about Peter as his son too for far longer than he would have wanted to admit. Peter had told him that he was going to be his stepfather back when he and Tony had first gotten engaged and it had been so absolutely touching. Steve had gotten extremely emotional over it.

Steve watched as Tony shifted but settled into his side again. He looked even in sleep like he couldn’t be at peace and yet he was beautiful. His fingers traced over Tony’s forehead and down his cheek. Steve couldn’t think of anyone else that he was as devoted to as he was Tony. The only one that might compare was Bucky but that was different. Bucky was family and his last friend left from his old life, but he didn’t mean what Tony meant to him. And Bucky was gone now, too. Dust just like Peter and so many others.

Tony moved closer, his face burrowing into Steve’s neck and his breath ghosting on Steve’s skin. He shivered in surprise, but settled and ran his hand through Tony’s hair. It was dirty but Steve didn’t care. Having Tony in his arms was everything. Steve didn’t care how long he’d be acting as Tony’s pillow and it didn’t matter because Tony was back and he needed rest and Steve was willing to give him anything he needed.

When Tony woke up, he woke up slowly, moving in Steve’s arms and shifting until he was trying to sit up. Steve helped him. Tony looked confused and unsure, his eyes moving from one side of the room to the other as if he couldn’t believe where was was.

“Hey, hey, you’re alright.”

“Steve,” Tony said and he let out a breath. “Oh god. Peter.”

It broke Steve’s heart to see how devastated Tony looked as he remembered. His face falling and pain etched into his frown. Tony took a deep breath and then he wrapped an arm around Steve, falling into his chest.

“I thought,” Tony said, “I kept thinking I’d come home and you’d be gone too. It was -- I was so afraid. Being out there and knowing Peter was -- but then, I didn’t know if I would make it here or what I would find and--”

“I’m not. I’m here. I’m here, Tony, and I’m never letting you go.”

Tony nodded as he pulled back. Steve didn’t let him go far, cupping his face and bringing him close to he could kiss him. It was not the best kiss. Tony gasped into it and their teeth clicked together and it was a little too hard and a little too messy and then Tony pressed his face into Steve’s shoulder and it didn’t really matter.

“He saw it coming. He was so scared. My boy, he was so scared and he just -- I couldn’t do anything, Steve, and he just he kept saying I don’t want to go…”

It was whispered into his shoulder but Steve heard it. His eyes stung thinking about it -- about Tony and Peter--

“I was holding him and then I wasn’t…”

“Oh, Tony.”

Tony was sobbing, shaking with the sobs that coursed through his body. Steve’s shirt was wet with
his tears and Steve held Tony to his chest, failing to keep his own tears from falling.

Chapter End Notes

This was a more Tony and Steve heavy chapter but I think it was definitely needed and that Tony needed to have those moments of grief. Originally I made Tony's return very quick and moved the plot along but it felt very rushed to me. I actually expanded on what was originally a chapter into two more chapters.

This is also in part to introduce Carol/Captain Marvel into the story and the plot. Originally, since I wrote all of this before her movie premiered and I knew very little about the character I didn't feel too comfortable writing her and didn't know how to fit her into the plot. However, I loved Captain Marvel. Her character, the movie, Brie's portrayal. Loved all of it. So now I've decided to include her which really just means a lot of editing/rewriting to weave her into the plot but I'm excited about it and it means I can use that post credit scene...

Next chapter is mostly done already so I expect to have it up Monday or Tuesday.

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“Sam!” Peter called.

He’d spotted him walking past mixed in with a whole group of people.

Sam turned and looked lost for a moment before he saw Peter. Peter waved at him and Bucky next to him chuckled. Peter liked Bucky and it was nice that he had gotten to know Steve’s best friend especially after that talk that he and Steve had had about Bucky. Peter hadn’t brought it up -- the whole thing about The Winter Soldier killing Howard and Maria Stark. It was kind of pointless to, when Peter could tell that it truly hadn’t been Bucky that did it but instead some brainwashed version of him.

Sam hugged Peter. “I -- you’re here,” he said. Then, he glanced at Bucky. “And you. You’re here too.”

“We are,” Peter said. “Kind of weird, isn’t it.”

Sam chuckled. “You could say that.” Sam frowned at them both. “So what is this place anyway?”

Peter explained about the stone and Strange and the sort of limbo state that they thought they were in.

“That’s insane. Half the universe is in this stone.” He let out of a whistle. “And we’re just going to hope that whoever is left figures out how to get us out of here.”

Peter nodded.

“It’s not entirely hopeless,” Bucky said.

Sam nodded. “I guess this is better than being dead.”

Having spent a lot of time with Sam in the tower, it was easy to fall into conversation with him. Sam filled him in on what Bucky had sort of already told him about Wakanda and the attack there. Then, they drifted in conversation.

“Hey, do you remember when you took me and the soldier over there down in that airport?” Sam asked.

Peter nodded quickly. For some reason or another they had never discussed it. A lot of the fight at that airport in Germany had been brushed off by everyone and forgotten. There had always been other more important things to discuss and do.

“Tony did tell me to web everyone up so…”

Sam smiled at him and reached over to ruffle his hair. Peter let him, not bothering to push him away like he would have done if they were -- they would be back there again soon. Things would go back to normal.

---

Tony had gotten over his thing with water a long time ago. He still didn’t really like having his head
under water, but showers and baths were fine. Pools were a little harder. Still, he was always quick in the shower, not liking to linger under the spray of the water for too long. But after Bruce finally took off the IV line, drew some blood for testing, and then sent him on his way, Tony went right into the bathroom desperately needing to get himself clean. And then he spent almost a full hour in the shower.

Somehow, the water hitting the tile was a soothing sound. The warmth of the water a comfort. The steam hiding everything outside the glass surrounding the shower a welcome sight. He could just stay there and breathe and not have to face the world and everything it entailed.

When he did finally get out, he spent some time on grooming. Trimming his goatee a bit just because it was familiar and normal. He used the expensive moisturizer that Pepper had got for him, and then he got dressed in clean familiar clothes and things felt just a little better. Just a little normal.

He found them in the kitchen. The last remaining Avengers and the two additions of Nebula and Rocket. Pepper was there too.

“Hi,” he said. “So, I guess this is the time when we exchange stories?”

Rhodey shook his head and smiled at him and walked over to him first, slinging an arm around Tony’s shoulders. Tony leaned into him.

“I’ve filled them in a little,” Nebula said.

“Ah. Yeah, that’s good.”

“Except that I wasn’t there the whole time,” Nebula said.

Tony nodded. It was easier to dive into the story. Essential in a way if he was going to explain all about Strange and how he’d seen all the possible future and what Tony thought that that meant.

“–then they all started turning to dust. One by one,” Tony said.

Steve and Bruce made him sit down to get some food in him and in the meanwhile they filled him in on everything that happened on their end. Halfway through Thor walked in. It was weird seeing him dressed in regular clothes. Tony didn’t even know he owned regular clothes, but apparently he did.

By the time that they had told him everything, Tony didn’t know what to feel. Wanda had destroyed the stone and Vision with it. She had done that and it hadn’t even mattered. She was gone too, now.

This wasn’t how the world -- no, the universe -- was supposed to be. Tony didn’t quite know how they were supposed to fix any of it. He just knew that they needed to.

They spent some time together. Filling each other in and talking about the matter at hand. He learned about the President being one of the ones turned to dust and then about Fury and the pager that had been left behind.

“Old tech even for Fury,” Tony said.

“Yeah, but it seemed important. We don’t know who he was trying to contact.”

Tony didn’t know if it mattered. He still figured he’d get a look at it.

There was a lot that had happened because of the snap. Things Tony hadn’t even considered and that made the whole thing even worse. All of it weighed on him and then Pepper brought up May.
Tony hadn’t even thought about her. Which kind of made him feel awful. Of course he should have thought about her.

“She -- I’ll need to tell her.”

Steve’s hand landed on his shoulder.

“If you’re not up to it, I could,” Pepper said.

Tony shook his head. It was going to have to be him and it had to be soon. He couldn’t not tell May and he couldn’t wait when he was back and Peter wasn’t. May deserved to know.

A few hours later he was in a car with Steve and Pepper on their way to Queens and Tony knew it was the right thing to do and that it was necessary and yet he didn’t know how it was going to go or how May was going to react and he hated it. He hated that he had to give her these news after promising time and time again to keep him safe.

When they arrived, Tony almost wanted to just leave again or just send Pepper in and take the coward’s route. But he couldn’t. He had to do this. He owed it to Peter and to May and to himself.

---

May didn’t expect to see Tony when she opened the door. Or Steve. Or Pepper. She did note that Peter wasn’t with them. Her mind went right back to the night when Ben died because she knew without them saying a word why they were there. Peter was gone. Peter was dead. He was--

“May, can we come in?” Pepper asked.

She stepped aside and let them in. Everything felt numb and her mind couldn’t take it in. Not yet. Not until—

“You’ll have to say it,” she said. “You’ll have to say it or I won’t--”

Pepper took hold of her elbow and they moved into the living room. She sat down and Pepper sat at her side.

Tony looked distraught and destroyed. His eyes were rimmed red and there was nothing there to suggest that he was doing well at all. He was holding Steve’s hand and it seemed to be the only thing holding him together. It confirmed everything, but she needed to hear him say it.

“Peter was one of the people that turned to dust,” Tony said. His words were spoken carefully and slowly as if he were fighting to get them all out.

May gasped out a “no” and then she was sobbing and Pepper was holding her and the whole room was silent and her sobs were loud and echoing and nothing made sense. Pepper kept hugging her, but she pulled away, wiping away angrily at her tears.

“How -- how is this happening?”

“We lost,” Steve said. “We lost and half the universe is gone...including Peter.”

Tony was silent next to him, deep frown and looking like he was ready to start crying too and May was angry. She was angry and upset and Peter was gone. Her Peter. Her Peter who was actually Tony’s son and who had gone and become Spider-Man and who was so young and so full of life…

Tony had his eyes closed. He was leaning into Steve and May couldn’t put it all on him. She could
see how much he probably already blamed himself and May just couldn’t add to that not when she had to be aware that Peter could have been home with her and it would have been the same result.

“I -- I’m sorry, May,” Tony said.

“It’s not your fault.”

Tony shook his head and he stood up, hands up and running through his hair. He looked wild and lost and Steve stood up a few seconds after he did, but Tony kept out of reach and he ended up looking at some framed pictures. Peter was probably in one or more of them.

May heard him sob. She saw his shoulders shake.

Steve made to move towards him, but she moved faster, wrapping her arms around him. She couldn’t remember if she’d ever hugged Tony Stark before, but she was crying and he was crying and Peter was gone. Their Peter was gone.

May had no idea how long they stood there, but he pulled away eventually and their eyes met. “I’m going to bring him back,” he said. It was sure and with conviction and May believed him.

May didn’t know how to respond. He hugged her again, tight and with meaning and May knew that he meant it. He would do anything to bring Peter back to them.

---

Afterwards, they went to the tower. Pepper needed to get back there anyway and get back to work, but Tony wanted to stop by. He kind of figured it was probably for the best for them to be at the compound and he needed clothes and a few other things. K-9 greeted them enthusiastically and it hurt to look at Peter’s dog.

“I’ll let you know about the press release,” Pepper said. “And I want you guys to keep me in the loop. I don’t want you disappearing again with no word.”


She hugged him tightly and kissed his cheek. Then she was gone and Steve walked with him and followed him to the workshop. Tony had almost anything that he might need at the compound, but he’d been working out of the tower for the most part and there were a few necessary things there.

He paused when he walked in, seeing how everything was just as he’d left it. Strange had appeared to him just there and from that moment everything had changed.

“Are those--”

Tony turned. Steve was looking at the papers on one of the tables. It took Tony a moment to remember what they were. He nodded.

“Oh,” Steve said.

Tony moved, grabbing things he knew he’d need and then having Friday fly one of his suits over to the compound. Without the nanotech one, he’d be relying on a different suit until he could build something else -- something specifically meant to go against Thanos.

He was doing things quickly, moving almost mechanically because if he stopped for long enough he would think about all the memories that room held because it had become as much Peter’s as his.
And then his eyes landed on a holo table and he gasped.

It was the last thing that Peter was working on. Tony didn’t even know what it was exactly because Peter had never answered his questions but it was there open and half done as if Peter had expected to get home and keep working on it because that’s exactly what should have happened and Tony’s hand fell on the table in front of him hard. It wasn’t fair.

None of it was fair. He grabbed the nearest thing to him and threw it. It shattered on the wall satisfyingly enough that he grabbed something else and threw that too.

“Tony! Tony, what are you--”

Tony swept everything off of one of the tables. None of it mattered. This was their space -- his and Peter’s. They spent long afternoons there. Tony showing Peter this or that and constantly being amazed by everything that Peter picked up on or just knew. Peter had his own projects. Some of them were school things but often times he was just curious and interested in figuring something out on his own.

Peter wasn’t there. He wasn’t there.

Peter was dust -- ashes. That’s all that was left of his brilliant amazing boy.

Tony cried out, reaching for something. Anything. His hand landed on the mug he’d been drinking out of that morning. The one Peter had gotten him. He cradled it to his chest and the liquid inside sloshed up the sides but it didn’t matter.

“Tony?”

He set down the mug his hands fell on the table next to it, shaking and he shuddered into Steve when Steve wrapped his arms around him -- fell into Steve and let Steve hold him.

“He’s gone. He’s really gone,” Tony gasped.

No amount of hope was going to change that. Not yet. He clutched at the arm around his chest and Steve held onto him.

“We’ll bring him back, Tones. We will. Together, okay. Together.”

Chapter End Notes

Not gonna lie, guys, but this one is the one that really hurt...
But I think Tony needed to break down and have that to finally move forward. Next chapter we skip about a week and Carol will be making her appearance.
And if you guys haven’t noticed, yes the full chapter count has gone up to 158. I expect it may still change as I keep editing.
I expect to have the chapter up by Friday/Saturday.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Ned didn’t know how to respond when May told him. She was already sort of crying. He kind of mostly just felt hollow inside. Ned had been expecting it though. He had known that it was a likelihood. He didn’t know if Peter being one of the decimated was better than if he had actually died. It was sort of just nice to know for sure.

The media was reporting on the return of Tony Stark. No one even mentioned Spider-Man. It was probably on purpose. Ned stayed out of any discussion sparked online because it was just easier to not get mad at the people that seemed to blame Tony for everything that happened. Granted, no one really knew exactly what had occurred. They just knew an alien threat was involved.

The whole world was a mess.

Too many people were gone. Too many injured.

“They’re working on it, Ned. The Avengers -- they’re working on it,” May said.

It wasn’t all that reassuring. Ned just dropped his face into his hands. He was getting really tired of crying and yet it was one of the few things that he had energy for these days. That and spending time with MJ.

MJ was stronger than he was, or at least she put up a strong front. He didn’t know how he was going to tell her about Peter. Ned thought that she probably already knew. Or if she didn’t then she had her suspicions.

“I’m sorry, May,” Ned said.

She wiped at her eyes and nodded. “Me too.”

---

Before Tony knew it a week had passed and they were no closer to figuring out how to defeat Thanos. Nebula had brought some insights into it what with her having once been his adopted daughter but even then it turned out that coming up with a plan -- any kind of plan was difficult. They didn’t even know where Thanos could be. So far all they could really think to do was to go after him and the stones and use them to change everything back. It was just -- they needed to find him.

In the meanwhile, life moved on. There was grief and pain everywhere and no one could get away
from what happened, but people were resilient.

Tony for his part kind of buried himself in work. It was the easiest thing to do. It was easier to work from the compound from one of the many labs that didn’t remind him of Peter and easier to deal with building a new suit than everything else.

Since his breakdown in the lab at the tower, Tony refused to return there. Steve had made him take the mug and it was the only thing from that lab that Tony could actually look at. It reminded him what they were fighting for.

Everyone else was keeping busy too. Rhodey had started helping Pepper and he made the perfect liaison with the U.S. Government -- what had been rebuilt of it. For the moment they could afford to have him working in that respect, but as soon as they figured out where Thanos was, Tony knew that Rhodey would be right there with them ready to fight. Natasha had gone to find Clint after they realized that he actually wasn’t listed as missing but that his entire family was.

Bruce buried himself in research and work mostly done on himself. He was trying to figure out what the Hulk’s problem was and Tony thought that he wasn’t having a lot of luck with that. Thor tended to hang around Bruce’s lab and Tony didn’t know quite what to make of how quiet and morose Thor was. Tony had gotten a full story about the destruction of Asgard and the loss of Loki and Odin and Hela -- the sister Thor had never even known he had. All of it felt like an overdramatic plot from a movie or book. But having met Loki, Tony kind of suspected that Asgard was just that dramatic.

It was Rocket that figured out how to make it so they had some way of way of knowing if Thanos used the stones again and combined with Friday’s monitoring they were waiting for it to happen. But it just didn’t. It gave them no alert because Thanos hadn’t used the stones.

Rocket spent most of his time doing repairs on the Benatar and Nebula hung out with him. All in all, their alien friends were odd. They didn’t seem to know quite what to do and Tony could tell that a part of them wanted to leave Earth all together and never look back. Tony wouldn’t have blamed them if they did. Only their mutual goal to get their loved ones back and rid themselves of Thanos kept them around. Tony liked both of them.

Steve spent hours upon hours going over everything that happened and trying to figure out what they could do next. When he wasn’t strategizing, he was with Tony -- tugging him away from the lab to get sleep or bringing him food and snacks. Steve made all of that -- the normal stuff -- easier. Still, Tony couldn’t really sleep for very long without nightmares.

At one point, Tony had spent a full twenty four hours trying to figure out Fury’s pager. It was more than just a pager but the technology was strange. Alien. Nebula confirmed that for him and yet neither he or Rocket could figure out who the message had gone to. It just kept blinking as if it was still sending some sort of signal and no one could figure out what the screen was displaying.

“Could have gone to anyone in the Universe,” Rocket said at some point.

“Yeah, well, maybe that person got dusted too. Or they didn’t even get it.”

So, it sat in the lab and just kept blinking and they were waiting for something to happen with it. Nothing ever did. Tony saw it as some sort of lost cause. Yet another of Fury’s secrets that didn’t make sense to them and wasn’t useful.

---

Steve could tell that it was all driving Tony crazy. The not knowing what they should or shouldn’t
do. At one point Rocket had suggested that they actually leave Earth and go see what kind of clues they could find to lead them to Thanos. Nebula was still technically his daughter. Finding him wouldn’t be all that difficult.

None of them knew if it was a good idea and they were hesitant to agree to it. Even Thor didn’t seem entirely sold on it. Steve knew they were being cautious and he didn’t blame them.

“How is he?” Natasha asked.

Tony was in the lab with Bruce.

“Better. But he still thinks that we can win and so far we have nothing. And Clint? Find him yet?”

She shook her head.

“Traces of him here and there. I don’t know what he’s -- I think he knows I’m looking for him. He’s avoiding me.”

It was late, but Natasha had just arrived and it wasn’t like any of them really slept. Tony and Bruce were too busy in the lab to notice the passage of time. Rhodey had gotten in from Washington just a few hours earlier.

An alarm went off.

“What is--”

Steve and Natasha ran to the lab. Tony and Bruce were already crowded around the table where the pager had been put. Rhodey showed up behind them, looking confused.

“It stopped,” Tony said. “It’s stopped completely. It’s not doing that blinking thing anymore.”

The tiny screen had gone blank and it wasn’t blinking. It was as if it had been turned off.

“And that means?” Steve asked.

Tony didn’t seem to know.

“Whatever signal it was sending...maybe it finally crapped out,” Bruce said.

But the battery couldn’t be dead. Tony and Bruce had made sure it wouldn’t just in case.

“Can we...can we reboot it?” Natasha asked.

Tony nodded at once. They still really knew nothing about it or who it was supposed to signal. They were trusting Fury on this because he had known and he had deemed it important enough to do before he was dusted.

Steve stared at the pager for a while longer. This was a piece of technology that Tony had explained to him as being ancient. Pagers pre-dated mobile phones and were used to send simple messages. But this particular pager was different because it had something else to it -- something alien and advanced. It was an entire contradiction and Steve knew that Tony was fascinated by it.

Natasha stepped back, turned and gasped. The rest of them turned just as fast.

“Where’s Fury?”
She was something to behold. Tony had no idea what to make of her. All he knew was that she impressed him from the moment he turned and found her standing there as if breaking through all their security measures and not being detected by any of them and then also going unnoticed by a super spy and a super soldier and Friday was easy.

It was easy to put together that she was the one that Fury had sent the message and signal to and that her arrival had shut down the pager. That still gave them no indication as to who she was.

“Who are you?” Natasha asked. “And how did you get in here?”

“Signal led in here. Now, where is Fury?”

“You still haven’t answered my question,” Natasha said.

Tony stepped forward. “Fury isn’t here. I don’t know if you’re aware, but a giant purple man decimated half the population of the universe. Including your pal Nick Fury.”

She backed down a little, falling back. Still, she looked like she would be ready to go at any moment and they truly knew nothing about her or what she might be capable of.

“So,” Steve said, “you going to fill us in on who you are?”

She looked at each of them, eyes narrowing. They settled on Steve. “You -- you’re familiar. Kind of look like--”

Tony smirked. “Captain America,” he offered. “He’s the real deal. And if you know who he is, then it’s safe to say that you’ve been to Earth before.”

“You can call me Carol.”

Tony extended his hand at her. “Tony,” he said.

She hesitated before shaking his hand and pulled back quickly. “Fury is gone?”

“Yes,” Steve said.

“But before he turned to dust he sent you a message,” Natasha said. “Why you?”

Carol motioned behind them. “Because I gave him that. In case of emergencies. Don’t you suppose this qualifies.”

After days of not knowing how to proceed and back and forths on the value of going out and looking for Thanos, something was finally happening. The pager thing had been resolved and it resulted in Carol. A friend of Fury’s who was more badass than anyone that Tony thought he’d met in a long while.

“Well, this probably requires a team meeting, then,” Tony said. “We can fill in our new friend.”

Natasha seemed wary, but Tony could tell that she was impressed by the nod that she gave Carol as she walked past her likely in search of Thor, Nebula, and Rocket.

By the time that Natasha was back, Rhodey and Bruce had introduced themselves. Carol was friendly but stiff and unsure and Tony didn’t blame her for it.
“You know, I could do with some coffee about now,” Tony said. “Anything for you, Carol?”

She gave a small shake of her head.

“Anybody else?”

Thor got there a few moments later and he walked and sat down without even stopping to greet Carol and Tony saw Nebula slink in with Rocket at her side. Tony finished fixing his coffee and he walked to stand next to Steve.

“Right,” Tony said, “so, what do you know about Thanos?”

Carol quirked an eyebrow. “I know who he is. I know the kind of destruction he leaves in his wake. I know he’s behind all of this.”

“And so you know that he has the infinity stones and that he won’t be easy to defeat,” Steve said.

Carol stepped forward. “I know that he is a threat. I know that he’s the reason half the population of the universe is gone but I’m here to set things right. And I hope everyone here is too.”

Carol looked around, looking at each of them and Tony liked her even more. His eyes met Steve’s and Steve gave a short nod. So, Tony launched into explaining that they didn’t know where Thanos was. Carol didn’t seem to have any idea either, but since he wasn’t on Earth, she was all for going to look for him.

“I can do it on my own, if I have to,” she said.

That was when Tony realized that they still didn’t know a whole lot about her or how she’d gotten to Earth or into the compound. Tony didn’t distrust her -- he just had questions. That was of course the moment that for the second time, Friday let out an alert.

One of the holographic tables came to life with a planet on display. Natasha was the closest and she turned to look at the display.

“He used the stones again,” Natasha said.

Tony moved forward. Steve went with him.

“What did he do?” Tony asked.

“Terraform,” Rocket said and Tony hadn’t even noticed him move. “Is that--”

“Titan,” Nebula said. “He’s reforming his home planet.”

Tony didn’t know what to say. It shouldn’t have been too surprising, though.

“We know where he is,” Natasha said as if the rest of them hadn’t already figured that out.

“That answers what we have to do, then,” Nebula said.

It did. It meant they needed to go to him -- they needed to make all of it right. Tony looked around and his eyes landed on Rhodey who looked unsure.

“We know where he is but that doesn’t mean we’re prepared. We’d be going in short handed--” Bruce said
All of that was true and yet--

“He still has the stones,” Rhodey said.

“So, let’s get him,” Carol said. “Use the stones to bring everyone back.”

She said it like it would be easy with almost a nonchalance that even Tony hadn’t expected from her. It reminded him that she actually didn’t know what Thanos was capable of -- that out of everyone in that room she had no idea what Thanos could do.

“Just like that,” Steve said.

“We owe it to them. To everyone that isn’t in this room. To everyone that isn’t on this planet or the rest of the universe,” Natasha said. “Even if there is a small chance. We have to try.”

Tony agreed with her. He also had to keep hoping that Strange had seen this and that he knew it would come to this and that they would win. Somehow. And this was what they had been waiting for. What Tony had built a new suit for and what would hopefully lead them to actually defeating him.

“And if we do this, how do we know it will end differently than it did before,” Bruce said.

“Because before, you didn’t have me,” Carol said.

Cocky. She was so sure of herself.

“Hey, new girl, everyone in this room is about that superhero life and if you don’t mind my asking, where have you been all this time?”

Rhodey had his Colonel face on. His no nonsense face -- the kind that spoke to his training and who he was as a person and as a hero. Tony had had that face look at him before and it never felt good.

“There are a lot of planets in the Universe and unfortunately, they didn’t have you guys,” Carol said. She was so calm and collected.

Tony could tell that Rhodey was impressed. He himself was still very impressed. That was of course the moment that Thor stood up and walked towards Carol. He had said nothing to her since he’d entered the room, but he walked over seemingly with purpose. Carol didn’t seem intimidated in the least and then Thor raised his hand and Stormbreaker came flying towards them, flying just over Carol’s shoulder before landing in Thor’s hand. She didn’t even flinch. Tony didn’t really understand what Thor was doing, but then he sort of smirked.

“I like this one,” Thor said.

“It’s settled, then,” Steve said.

Tony nodded. “Yeah, let’s--”

He was cut off by yet another alert because apparently all of them were going to go off on the same night. Except that this time it wasn’t something inside the compound or the lab but it seemed to be one of the side doors.

“Did you bring a friend?” Tony asked Carol.

She shook her head, frowning a little.
Friday pulled up footage. The compound had one main driveway that led directly to one side of the building, but there were other entrances. This was one of the more unused ones because it was the garage door. A van was idling in front of the closed door, but then Scott Lang appeared, just in front of the car, waving at the camera.

Chapter End Notes

So I ended up using both the post-credits scene and the Endgame clip because it actually fit in perfectly with the direction the fic is going. I do think it's going to obviously differ from here as far as the movie goes especially since Tony is present where he isn't within the clips and there's obviously some other minor changes. But I think it was when I saw that Endgame clip that I really knew I needed to include Carol in the fic. It was the push I needed.

The next two chapters are going to be a little different and I can't wait to post them -- I think it's the point of departure from canon. I plan on having the next one up on Monday or Tuesday.
Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 134

Chapter Notes

Getting this one up a little earlier than I expected.
A couple of notes: This chapter picks up after the end-credit scene of Ant-Man and the Wasp. (Did I not say I was tying that in together too?)
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

2025

Scott came out on the same parking deck except that it was empty and all of their equipment as well as Luis’ van was gone. Scott had expected that -- he’d expected to come out at a different time. Janet had sort of explained time vortexes as wormholes within the quantum realm that could displace someone in time. She didn’t really understand them all too well which meant that it was likely no one really knew anything about them. They were uncontrollable and his only way out, but Scott had had literally no other choice.

Scott had given them more than a full hour before deciding to find a time vortex. He just hadn’t known what to and panicked because none of them had expected anything to go wrong which to him simply meant that something happened and it wasn’t just their comms malfunctioning. So, when nothing happened after an hour, Scott took it upon himself to get himself out with whatever means were necessary. He wasn’t going to be stuck like Janet had been. Unsure of what had caused the issue, whether that was the tunnel malfunctioning or something else entirely, Scott had decided on the only way out even if the time vortex displaced him in time.

That he was on the same parking deck gave him hope that he hadn’t gone too far in either direction. Future or Past. Scott didn’t fancy being in either. The deck looked mostly the same but there were no cars so discerning anything from just the parking deck was impossible. It didn’t take him long long to get off of the parking deck. Nothing seemed obviously changed but Scott could tell that he definitely wasn’t in his own time. He went small only because he didn’t want the Ant-Man suit to make him stand out or look suspicious. So, he flew on an ant and ended up at a busy Starbucks.

People were in line, but most were turned to the tv in the corner.

“--Gala which honors the late Tony Stark and his son Peter Parker. CEO of Stark Industries, Pepper Potts hopes that donations exceed last year’s number.”

Scott was struck cold. He got off the ant at an empty table and stayed out of view, but still managing to look at the screen. On it, pictures of Tony Stark appeared. He was in his usual three piece suits, looking completely put together with sunglasses on his face and a grin. Then there were pictures of his suit. A few different versions of the Iron Man suit. The reporter kept talking, but Scott barely listened as the pictures flicked over to one that must have come from the funeral.

Scott recognized Natasha Romanoff and Clint Barton. A blond woman stood next to Steve Rogers. They all wore black. Steve looked completely devastated.
“It is still unknown if Captain Rogers will make an appearance at the gala. He retired from The Avengers after the death of his fiance. He is rarely seen in public since moving to Stark’s Malibu home.”

Scott had no idea what to think. Tony Stark was dead. Steve Rogers had given up being Captain America. Nothing was right with the world. Scott called an ant back over to pick him up and he jumped up. A newspaper was on a different table and he needed to see the date on it. It wasn’t hard to find on the cover despite being small.

July 8th 2025.

He’d gone forward seven years and seven years into the future Tony Stark was dead. And whatever The Decimation was, it was probably to blame. Scott needed to get back to his present and he needed to warn everyone except -- well, he didn’t really know what he was warning everyone about. He had no idea what happened or how Tony Stark died. He needed more information. He needed to get to Malibu. He needed to speak to Steve.

It wasn’t going to be hard to figure out where the house was located seeing as it had been rebuilt where the last house sat and Tony had made his address public. Still, Scott went to the library to get the information he needed. Outside the library was a memorial -- a statue with a plaque that read:

**Memorial for Victims of The Decimation**

And it was that again. The Decimation. Scott needed to find out what that was.

The statue was covered in names in small plaques. Scott paused in front of it, but he couldn’t handle making himself read any of them.

First, he looked up The Decimation. The computers in the lab were not much more advanced than what he was used to which was a little bit odd. Then, he realized that they were old Stark models which could have been down to funding or the technology not advancing.

There were a million results when he looked up The Decimation. Hundreds of books had been written about it. The Wikipedia page went on and on. But in the end the important thing to understand was that one day, half the population of the planet disappeared into dust.

“Wow,” Scott said. He had no other words.

Half the population.

A few moments later he searched for the address to Tony Stark’s Malibu home. He wrote it hastily on a scrap piece of paper.

No one had batted an eye when he walked in with his suit on and no one noticed him as he left either. He stopped at the memorial, unsure if he actually did want to read the names or not. What if Cassie’s name was on there? No -- it was better if he didn’t. He was already pretty sure that Hank, Hope, and Janet certainly would be since The Decimation apparently happened at the same time that he’d gone into the quantum tunnel. It made Scott wonder if the tunnel was the reason he’d been spared or if he would have been fine no matter where he was. He supposed it didn’t matter.

“Sad, isn’t it?”

Scott turned.

“Yeah,” Scott said.
The woman kept walking and Scott rushed away. He really needed to get to Steve. They needed to -
- this couldn’t happen again.

By the time he made it to Malibu it was dark out, but Scott just kept going, sneaking onto a bus and
then actually walking the last of the trek to the house. It was isolated from other properties in part
because of course Tony Stark’s house would be separated from everyone else but also because even
Scott could tell that it was a work of architectural genius to get the house built where it was on the
very edge of a cliff. No one else but Tony Stark could have attempted it. This house had been
destroyed once, of course, and then rebuilt so it was quite impressive to know it had been built twice.

His hands were clammy by the time that he’d made it to the door and he took a deep breath before he
rang the doorbell. No one answered. He rang again. Three times more he rang and there was no
answer and Scott couldn’t even tell if anyone was home. If no one answered in the next fifteen
minutes he was just going to have to break in and figure out a way to contact Steve or one of the
other Avengers.

Scott let his head fall on the door. He rang the door bell a couple more times. “How do I get myself
into these situations. I’m seven years in the future which is ridiculous. This is ridiculous.”

“You’re what?” a voice asked.

Scott pulled away from the door and looked around but he couldn’t find anyone. “Who -- what?
What’s happening?”

The door opened and Scott could just stare because it seemed to happen of its own accord. He
moved inside but there was no one there.

“Hello?”

“Scott Lang.”

The door closed behind him and Scott started at the sound of it closing and then a light turned on and

The last time Scott saw him, Steve had rescued him from The Raft. That felt like eons ago. Steve
didn’t look much like that put together man anymore. The Steve in front of him was still tall and
muscular, but he stood smaller. His hair was long and out of control, he’d grown a beard that was in
good need of a trim, and he was wearing loose sweats. There was a tired look in his eyes and his
pallor spoke to how little time he spent outside.

“Hey, Cap,” Scott said.

“Don’t really go by that anymore,” Steve said and then, “what are you doing here? You’re supposed
to be -- you were reported missing years ago.”

Steve didn’t wait for Scott to follow as he turned, but Scott went after him. The house was beautiful
and yet clearly barely used. The living room they passed through looked like it had collected a fine
layer of dust and then the dining room table was covered in newspapers and packages and letters and
other random things. Steve took him to the kitchen which seemed to be the only used room.

“You said outside you were seven years in the future,” Steve said.

“Is that why you opened the door?” Scott asked.

Steve stiffened but then he gave a curt nod. At least, he didn’t seem to think the idea far fetched.
“I’m from 2018,” Scott said.

Steve inhaled loudly. “What -- what happened?”

“I didn’t know what happened. I was in the quantum realm and Hank was supposed to pull me back out but something happened and they were gone. Couldn’t hear them on the comms or anything. I waited as long as I could but it didn’t seem like they’d be getting me out of there so I just -- I took a gamble and went through a time vortex. I know all of that probably makes no sense to you but the point is that I travelled through time using a time vortex. I ended up here.”

Steve barely reacted to everything that he was being told. Anyone else would have had questions or stated at him in disbelief but not Steve Rogers. And when he didn’t say anything, Scott figured he’d keep explaining.

“I ended up here. I read about The Decimation. I think -- well, they probably turned to dust so they couldn’t get me out. I have to go back. I can’t stay here. Maybe...maybe we can stop it if we know it’s coming. I can--”

Steve shook his head. He looked like he was far away, reliving something horrible. “Nothing is going to change. We tried to go against Thanos and he wins every time. And Tony he -- he sacrificed himself to save us.”

Steve Rogers was defeated. He had given up. He was -- it was all over for him.

“I can go back in time,” Scott said.

“Can you control it?” Steve asked.

Maybe it wasn’t defeated. Maybe it was -- he was trying not to let himself hope. And Scott didn’t know if he could control it. He had no idea if it was really possible to control it and yet he had to believe that it was possible because otherwise he would be stuck in this awful future and he might never see Cassir or Hope or anyone. He might become as jaded as Steve Rogers. And if he could go far enough back with all the information then maybe...maybe that meant changing everything.

“I think I can,” Scott said.

Steve’s hands dropped to the granite counter and he gripped it hard. He closed his eyes and seemed to be bracing himself before he opened his eyes again and regarded Scott. Scott felt like the moment dragged for forever.

“I -- come down to the lab. Friday will show you everything.”

Chapter End Notes

So that happened.
I once said that time travel fascinated me and one of the things that seems sort of likely when it comes to Endgame is the inclusion of time travel...so it was a direction I wanted to have this fic head and so that begins here with Scott. I actually had very little fully planned until I started writing this chapter (as far the ending/Endgame went) but writing this chapter really helped me figure all of that out...

Next chapter we remain in 2025. I will probably have it up by Wednesday.
Happy Easter/Passover to any of you who celebrate it. Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog [this chapter](#) and the [masterpost](#) on my tumblr.
Chapter 135

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

2025

The lab didn’t look like what Scott had expected a lab to look like. He’d been expecting something like what Hank Pym’s lab looked like which meant that he’d expected a workspace. This had become more of a living space than anything. There was a bed and a bunch of art supplies on one side and then in another corner a punching bag but there were still tool boxes and workspaces and yet none of that seemed like it had been used in a long time. The lab also doubled as a garage, it seemed like and there were two cars parked closer to the exit as well as a motorcycle.

The moment the glass door opened, a robot dog barked at Steve and he reached down to pet it for a moment. It followed after Steve as he walked further into the lab.

“That’s K-9. He belonged to Peter,” Steve said.

Scott didn’t even know what to say to that as Steve knelt to pet the dog.

“Friday, give him a rundown,” Steve said when he stood up again.

“Hello, Mr. Lang,” a voice said -- he supposed that that was Friday. A video feed appeared in front of him in the form of some sort of holographic and Scott didn’t know if this was a future thing or a Tony Stark thing but it was kind of amazing nonetheless.

“She’ll show you everything -- everything that happened,” Steve said.

It was comprehensive and insane and Scott couldn’t -- he couldn’t believe it even though all the footage was right in front of him. New clips mixed with articles and footage that must have come from the Avengers compound.

Scott was startled when he heard something punched. He turned and found that Steve had moved over to the corner of the room where the punching bag had been set up. Steve seemed to be focused on that and that alone. Scott left him to it, hearing the punches as background noise as he turned back to the video.

Pieces of the battle in Wakanda were shown. All of that had happened while Hope had stolen him away to find a way to bring her mom back from the quantum realm. Then there were news clips of an alien ship in New York City and a news report about Tony Stark leaving on the ship. It made Scott wonder if that’s how he’d died -- but no, there was more to look at.

Tony Stark back on Earth -- an Earth where half the population was gone and no one knew what to do. There was destruction and pain everywhere. Accidents and lack of leadership left and right leading to chaos and more destruction because people couldn’t help but just do that even after things seemed like they were starting to get better.

Then, came something else. The remaining Avengers announcing that they were going into space to confront Thanos. The world cheering them on. Someone new was with them, a woman that glowed and wore some sort of red and blue and gold uniform. Some footage from space -- taken by Iron Man’s suit from the looks of it. There were bits and pieces of a fight and even Scott could tell that it hadn’t gone well. Then it switched to more media clips. The return of The Avengers without Tony
Stark and without a victory. The world unchanged. Tony Stark’s funeral.

“We thought that if we faced him together we could do it -- we could steal the stones back and fix it all. Bring everyone back. Instead, we lost Tony. And nothing changed -- we couldn’t fix it. Even now, things are not the same. They never will be.”

Steve had left the punching bag, and he unwrapped his hands. There was barely any sweat on him but he looked a little better as he walked back. Maybe it was that he seemed just a smidge more relaxed.

“So I go back to before any of this happens. I warn everyone and we stop him,” Scott said. “Seems simple enough.”

Steve paused a few feet in front of him. He stared at the ground for a while and then looked up. “The only way to stop him is to destroy the stones before Thanos can get to them. None of this is simple,” Steve said.

“But how? I mean they look -- can they be destroyed?”

Steve nodded. “There are two people that can destroy the stones. Wanda is one. Her power comes from the Mind Stone and it can destroy the Mind Stone. Perhaps other stones as well.”

Scott nodded. “But isn’t it in Vision’s forehead?”

“If it’s taken out first it won’t hurt Vision. They just have to have enough time to do that. We didn’t the first time.”

Scott nodded. “Okay. That’s -- yeah, I go back early enough and we get on that. Who else can destroy the stones?”

Steve picked something up from one of the tables. It looked like a pager and it looked completely out of place there. Scott hadn’t seen one of those in ages.

“Carol,” Steve said. “But Carol -- she won’t arrive until Fury calls her in. She’ll be too late but maybe you can get Fury to call her in earlier. With Carol there at the beginning maybe -- well, we might have a fighting chance. She’s pretty impressive.”

Scott nodded. He just hoped that he would actually be able to control it and pull all of this off. Steve and the world at large -- no, the universe -- was counting on him being able to time travel. Scott felt like one of those college graduates lying about the level of experience they had on any given field of study.

“So, if we destroy a stone, it will change what happened?” Scott asked.

Steve hesitated. “Only if Thanos doesn’t get to the Time Stone. You’re not the only one that can rewrite time.”

---

Steve didn’t actually believe that Scott Lang would be able to pull it all off. Mostly, Steve just didn’t want to raise his hopes for anything to change. Hope had failed him time and again -- it was just going to lead to more disappointment. More loss. More pain.

There was a picture of Peter and Tony in a frame that Natasha had brought him one of the last times that Steve had bothered to see her or any of the rest of the team. They had taken it while Steve was
gone on that mission with Natasha. Probably the last picture that Tony and Peter took together. It was silly because Peter was holding some sort of plaque about being a Stark Intern. It was all sort of a joke to do with the class field trip that of course Peter never made it to. In the one that was framed, the plaque was upside down. They were both smiling so wide. Happy. Steve missed them every day. He was never going to see them again, not unless--

Scott could make it possible. Maybe. So maybe he would see them again. Maybe it would make the image of Tony’s pain filled face fade from his memory. The way that Tony had mouthed his name and Steve couldn’t make it to him in time.

“I spared him once -- I will not do it again,” Thanos had said. Words that Steve would never forget. Tony’s eyes had stared blankly and Steve lost everything.

He helped Scott go through everything that happened. He started with what he knew about Thanos and his children. He told him about Strange and everything he knew about the stones. Friday brought up anything relevant and Scott asked his questions and he seemed appalled at the things he was hearing. Then, after that was done, he sent a message on the pager and a text to Natasha. The pager was kind of redundant since Carol actually did have a cell phone these days, but she’d left Fury’s with him as encouragement to call her if he ever needed her as a friend or otherwise.

Natasha called him at once. “Did Thor give you more of his mead? I haven’t heard from you in months and now you’re texting me you need me to come over because you know how to fix things?”

“Just come,” Steve said. He was tired. The world at large was tiring and he didn’t want to think that any of this would work.

“Ask her about my van,” Scott said. “There’s a quantum tunnel in the back. Kind of one of a kind.”

Steve stared at him for a long moment, but then asked.

Natasha seemed to know exactly what Scott was talking about.

“Yeah, I know where it is. We’ll bring it with us.”

“Us?” Steve asked.

“Bruce.”

Natasha told him nothing else and then she hung up. Steve turned back to Scott.

“So, this van is an important part of the plan?”

“Kind of the most important bit,” Scott said. “Well, no. I could probably go into the quantum realm on my own with just the suit but the tunnel will help.”

Steve shrugged his shoulders. He didn’t really understand any of what Scott had tried to explain to him about how he’d gotten there and he wasn’t really pushing to know. It wasn’t all that relevant as long as it worked. He didn’t think it would work. Steve hadn’t known Scott all that well before, but he’d counted on him when it came to the whole Accords situation. Steve believed he wanted to help and he wanted to change things, but Steve also knew how stubborn he and Tony and all the rest were and he didn’t expect that things would be all that easy for Scott.

Natasha arrived with Bruce a couple of days later with Scott’s van.
Those two days were long. Scott had all kinds of questions. Steve mostly wanted to just hide away and not see Scott at all. For a large part of one he did, venturing to the bedroom he rarely used.

The Malibu house hadn’t been his first choice in place to live, but after trying to stay in New York and being constantly reminded of Tony and Peter and Bucky, Steve had just wandered. He’d gone from place to place never staying anywhere long and not finding any hope in how lost the world at large was.

He’d ended up in California eventually and at first he’d just gone there to have a place to go. It was still all Tony. Big and ridiculous and too technologically advanced. But it was less Tony in his mind because it wasn’t somewhere he had ever visited with Tony. He’d felt better there and it helped that it was isolated and away from everyone else. It hadn’t taken him long to decide to stay. Natasha fought him the entire time. Bruce and Thor tried in their own ways. Even Carol made an attempt at changing his mind and yet they all knew he was moving and leaving the team and that was that.

Natasha and Bruce didn’t look all that changed since he’d seen them last. He couldn’t remember when. Natasha hugged him tightly, pulling at his beard when he pulled back.

“It’s not good for you to be out here all alone,” she said. “You make horrible choices when you’re on your own. Like the beard.”

He just shrugged his shoulders. There wasn’t much that could explain his actions because they all knew how deeply rooted in Tony it all was. Looking at any of them -- their friends. Or the tower or even the compound. Without Tony everything was harder. Being a part of The Avengers had felt impossible. Steve knew that he probably would have stuck it out if they really needed him but with Carol in the picture, he’d felt like he could step back and let the others handle it.

“Where’d you find the van?” Steve asked.

“One of the new recruits,” Natasha said but only when Scott had gone with Bruce to look at the van. “His daughter Cassie, actually. She told me not to tell him. We were all kind of shocked. Wasn’t Scott decimated?”

“Appears not. He was trapped in the quantum realm.”

That was when Carol arrived. She was ablaze as she came down from the air and then her glow disappeared as she touched the ground.

“Hey, Cap,” she said.

“Hey, Cap,” Steve said back.

She hugged him. Steve would never not be impressed with her. In some ways, Steve still didn’t know how they had failed against Thanos when they had Captain Marvel on their side.

“So what’s happening? Who are you?” Carol asked.


“Captain Marvel,” Carol said and shook Scott’s hand.

Between him and Scott they explained everything and the plan that they had come up with. Carol seemed all for it. If Steve knew anything about her, he knew that she was probably only just holding herself back from offering to travel back with Scott. Bruce seemed more interested in the technical aspects of it all and Steve saw him asking Scott question after question.
“Do you think this will work?” Carol asked him.

Bruce and Scott were getting the tunnel on. Natasha stood a few feet away, watching with interest. There was a hardness to all of them. Losing the way they did -- not being able to make things better took a toll. Steve didn’t think he lost more than anyone else did. He just knew that his loss made him a different person.

“I hope it will. I hope he can pull this off,” he said.

“Me too,” Carol said. “I hoped when you reached out that maybe you wanted to come back to the team. I didn’t expect--”

“I don’t want to come back to the team. I was done. It was going to be Thanos and fixing all of that and then I was done. Maybe not right away, and maybe not entirely but Tony asked me what the point was and it’s been to make things better and to make things safe but at some point the fighting and all of it had to end. And it hasn’t and it won’t and it’s naive to think that it ever will stop but that doesn’t mean we don’t get to step back and live normally. Even us. Even just me.”

Carol’s lips pursed. “You’re hiding away. This isn’t what Tony would have wanted. He wanted you to be happy.”

“Well he isn’t here and that’s entirely tied up with my happiness.”

“Steve, he would want you to move on. See other people, go out into the world. Be a part of the world. You can’t hide away--”

Steve shook his head. “I can’t.”

“So this better work,” Natasha said. “Then, this won’t be a worry at all.”

A few hours later, they drove to San Francisco and the parking deck where Scott had arrived at Scott’s insistence and then between Scott and Natasha and Bruce everything was set up.

“Okay,” Scott said, “to a better future.” He closed up the mask portion of his suit and then promptly disappeared.

“Do you think he can do it?” Bruce asked.

Steve stared at the space where Scott had been. He didn’t know if Scott would make any difference to everything that had happened. Maybe he would -- maybe he wouldn’t. To Steve it almost didn’t matter. He desperately wanted Scott to pull through and change everything and yet letting himself hope again felt like he was just getting ready for more disappointment and heartbreak. He didn’t answer.

“So, his daughter had the van?” he asked instead.

Carol nodded. “She kind of takes after him. She’s young, but she knows the importance of heroes. I like her.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay here we are. I'm so happy to be getting updates out this quickly.
So we sort of get more information about what happened with Tony in this future...next up we're back in 2018 and picking up where we left off there.

Even though I don't think it needs to be said, with Endgame already out in a few places already and people starting to see it, please keep the comments spoiler free. I don't think I will have another chapter out until after I've seen the movie and after the official release date of 4/26 but I'd hate for anyone to be spoiled. I will personally be seeing it on Thursday night (exactly 48 hours from now omg) at which point I will gladly discuss the movie and the best way to reach me is probably my tumblr.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
“Time is kind of silly in here,” Peter said. He was lying down on the floor. It actually kind of felt nice to stretch his back on the floor like that.

“You are kind of silly,” Bucky said.

It felt like they had been in the stone for forever. Except that other times it felt like he had been out in the real world just minutes earlier -- like his dad had been holding him so recently that Peter still felt his hands.

“I know that,” Peter said. “So, did you know that my dad actually drew up plans for your arm? I saw them once -- he was really surprised by all the work that those Hydra scientists managed to do since it was so long ago.”

“You’ve told me this before,” Bucky said.

“Oh,” Peter said. “I guess I forgot. I’ve probably told you everything already.”

Bucky nodded. He then, dropped down to the ground next to Peter. “Everything,” he said, “except for about this MJ girl.”

Bucky tended to bring up MJ whenever he felt like bothering Peter. It was all because Peter had been describing her to Bucky and Sam once for just in case anyone saw her around in their weird orange world -- the stone. No one had. It meant that she probably hadn’t turned to dust.

Then again, they were finding people all the time. And even though they had seen Quill and Drax they hadn’t seen Mantis and Peter knew for a fact that she’d turned to dust.

“You said her eyes were really pretty, Petey,” Bucky said and smirked. “Then, you told us that she has a really nice smile.”

Peter could feel his face getting warmer.

“I don’t have a crush on MJ.”

The thing was that maybe he did. Well, no, Peter didn’t know for a fact that he did. He just knew that he didn’t know how much time had passed in the real world and that he missed MJ and hoped she was okay. He hoped the same for Ned and maybe for everyone else that he was in school with -- even Flash.

“Are you teasing him again, Buck?” Sam asked with a smirk. “You know, I just remembered that MJ definitely knows he’s Spider-Man. So as far as possible girlfriends she’s definitely a good candidate.”

“Yeah,” Peter said with a roll of his eyes. “If we ever get out of here.”

Bucky laughed and Sam grinned at Peter and Peter just groaned and he didn’t have a crush on MJ.
“I don’t know why I hang out with the two of you.”

“Because your other options include Strange,” Sam said.

“Or Quill. He was kind of weird.”

“Oh. Yeah.”

--

“So, what you’re saying is that you’re from the future?” Natasha asked.

Scott began to nod but then he shook his head. “No. No. I’m from a few weeks ago.”

“So you’re from the past,” Bruce said.

Next to Tony, Steve shifted, his arm brushing against Tony’s. Too much had happened in the last twenty minutes. The arrival of Carol, Thanos’ use of the stones, and then Scott Lang had arrived. Scott who had been presumed to be a victim of The Decimation, but who turned out to be perfectly fine but had appeared with some outlandish story about time travel.

Scott threw his hands in the air. “Yes. Sure. I went to the future accidentally when I was stuck in the quantum realm. I came back — I meant to go back into the past so I could warn everyone about Thanos and stop the decimation from happening. I didn’t manage that so now I just want your help with going back far enough that I can actually do that.”

“Run all of this by us one more time,” Rhodey said. He had his arms crossed and he looked tired. They were all tired.

“I need to go back in time to warn all of you about Thanos,” Scott said. “Although considering how this conversation is going, I don’t know if any of you will actually believe me.”

Tony could tell that Scott was getting frustrated. Scott was also telling them something that could have sounded crazy except that Tony had been in space and fought a weird purple alien who thought that the way to save the universe was to get rid of half of the population. Tony had also seen first hand that what scientists had been theorizing for years about wormholes was true and that they could indeed bend space to make space travel faster and easier. So, why couldn’t time travel be possible as well? After all, time travel sort of landed within the same theories as far as Tony knew.

“The issue isn’t if we believe you,” Carol said. “I mean, I don’t even know you. Just explain it in detail.”

Scott hesitated. His eyes seemed to linger on Tony and then again on Steve.

“Sort of met you in the future,” Scott said. “Captain Marvel, right?”

“I’ve been called that,” Carol said.

“So what happened,” Steve said. “In the future?”

Tony was interested too. It couldn’t be good from the way that Scott was so insistent on going back in time to somehow fix the whole problem.

“When did you end up?” Tony asked.

Scott took a steadying breath. “I ended up in 2025,” he said, “and I went to find Cap because I was
in California and I knew where I could find him. I saw a newspaper and he was the closest to me location wise.”

Steve in California didn’t sound right at all. “Why?” Tony asked.

“Why what?” Scott asked.

“Why was he closest to you?”

Scott stared at him for a moment. “Because he was living in Malibu. Your house to be more precise.”

Maybe they were on vacation or there was another explanation for it except that Scott only mentioned Steve. And Scott had to pause and he looked nervous, as if he were trying to figure out how to explain things.

“Scott?” Steve asked.

“I guess it doesn’t matter that you know because we’re going to change it so it won’t happen at all, right?” Scott asked.

Bruce caught Tony’s eye. Time travel was a tricky subject and while Tony knew now that impossible things could happen and that they did, they couldn’t know that things could actually change. Maybe it would create an alternative time-line or it was all some paradox leading to the same end. There was just no knowing.

“I don’t know if that’s how it works,” Bruce said.

Scott nodded.

“Tell us anyway, Scott. No use hiding things from us,” Natasha said.

Scott nodded. He motioned at Steve. “You were living in Malibu and basically avoiding the world. I saw a news report and looked at a newspaper. I -- this is hard to say. They were talking about a charity gala for the anniversary of your death.”

Scott was looking straight at Tony. There was no mistaking that he meant him. No one said anything. It was -- it was only seven years from now and Tony was dead. But what did that mean about everyone else? Peter? Did they manage to get everyone back or was it that they failed again except that this next failure led to his death.

Scott seemed to look around at all of them, his eyes settling on Tony again. “It’s why Cap moved to California. He retired. I sort of got the sense that he never left the house.”

Steve had gone stiff from the moment that the implication of Tony’s death was out in the room. Tony grabbed his hand, holding it tightly until Steve looked at him and he let out a breath. Steve’s fingers squeezed his back.

“I--”

“I know,” Tony said. “We’re not going to let that happen.”

Steve didn’t seem to believe him. There was a fear in his eyes that Tony didn’t see often and it was hard to take in.

“We won’t let that happen,” Carol said.
It would destroy Steve if it did. For Steve to retire and become a recluse and never see anyone. For him to move all the way to California away from everything and everyone that meant anything to him — it was more than Tony could handle to hear that. To know that his death could break Steve and make him someone else entirely.

“How did it happen?” He looked to Scott, not sure if he did want to hear it but needing to. They needed to know in order to prevent it.

“Thanos,” Scott said. “I, um, I saw some footage. From what I gathered, there was a fight and it didn’t end well.”

Of course it was Thanos. It shouldn’t have been surprising to him in the least and yet to hear it out loud -- to know that in some future that hadn’t yet happened he was dead and that they hadn’t managed to defeat Thanos--

“So we don’t win,” Tony said. And he died. And Strange had given up the Time Stone to save him for no reason.

Scott nodded. “Yes,” he said, “yes, you lose. The future is -- it’s not good. But if you help me go back further into the past then maybe we can do something about it. We can win. We can be prepared for Thanos. Steve said -- he said something about destroying a stone earlier.”

“Not that it would matter if Thanos gets the Time Stone,” Bruce said.

Unless that’s the stone we destroy,” Tony said. “But, is that even possible?”

Scott nodded. “Yeah. It’s possible she can destroy a stone,” he said and pointed at Carol. “Or Wanda.”

Tony knew that Wanda had destroyed the Mind Stone, but he didn’t know if she could have destroyed any of the other stones. Her connection to the Mind Stone made her power similar to it. But if a Steve from the future thought it was possible, then he had to have a reason for it. He did find it a little funny that they were back at the first idea he’d thrown out when Strange and Bruce took him to Strange’s place. The only thing that was Strange would never go for destroying the Time Stone.

Actually, Tony wasn’t all that sure that Scott’s plan was the way to go. If he showed up in front of them months before the initial attack when Thor and Bruce were still in space and none of them had any inkling on what was to come, Tony didn’t know if he or anyone else would just take Scott’s whole story well. Not to mention that if Wanda couldn’t destroy a stone that wasn’t the Mind Stone, they wouldn’t exactly have Carol around as back up. This was his life on the line -- his and the lives of everyone that had been dusted. Peter included. No. They had a real chance to get this all right and make it right again and Scott’s plan wasn’t going to work.

“Warning us isn’t going to do anything,” he said.

“But--”

Tony shook his head. “We won’t listen. You know we won’t. And even if we do, we won’t know the stakes or know how to make this right.”

Rhodey nodded along. “So, what do you propose, then?”

Tony didn’t really have a full plan in his head. He wasn’t exactly the one that was best with strategy. He looked to Steve and then back at Carol.
“If time travel is an option, then there’s plenty that we could do,” Carol said.

She was right. Scott looked a bit nervous and Tony had to wonder about him arriving at the wrong time than where he’d been headed. It made Tony wonder if Scott even knew how to control the whole thing in the first place.

“We can use time travel to help us,” Tony said. Then, he looked directly at Scott. “But, it seems to me like you don’t know quite how to control it -- otherwise you might have ended up when you wanted to be.”

Scott sort of grimaced and it was answer enough which meant that first they needed to actually figure out how to time travel. Because if Tony knew anything, it was that time travel was dangerous and messy and that all of this could end just as bad if not worse than before.

“What are you thinking, Tony?” Bruce asked.

The idea had formed for him before he even realized it -- coming to him because of something Carol had said earlier about going after Thanos and taking the stones and using them to set things right. Using the stones was probably the only way to undo the snap. But facing Thanos to take them seemed to lead directly to more defeat and his death too. Now, if they could time travel. It changed things.

“Well, what if we get all the stones before Thanos?”

Chapter End Notes

I didn’t know if I was going to get this chapter out tonight as one of the sideeffects of seeing Endgame made me start working on another fic (something I really didn’t want to do). So for anyone interested I will be posting it as soon as I finish it (probably in a few hours) and it will likely remain a one-shot and it will also contain a lot of spoilers. That will also likely delay the next chapter of this fic a bit. Oops. And I still very much do not mind if anyone wants to come to talk to me about over on tumblr because there is just so much to discuss about this movie.

And let’s continue to keep the comments spoiler free for anyone that has yet to see the movie. If you do have something spoilery to say again I do not mind hearing from anyone (even on anon) on my tumblr. :)

And on another note this is one of my favorite chapters of this section of the fic and I especially liked it more once I included Carol in it. Thanks for reading. I am aiming for Wednesday for the next chapter of the fic.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 137

Chapter Notes

I wanted to make a note to say that this fic will not be Endgame compliant. There are some similarities, but just remember that I did finish writing the whole first draft of this fic back in March so a lot of the things I've gotten right are pure dumb luck. And I did spend a lot of time analyzing IW, Endgame promo, theories, and realistic story arcs while I wrote this. As I continue to edit I'm sure some things will slip in where they fit - if they fit.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So where are all the stones?” Bruce asked. “Or rather, where were they?”

They all looked to Thor. Bruce still found it a little weird to see him with an eye again -- especially one that was a different color -- after seeing him for so long with an eyepatch. Thor was -- he was different. Thanos had done this. Thor had lost so much even before and unlike everyone else who seemed to have some some hope that those that had been dusted would return -- Thor’s losses wouldn’t be changed.

Bruce would never say he had trusted Loki -- but he more than anyone had gotten to see the complicated relationship that Thor and Loki had and in the end Loki did care for his people and it had seemed like he was more than willing to help going against Hela. Apparently the best way to unite two siblings was to put them against another sibling. There was also of course Loki’s attempt to stab Thanos. Thor had told him about Loki’s final moments. How he’d had the Space Stone on him somehow and he’d tried to trick Thanos only to fail. Thor had watched him die,

“It’s real this time,” Thor had said at the time. “He’s really dead.”

“The Space Stone was taken from my brother when Thanos attacked us,” Thor said. “Before then -- it was in the vault in Asgard where it was taken after the Chitauri attack in New York.”

“Shield had it before Loki got ahold of it,” Tony added.

Friday started mapping everything out visually for them, bringing up a picture of the tesseract as a way to identify it.

Carol who had was leaning against one of the tables stood up straight again, suddenly. “Wait,” she said. “That’s the power source -- that’s -- Goose ate that.”

“A goose did what now?” Tony asked.

Carol stepped forward and she pointed at the image of the tesseract. “That cube, Goose ate it and Fury kept Goose. I guess he got it back eventually if Shield had it.”

Bruce felt as confused as the rest of them probably were.

“Goose as in Fury’s cat?” Natasha asked.

Carol gave a short nod.
“I feel like I didn’t know Fury at all,” Tony said. “Super spy had a cat?”

Bruce didn’t think their conversation was at all relevant, but it was Steve that spoke up. “At least we know where the Space Stone has been over the years. What about the other stones?”

“I didn’t even know that was an Infinity Stone,” Carol said and there was something like awe in her voice, as if she was realizing something but she didn’t want to say it out loud.

“Okay. Quick overview. We know that Strange had the Time Stone -- was protecting it anyway,” Tony said.

“And Vision ended up with the Mind Stone,” Natasha said. “Before that it was on the scepter that we took from Sokovia.”

“Right,” Tony said and Friday updated the display.

“The Reality Stone was taken to the Collector by Sif,” Thor said, “we thought it’d be safer to not keep two stones together.”

“Smart,” Natasha said.

Bruce glanced at her. She had her arms crossed and she was looking at the display and Tony with interest. Next to her, Nebula had her usual stoic look, but somehow Bruce could see that she was definitely interested. He suspected that she knew a lot more about the stones than most of them due to her connection with Thanos.

“That’s four,” Carol said.

“What do we know about the other two stones?” Steve asked.


“The Power Stone was given to the Nova Corps,” Rocket said. “My team and I gave it to them after Quill found it in some sort of cave. It’s how the team got formed.”

“And the Soul Stone?” Tony asked.

Bruce hadn’t heard about anyone encountering that stone. None of the others seemed to have any idea about it either and yet Thanos had had it meaning he must have gotten it from somewhere.

Nebula cleared her throat and didn’t seem entirely pleased to have them all look in her direction. “My sister figured out the location of the stone long ago. Thanos ordered her to find it and she did. It’s in Vormir. That’s where Thanos got it from.”

“Vormir,” Rocket said.

“That’s the six stones,” Rhodes said.

Tony nodded. He paced a little. Friday had added as much information as she could about the stones. Images and facts on what they knew about them.

“Now we only have to figure out how to get to them before Thanos does,” Tony said. “So the question is, where and when did he get the stones?”

Bruce could tell that there was a whole lot more for them to plan out and figure out but they were headed in the right direction and that was enough for the moment because it meant that they might
yet find a way to set the world right.

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Tony had timelines for each of the stones. It hadn’t taken them long to pinpoint where all the stones had been. Some like the Soul Stone had probably been stationary on that alien planet for a long time but he could tell that Nebula thought there was a trick to getting it — something that kept anyone from just stopping by to grab it. Some of the others like The Mind Stone and the Space Stone had obviously been in a few different hands.

They could trace the Space Stone down to Steve’s time and then Howard had fished it out of the sea and it was Friday that got them the information on what happened to the Tesseract after Howard found it. Project Pegasus, research that joined NASA, the US Air Force, and Shield into trying to harness the power of the Tesseract. Tony sort of remembered reading a bit about it at some point, but it hadn’t seemed important at the time.

Carol filled them in on her part of it and Tony didn’t know if he or Rhodey were more shocked to find out that she had been an Air Force pilot. In the end, Carol told them the stone ended up with Fury and it remained with Shield until Loki stole it and then he opened up that wormhole with it allowing all the Chitauri into New York. In the meanwhile, Loki had had control of another stone — the Mind Stone.

“It came from Thanos,” Bruce said. “He gave the Scepter to Loki so that Loki could enslave Earth and bring Thanos back a second stone.”

“He didn’t care if he won or not,” Tony said with some thought. “Loki just thought it was fun. He was following orders but he didn’t care one way or the other—”

And they had all thought that it was all Loki and that he had wanted to control Earth for some reason or another. Tony looked towards Thor.

“Loki is the god of mischief,” Thor said. “More interested in self-preservation until—” He trailed off and Tony could understand what Thor was going through. No matter what Loki was, he had still been Thor’s brother.

While the Space Stone — the Tesseract — had been taken with Loki to Asgard, the Mind Stone had remained on Earth with Shield and Hydra had gotten ahold of it. It was later, in the aftermath of Shield turning out to be Hydra that they started searching for it. Eventually, it would end up bringing Vision to life.

The more they went over everything the more they realized how much influence the stones had on their lives. Thor told them about the Aether — The Reality Stone — and how Jane Foster had been able to become a vessel for the stone. Before Jane came upon it on accident no one had known where the stone was. In the end, Odin had sent the stone somewhere safe with someone named The Collector.

“I’ve met the guy,” Rocket put in, “kinda weird and kinda obsessed with the stones. He was willing to pay a pretty penny for the Orb.”

“With a name like The Collector, what did you expect?” Tony asked.

He liked Rocket. The guy was snarky and pretended like he didn’t care and yet Tony could tell that he was broken up about the loss of his team. Tony was actually a bit curious about how Rocket and Quill got along since they both seemed to be of the opinion that they each lead the team. But Rocket
was also brilliantly smart and Tony appreciated all the input that Rocket gave them.

“Yeah, well,” Rocket said, “I just wanted my share of the units.”

Rocket told them about his own encounter with The Collector and the stone that Quill had found and that Rocket had tried to steal from him. Gamora had been after it as well.

“She was supposed to bring it back to Thanos,” Nebula put in. “Of course, she aimed to betray him and I -- I meant to take it from her and take the glory of bringing the stone in.”

“Not your finest moment,” Tony said.

Nebula shook her head and her lips quirked up.

“In the end, we took the stone and gave it to the Nova Corps and in return none of us went back to prison,” Rocket said.

“The Nova Corps was obliterated,” Carol said.

“Probably as a result of Thanos taking the stone,” Natasha said.

The Time Stone was with Strange and none of them could pinpoint when Strange had gotten the stone or where it had been before Strange was tasked with protecting it. When Tony asked Friday about Doctor Strange she brought up all kinds of files about him and Tony was only a little surprised to learn how successful he’d been as a neurosurgeon before his accident.

“Didn’t -- I think Helen mentioned him to me once,” Tony said. “I didn’t put that together after meeting him.”

It was Rhodey that answered. “Yeah, Tones, he would have been able to fix me. Probably.”

“Oh.”

Tony hadn’t noticed Strange’s hands -- maybe he hadn’t looked closely enough -- but if the accident happened in 2016, they could assume that Strange hadn’t become the guardian of the Time Stone or a user of the mystic arts or whatever he’d called them until after his accident. Before that Tony could only assume that the stone had been in some other wizard’s possession. Maybe Wong’s.

“We know where and when they’ve all been more of less,” Steve said, speaking for the first time in a while.

When Tony looked in his direction, he found that Steve had begun drawing up a graphic for the stones and their timeline on the dry erase board.

“Some will be easier to get to than others,” Tony said and then he looked towards Scott, “and with time travel we might be able to just plan each retrieval. How accurate will our timing be?”

Scott looked a little panicked. “I -- well, the quantum realm is not the most stable place to be but I think it’s possible to control a time vortex. Kind of thought controlled.”

Tony suddenly felt like maybe he was still going to be dead by the time 2025 came about because Scott had a weird way of trying to show how confident he was about something and it was decidedly concerning. If their entire plan hinged on time travel, then the time travel needed to work perfectly.

“We should maybe do better than just suppose that it will work,” Bruce said like the true scientist that he was. “I’m going to need you to tell me everything you know.”
“I have everything that Janet had and she was kind of the expert.”

Tony didn’t say anything, but he could have face palmed. Hadn’t Scott realized that they probably needed to look at that earlier than this moment?

“But you said it works on thought,” Carol said.

“It does,” Scott said. “Well, that’s sort of how I got here...but I didn’t mean to get here so--”

Tony sighed. Steve met his eyes and gave him a small smile and Tony just -- he could do this. Maybe Scott’s thoughts hadn’t been focused enough. Maybe...maybe they needed something that could focus someone’s thoughts in a way that allowed there to be no error.

Chapter End Notes

Managed to get this one edited earlier than expected. And I started editing the next one too so hopefully there won't be a long wait.

As I mentioned in my last note I was working on a stony Endgame one-shot. If you're interested and have seen the movie (as it is full of spoilers) you should go read it! - Together. Always.

Next chapter will probably be up Saturday.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 138

Bruce and Tony got busy getting acquainted with the quantum tunnel and the pym particles and every piece of information that they could get their hands on even if Tony seemed to already have his own ideas about time travel because of course Tony would. Scott offered what he knew which was apparently a lot and everyone else just left them to it. It was easier that way.

So while Natasha had taken on the task of showing Carol around, Steve had followed Thor outside to where Rocket had gone back to keep working on the Benatar.

“Do any time-travel ever?” Steve asked.

Rocket made a noise that sounded not unlike a snort.

“No. I did not think it possible;” Thor said.

Steve nodded. “Me either. I mean -- aside from the getting frozen and waking up in the future kind.”

Thor shook his head and Steve could tell that he was a little amused. “If this works,” he said, “I will be glad. Stark deserves his child back.”

“Peter’s seventeen,” Steve said.

“Very young,” Thor said. “Bruce said you and Tony were getting married.”

Steve hadn’t thought about it much -- hadn’t had a chance to think on it mostly because he was so happy to have Tony back that the whole getting married thing didn’t matter in the least. Especially not with everything else that was going on.

“We are,” he said.

“It will be quite the celebration,” Thor said. “I look forward to it. After all of this is over, of course.”

Steve nodded and Thor was right -- they would have a wedding after it was all over. First they needed to fix things and make sure that Peter and Bucky could be there with them. Especially Peter who had done so much of the planning and who had been so excited and supportive. It was easier to let him imagine their future like that -- with everything going well and a wedding and Peter right there with them laughing and tugging at his tie and with all the rest watching as he and Tony declared their love to each other. Easier than to think of what Scott had seen where Tony was--

He couldn’t even consider it. That wouldn’t be their future -- his future. They were going to change things. Already, they were changing things. None of them had voiced anything to do with their earlier plan to go after Thanos especially when Scott told them that doing exactly that had led to Tony dying.

Natasha joined them after a little while, holding a tablet. “I have a lead on Clint,” she said. “One of my contacts just sent me new intel. Carol is back with Tony and Bruce. Rhodey has to go back to the city as well so we’ll head out together. Call us if anything comes up.”

“Sure,” Steve said. “Do you need any backup?”
She shook her head. “Might spook him. Better, I go alone.”

Steve nodded. Rhodes clapped his shoulder as he passed and did the same to Thor.

After Natasha and Rhodes had taken off in one of the quinjets, Steve got to thinking about what else they were overlooking or that they might need. Then, he remembered something Thor had said about the stones earlier.

“They cannot be wielded by anyone -- it’s why they’ve all been encased somehow. The raw power of any of the stones would kill anyone that tried to touch them.”

Rocket had been quick to support Thor and explained how it had taken all of the Guardians to control the Power Stone without the power of the stone destroying them. Somehow, Jane had managed to live even after having one infect her body. Thor claimed she would have died if it wasn’t taken out of her when it was and Steve believed him. It meant that they were going to need to get something to hold the stones. And if they hoped to use them to change everything then they might need their own gauntlet or something similar enough to hold the stones. That was part of the plan that none of them had thought of.

“Thor, do we know anything about where Thanos got the gauntlet?” Steve asked.

“It was forged in the same place where my hammer and my axe were forged. In Nivadellier,” Thor said.

“And can we get another?”

“The mold was still there,” Thor said, “but even getting Stormbreaker made was a hardship I almost paid with my life.”

“Right,” Steve said. Things were rarely easy.

“I’m not saying it’s not doable,” Thor said. “And you are right, Cap, we’ll need our own gauntlet.”

---

She was green and young and really really sad.

It was Bucky that spotted her wandering around. There were plenty of odd people around seeing as the stone was housing half the universe so Peter had gotten to see all kinds of beings. Green and purple and yellow and gold people with crazy hair and weirder clothes. Aliens. Mostly everyone found someone they knew and they stuck to them. There was very little interaction and yet this girl seemed completely alone.

“Are you alright?” Sam asked.

Peter watched with interest. She turned to look at them with some confusion. “He did it. He put us all here and he thinks he’s doing what’s best,” she said. With conviction she added, “he’s wrong.”

“What’s your name?” Bucky asked and moved closer.

She stared up at him. Her hair was tinged with red and there was something about her eyes that told Peter that she wasn’t just some little girl. Maybe it was an alien thing, he couldn’t tell, but she seemed to look at each of them for a long moment.

“I’m Gamora,” she said.
Peter knew that name. Gamora. It sounded so familiar. Too familiar.

Gamora. Gamora.

He knew -- where was Quill? Hadn’t he -- wasn’t Gamora the person that Thanos had killed...the one that had made him break their plan and just lose it when Peter had almost had the gauntlet. And Thanos had muttered the name too.

But they’d never said it was a little girl and maybe Gamora was a common name in space. Still, he had to be sure.

“Sam, have you seen Quill?”

Sam looked at him confused. “What do you need him for?”

Peter was well aware that Sam didn’t really like Quill and Peter sort of felt like he was an acquired taste. They’d run into him at some point and Quill had sort of rubbed Sam the wrong way with his mixture of bad jokes, odd references to songs that Peter didn’t know much about, and his general demeanor.

Peter thought that maybe being out in space with him had made him like Quill a little more despite how his anger had lead to them not being able to take the gauntlet from Thanos.

“I think -- I think he may know her,” Peter said. “Kind of a long shot but--”

Sam shrugged his shoulders but went to find Quill. Peter turned back to the conversation that Bucky was having with the girl. She was a bit stiff, maybe not sure if she could trust them, and yet she stayed where she was and Peter smiled at her she smiled back.

“He was good to me once,” she said. “It doesn’t really matter. His cause and his beliefs were always more important.”

“Who?” Peter asked.

She didn’t answer and her face turned into a frown. Bucky looked concerned but completely out of his depth and Peter had to admit that he didn’t really know what to do with kids. Much less alien kids.

Sam returned with Quill who was grumbling behind him as he walked. “What’s the meaning of this - - I was in the middle of something and you just--”

Peter rolled his eyes and Bucky shook his head just as Gamora’s eyes landed on Quill and she gasped. “Peter,” she said.

“Um, that’s me,” Peter said, confused, looking from Gamora to Quill.

“Gamora?” Quill asked, eyes wide and confused. “But you’re -- you’re not. What happened to you? I thought you were…”

“He sacrificed me for the stone and so the stone took me,” Gamora said. “I didn’t know he could love anyone which doesn’t make him any less a monster.”

Peter looked between Quill and Gamora and then right before their eyes Gamora started to change, growing in stature and her features becoming more narrow and less child-like and then a woman stood before them still green and with her pink hair and an aura of sad resignation around her. She
was the little girl.

“I can’t believe it -- Nebula said he must have killed you but you’re here…I’m sorry -- I’m sorry I didn’t do it. I tried,” Quill said and he finally moved towards her

“I know you did,” Gamora said. “Peter, I know. It’s not your fault. Odds were against us. Thanos is-”

“Wait,” Peter said, but only Bucky seemed to be paying him any attention, “his name is also Peter?”

---

Carol was relatively quiet as they worked. She observed and walked around the lab and mostly just seemed perfectly at ease.

Tony had abandoned looking at things from the perspective of where and when they should go get the stones because he figured that was something they didn’t need to worry too much about just yet. Instead, he was trying to figure out how they could make sure they went to the right time.

“Well, what were you thinking about that brought you here?” Tony asked.

“I’m only off by a few months,” Scott said. “I thought about the date I wanted to return to and I guess I got a bit side-tracked thinking about the decimation and Hope and Hank and Janet.”

“So it’s really a matter of focus,” Carol said.

Scott nodded. That was exactly when it hit Tony. BARF. He would have to really have an in depth look at all the information on the quantum tunnel and time vortexes, but it was the only thing that made sense to work.

“We can -- we can try to use BARF,” Tony said.

“What? Tony are you--”

“Binarily augmented retro framing,” Tony said.

“What does that mean?” Scott asked.

Carol looked interested too.

Tony jumped into an explanation. They all watched him and Tony rambled on about memories and accessing the brain.

“And this machine -- it’ll help how?”

“With it we can accurately control the time vortex. It can -- it’s a game changer. We won’t just be time travelling to a certain date but maybe even down to the moment. And you know what else -- Barf might be able to help you out with your green problem too. Don’t know why I didn’t think on that before. I -- this is perfect. Now we can really get down to business and figure out exactly when we have to go back to. Bruce, we’re...we’re really doing this.”
Managed to get this one ready yesterday and managed to get some time to post tonight. I really love the developments this chapter brings us.

In other news, Endgame has got me writing lots again so go check out my Endgame one-shots! Together, Always, and And Oh This Too Shall Pass...

Next chapter will probably be up by Tuesday.

Thanks for reading.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
It was fairly clear, at least to Steve, that the whole time travel thing was going to take a bit of planning. When he returned from outside, he found Tony showing Bruce and Carol something on a screen. Bruce and Tony looked dead on their feet. Steve actually felt quite tired too. Although Carol had arrived sometime after 4am, Scott had made his appearance about an hour later and now it was well into the morning and no one had slept a wink.

“What’s going on?” He asked.

“Breakthrough,” Tony said and turned to Steve. His eyes were alight and excited. “BARF. It’s going to help us with the time travel.”

It was nice to see Tony excited again. It meant that Tony thought this was actually going to work.

“That -- that’s smart.”

“Genius,” Tony said and pointed at himself.

Carol stepped forward. “As impressed as I am by the plan that is forming here, this is going to take some time to formulate. I don’t know that I will be useful and if it doesn’t--” she trailed off, looking a bit apologetic.

“You’re saying you want a back up plan,” Bruce said.

Carol shrugged her shoulders. “Well, this is going to lead into a fight against Thanos, is it not? Even if we have the stones, so does he.”

Steve knew she had a point. They didn’t all need to be working on the time travel stuff. Tony and Bruce were dealing with the technical and science stuff and someone would need to work out with exactitude when and where they needed to travel to, but even once they were ready to start collecting the stones, that wasn’t going to require everyone.

“What do you want to do?” He asked.

Carol pursed her lips. “I -- I think that Earth is protected. It has you lot and you’re all fairly competent at this. The rest of the universe is already missing the Guardians and I -- your plan may very well work and resolve everything but until it does, I think I’m needed elsewhere.”

Steve nodded. “I understand.”

“I’ll keeps tabs on Earth. And when the fight comes -- I’ll be there.”

“We’ll keep in touch,” Tony said. “Something a little more competent than the pager.”

She nodded back with a grin and slowly walked out of the lab.

“We don’t even know what she can do yet,” Bruce said. “We know nothing about her.”

“Carol knows what she is capable of,” Steve said. “And she’s right -- this isn’t just Earth that’s been affected.”
Bruce nodded.

Tony shrugged his shoulders and yawned. “Hmm, might do with another coffee so we can keep--”

“Or, some sleep,” Steve said. “Both of you.”

“Cap, it’s almost noon,” Tony said.

“Yes, and you’ve been awake for -- I’ve lost track, that’s how long.”

Bruce tried not to laugh. “Tony, sleep might help. You might have thought about BARF ages ago if you’d had enough sleep.”

Steve stepped closer, grasping Tony’s forearm. Tony moved into his space willingly just as Steve realized that there could be another way to use BARF.

“Actually, we should have thought of it earlier. With BARF we can look at our memories of the times we were around the stone and really pinpoint when to go back to.”

Tony nodded rapidly. “Yes. Yes, that’s -- we can do that. We’ll have to set it all up but we can get started right--”

Steve shook his head. “Sleep first for both of you.”

“But--”

“No,” Steve said.

“He has a point, Tony. We’ll keep working in a few hours. I could use some sleep.” Bruce yawned for good measure as he set something down and taking off his glasses walked away.

Steve pushed Tony’s hair back from his forehead and Tony closed his eyes right as Steve leaned down and kissed him. It wasn’t a long kiss, but short and to the point -- a quick distraction before Steve just grabbed his hand and tugged at him in the direction that Bruce had gone and the bedrooms.

--

Tony sort of missed being at the tower when he didn’t think about it too much, but it had just felt right to stay at the compound once they were all there. The bedroom that Steve had been using as his own long ago had become his and Steve’s and when Tony helped him undress and get into bed Tony didn’t even protest that Steve didn’t stay behind.

“I’m gross and sweaty, but after I take a shower I’ll be back.”

“Or,” Tony said, sitting up, “I could join you on that shower and then we can both get into bed.”

Steve had stared at him for a long while. “As long as you get some sleep somewhere in that time I’m not entirely opposed.”

Tony hadn’t allowed himself to be anything more than wholly overtaken by his work and his grief since he’d returned from space. He and Steve just -- they’d been too busy or too tired or sad and he was still a lot of those things but he also loved Steve and he missed Steve. He needed Steve.

“You know, I’m only doing this because I’m also kind of gross,” Tony said.
“Oh, right. Has nothing to do with me nude in the shower.”

Tony laughed. “That’s just a perk. Not to mention this way I don’t have to wash my own hair. Since, you know, I haven’t really slept in a while.”

Steve pulled him into his arms into a hard and passionate kiss that Tony returned readily, melting into Steve and for once letting his brain push everything else away.

---

Gamora was nice. She and Quill went off on their own after a while which didn’t really matter because time moved and didn’t all at once and nothing really mattered. Everything was still kind of orange or yellow. Everything stayed the same. Peter was growing tired of it.

“How did you get your powers again, Peter?” Bucky asked.

“I haven’t told you about that, have I?” Peter asked, a little surprised. “A spider bit me.”

Bucky stared at him for a long while and then he started laughing. “A spider bit you,” he said. “No, come on. How did it happen? Or is it the suit?”

Peter didn’t know if Bucky was joking or not. “No. A spider literally bit me. I should add that it was radioactive. I was on a field trip and I guess it escaped and bit me and then I felt sick and I woke up and I was stronger and I could hear things from far away and I can stick to things.”

“Interesting,” Bucky said. “So you just leaned into the whole spider thing, then.”

“It felt right,” Peter said.

Peter nodded and hummed a little. He was kind of bored. Being in the soul stone was boring.

“I guess it’s an easier way to get super powers than what I had to go through.”

Bucky didn’t really talk about his time as The Winter Soldier, and Peter didn’t know if he wanted to know or not. Peter had definitely not brought up how Bucky was kind of the person that killed his grandparents mostly because from his talk with Steve and a couple of conversations with his dad he knew that they didn’t blame Bucky. It was a brainwashed version of Bucky and not the one in front of him that Peter really really liked. He definitely understood how Bucky and Steve were best friends.

“It’s like the serum that Steve has, right?”

Bucky nodded. “Sort of. A different version and I’m lucky it worked because so many of the others just died. Or maybe, I wasn’t lucky. I don’t know. In the end it kept me alive when I fell off the train. Still lost my arm -- and they took me and used me for their purposes.”

“I’m sorry,” Peter said.

Bucky reached over and ruffled his hair. “You had nothing to do with it, kid.”

---

Scott was a little bit in awe of Tony Stark in a way that he hadn’t thought he’d be after everything that Hank and Hope had to say about him. Of course, Hope kind of blamed Tony for all of their troubles. While Scott had been able to get a deal and get house arrest, Hope and her dad were blamed for the creation of the Ant-Man suit and they became fugitives. Fugitives that Tony still tried
to help, apparently, but nonetheless on the run from the law.

So, it felt a little bit like a betrayal that Scott had just given him and Bruce Banner everything and yet if it brought him back Hope and Hank then he had nothing to worry about. His ex-wife was gone too but not her husband and not Cassie. Scott had considered reaching out and letting them know he was okay but he knew Cassie would ask him to go see her and Scott wouldn’t be able to say no.

When Tony and Bruce called for another meeting, he joined them, Steve, Thor, Nebula, and the raccoon whose name always escaped him.

“We know how to control the time vortexes,” Tony announced. “Well, we have a theory. But I realized this morning we have another issue -- you’re only able to really travel because of your suit.”

Scott hadn’t thought about that. It hadn’t even occurred to him that he might be the only one that could actually travel through time.

“That and the pym particles,” Bruce said.

“What does that mean?” Scott asked.

“It means we’re either only sending you through or that we have to figure out a way to send all of us,” Bruce said.

No one seemed to know what to say until the raccoon spoke. “Couldn’t we just build more suits?”

“Pym’s tech is different from my own,” Tony said. “It’s not really the suits, anyway. It’s the pym particles and I can venture to say we don’t have much of that left. And with Hank gone—”

Scott had brought everything that he could including some of the discs to shrink and enlarge objects. He hadn’t actually looked at how much of it he had and Tony made a good point that it would limit them.

“Well, how much do we have?” Rocket asked.

They all looked to Scott. “I -- I’m not sure.”

Tony shook his head. “Well, we’ll have to figure that out. Carol was right, there’s a lot that we need to do before we can travel anywhere in time.”

“Lucky it won’t matter when we go back as long as we do go back,” Scott said.

Scott couldn’t help but wonder how Hank and Hope and Janet would react to all of this once they returned -- because he needed to believe that they would be returned and that that awful future he’d seen wouldn’t come to pass. It was all starting to feel a lot like Back To The Future.

Voicing that out loud made Bruce and Tony stare at him.

“That is not at all how time travel works.”

Scott had watched a lot of movies in his time on house arrest. A lot of tv-shows too. Some of them had contained time travel.

“But what about Hot Tub Time Machine? Or or The Terminator?”

“Yeah, none of those depict time travel at all accurately,” Bruce said.
“Not even Doctor Who?”

At that, Bruce and Tony hesitated and then Steve coughed.

“Right,” Tony said, “none of that actually matters but Doctor Who has probably done it right somewhere along the way.”

Scott nodded. “And Heroes. What about that?”

Bruce let out a sigh.

---

Things were not the same without Peter. Well, it wasn’t just Peter that was missing -- but he was the one that Ned missed the most. He still had Michelle. And Betty. Betty had kind of just started hanging out with them because of all her friends were gone. He and MJ had run into her and they had gotten talking and somehow she’d just become friends with them and she was kind of nice and cool and not at all like what Ned had thought her to be like when he saw her hanging out with Liz when Liz was still around. Still, Ned appreciated the times when she didn’t tag along so that he could talk to MJ freely about Peter.

“I went to see May the other day,” Ned told her one afternoon.

“How is she?”

“The same,” Ned said. “She said The Avengers are working on some sort of plan. Tony Stark is going to do anything possible to bring everyone back.”

They hadn’t known for sure if Peter had turned to dust or if he had died at first, not until Tony Stark finally returned. Things had been a bit nuts after it was announced that Tony Stark was back on Earth and it didn’t take long for people to place the blame on him and the other Avengers for not being able to stop The Decimation from happening even if no one knew exactly what happened.

“You think he will fix this,” MJ said.

“It’s Tony Stark. If anyone can he can. He won’t rest until Peter is back.”

“No. He won’t,” MJ said. Her eyes were wet with unshed tears. “Didn’t know I’d ever miss him so much.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter has a bit of everything, I feel like. Next one we'll get closer to the whole time travel aspect of the story...it's slow going but I think when I wrote this I was still trying to figure out my plot so I dwaddled a bit.

I did decide to have Carol leave for a bit in part because I feel like there really isn't much for her to do, and because realistically she would feel needed elsewhere.

On another note, I think I died a little after watching the Far From Home trailer that came out yesterday. It was rough, watching that.
In other news, Endgame has got me writing lots again so go check out my Endgame one-shots.
I added a new one today.

Thanks for reading. Next chapter should be up Friday or Saturday.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
"The easiest one is probably going to be the Space Stone," Steve said over breakfast a few days later.

Tony sipped at his coffee as Bruce and Steve began to discuss it. He agreed with Steve. The Space Stone was the one they could probably manage to take at a few different points during the past. They could do it when Howard was still in possession of it and return it later so as to not change history -- or they could wait for everything with Loki to go down and take it sometime in the middle of that. The trick was going to be making sure that them taking the stone wouldn’t alter anything else in the timeline -- although, it wouldn’t actually matter. It would just probably create an alternative timeline.

Time travel was kind of confusing. Tony had always sort of understood it as an impossibility. And he had also supposed that if it were possible that time couldn’t be changed. It wasn’t because Tony believed in pre-destiny or something as ridiculous as that but because time wasn’t all that fragile and it was linear. It was happening all at once and while some people preferred to believe that time travel would create a paradoxical loop in which everything happened because it had already happened even if the events were in a scattered order, Tony believed a multi-verse existed. Time travel and any changes made in the past would just contribute to the creation of an alternative reality.

Janet and Hank Pym hadn’t really given him much of a different outlook on time-travel. The quantum realm was something of a mystery even to them but in some of her notes Janet had written that time worked differently there and that it all was happening at once which Tony thought maybe fit in with his own ideas on time travel.

"Not the Mind Stone?" Bruce asked.

"Well -- that one might be on the easier side too," Steve admitted. "I’ve been focusing on the Space Stone while using BARF."

Everything was ready for their first trip into the past. Tony had spent a few days with Bruce and Scott working everything out but he was entirely sure that things were going to work out the way he wanted them to. Their only problem was the Pym Particles.

Tony had known as soon as Scott showed him how much he’d brought with him that they were going to need more.

“So, did he leave more behind? I mean, if we go to his house or his lab or whatever, will we find more?”

Scott had hesitated for a few seconds before shrugging. "It’s possible."

“If not, then we’ll have to steal some from the past,” Tony said because it was the only logical solution.

Despite needing to figure out if they would need more Pym Particles, they kept going with everything else. Steve worked on figuring out the timing of it all, and Tony got to work on making BARF mobile and accessible to them through a device that would also link all of them together.

“I want to do a test trip before we go after a stone,” Bruce said. “We have to be sure this will really work.”
Tony finished his coffee and refilled the cup. “Probably for the best to try it out first,” Tony said even though that definitely hadn’t been his first instinct. But Bruce was right, there was a lot that could go wrong.

A few hours later found him, Bruce, Scott, and Steve in the quinjet hangar where the van had been parked. Between him and Bruce they had set up everything. Scott helped with the quantum tunnel and getting it turned on. It was bright and colorful and kind of amazing to peer into.

“Is it just going to be me again?” Scott asked.

“No. I’ll tag along,” Tony said. “We need to be sure that these things work.” Tony tapped the device he’d created with the BARF tech.

They were careful with the Pym Particles and Tony had used one of the nanotech suits to give him some protection. The plan was to build suits for everyone that was going -- suits that mixed in the Ant-Man suit tech and his own Iron Man armor. But first they had to be sure that it was all going to work.

A few minutes later, he and Scott were standing in front of the quantum tunnel. Tony felt a bit nervous as Scott gave him a nod.

“Ready?” Bruce asked.

Bruce and Steve stood out of the way behind everything controlling the quantum tunnel.

“Sure,” Tony said.

“Yup,” Scott said.

Bruce nodded and when Tony turned to look, his eyes met Steve’s. He shot him a thumbs up and Steve gave a curt nod but Tony knew that he was worried and would have preferred that Tony stay behind. It was just that Tony needed to see how this worked for himself. He braced himself and Bruce barely gave them a warning before the tunnel was truly on and then Scott nodded at him and they were shrinking.

It was weird. One of the strangest sensations and then they were being pulled into the quantum realm and that felt a bit strange too. Tony kept his eyes closed until he felt more like himself again. Then, he opened his eyes and gasped. It was -- there was color everywhere and it felt like they were just floating in it even if they weren’t really moving. Scott’s hand landed on his shoulder.

“Tony? Everything alright?” Steve’s voice was in his ear.

“Yeah. Yeah. Good. We’re fine.”

“Good,” Steve said.

“I’m trying to find a time vortex,” Scott said.

It didn’t take long for Scott to find one. It looked like a whirlpool, colors turning and turning at a fast speed. It stood out among everything else.

“We’re going to travel now,” Scott said.

“Everything seems to be going well so far. We’ll see you in a bit,” Bruce said.

Tony was nervous and excited all at once. So far everything was going to plan and if this worked --
if this actually worked the way they wanted it to then Tony could really let himself hope that they could actually pull it off.

He activated BARF as they moved closer to the time vortex. He pictured in his mind the moment he wanted to go back to -- nothing too far away. BARF accepted his destination and Tony linked him and Scott, when the devices on their wrists both lit up green, he knew it was time. The time vortex dragged them in and everything spun and spun and nothing made sense and it happened too fast until they met the cold hard ground.

The others were gone. The van was gone.

“Did we--”

Scott took off his helmet and he nodded. “We did it,” he said.

It was 2017 if they had gotten this right and Tony had to suppose that they had. They just needed to know what the date was before they went back.

“There shouldn’t be anyone here today,” Tony said. “It’s Christmas and they’re all at the tower.”

Tony was right. The compound was empty. Anyone that worked there was home with their families and Rhodney and Vision wouldn’t have been there because they were both at the tower. Tony went up to Rhodney’s office and found a calendar on his desk and sure enough he was right. Christmas 2017. It was even snowing outside.

“It works,” Tony said. “We’re in the past.”

Scott nodded with a grin. “We should get back.”

Tony had worked it out so that they didn’t need the quantum tunnel to get back. According to Janet’s notes time vortexes left traces so they just needed to be back in the same spot they had come out from and then using BARF they would be back in a time vortex and travel wherever they wanted to. The quantum tunnel was just an easy way to find a time vortex. It was all theory, of course, but Tony was confident that Janet was right.

Tony turned on BARF and he grabbed onto Scott’s arm and then Tony felt them get pulled again. It felt rougher this time as everything began to spin. He felt like he was going to be sick, but the next few moments went fast and then he was on the ground again.

“Tony!”

---

They didn’t come back immediately. It really shouldn’t have taken longer than a minute or two, but after two minutes passed, Steve worried. Anything could have gone wrong. Bruce next to him seemed to be trying to keep his own worry from showing.

“It’s going to work, Steve. They’ll be back soon.”

Steve nodded. He had to believe it. Tony wouldn’t have gone unless he knew that it was going to work. They’d been working on it for almost a full week and both Bruce and Tony had decided that it was ready. Although -- with Tony there was no knowing the level of risk he considered worth taking.

“We just have to give them more time,” Bruce said. “
Waiting was the worst. Steve had waited for Tony to come home from space and now he was waiting for him to come home from somewhere in time. He hated waiting. The longer it was taking the worse it was and Steve was regretting not insisting on going along.

“And if they don’t--”

Bruce shook his head. “They will come--”

The tunnel brightened and a few seconds later, they reappeared. Tony fell to the ground on his hands and knees and didn’t immediately stand up.

Steve rushed to his side. “Tony!”

Tony coughed as Steve reached him, helping stand. The faceplate disappeared and then the rest of the suit with it. Tony mostly looked nauseous and maybe a little dizzy but Steve still checked him over and he seemed alright.

“Oh, not doing that again on a full stomach,” Tony said.

“But it worked?” Bruce asked.

Tony nodded.

“It did,” Scott said.

Steve let Tony lean into him and Tony pressed a kiss to his cheek. “It works just like I thought it would. It’s a bit dizzying but the quantum suits will make that easier to handle. I think we’re ready for this. We’re just going to need more pym particles.”

---

“Of course you’re here, loser,” Flash said.

Peter groaned. Of all the people that he could find in the stone, he hadn’t expected to find Flash. He’d been walking around on his own for a little while mostly out of boredom and finding a few people he recognized here or there. He didn’t approach anyone he didn’t want to talk to, and he’d tried to avoid Flash when he spotted him, but of course Flash wouldn’t have just let him walk past without saying anything.

“Yup,” Peter said, “and now I’m going to walk away.”

Flash laughed. “Right, to be all on your own because even here you have no friends.”

Peter didn’t respond. It wasn’t worth it to respond even if he was bored. Flash would always be Flash and it wasn’t worth it to talk to him. So, instead, he headed back towards where he’d left Bucky and Flash didn’t follow him which was good.

Strange was with Bucky and Sam when he got back as was Quill and Gamora.

“What’s going on?” Peter asked.

“Not much,” Sam said. “Just hanging out -- not much else we can do here.”

That was true enough. He thought that they were all getting pretty annoyed and bored with being in the stone.
Peter sat down next to Sam. “Do you think we’ll ever be out of here?”

“Steve and your dad are stubborn enough to make it possible,” Sam said, “especially because you’re here. Your dad would do anything and everything to get you back.”

“Yeah, well, he better not do something stupid,” Peter said.

They had variations of that conversation time and time again -- all of them looking for the reassurance that they would be getting out of the stone at some point.

Sam shrugged his shoulders. “I would almost count on it.”

Peter laughed. He saw Gamora press a kiss to Quill’s cheek and then she and Bucky started to spar. If nothing else, it was entertaining. They had no weapons so it was hand to hand, but they both were equally matched and moved fast. Where Bucky was perhaps stronger, Gamora was more light on her feet. She was smaller and she used that to her advantage.

Chapter End Notes

Been trying to post this since yesterday but I was so tired from work that I just didn't have the energy to do more than sit and read fic last night.

So I do have one thing to say as far as the time travel as to not confuse anyone. I am following some of the rules established in Endgame as in the past cannot be changed - changes will only create alternative timelines. The other rule is one that I personally felt necessary and added an element of difficulty...we are time travelling but not travelling through space. So there's an element of when but it is separate from the element of where. We're heading right into travel in the next chapter so I figured I'd mention it.

On another note: Happy Mother's day to anyone that celebrates it tomorrow and happens to be a mother.

Thanks for reading. Next chapter should be up Tuesday.

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Chapter 141

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Scott ended up going on his own to get the Pym Particles. Although they had first decided it would be a good idea to just try and get whatever remained in their present day, Bruce had pointed out that it would be a waste of time to have Scott go all the way to San Francisco if for some reason not enough Pym Particles were there to be collected. So, they figured they could spare a trip into the past to bring more Pym Particles to the future.

“And I know exactly when and where,” Tony said.

“How?” Scott asked.

“My father worked with Hank, remember? And Shield.”

Scott nodded and Tony had Friday pull up the information on one of the screens. Camp Lehigh.

It was where Steve had trained before he got the serum and where Steve and Natasha had uncovered the secret of Hydra within Shield. It was also where Hank Pym had worked at one point when Peggy Carter had been director of Shield and when Howard Stark had still been a big part of it too.

“Okay. So I just have to sneak in there and steal some Pym Particles.”

Tony nodded and then started showing him what Friday had been able to dig up on Camp Lehigh. Howard hadn’t kept much, but the Shield file dump from a few years back had had a bit more information on that Shield base.

Camp Lehigh was in New Jersey which also made things a little easier in that Scott wouldn’t have to travel too far in the past to get to where he needed to be. Tony was hesitant to send him on his own, but with Scott being able to shrink, he was the best suited for getting in and out of a place that was likely very secure.

“You’re sure you can do this on your own?” Bruce asked.

“Yeah...I mean, this isn’t my first heist. But what if I can’t find any?”

Tony thought that it was extremely likely he would find Pym Particles, but he shared a look with Bruce.

“I think you will find them. And if not the Pym Particles themselves then any data on how Hank Pym even discovered or synthesized them would help.”

Scott nodded. “Okay.”

Tony instructed him on how to use BARF and then he and Bruce sent him on his way.

“You think he’ll be fine?” Bruce asked.

“I think that none of us could be inconspicuous enough to sneak in there and steal anything. I know that changing anything back then won’t affect us, but it’s still dangerous -- creating new realities where anything could happen. It isn’t ideal.”
Bruce nodded in agreement.

They didn’t wait long before the quantum tunnel lit up and Scott appeared before them.

“Did it. I got more than enough.”

---

Peter leaned his head on Sam’s shoulder. He was bored.

“You know what I want,” Peter said.

“What?”

“I want to tinker. I want to work on something but there is literally nothing to do in this place.”

Sam hummed. “I know, spider-kid. I know.”

“And it’s just like...when are we going back? Are we? No one knows.”

No. That was wrong. Strange knew. Strange knew and yet he refused to talk to any of them about it. There had been a moment at one point where Quill had been trying to get him to explain himself -- trying to get him to tell him why Strange hadn’t once considered letting him know that he’d see Gamora again.

Gamora had eventually had to pull him away. She was nice if a little bit scary. Peter thought that his dad would probably like her a lot. Maybe Natasha too.

“Come on, lets go walk around. Might find someone we know.”

“I saw Flash,” Peter said. “Still the worst kind of person even here.”

“You have weird friends,” Sam said.

“Not my friend. I did steal his dad’s car once -- while Flash was driving it.”

Sam grinned.

---

Tony built suits for everyone. They were an improvement on the Ant-Man suit and Tony had gone and included BARF tech into the suits as well as the wristlets. The suits were nanotech which meant that they wouldn’t have to worry about stashing them away in the past. It didn’t take long for him to get them all ready and even though only he, Steve, Scott, and Bruce were going on this first trip, he had suits ready for the rest of the team.

The morning of the trip, Tony spent some time checking over the suits and the nanotech. Bruce was making sure enough Pym Particles would be in each of the suits to get them there and back and Steve just sort of hovered beyond them.

It was Steve that had spent a lot of time with BARF figuring out when they should go back to get the Space Stone. They were all wary of making any big changes in the past even if Tony and Bruce both agreed that it would do nothing to change their present day. They had the whole thing planned out. It was going to work.

“I can’t believe we’re really doing this,” Steve said.
“I know,” Tony said. “One step closer to getting them all back.”

Tony didn’t let himself think about it too much -- the end goal. The reason they were doing all of this. Peter. It still stung to think about his son and remember Titan and watching him go.

“We will,” Steve said. “We will get them back.”

Right before leaving, Tony sent a message to Natasha and Rhodey to let them know what was happening. Natasha returned the message with a picture of her with Clint which made them all breathe a little easier. He looked a little crazed and wild. Natasha assured him in a following text that he was fine and they’d be home soon.

Rhodey was kept busy in meetings, but he had time to answer the call. As an Avenger, no one could argue that Rhodey should be allowed to answer his phone. Still, they kept their conversation short.

“I hope this works, Tones,” Rhodey said. “Don’t screw up the timeline. I can’t believe I just said that.”

“Love you too, Honeybear. And that’s not how time travel works.”

Rhodey laughed. “Just -- I better not suddenly have some weird memories about two Tony Starks running around.”

“Not how it works,” Tony said.

“Good luck,” Rhodey returned.

It was settled that he, Steve, Bruce, and Scott would go because Thor was working through BARF to look at his memories of the other stones and Rocket and Nebula were going to do the same once he was done. But in the meanwhile, Rocket continued working on the Benatar. Adding and changing things because they all knew that this was going to take them into space and Tony was more than happy to let him do whatever needed to be done to the ship to make sure that it would get them anywhere they needed to go. He didn’t want a repeat of before and being stranded in space. Although now that they knew Carol and had a direct line of communication with her rescue wouldn’t be difficult.

Tony had heard only once from Carol since she left. A quick message about being right about the mess that Thanos had created across the Universe. She was very busy, and glad that their plan was working.

By the time that they were ready to go, Nebula and Rocket had shown up in the hangar to watch it happen.

“We’ll be back before you know it,” Bruce told them.

“Good luck,” Nebula whispered.

The suits came on over them. They were white and grey and Tony wished he’d had more time to make them look better. Maybe a nice blue or just plain black. The only one that really looked good in it was Steve -- but then Steve looked good in anything.

“Ready?” Tony asked.

Steve nodded. So did Bruce. Scott already had the faceplate on but he nodded as well. It was time.
It felt almost exactly the same the second time as it had the first except that the quantum suit did its job and Tony felt far less uncomfortable. His nerves weren’t gone though because there was just so much that could still go wrong which was unconnected to the time travel and the quantum realm and all of that.

Steve and Bruce seemed as amazed as he’d been the first time he was in the quantum realm. The new suit made moving easier and the pressure of becoming small less disorienting. It was easier to focus on all the colors and the strangeness of knowing they were technically microscopic.

“This is amazing,” Bruce said.

“You didn’t tell us it looked like this,” Steve said.

Scott led them to a time vortex and they were pulled in as Tony started up BARF. They were spinning, going through the time vortex fast and with no real control until they weren’t. The next thing they knew they had been spit back out. It was time-travel -- not space and time travel -- so they came out just where they had been before in the space where the Avengers compound would have been. Instead, it was an empty warehouse and it was 2012 -- one day before the attack in New York took place. This was really happening. They were really going to do this.

---

It was strange to be in a place that would later become something else -- to see how it had been before Tony decided to turn it into the Avengers Compound. There were things there -- boxes and file cabinets and all kind of things that didn’t matter. They couldn’t linger there anyway, they had to get to the newly built Stark Tower.

Steve had thought it was so ugly the first time he saw it. But then, the whole city had felt ugly and wrong. All the busy billboards in Times Square and the buildings that had no essence to them in their plain lines. Seeing the huge letters on the building: STARK. It had angered him a little because by then he’d already known that Howard was dead and he hadn’t bothered to find out much about Tony Stark past knowing that he was Iron Man and whatever the media and the Shield files said about him. They had been so wrong.

Still, every day he’d sat at that cafe that had the view of the tower. He’d sketched it a few times and thrown out most of the sketches at the end of the day. Steve could remember with perfect clarity how lost and depressed and just uneasy he’d been for such a long time then. How it hadn’t been until Fury was asking him for help with the tesseract that Steve had started to finally feel a little bit like himself perhaps because there was a mission and a purpose instead of trying to find his way in a world he didn’t know.

He’d met Natasha and Bruce and a whole bunch of Shield agents -- Coulson being one of them. Then, Tony. Tony who was loud and egotistical and who had rubbed Steve the wrong way from the beginning. Maybe he’d been looking for a flaw. The scepter had certainly had something to do with it. And Steve wouldn’t change any of it. He wouldn’t change waking up in the future and meeting the people that would become more like family. He definitely wouldn’t change anything about meeting Tony and getting to know him and falling in love with him.

“Come on,” Tony said, “we’re going to have to get to the city.”

They needed to be in the tower when the battle of New York commenced. They needed to let everything play out like it had and that meant that they had to wait for Loki to be defeated and for the current Avengers to have the Tesseract and bring it into the tower. They were going to then switch it out with a replica. Once everything was over and set to rights, they would switch it back before Thor
used it to take Loki back to Asgard. The whole trick of their plan was to be undetected because for it all to work the Tesseract needed to be in the right place at the right time.

They got ready to go, Steve putting on the old suit after Scott un-shrunk the car and pulled it out of the trunk. It was just a bit of a precaution. Steve kind of hated the old suit. Coulson had designed it so it was brighter and tight in a way that his Tony made suits weren’t.

“You know,” Tony said out of earshot of the others, “I won’t lie and say this getup didn’t give me some good fantasies back in the day.”

“Tony!”

Tony laughed. “All I’m saying is that you still look really good.”

Steve shook his head and walked away even if he didn’t hate that Tony had slowly started to come back to himself. There was always that grief and anger under all his actions but more and more often he could let himself have fun and think about something other than Peter turning to dust in his arms.

“You’re horrible is what you are,” Steve whispered to him when Tony caught up to him. He stopped and spun to face him and Tony smiled and poked the star on his chest. Steve rolled his eyes but pressed a kiss to the corner of Tony’s mouth. “I don’t know what I ever saw in you.”

“My charming wit and handsome face,” Tony said without pause.

“And once we’re done flirting, maybe we can get on the road,” Bruce said.

They got into the car with Tony at the wheel and it was weird to see Tony driving a regular car that wasn’t flashy or had had numerous features added to it. Still, Tony drove just as recklessly as ever.

“Should have taken the wheel,” Bruce said from the back. “Definitely not letting him drive again.”

“Only Happy is allowed to drive me, I’ll have you know,” Tony said.

Steve decided not to put his two cents in because he didn’t really drive cars all that often. The house arrest had in part made driving impossible, but even when he was on missions he usually preferred a motorcycle in the case of any necessary driving. As a gift and maybe for Steve to have something to look forward to, Tony had gotten him a new bike last Christmas. Well, it was new to Steve, but really it was a bit older and in need of a lot of repairs but they had started working on it together.

Peter had asked about getting to ride on it once it was done, Steve remembered. He also remembered the way that Tony had sort of frozen despite the fact that his son was Spider-Man and Peter on a bike shouldn’t have been a big deal. It was bittersweet thinking about the past and Peter. But they would get him back soon enough and Steve would take him out on the bike. Maybe he’d even teach him to drive it himself.

Despite how fast Tony drove, it was still a few hours before they made it into New York City. Nothing was amiss yet. People were just living their lives. None of them expected anything to happen to disrupt their peace.

Peter’s uncle Ben would be at work and he wouldn’t know that he would need Steve to save him just a day later. And Steve had never thought about where Peter would have been on that day. School, probably. It was good to know that at least wherever he was -- he was safe.

---
“Right now we probably haven’t even met Loki and Thor yet,” Tony said as they got to the city.

It was weird to be back at what could be considered the beginning. The Avengers Initiative had still been an idea of Fury’s and Tony not even approved to be on the team. Tony had gone over everything he’d been given -- read up on Steve and Thor and Natasha and Clint and wondered how any of them could actually hope to work together. It really was the start of everything -- of the team and the friendship and family that they would end up forming.

“It’s a bit weird to think about everything that we’d be up to now. I wasn’t even in jail yet,” Scott said.

Tony didn’t know if he had actually known that Scott had been in jail at some point in his life. When he glanced at Steve, though, it was clear that Steve did know.

“You were in jail,” Bruce said.

“Yeah,” Scott said like it was normal. “I worked for Vistacorp. They were overcharging customers because of a code error. Well -- it wasn’t a code error like I thought when I found it and fixed it so they fired me.”

Tony sort of remembered hearing something about that.

“But how did that land you in jail?” Bruce asked.

“After they fired me I broke into headquarters to return all the money the company stole. It was about four million.”

Steve nodded along. “And then…” he said.

Tony could tell that Steve was smiling.

“Then, I broke into the CEO’s house and drove his car into the pool. I also stole a bunch of his stuff so I got five years. I still think it was worth it.”

As far as reasons for someone to go to jail, Tony couldn’t really fault Scott. He sort of liked him more for it actually. It was kind of a shame that so soon after getting out of jail, Scott had ended up on the raft and then on house arrest.

Tony parked the car on an almost empty street not too far from the tower. They still had some time to kill before they snuck into the tower. It had just felt better to arrive earlier than with so little time that they might not be able to do everything the way they needed to. Of course, there was a danger of being early too seeing as any tiny mistake could make things play out differently.

“A few more hours until I leave the tower,” Tony said. “We’ll know because we’ll see the armor.”

The car had a sunroof and Tony opened it up on the drive, but the real reason this was the car they were using was the visibility of the sky.

They went over the plan one more time while they waited. Out of all the stones, this was going to be the easiest one.

Chapter End Notes
This turned into a slightly longer chapter. No regrets there. And they're finally going after a stone.
I started working on editing the next chapter so hopefully it won't be a long wait. I expect to have it up by Friday.
Thanks for reading.

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Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Iron Man flew over their heads, but they still waited just a little longer before Tony finally got them back on the road. He took the car directly into the underground parking and then once they had everything and they were all out of the car, Scott shrunk it and put it in his pocket just in case someone saw it and thought to question where it had come from.

Getting into the tower wasn’t hard mostly due to how lax the security system was. Jarvis had only just been connected to the tower for about a day which made it the perfect time to sneak into the tower. They got the elevator moving with relative ease, but Tony didn’t have it take them to the penthouse because that would definitely alert Jarvis. Instead, they got off a few floors down.

“This place looks the same but different,” Bruce said.

“It wasn’t quite finished at the time. A good thing, too, because so much had to be reconstructed after the Chitauri attack,” Tony said.

With any luck things were going to go just as they had before. They remained on their current floor - where Natasha’s living space would eventually be. It was still going to be quite a bit of time before they had anything to do. This time’s Tony was probably just arriving in Germany and helping Cap and Nat take in Loki. So, they all relaxed a bit. Steve even got out of the uniform.

He and Steve sat down together against a wall. The flooring on this floor had been done at least and the carpet felt nice and soft. Tony couldn’t remember what the purpose of this floor had been originally. Maybe there hadn’t really been one.

“Doing this just brings it all back,” Steve said. “The first time all of us did any of this together.”

“It does. I kind of hated you a little. Well, maybe not. Resented maybe.”

Steve nodded. “I judged you before I got to know you so--”

Scott had packed UNO cards for some reason so for a while the four of them played the game and it was a fun distraction and Tony didn’t know when he fell asleep on Steve’s shoulder, but he woke up with his head on Steve’s lap and sunlight coming in through the windows.

Bruce was sitting at the other end of the room and seemingly meditating. Scott was still asleep on the floor just a few feet away on his back.

It was early, the sun still rising which meant that up on that helicarrier things were starting to go wrong. Loki’s plan was working as it was supposed to and in a little while he and Steve would work together to stop the helicarrier from falling from the sky. Coulson would die -- but not really die -- and they would all be convinced to work together.

“Hey,” Steve said. “Maybe we shouldn’t arrive so early next time.”

“You make a good point,” Tony said as he got up. He was sore, and his body protested much of his movement. “I’m getting too old for this.”

Steve rolled his eyes. “You need to stretch more.”
It wasn’t a bad idea so Tony stretched his arms first, bringing them over his head. It helped a bit so Tony went through a few more stretches. They really should have timed things a bit better, but he and Bruce had been concerned about getting into the tower before any of the fighting started.

“Did you sleep at all?” Tony asked while he stretched.

Steve shook his head. “I’m alright, though. I can go on less sleep than the rest of you.”

He and Steve walked over to one of the windows that overlooked the city. Everything was normal out there. Taxis and other cars drove past and people walked on the sidewalks. There was noise and movement and people beginning their days with no idea that something horrible was going to happen. There was a small temptation to stop it all -- to stop Loki before he opened the portal and allowed the Chitauri to arrive and cause all the death and destruction. They would save so many and yet what would be the cost of that? Changing this event -- how much else would it change? Would the team even become a team? It wouldn’t alter the future as it stood for them but Tony imagined that there would be a cost to such a big change like that especially now that they knew that Thanos had been behind Loki’s involvement in this. The Chitauri were Thanos’ after all.

On a smaller scale, Tony was sure that it would change things for Peter. In one big way it might mean that Peter never had to face The Vulture. But then, how much else could go wrong? They would never know what this branched off timeline would be like and it would be irresponsible to create changes. What if it meant that Tony never got to meet Peter...

“What are you thinking?” Steve asked, reaching up to fix Tony’s hair, fingers trailing over his forehead before falling away.

“I’m thinking about how we could find a way to stop Loki from opening that portal in the first place.”

When he looked at Steve, it was clear that Steve had probably had similar thoughts.

“It would change things -- maybe for the better or maybe for the worse. We can’t know what would happen,” Steve said.

“I know,” Tony said. “It’s kind of horrible that we get to sit here and watch people die and yet changing anything might make it worse for them -- for us. It might create a horrible world.”

Steve nodded along and pulled Tony closer, an arm wrapped around his back.

“We’re just going to stick with our plan,” Tony said. “It’s probably for the best.”

Steve nodded.

Tony didn’t voice the other thing he kept thinking about: Peter was alive in 2012. He was just a boy and he had no idea that Tony was his dad or that one day he would become Spider-Man, but he was alive. And it would have been so simple to forget the whole plan and just go find him. But he couldn’t do that.

---

Mantis didn’t have her powers in the stone, which was apparently distressing to her. Peter didn’t see her often because she and Drax tended to wander about but ever since Gamora had found them they stuck around. Peter still didn’t know what to make of them, but they had sort of bonded during their time on Titan.
Peter overheard when Mantis explained to Gamora how much pain Thanos had been in.

“He may have hurt over killing me, but he still did it,” Gamora said. “He doesn’t understand love.”

It was while Mantis explained to Drax that she couldn’t put him to sleep, that Peter spotted Flash again. He was walking past and he didn’t seem to notice Peter at first -- maybe because of his companions. But then, he did and just sort of stared.

“You would have the weirdest friends, Parker.”

“We are not weird,” Drax said.

Peter shook his head. “Guys, just...just don’t--”

“Does she have antennas?” Flash asked, his face twisting in confusion.

“The whole universe is here kid,” Sam said, stepped forward. “I’m sure you’ll find all kinds of aliens.”

Bucky came to stand at Peter’s side, dropping a hand to his shoulder.

“This kid bothering you, Pete?” Bucky asked.

Peter shrugged his shoulders. “Nah, not really.”

It seemed like Flash was going to say something, but then he seemed to actually think better of it. He glanced at Bucky and Sam and then turned around and walked away.

As soon as Flash left, Bucky shook his head. “I hate kids, you know? Bullies like that -- Steve used to go out of his way to help anyone being bullied.”

“Which is exactly why he’s Captain America,” Sam said.

---

Tony -- this time’s Tony -- fell past the window and Steve felt his entire body go cold. Had that happened before? Tony next to him didn’t react, but it took everything in Steve to not open a window and figure out a way to get to Tony.

“It’s okay. Jarvis is going to catch me,” Tony said, grabbing his hand.

It didn’t make Steve worry any less. He held his breath until he saw the suit drop after Tony and then encase him. Then, Iron Man flew past. He knew they all made it out of this battle and that they won but being on the sidelines of it and not being able to actually do anything -- it was hard. It was especially hard when it came to Tony knowing how the battle would end.

Eventually there was thumping up from above them and Hulk’s yells.

“What was that?” Scott asked.

“That was probably The Hulk and Loki,” Steve said.

“Hulk spoke,” Bruce said, eyes wide. “I didn’t --

The ceiling shook and there was another loud thump.
“No wonder Loki was still out when we came to find him later,” Tony said.

Eventually, everything ended. The Chitauri fell where they were and the whole world seemed to stand still as Iron Man fell from the closing wormhole.

“Oh,” Tony said next to him. “That’s — I really look like I—“

“Yeah,” Steve said just as Hulk caught Iron Man. Tony squeezed his hand.

They were all silent for a while. They couldn’t see much of what was going on down below because of how high they were, but they all knew what was happening.

“We’ll be coming back up for Loki soon,” Bruce said.

They were going to have to time it perfectly. Fury and Hill had been too busy dealing with the council and the state of the carrier to collect Loki or the scepter or the tesseract immediately. Of course, Shield agents had descended on New York while the battle was going on and after.

Really there was so much confusion, that when Steve presented how they were going to switch them, no one had had anything to add. Not even Tony. It was all down to the timing.

---

They listened to the elevator go up and Tony could still remember how strange it had felt to be in that elevator with everyone after just having been woken up by the Hulk. To be sure, he tapped his glasses and he could see them all going up. The Tony in there had just seen space -- had barely understood how much of a threat could be there for them and hadn’t yet known just how right he was. That Tony had still been in some shock.

Up at the penthouse, they would be confronting Loki and tying him up. Thor would put his hammer on top of him to keep him from moving and none of them had really understood how it worked then. Now, the hammer was gone -- destroyed by Thor’s own unknown sister. Thor had a different weapon now.

Today was the first time that Tony had ever heard from Peter. He was probably reading the letter now. Peter’s excitement and his admiration such a relief after everything that had occurred that day. Tony had believed that he was going to die. He remembered demanding that Pepper make a meeting for them happen. Of course, it hadn’t happened, and yet Tony had started to write to Peter. It had been a bit of a turning point. Tony hadn’t looked back at those letters in a long time and now he wanted to. He wanted to read every word and see all of their exchanges.

It wasn’t long before they heard the elevator again and that was the team from Shield, there to retrieve the scepter. Tony could make out their heat signatures. Agent Sitwell would be there with Rumlow and Tony kind of regretted that they hadn’t been able to take both stones, but they were going to let the scepter go for the moment.

A few minutes later, the elevator went down again and that was the scepter and a team consisting of Hydra Agents taking it away. Tony was tempted to stop the elevator and just take the scepter somehow but it was too risky and not because they were in the past but because going after the tesseract and the scepter put them at risk for getting neither.

“I guess it’s time we go up,” Steve said looking at each of them.

Steve took his hand and gave it a squeeze but let go as they moved towards the stairs. Scott was close behind them with Bruce bringing up the rear.
They stopped at the door. On the penthouse floor the Avengers from this time were preparing to go and then it would just be Loki left behind tied up and under the hammer and thinking back on it, Tony couldn’t believe that he hadn’t found it suspicious that the Shield agents hadn’t demanded that Loki be turned over to them along with the scepter and the tesseract. Of course, Fury had made it clear that other arrangements were being made and maybe they hadn’t wanted to be too suspicious when the scepter eventually disappeared, but Tony couldn’t believe that none of them had been surprised about how easy it had been for Thor to be allowed to take his brother and the tesseract away.

Actually, they had all been so naive and trusting. They had rushed down to help with search and rescue and with the immediate clean up required and left both Loki and the tesseract alone. Anyone could have shown up and taken it.

“Keep out of sight of Loki,” Tony reminded Scott as they heard the Avengers leave.

It would probably be okay if Loki saw the rest of them but certainly not Scott. Loki was their unknown variable because as much as they might try to avoid him, he might still figure out they were there and perhaps even that they weren’t from this time.

The stairs ended next to the elevator but they didn’t open the door because first Tony wanted to disable Jarvis a bit. He shut down some protocols and made sure that Jarvis’ cameras weren’t filming anything. The best thing about it was that it wouldn’t even be suspicious because of the state of the tower.

Tony worked on Jarvis quickly, using passwords that he didn’t even use anymore but that he still remembered. When he finished, he turned back to them. It would only give them a few minutes.

“Ready,” Tony said.

Natasha had been the one to bring the tesseract down from the roof with Selvig and she had left it on Tony’s bar. Selvig had been so shaken up by the entire thing that he hadn’t protested at all when Natasha got him out of the tower and she helped him get to one of the Shield medics.

Once the tesseract wasn’t opening a portal up, none of them had really cared to keep an eye on it, especially with everything else that was going on. After all, Loki was passed out and that was the only threat that they knew of. Then, Thor had voiced that he could take it with him and take Loki as well, and Tony had managed to get word of that to Fury.

“To face my father,” Thor had added. “He will be punished for this.”

None of them had considered arguing with Thor. Tony had had other matters to worry about. He was worried about getting to meet Peter and what he’d seen through the portal and he’d been a little bit distracted with the idea of food. They had rushed the clean up and search and rescue before tiredly ending up at the shawarma restaurant Tony had wanted to check out.

Fury and Hill had both been blowing up his phone, but at that point Tony hadn’t cared enough to even bother looking at his phone.

Scott brought out the silver case with the replacement and gave it to Steve as they stepped out onto the penthouse. Bruce was keeping watch on the panel that Tony had disabled Jarvis with because they wouldn’t have long before Jarvis brought the cameras back on and rebooted the security.

Steve crossed the room to where the silver case lay. Loki was on the ground on his back with Thor’s hammer on his chest, but he was awake and he lifted his head as Steve walked past.
Scott stayed close to the door just in case but Loki was still distractedly watching Steve and not saying a word. Tony for his part couldn’t help but look around. This floor looked different in the future and Tony kind of missed when it looked like this.

“You know, I didn’t expect any of you to be back so soon,” Loki said. “Or to have aged.”

That was exactly the same moment when Iron Man flew in through one of the broken windows. He had his gauntlets raised, but he stopped as he dropped down.

“Now this, I didn’t expect,” 2012 Tony said and then immediately turned to look at Loki. “I suppose this is you.”

Steve froze where he was standing holding the case with the fake. Tony met his eyes from his spot and Tony realized at once that they had made a mistake. He’d made a mistake in thinking it would be easy to just get into the penthouse and not be noticed. That somehow the Tony from 2012 wouldn’t notice. And of course he hadn’t just left it up to Jarvis -- not with Shield crawling all over and Tony had just...he’d forgotten. Maybe because in his past, nothing had come of whatever precaution had alerted him when they entered the penthouse.

“This is not me,” Loki said, grinning. His eyes were possibly even twinkling. “But I am amused. Do continue...I love some good drama.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter comes in at exactly 3k words so another sort of longish chapter. It actually went on into another scene that I decided to move into the next chapter because it was getting long but also because suspense. The fun thing about this chapter is that I'm not just revisiting 2012 within the MCU and The Avengers but also within this fic and so they get to think about that a bit which was a fun side to it.

I am more than halfway done with the next chapter so it shouldn't be long before I get to post it. Maybe Monday or Tuesday.

Also we're past the 300k mark as far as what has been posted which is insane. This fic is longer than I ever expected it to be.

Thanks for reading.

Check out my Endgame one-shots

I added a new one-shot today.

Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Peter did manage to get some sleep sometimes but it was weird because he didn’t really need sleep and because when he did sleep, he had weird dreams that didn’t quite make a lot of sense and that he didn’t actually remember completely when he woke up. Usually he woke up because Bucky or Sam were shaking him awake. A few times it was had been Stange.

Strange still hadn’t told them much. He just stood by his belief that everything would turn out fine and that they would all be returned to their former lives. But what Peter wanted to know was what was going on out in the real world. He wanted to know that his dad and Steve and the rest were okay and that they would continue to be okay in the end. He wanted to know how May was handling it and how Ned and Michelle were. It was hard not knowing.

He dreamt about his dad sometimes -- reliving memories more like. His dad in the workshop so zoned in that he didn’t hear anything anyone said to him. Or his dad smiling at him when they went out to get food on their own. Steve showed up sometimes too. May made her own appearances occasionally with Ben.

After a very short dream about a cactus, Peter woke up to hear Sam groan.

“I miss eating,” Sam said to Bucky.

“But you’re not hungry,” Bucky said back.

Sam turned to look at Peter. “You can’t tell me that you don’t want a chocolate chip cookie right now? Or...or a slice of pizza? Or french fries? Hell, I would settle for a salad right now.”

“Hadn’t really thought about it. I mean, now I do.”

Bucky shrugged his shoulders, still not really getting it. Peter thought that it was probably something to do with the era from which he’d come. Or his time as the Winter Soldier. There was no way to really tell the difference.

“You’re going to go on some sort of eating binge when we’re out of here,” Bucky said.

“At least I have the metabolism to make that a reality,” Peter pointed out. “Sam’s going to have to pace himself.”

“But food,” Sam said.

---

Steve switched the cases. He knew Loki was watching, but Loki also seemed interested in two Iron Mans facing off. His Tony had put on his suit which had actually on its own managed to surprise the other Tony in how advanced and different it was.

“Now,” Tony -- his Tony -- said, “I know this looks suspicious. But it’s me. I’m you.”

Stark -- because that’s what Tony had been to Steve back in 2012 -- made a sound at that. “Yeah, like that’s believable.” Then, in all Tony Stark fashion he attacked because that was Tony all over
and Steve would have found it funny if he wasn’t attacking his time travelling self.

The entire thing was going to get confusing in his head fast.

Scott shrank without being noticed and Steve quickly told Bruce to stay out of sight where he’d been in the stairwell.

“We have to disable his suit,” Tony’s voice came over the comms, then.

“I’m small. I can get to the reactor,” Scott responded, “that’s what powers the suit right?”

“No,” Steve and Bruce said all at once.

Tony was a little busy deflecting a repulsor blast and hitting Stark with a nanotech created shield and pushing him away. Stark was holding his own, though, hitting his future self and somehow managing to throw Tony into a wall. Steve made to rush over, but something was tugging at the case in his hand and when he turned he saw Loki. A second Loki.

The original was still on the ground with the hammer on his chest, but the hammer didn’t stop him from using magic and his duplicate was trying to take the case and he was holding strong.

“You really aren’t the same as the other one,” Loki said.

Steve elbowed him in the face but his elbow hit nothing but air and he stumbled forward. Loki on the ground laughed. His illusion gone.

“So why can’t we disable the reactor?” Scott asked.

“It’s in my chest,” Tony said through a grunt. “Doesn’t just power the suit.”

Steve moved past Loki who was straining his neck to watch Tony and Stark. Tony had recovered from where he’d been thrown, but Stark was shooting repulsor blasts and Tony was doing his best to dodge them or shield himself behind another nanotech shield.

“Listen, Tony. I’m you. You’ve seen what my suit can do. I’m you.”

“He is probably telling the truth,” Loki said. He was back as an illusion, leaning against one of the remaining glass windows and holding a glass with a drink.

“Bullshit. Everything I’ve seen today and I’m expected to believe that somehow another me showed up.” Stark said, but he didn’t shoot at Tony. “And you’re here,” he said and motioned towards the illusion of Loki.

“I’m from the future,” Tony said. “And I don’t want to hurt you. You’ve kind of been through enough today.”

“Think he’s going to let us go, Cap?” Scott asked.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. They had to get the tesseract out of there. Maybe if he passed it on to Bruce he could get a head start.

“And is he also from the future?” Loki asked, pointing straight at Steve.

“You have to knock him out. We have to go,” Bruce said. “Who knows if he’s called any of the others back.”
Bruce was right.

“He’s definitely not the Captain America I saw earlier. That righteous one with the serious face,” Loki said.

Stark turned in his direction and Steve completely froze again and he knew that it was because it was Tony -- a younger and different Tony but a Tony nonetheless. The last thing that Steve wanted was to hurt him especially not after everything he’d already gone through that day. He had almost died not even an hour ago.

“He is from the future,” Tony said. “We both are. We’re on a mission and we need to go--”

Stark shook his head. “Not with that you don’t.” Then, he shot directly at Steve and Steve had to throw himself out of the way to not be hit, losing hold of the case which slid down and flicked open.

“You know, you already have a lot of work ahead of you so maybe mind destroying more of the tower,” Tony said and sure enough the repulsor blast had hit a wall and created a hole where it hit.

The blue light of the tesseract illuminated the space in front of it and Loki was there suddenly, his illusion reaching for it.

“No!” Stark yelled, shooting at Loki but it went right through him. The Loki on the ground laughed, but the illusion disappeared.

The case snapped closed a few seconds later and it was moving, sliding on the floor back to Steve which meant that it had probably been Scott’s doing. Steve went to grab it but Stark was running for it too and they collided. Stark hit his chest with his suit covered fist and Steve tried to grab him and stop him. They sort of wrestled for a bit and the last thing that Steve wanted to do was hurt him. He was holding back, but that meant that Stark had the upper hand. Steve had fought with Tony before - the memory of what happened in Siberia brought back fresh to his mind when he aimed a fist at Stark’s side and he held back so much of his strength. He didn’t want to fight Tony. Any Tony.

Stark punched him on the face, scrambling to get a hold of his neck and Steve barely put up a fight. He could hear Tony coming towards them and Scott had hopefully gotten the case away.

“Tony. Tony, listen,” Steve gasped. “Please. I -- we’re from the future. We are. Me and you -- that you. We’re here because we have to save Peter. Your son.”

Stark stopped short and his grip loosened enough that Steve could take in a full breath. Stark stepped back. “You--”

“Yes,” Tony said, “we need the tesseract to save your son. Today was the first time you ever read a letter from him. Peter Parker.”

Tony reached Steve’s side and the faceplate pulled back, he looked like he’d sustained a bruise on his cheek, but he was frowning at Steve and he reached over to wipe blood from Steve’s forehead before his attention turned back to 2012 Tony who was watching them.

“Peter,” 2012 Tony said. “How can you--”

“Peter wrote a letter to you and you only just read it after the battle. It’s tucked into the back pocket of your jeans...and...and you were space when you went through the wormhole. We saw a lot of scary things up there and it was a sacrifice play. We thought we were going to die. Now, you just have to let us go. We’re on a mission. If it ever comes to it, you might be on this same mission one day. I am you.”
Stark said nothing. Loki from his place on the ground groaned and Steve realized that Scott must have hit him. It really was hard to keep track of Scott when he was small which Steve supposed was the point.

“Even if you know all of that and you’re...from the future -- I can’t let you take the tesseract. Thor needs it. Has to take that one away,” Stark said.

Loki kind of looked pitiful and nothing like the illusions of himself that he’d been creating. In some ways, Steve was a little sad that Thor hadn’t come along and that he hadn’t been able to see his brother one more time. Loki was a trickster and annoying, but he was still Thor’s brother.

Tony sighed. “I did say I didn’t want to hurt you. Then again, I didn’t say I wouldn’t.”

“What does that--”

Tony punched himself hard and then Stark was falling back and Steve rushed to catch him, suit and all. Tony above them sighed and then bent down and did something to the suit that 2012 Tony was wearing and it just sort of came apart.

“You didn’t have to hit him so hard,” Steve said.

“Yeah, he’s really going to feel that later. Kind of a shame they won’t get to go get Shawarma later.”

Steve rolled his eyes and he moved the pieces of the suit out of his way before he picked up Tony who lay completely limp in his arms.

“What are you doing?”

“We can’t leave him on the floor. I can’t just -- Tony, this is you. You.”

Tony rolled his eyes. The nanotech slowly crawled back from Tony’s body into the device on his chest and Steve heard him following him as Steve walked towards Tony’s bedroom. It was very bare. Steve had to remind himself that Tony had barely just moved into the tower. The room did have enough touches to signify that it was a bedroom belonging to Tony Stark and Pepper Potts though.

Steve set Tony down on the bed. He touched the spot where Tony had hit him and it looked like a bump would form there. Steve couldn’t imagine the kind of ripple effect that everything that had just happened would have, but he supposed it didn’t really matter.

“Steve come on, we have to go,” Tony said. “Scott and Bruce have the tesseract. We have to go.”

“Okay. Okay. I’m coming. I just -- can we leave him some painkillers?”

Tony walked towards the ensuite and Steve had a moment to just look at the younger Tony. He didn’t look all that different from his Tony. Six years hadn’t changed him too much.

Tony came back with a glass of water and a bottle of advil. He placed both on the bedside table and then his hand landed on Steve’s shoulder, pulling him away and Steve let him, following after him.

“He’ll be okay. And when we get the tesseract back here, he’ll probably think he dreamt the whole thing. Or he won’t. I don’t know -- could go either way. Maybe I’ll be obsessing over time travelling future versions of me instead of the wormhole. Who knows.”

Steve shook his head.
Loki was still on the ground where they left him and he looked mirthful.

“It’s nice to know I was right,” he said. “Time travel is possible. So, tell me, what’s the future like?”

“For starters,” Tony said, “you’re kinda dead. So there’s that.”

“In that case, say hello to my brother for me,” Loki said and his tone had shifted entirely, a bit more serious.

“We will,” Steve said.

Loki sort of nodded. “See, always the honorable one.”

Scott and Bruce were waiting for them in the stairwell and Bruce had the case in his arms. Steve picked up the case and they ran for the stairwell. Bruce was waiting for them and Scott was next to him.

“We have to go,” Tony said. “We can catch the elevator when we get to the next floor.”

They made it down to the garage level a few minutes later. Scott brought the car back out and they all got in and Tony didn’t even complain when Scott got in the driver’s seat. Steve wasn’t sure they would make it far in the car considering the mess outside, but before he could say anything, Scott pressed something and the car shrank with them inside.

“That, I did not see coming,” Bruce said.

The streets of New York were a mess. Not only was there alien tech along with the leviathans and the chitauri around but there was destruction everywhere. Cars and buildings and all kinds of debris. Scott somehow navigated all of it and they got out of the worst parts before Scott brought the car back to its normal size.

“So,” Scott said. “How was it, fighting yourself?”

“Not particularly great,” Tony said. They left it at that.

A couple of hours later they were back at the warehouse.

“How do we get back?” Steve asked. He hadn’t even thought about that -- the quantum tunnel didn’t exactly come with them when they travelled but Tony’s wristlets probably had something to do with how they got back.

“Tachyon particles,” Bruce said. “The time vortex leaves traces where a portal has been opened. So we have to travel back from where we arrived, but the GPS attached to the wristlets connect us to our time.”

Steve wasn’t ever going to really understand it, so he nodded as they all got their suits back on and then Tony did something with his wristlet and they were shrinking and the next thing he knew they were spiralling away in the time vortex until they were spit back out.

Chapter End Notes

I really really enjoyed working on this chapter. It was just a lot of fun. Hope all of you
guys liked it as well.

On a timetravel note: Tachyon particles - they are theoretical particles that may or may not exist. They are particles that travel faster than light speed which is impossible (because physics). Theoretically, though, if they did exist it would mean that time travel would be possible. (and yes, this is how deep my research into time travel is...and what happens when you start writing a book heavy on the time travel)

I am already working on the next chapter. I'll probably have it up by Thursday.

Check out my Endgame one-shots
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 144

They had one stone. Steve almost couldn’t believe that their plan was working. They had gone into the past and brought back one of the Infinity Stones and although they’d run into a spot of trouble, they had managed to get the stone and get back to the future so all in all it had gone well. They had five more to get, but having just the one made him feel like they might actually manage to win.

After they got back, they all felt a little bit odd. It wasn’t as bad as when Tony had first arrived back during the test run, but it was clear that time travel wasn’t entirely easy on them but the suits had definitely made a difference. Tony got Friday to order them food and then they all just sat down in the living room and Steve could tell that everyone was tired. The reality of it was that only a few minutes had passed since they went back in time -- but they had been in the past for over twenty four hours.

“We’re going to need at least a day before we go looking for another stone,” Tony said.

When the food arrived, Thor, Nebula, and Rocket joined them.

“How did it go?” Thor asked.

“It went well. We have the tesseract now,” Bruce said.

They filled everyone in while they ate and Nebula at least seemed to find the whole thing funny. Thor less so, but then that probably had to do with Loki.

“He said to say hi to you for him,” Steve told Thor afterwards. “Tony let it slip he’s--”

“He pretended to be dead a lot. I’m sure he didn’t believe you.”

Afterwards, Steve just wanted to nap. He was too tired to get up and try and head to his and Tony’s room, though, so he stayed where he was seated with Tony leaning into his side, probably just as tired.

“It seems this plan is going to work,” Rocket said. “I’ve made progress on the Benatar and started doing some work on one of the jets as well. I was thinking that some of these stones will require travel into space in the past.”

Steve hadn’t even really thought about that aspect of getting those particular stones. Tony had always said that it was the Time Stone that would be difficult to take from Doctor Strange, but Steve thought that the ones in outer space would probably be harder. At least the Time Stone was on Earth.

“We can deal with all of that later,” Tony said eventually. “For now I think we need to get some rest. Yeah, I know, weird having that come from me.”

---

Tony was used to not keeping normal hours so when he woke up around 2am, it didn’t really bother him. Steve was still fast asleep and Tony had been using his chest as a pillow, Steve’s arm resting loosely over his shoulder and their legs intertwined. He felt warm and comfortable and a part of him wanted to just stay there and try to fall back asleep, but his mind was awake and he knew he
Tony kissed a spot on Steve’s chest and slowly untangled himself. Steve twitched when Tony had made it out of his grasp, but he stayed asleep and Tony just watched him for a moment and then Steve turned, grabbing Tony’s pillow and hiding his face in it.

“Don’t know how I got so lucky,” Tony whispered. He pressed a kiss to Steve’s head and then grabbed his silk robe and put it on over his pajamas.

A part of Tony still couldn’t believe that despite that small hiccup with the other Tony showing up, that they had actually managed to get a stone. They were that much closer to getting everyone back. Getting Peter back.

Everyone else still seemed to be in bed, so Tony went to the kitchen and made himself some coffee before walking to the workshop. There were a couple of things that he wanted to look at -- that he’d wanted to look at since being in 2012.

“Friday, open Peter’s folder,” Tony said and grabbed his tablet.

Peter’s folder had everything. To start off there were baby pictures, but those soon turned into toddler pictures and more and more for every single year of Peter’s life. Mary and May had sent them all to Pepper and him and Tony hadn’t looked at them in years. Peter’s chubby cheeks and his big brown eyes. His boy. Tony missed him terribly.

Mixed in were school pictures, odd little things like the first place ribbon from a science fair and his report cards with every single comment from his teachers about how much of a pleasure he was to teach. Then, there were the letters. The first few that had been physical and scanned by Jarvis and then the emails later on. Tony read through every word and he could still remember when they had been his only form of contact with Peter. It was hard not getting emotional the more stuff he looked at. He missed his son.

He was wiping away tears when he heard the door open, but he didn’t turn.

“Hey. Woke up and you were gone. What are you looking at?” Steve asked, coming up behind him.

“Peter’s folder. I read his first letter after the battle of New York. I just -- I felt like revisiting it after earlier.”

Steve nodded.

“I remember that,” Steve said. “It was knowing you were willing to sacrifice yourself that day even though you had a son -- you had family. It was -- it changed everything about how I saw you. At that point I had nothing -- no one and if anyone was going to die to save the world it should have been me but that you were willing to sacrifice yourself even though you had a reason to live…”

Tony reached for Steve’s hand, pulling him closer. “It’s a good thing neither of us, died, then. Come and look at these. I don’t think you’ve ever seen him as a baby. Granted -- I never did get to see him in person that way myself. One of my many youthful regrets. I suppose -- well, me back then I probably wouldn’t have been any good for him anyway.”

Tony sighed and he pulled up the pictures, ready to hand the tablet to Steve but Steve was staring at him with a weird look on his face.

“What?”
“You could now,” Steve said.

Tony’s hand paused in mid air.

“What do you--”

“You can go back and see him. We have a time machine,” Steve said.

It hadn’t occurred to him. No, it had but not like this. In a moment when everything had started to come together Tony had thought about going back to see Peter back to right before everything with Thanos began. He hadn’t considered to go back as far as when Peter was still a baby. It was crazy to think of it as a real possibility and yet it was. He could do it. Tony could go back in time to see Peter when he was just a baby. He imagined that the whole thing would be amazing and horrible all at once because there would be a trip back and Peter would be left in his own time.

“Tony?” Steve asked.

“I don’t know,” Tony said. “I -- can I do that and then walk away? Steve, I -- I lost him once and I don’t know if I could do it again.”

But he wanted to. He desperately and truly wanted to.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said. “I know it’s hard. I know -- but I just thought maybe it might help.”

“We can’t change anything. I’d have to leave him. I do want to -- I never met him that young and I always kind of wondered what he looked like -- what he smelled like. So much that I never got to experience.”

Steve took the tablet and set it down and then he faced Tony again, reaching to place a hand on his jaw and neck, thumb sweeping over Tony’s cheek.

“If you want to do this, we’ll do it. I’ll be with you every step of the way. And if you don’t want to go then we don’t and we can look at pictures and plan our next heist -- what is Scott calling it again?”

“Time heist,” Tony said and he shook his head a little. “I -- I want to. We should go.”

“Okay.”

He would regret it if he didn’t and Tony had no idea if they would have time to do this at all once they started getting the rest of the stones. He had Friday find him information on where Mary and Richard had been living back in 2001. Peter had been born at New York Presbyterian in Queens on August 10 2001 but Tony didn’t think visiting the hospital was a good idea. He was still Tony Stark and in 2001 appearing in more tabloids for his antics than anything else.

“The hospital is too public even if we sneak in,” he told Steve. “They’ll have cameras so we’ll have to avoid all that. But I think Mary would let us see him. She wouldn’t give us away if we asked her not to. I don’t know if she would buy that I’m -- that I haven’t aged seventeen years.”

Steve laughed and he ran a hand through Tony’s hair. “I like the grey in your hair.”

“Excuse me, there is not a lot of grey in my hair.”

Steve laughed. “Some. Didn’t really notice it until we saw Tony from 2012.”

Tony gaped at him. “I don’t know who you’re calling old -- you’re over a hundred, mister. Hey,
maybe I’ll strand you in 2001 with the younger model.”

He walked away from Steve, then, feeling a little lighter and less worried about going back to 2001. Steve caught up to him, spinning him around.

“I could probably love every version of you -- but you’re my Tony. And you getting older while I’m at your side is absolutely everything I want and more. Now, come on, let’s go meet your son.”

“Our,” Tony said, smiling up at Steve. “Didn’t we decide that he’s ours?”

Steve gulped and he nodded. “Yeah. We did.”

Tony leaned up and kissed him quick and soft. “Love you. Anyway, I’m thinking that having a newborn probably means Mary hasn’t had much sleep so she might not even notice.”

To be safe, Tony sent Steve to wake up Scott. Once Scott figured out what they wanted to do, he understood without asking too many questions and Tony was reminded that Scott was also a father. They got everything underway fairly quickly.

It was Tony’s third time using the quantum tunnel, but it still felt weird to be in the quantum realm and then to be thrown back in time. In 2001, the warehouse looked just like it had in 2012 -- it had sat unused for so long.

The portal opened exactly where the last one had and Tony had a worrying thought: if they continued to use that same spot would it affect reality somehow? Would the time vortex leave a trace forever? He made a note to speak to Bruce about it just in case when they got back.

“It’s lucky they live in New York,” Tony said as they got into the car they had brought along for the trip.

Mary and Richard Parker lived in Queens not too far from where Peter had grown up with May and Ben Parker. The drive there felt like it went on for forever and Tony felt excited and nervous and worried about what this would be like. Peter as a baby. His son. His Peter.

Steve held his hand, the closer they got and Tony shot him a grateful smile.

It was after he parked the car that it all started to feel like a mistake. His very presence was bound to create a new timeline and since Tony was directly interacting with Peter and Mary would that somehow change how Peter grew up? Peter had had a good childhood. He’d grown up well in spite of losing his parents and his uncle.

“Hey, hey,” Steve said and Tony looked at him. “You don’t have to do this if you think it’s too hard.”

“I want to,” Tony said. “I want to. We came all this way. He’s -- he’s just there and I--”

“There is nothing like the first time you hold your kid,” Scott said, speaking up for the first time. “I know that you already have...sort of -- your grown kid. It’s different when they’re a baby and it’s going to be even more different for you but worth it, I think.”

In the present Peter was gone -- he’d turned to dust in his arms and Tony hadn’t seen him or heard him or been able to touch him in so long and it was this deep pain and longing that never went away. It was only the hope of returning Peter from the dust that was keeping Tony from truly falling apart. But he could see him now -- this baby version of his son.
“I can do this. I want to do this,” Tony said. He shot a grateful smile in Scott’s direction.

They got out of the car and Tony took a deep breath. He was going to do this -- he was going to see Peter. He was going to do what the Tony from 2001 should have done when Pepper told him that Mary had given birth to his son. Today Peter was twenty five days old and he wouldn’t know a difference or remember anything, but when he came back -- because he would -- Tony would tell him all about it.

“Ready?” Steve asked as they got out of the car.

“Yes,” Tony said and he reached for Steve’s hand because he needed that support.

“I’ll just wait for you guys here,” Scott said, poking his head out of the window. He gave Scott a nod and then they headed towards the apartment building.

He was going to see Peter.

Chapter End Notes

So a while back I said that there was one reason I wanted to include time travel in this fic. I wrote the time travel before Endgame even came out so I was entirely surprised when there were some similarities but it really does fit naturally as the direction that this fic would be going in and one of the ways to resolve Infinity War. But what really cemented me on following the idea of using time travel was the idea of Tony and Steve going back in time to meet baby Peter. So they’re now in 2001 and we'll be seeing a baby Peter in the next chapter.

Since I had to move some things around I haven't started working on next chapter yet. I think it will probably be up on Monday. Thanks for reading.

Check out my Endgame one-shots
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Chapter 145

Mary Parker was not what Steve had been expecting. Steve actually didn’t know what he’d been expecting -- but he hadn’t realized how much she would remind him of Peter. They had heard her voice over the intercom when they buzzed and she’d let them up and he had been able to tell how weird that was for Tony who had paused before speaking.

“Mary Parker? It’s -- it’s Tony. I -- can you let us up?”

Steve had held his hand for the long moment during which no one said anything and then the door opened and Tony let out a breath. It hit Steve, then, that this was actually happening. He and Tony were going to see Peter as a baby.

The walk up the stairs -- because the elevator was out of order -- felt long and short all at once and then they were at the Parker’s door.

“I guess now or never,” Tony said and he lifted his hand and knocked.

When she opened the door, Steve hadn’t expected to see a woman with small similarities on her face that filled up the parts of Tony that didn’t show up on Peter. She was also clearly a woman who had recently given birth to a baby and no longer remembered what a full night of sleep was like. It was eerie seeing so much of Peter in her -- in the confusion on her face and the way she frowned.

Mary wore a long oversized sweater over what probably was just pajamas. Her hair was pulled back into a messy ponytail and she stared at them as if she weren’t seeing them at all. The bags under her eyes were easy to notice and she gasped when her eyes spotted Tony.

“Tony Stark,” she said, “what are you -- what are you doing here? We -- we got your present and Pepper said you liked the pictures but what are you--”

“We just--” Tony began but a voice from further inside the apartment interrupted.

“Sweetheart? Where are you? Who’s at the door?”

That was probably Richard Parker, Steve realized.

Mary shook her head. “I -- come in. Come in.” She didn’t even seem to really notice Steve as she led them inside. Steve closed the door behind him and he took in the apartment.

They were in a living room that looked like it had seen better days and as Mary walked in she picked up a cushion and put it on the sofa and then picked up a baby blanket and a towel and she looked like she was going to pick up a few more things but Tony stopped her, grabbing her wrist to stop her. It was kind of strange to think that these two people -- that Tony and Mary had created Peter. He knew Tony’s history -- knew the kind of man that he used to be before Iron Man, but he was also aware of how different Mary had been for Tony.

“Hey, hey, don’t worry about the mess, Mary. I came to see him,” Tony said. “Just the once. I had to. And I know you told Pepper not to even tell me but she couldn’t hide this from me and I couldn’t not come because it’s...he’s my son, you know and--”
Mary stared at Tony for a long moment and then she lifted her hand and held up a finger at them. She set down the things she’d picked up in a corner and then she blinked at them and sighed. “Wait, I’ve had like an hour of sleep, Stark.”

“Mary?” Richard called out again.

Mary shook her head and then stared at Tony. “Just give me a minute. I’ll be right back.” Then, her gaze finally landed on Steve as if only just noticing him. “You look familiar,” she said, “did we work together in California?”

Steve shook his head but she had already turned away and moved further into the apartment.

“Right, so she’s probably not even going to remember this happened,” Tony said.

Tony was probably right which made things a little easier. Steve could see how nervous Tony was and looking around the apartment and all the signs to pointed to a baby living there seemed to be making it worse. The Parkers had all kinds of baby things lying about from blankets and clothing to boxes of diapers and even a car seat on a chair.

“He’s here,” Tony said. “In this apartment. My son is here.”

And he wasn’t where they came from.

“He is,” Steve said.

Tony reached for his hand again and they waited but Steve couldn’t even hear Mary or Richard moving around. He couldn’t hear Peter either for that matter.

Ten minutes passed. And then five more.

“Uh, do you think she actually forgot?” Steve asked.

“Possible,” Tony said. “We can go check.”

Together they walked further into the apartment. It was a nice apartment -- spacious enough for a couple and a baby. The living room was big and the open space of it led directly to a small dining space and then the kitchen which was visible enough. A hallway led further into the apartment towards the bedrooms and he followed Tony and Steve heard it before Tony did. Snoring. One of the doors was cracked open and as they neared it they could see two lumps on a bed and one of them was definitely Mary. They were fast asleep. She really must have been tired.

Tony motioned to him and Steve followed to another door that was also cracked open. The nursery.

---

From the hallway they could see most of the room because it was kind of small. It was lit up by a night light sitting atop a dresser. In the middle of the room was the crib complete with a mobile hanging over it. Despite pushing the door open wider, Tony hesitated. Peter was blocked from view, but he was just there inside the room. He was a baby. He was within Tony’s reach. Tony didn’t know what to do or say and he could feel Steve’s presence behind him but Peter’s was stronger and Tony had come all this way but he was nervous and shaky and he didn’t know what to do.

“Go on,” Steve whispered, pressing a hand to Tony’s lower back.

Tony glanced at him and Steve smiled encouragingly. Tony nodded and he walked in. He paused to
reach back for Steve who took his hand.

“Together?” Tony whispered.

Steve squeezed his hand and they walked towards the crib. Tony felt his entire body stiffen as he got closer. Peter was a tiny thing, almost lost in the middle of his crib under a small baby blanket. He was on his back, hands on either side of his face and he was so completely still. A wave of affection hit him and Tony felt overtaken and overwhelmed. He was looking at his son. That was Peter in front of him -- his son. A baby Peter. Tony could only look at him. He stood as close to the crib as he could and he just looked. Peter barely moved, but Tony could see that his chest was moving even if the movement was so miniscule.

It took him a while to reach into the crib. Not to pick Peter up but because Tony knew that looking at him wasn’t enough. He needed to be sure that he was real. Tony reached into the crib, gently touching one of Peter’s hands with a finger. He was so soft and small and fragile and Tony didn’t dare pick him up out of the crib for fear of hurting him. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from the baby and when suddenly he moved, Tony almost jumped back. Peter only stretched out one arm and then settled again and Tony held his breath watching him. Pictures had not done him justice.

“He’s so small,” Steve said in a whisper.

“He’s beautiful,” Tony whispered back and he wiped away a lone tear.

There was a tuft of hair on Peter’s head and his skin was more pink than anything and Tony didn’t think he would have ever been able to discern that this was his son. He would never have been able to tell him apart from other babies, and yet it was Peter. His Peter.

Peter moved a little again and then settled and Tony stroked a finger over Peter’s hand and arm. It was a few minutes later when Peter’s eyes opened. They weren’t brown yet but held a blue hue and he blinked a couple of times, face scrunching up adorably and if Tony hadn’t been in love before, he was then, as something between a yawn and a cry came out. The most adorable sound that Tony had ever heard.

“What did you hear that? It was so--”

Steve looked just as taken but he was also thinking a little clearer. “Is he -- does he look like he’s going to start crying? He’ll wake them if he does. Probably better if we’re not here.”

But Peter was right there -- his son was right there and Tony could touch him and see him and if his younger self were smarter it would be him there in that room admiring his son because Tony knew that he would never have wanted to stay away after seeing him.

Peter made another noise and Tony reached down and without even realizing what he was doing he slowly picked him up, trying to remember everything he knew about how to hold a baby. It wasn’t much, but Tony knew to support his head and that seemed like the important one. Peter fit into his hands perfectly and he was just so small that holding him wasn’t any kind of hardship. He hardly weighed a thing. Peter didn’t break out into tears or cries at being picked up and Tony cradled him to his chest and tried not to hold him too awkwardly. From the way that Peter was settled in his arms, it didn’t seem like he minded.

Steve looked over his shoulder and Tony leaned into him a little and Steve reached down around Tony towards Peter, running a finger over Peter’s chubby baby cheek.

“Hi,” Tony whispered. “I’m your dad, Peter, and you don’t know it yet, but you’re going to grow up
into someone amazing."

He rocked him a little just as Peter took hold of Steve’s finger.

“Oh,” Steve said and gasped.

Tony turned and looked at him and there was just so much love there in that gaze directed at Peter. Tony had called him theirs and he was. Peter was definitely theirs.

“We’re not going to meet for a long while, Peter,” Tony said. It was partly that he wanted to tell him that and then also that he wanted to remind himself of it. “It won’t happen until we’re both ready for it and it’s not a bad thing. I wish things had been different but they weren’t all bad. You’ll have your mom and dad and May and Ben. And then one day me. And Steve.”

Steve made a noise at that and Peter was still holding his finger. He was the cutest baby. The smartest baby. His baby.

“I love you, kiddo. So much. I’m going to do everything to make sure you’re okay. Everything has always been for you especially now.”

Peter sort of gurgled something, smacking his lips together and Tony knew he was tearing up again as he watched him. Tony shifted him in his arms, bringing him up a little higher and rocking him a little. Tony couldn’t imagine how things would have been different if the Tony from 2001 had bothered to actually meet Peter as a baby.

Steve pulled away, stepping a few feet back.

“What are you doing?”

“I want a picture,” Steve said. “For your Peter file.”

“Oh,” Tony said.

Steve pulled out his phone and he snapped a few pictures, making Tony shift Peter and move closer to the night light for better lighting. He had no idea how many pictures Steve took, but Tony was glad. He was glad to have something concrete to remind him of the moment even if he doubted that anything would ever actually make him forget it.

Tony had never understood the whole baby smell thing until he kissed Peter’s forehead and he smelled him. It was a real thing -- some sweet and light smell that made Tony want to linger and keep smelling him forever. He knew it was a hormonal thing for mothers -- a bonding thing.

“Steve, you have to smell him,” Tony whispered.

“Smell him?”

“Baby smell,” Tony said.

Steve moved closer, coming to stand in front of him and Peter and it was almost humorous how Steve had to lean into Peter.

“It’s a real thing,” Tony said. “Can you believe that?”

Steve shook his head. “I haven’t been around a baby since before I got the serum,” Steve admitted. “And even then...”
They were a pair of them. Peter moved, fussing a little and Tony knew as he did that it was time because Peter was a baby and he probably wanted to be fed and neither he or Steve could fix that. It was a matter of time before he started crying.

“Do you want to hold him before we go?” Tony asked.

Steve shook his head. “I -- no, no, I don’t think I could…”

“It’s not that hard,” Tony said. “And if you don’t take him I don’t think I’ll be able to leave him.”

Steve hesitated, but Tony wanted this for him. He wanted Steve to hold him and know the magic of holding a baby -- of holding a baby Peter. Handing him over took a moment and Peter didn’t enjoy the change, a few whimpers escaping his lips because they were both so awkward.

“Oh my god,” Steve said once Peter’s weight was settled in his arms. Tony missed it already, but he was trying to stop himself from reaching over and taking him again.

Watching Steve with Peter was something else entirely. Steve’s attention was completely taken up by Peter. He cooed at the baby, smiled and made faces and touched Peter’s face and hands and Tony felt overcome. He hadn’t known what it would feel like to see Steve with baby Peter. To break himself out of it he brought out his phone and took pictures of them. Steve didn’t even notice. Steve was ensnared by Peter, lost to Peter’s eyes and his small movements and Tony joined them, wrapping an arm around Steve’s waist and reaching to touch Peter’s tiny feet and toes. Everything about him was beautiful and tiny and Tony loved every inch of him.

“Get a picture of the three of us,” Steve said. “We can show our Peter once we get him back.”

And they would. They would get him back and they would show him the pictures. It would be a good laugh.

“Thank you,” Tony said, looking away from Peter and at Steve instead. “For the idea and for coming with me. For knowing I needed this.”

“Of course,” Steve said. Tony leaned over Peter to kiss Steve, not being able to help himself because Steve holding Peter -- Steve looking at Peter like he was the most wondrous thing in the world -- it did something for him.

When he pulled back, hand lingering on Steve’s cheek, his attention went back to Peter who was moving a little.

Peter made a noise. He whimpered and his face scrunched up again and this time it looked like no amount of rocking would calm him. It was their cue to leave as much as Tony hated it.

“Here, let me,” Tony said.

Steve let Tony take him, but he leaned down to kiss Peter’s cheek before Tony walked him back to the crib.

“Peter,” Steve whispered and didn’t seem to know what else to say for a moment. Peter sort of just stared back but he was whimpering a bit louder. It was going to turn into full on cries soon.

“I should--”

“Yeah,” Steve said. He touched Peter’s cheek again and then Tony moved back towards the crib. It was hard to let go, especially when Peter’s face told him that he was cranky and upset and maybe
hungry. Tony wanted nothing more than to resolve the problem.

“Love you, Pete,” Tony whispered and he kissed Peter’s cheek and forehead before setting him down in the crib. He wiped a tear away from his cheek and then braced himself to turn away.

This was the part that he’d been afraid of. It would be so easy to take Peter away and yet he couldn’t do that. He couldn’t take Peter from Mary and Richard and from the amazing childhood that he was going to have. Peter would grow up loved and happy and Tony didn’t want to take it away. Not that he could take him anywhere else. The Tony from 2001 was in no state to become a father and bringing Peter to the future was impossible and probably dangerous.

“Come on,” Steve said, pulling at his arm. “We should go.”

Tony nodded. He glanced at Peter one last time. Peter was fussing in the crib, whimpering and crying out. Tony let Steve pull him away and it was when they made it out into the hallway that the crying started in earnest. Tony left the door open a few inches and then Steve tugged him away. They heard someone getting up from the other room as they left the apartment entirely. It was only once they were in the hallway that Tony let himself slump into Steve.

“I know, Tony, I know,” Steve whispered. “I know it was hard.”

Tony clung to him and Steve held him back just as tight and Tony tried not to cry.

“He’ll be okay,” Steve said. “He’ll be okay. We know that. We know he’ll be just fine.”

“Until he loses his parents and his uncle and he gets bitten by a spider,” Tony said, wishing he could protect Peter from everything even when he knew he couldn’t.

“Tony. Tony. All of that -- he’ll be okay through that.”

“Until Thanos,” Tony said and he wiped away his tears. The memory was still so fresh and he hated thinking about it. “We have to get him back.”

“We will, Tony. We will.”

Chapter End Notes

I love how this chapter came out. It's for sure one of my favorites. And I will say that I also haven't spent time around a baby in years so I hope I didn't do too badly with baby Peter. And I am already working on editing the next one so hopefully it won't take too long. I'll probably have it up on Thursday. Thank you to everyone reading. You're all the best. :)

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(I will be adding another one as soon as I finish editing it.)
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Chapter 146

Chapter Notes

Just wanted to say that I am totally lying to you guys and there will be more than 159 chapters but I don't know the count quite yet so...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There was a heavy feeling that sort of lingered on him afterwards maybe because Tony felt weird about the whole thing or because he and Steve didn’t really speak after they got out of the building.

“Scott, mind driving?” Tony asked.

Steve glanced at him in surprise, but Tony really didn’t feel up to driving. He was sort of drained and Steve just took his hand after they both got into the back of the car and Tony leaned his head on Steve’s shoulder.

It was the radio that filled the car with noise -- old songs from 2001 and earlier that Tony barely recognized or remembered. His mind wasn’t really on the music anyway. He’d met a baby Peter. He’d held a baby Peter -- one that was just over three weeks old and was so absolutely beautiful and amazing that Tony doubted he would ever forget the way that baby looked or felt in his arms. Or how he smelled.

Once Peter was back, Tony would tell him all about it. Not just him and Steve going to meet baby Peter, but all of it. The time travel and everything they’d done to get him and everyone else back.

It was only once they were back at the warehouse that Scott finally spoke. “How did it go?”

“It was great -- I’ll never forget it. It was just hard too.”

Scott pat him on the shoulder but didn’t say anything.

They got back to their present time quickly enough after that. Tony made a note to check up on what the opening and closing of a time vortex in the same place repeatedly would do, and then he just led Steve to their room after parting ways with Scott.

“A part of me wants to go back there and just take him and raise him and love him and never let him out of my sight,” Tony said.

“I know,” Steve said. “Me too.”

“I just -- I lost so much time not being around for him. And I can’t actually change any of that -- I don’t want to. I don’t know what it might do or how it would change what Peter grows up to be but it still just--”

“It’s unfair,” Steve finished for him.

Tony nodded.

Steve led him to the bed and pushed him to sit. Tony just watched him while Steve moved around
undressing and getting ready for bed.

“Tony, you were a part of his life in the way that you could be. In the best most capable way that you could have been at the time. And you can’t beat yourself up about doing the right thing and letting Mary choose what was best for him.”

He did know that -- he was well aware of how badly the Tony from 2001 would have done with a baby. Or maybe he wouldn’t have been that bad -- Peter would have certainly changed him. Or that Tony could have damaged Peter and made him into a different person entirely because he just wasn’t prepared for fatherhood back in 2001. And then there was everything else too -- Afghanistan and Iron Man and all the things that would have put Peter in danger.

“Tony, I have to ask,” Steve said, sitting down next to him. Tony turned to face him.

“Yeah?”

“Is that why you wanted to adopt? It was -- you mentioned it in the message and we haven’t really talked about it.”

“What? The whole baby thing?” Tony asked and he shook his head at once. “No. Well, maybe at first when I had no hope of meeting Peter. But now I honestly can say that I don’t really care what age we adopt. I just, I like the idea of making this family bigger. Peter with a brother or sister and the two of us -- it was kind of fanciful.”

Steve shook his head. He was holding Tony’s hands in a tight grip. “I was so thrown when I heard that and I couldn’t imagine it, you know. Back in the 40s it wasn’t even a thought. Not really. Then waking up in the future killed all of that. I didn’t think I’d ever be more than just Captain America again but you changed that.”

“Steve, I--”

“No. Wait. I just want you to know that once everything is back to normal and Peter is -- our son is back -- adoption is definitely on the table for me.”

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“I miss K-9,” Peter said.

“K-9?” Bucky asked just as Sam nodded in agreement.

“My dog,” Peter said.

Bucky gave him a look. “And you couldn’t come up with a better name than K-9?”

“What, like Bucky? I mean, it’s kind of a good name for a dog. Maybe if I get another dog, I’ll name it after you.”

Bucky reached over to pinch his arm which actually kind of hurt. Peter rubbed at the spot and shot him a glare.

“It’s a pun because he’s a robot dog,” Sam said.

“Ah. That almost makes it better. Kind of,” Bucky said.

“And if you build another and name it Bucky, I claim dibs,” Sam said.
Peter laughed. “Red Wing not enough for you?”

“I hated that thing,” Bucky said.

Peter did miss K-9 and the way that he greeted him every time he came home and how absolutely dog like the robot dog was. Peter had played with him before leaving for school the morning of the trip, throwing a tennis ball for K-9 to chase and bring back. He’d almost been late leaving because of it.

He missed being home in general -- everything about it. Things had just seemed so simple -- his biggest worry had been the field trip to the tower. Peter had never expected to end up in space and to turn to dust and end up trapped in one of the stones.

“I always wanted a dog,” Peter said, “and my dad built one for me.”

“He’s really cool,” Sam said. “Basically a dog without all the annoying parts. He’s going to be there waiting for us to return. Maybe you’ll get to meet him, Barnes.”

They had to keep their hope alive and believe that they’d be going back. Time moved weirdly in the stone, and there was no knowing how much time had really passed so far, but no matter how long, they had to believe that his dad and the others would figure out where they were and that they would get them out.

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Tony woke up before Steve again a few hours later and it felt like deja vu to get up and leave Steve behind again. He got dressed and then walked towards the kitchen, ready for a cup of coffee, and wasn’t surprised to find Bruce already there and he wasn’t alone. Natasha was with him.

Bruce was in the middle of cooking something that smelled wonderful while Natasha leaned against the counter next to him, holding a cup of steaming tea or coffee -- Tony couldn’t tell.

“He’s going to be fine, Natasha,” Bruce said. “He’s just grieving like everyone else. He lost his whole family.”

“You didn’t see him when I found him. It was like he was someone else entirely. And he was out there on his own chasing on cold leads on some bad guys like that was going to help anyone. I guess he just needed something to do. I don’t know.”

Tony stepped into the kitchen. “I better hope you’re making enough for me,” Tony said.

Bruce laughed. “I’m making enough for Thor.”

“Hi, Tony,” Natasha said, she moved to his side, wrapping her arms around his middle, her cup still in her hand.

“So, you found him? You brought him home?” Tony asked.

“I had to sedate him,” Natasha said.

She looked tired and sad. Tony rubbed a hand over her back. She leaned her head on his shoulder for a few seconds before she pulled back entirely, sipping at her drink again.

“He’s not taking it well,” Natasha said. “I think the past few years have been hard on him. Fury and his missions and being on house arrest. He got back home from a mission to see them disappear and
he hates that he wasn’t there earlier -- that he was on a Shield mission instead of with us. With them.”

Tony was probably the only one out of them that could understand what Clint was going through. It was different when it was your kids. Different than losing friends, different than losing family members -- it was a pain that Tony would never wish on anyone. And Clint had lost more than just one child. His wife too. Having just gone back to see Peter, Tony felt even more motivated to keep working on getting everyone back.

“Did you tell him we’re working on it?” Tony asked.

“He doesn’t care. He’s -- I think he lost it a little. I don’t think he wants to let himself believe we can do it.”

“Well, he’s going to find it again,” Tony said. “Even if he’s useless to us at the moment, I’m glad you brought him back. He shouldn’t be alone.”

He went about getting himself his cup of coffee and then poured another for Steve. They needed to get on planning how to get the next stone. There were so many people that probably had lost everything just like Clint and they needed to get a move on getting the stones and bringing everyone back.

“I think we need to start getting our plan for the next stone. I’ll go get Steve.”

When he got back to his and Steve’s room, Steve had rolled onto Tony’s side of the bed entirely, but the smell of the coffee and Tony walking into the room seemed to wake him up because he blinked slowly and Tony just smiled and watched him until Steve stretched out an arm and his eyes found him.

“Hey, Sunshine. I think it’s time we get back to work.”

“How are you so awake right now?” Steve asked. “What time is it?”

“Early. But come on, Bruce has breakfast on and Nat is back.”

Steve sat up. “Nat’s back?”

Tony nodded. He extended Steve’s coffee to him once he was on his feet, but Steve’s hand landed over Tony’s and he leaned over to kiss Tony before taking cup from him.

“Hi,” Steve said.

Tony smiled and hummed.

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“What if we go for the Time Stone?” Steve asked.

They were in the conference room again and Tony had images and video from BARF up all relating to the Mind Stone. The thing with the Mind Stone was that it had shown up when Loki did and while they could try and go back to 2012 again, Tony felt a little better about finding it elsewhere. There was just the problem of Hydra being in possession of it for so long.

“Nope. The Mind Stone has to be first. You did not meet Strange, Steve. He will not allow us to take that stone without a fight. He’s the protector of the Time Stone and he takes that absolutely seriously.”
“Exactly,” Steve said, “so he’ll understand time travel. We can explain it to him.”

Tony shook his head and then he looked towards Bruce. “Tell him, Bruce, tell him how hard it will be to convince Strange to do anything. He won’t believe us and even if he does he won’t want to part with the stone.”

“Well neither did you and we figured that out,” Steve said.

“Yeah, when I had to knock myself out,” Tony said.

Steve rolled his eyes, but there was fondness there. “You didn’t seem particularly remorseful about it at the time.”

Tony shrugged his shoulders. That had had more to do with how Steve had been looking at that other Tony and how obvious it had been that Steve didn’t want to hurt the Tony from 2012. It was a little bit silly considering that it was him in the past -- but Tony just hadn’t liked it.

“And if he doesn’t want to part with it then we just bring him along, then,” Steve said. “Would that be so bad?”

At that Tony actually laughed and Bruce gave him a reprimanding look. Tony had to remember that Steve had never even met Strange and that Bruce had dealt with him for an hour at the most. Neither had gone to space with the guy. Not to mention that plucking someone out of time would have consequences.

“It’s not an entirely bad idea,” Bruce said.

Tony shook his head at once. “But it is,” he said. “Even if we’re not making a mess of our own timeline by taking him out of it, he’s still the head wizard or whatever and that would probably have some sort of major impact in at least the branch timeline created if we took him.”

“So we return him from where we take him,” Steve said.

It was just the three of them in the conference room seeing as everyone else was still sleeping and Natasha had chosen sleep over staying up with them and planning. Tony had realized how tired she was, then, because Natasha was not one to miss anything if she didn’t have to. Her search for Clint had really taken it out of her.

“He would drive us all crazy,” Tony said. “I already spent more than enough time with him.”

Steve sighed. “I’m just saying that we can’t make that stone be the last stone we get and that it might be worth it to have someone that knows how to use it on our side.”

Tony shook his head and when he looked at Bruce, Bruce just sort of shrugged as if he had no opinion on the matter so Steve just sighed.

“Fine. So we go for the Mind Stone, then. But afterwards we’re going to have to deal with the Time Stone.”

“We’ll deal with it when we get to it,” Tony said and then he pulled up one of the videos and Tony knew it was something from Steve’s memories from when he’d been working with BARF.

It was just after they had all left the quinjet and Clint had gotten patched up. Tony remembered how weird that time had been. He and Pepper had been breaking up. Tony had all but given up on ever getting to meet Peter. And then there had been those visions from Wanda. They had been splintering
from within even then.

Tony and Bruce had taken the scepter to the workshop and it was obvious seeing things from Steve’s perspective that Steve had had no idea that they were going to do more than keep it there. And then, the scepter would remain in the workshop.

“This one is going to be more delicate,” Tony said. “There’s only a narrow window of time when we can take it undetected. Bruce and I were working on it constantly.”

They watched something from Bruce’s perspective next and it was so clear that he and Bruce had barely left the lab since they had arrived back. They had been so obsessed. No, not them. He had been obsessed. Scared and sure that they would need some sort of protection from alien threats. The only time they finally gave up on it was the night of the party and Ultron had of course formed during the party.

“What about taking it before we bring it to the tower?” Bruce asked.

“We’d be facing Hydra,” Tony said. “We would know where to go now but it’s not likely we’ll see Hulk any time soon and I don’t want to go into a fight that we could avoid entirely.”

“And before it made it to Sokovia,” Bruce said.

“We couldn’t find it anywhere, remember,” Steve said. “We were at it for months. We don’t know anything about what might need to happen or how the stone was used. Too many variables.”

He was right. Tony nodded. “Too many unknowns. If it had just gone to a vault this would be different but we have no idea how many hands it changed before we found it or what they did with it. We’ll just have to do it during the party. That’s a bit more controlled.”

Chapter End Notes

And we're getting into their second stone related trip. I'm writing and rewriting a lot of the next chapter which hopefully won't take me too long but I'm aiming to post monday or tuesday.

Check out my Endgame one-shots
(I added a new one earlier this week)
Come like/reblog this chapter and the masterpost on my tumblr.
Peter was on his back staring at the moving orange clouds when he heard Bucky talking to someone. It wasn’t Sam because Sam was on the ground next to Peter and he knew Bucky wouldn’t be so warm with just about everyone, so he lifted his head and found a teenage girl. She looked familiar but it wasn’t until he saw the man standing behind her that he knew. Shuri and T’Challa. Peter had never gotten to meet them, but he knew of them. Shuri had been communicating with his dad for ages but she had never had time to actually visit the tower. It was kind of a shame that she was in the stone with them because Peter imagined that if she had survived being dusted that she would have figured out how to get them out of the stone faster.

Peter sat up and Bucky turned towards him.

“Hey, look who I found,” Bucky said.

“You are Stark’s son,” T’Challa said.

Peter nodded. He stood up and extended his hand out to T’Challa. “Nice to meet you finally. Although, I did see you in Germany. We were on the same side.”

“Germany,” T’Challa said, frowning.

“Yeah, the airport thing.”

“Stark brought you along to that. What kind of father--”

“Brother, he’s Spider-Man,” Shuri said. “It’s obvious.”

T’Challa looked to his sister and then back at Peter. “Not to me.”

Shuri stepped forward then. “You’re actually really bad at keeping your identity hidden, you know. Although--” she looked to her brother “--maybe it isn’t obvious to everyone. I’m Shuri.”

“I know,” Peter said. “My dad’s told me a lot about you. I -- you’re impressive.”

Shuri grinned. “Thank you.”

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It was later in the day that they finally settled on a plan for getting the scepter. It was all going to be about timing. They wanted to avoid a fight of course, but Tony figured that it didn’t really matter if they did end up meeting their 2015 selves. They had already created an alternate reality with their last foray into the past so it wouldn’t be a big deal if they accidentally created another one. Tony kind of had to suppose that the very act of them being in the past could create an alternate reality.

“We have to go right when I’ve given up,” Tony explained. “When Bruce and I tried everything and nothing happened. Right when we were all getting ready for the party.”

“But that means we’re all walking around the tower,” Steve said.

Natasha looked around at all of them. “Yeah and as long as you don’t run into yourself does it
The trip was going to be him, Steve, Bruce, and Scott again. Natasha wanted to stay behind for Clint’s sake. Tony had gone to see him but he hadn’t woken up yet. They didn’t want to bring Rocket or Nebula along due to how shocking it might be for anyone to see them and Thor thought that it’d be pointless if he went with the way he looked. He was also sort of listless and depressed and Tony was worried about him. Thor had, after all, lost everything.

Tony told Rhodey and Pepper their plans over text and then sent a message to Carol to keep her up to date.

Instead of travelling back from the compound and driving to the tower, they went to the tower first to travel from there. In part it was because Bruce shared Tony’s fears that too many tachyon particles and residue from the time vortex in one place could make that spot unstable perhaps across time. Thor and Rocket had been wont to agree. Going to the tower also meant that they wouldn’t have to account for the travel time in the past and they wouldn’t have to sit around for a while like the last time.

Tony was getting so used to the sensation of time travelling that he barely registered how weird it felt anymore.

The good thing about sneaking in while everyone was getting ready for the party was that almost everyone was on their own floors. Tony remembered that after he and Bruce declared the whole thing pointless that he had gone straight to take a shower. He’d almost fallen asleep in the shower. They probably wouldn’t be running into a younger Tony Stark during this trip.

“Tonight is Jarvis’ last night,” Tony said when they got to the elevator and then he stopped.

They had made a mistake when it came to security measures before. If they got into the elevator Jarvis would greet them and although Jarvis might not immediately realize that there were duplicates around, it was still a possibility. It was a risk they were going to have to take, though. Short of taking the stairs their only other way would be from above and that would probably definitely alert Jarvis and with Jarvis the Iron legion.

“What is it?” Steve asked.

“Jarvis operates the elevator. So he’s bound to notice there are two of us in different places. Not right away but it’s possible.”

“We have to make it quick, then,” Bruce said. “In and out.”

“In and out,” Tony repeated.

Scott shrank down before they got in, landing on Tony’s shoulder. The elevator opened only once Tony pressed for it to -- Jarvis reading his biometrics.

“Good afternoon sir, Captain Rogers, Dr. Banner,” Jarvis said.

Hearing his voice again made Tony pause. It had been different when it was Vision using Jarvis’ voice -- eerie but different. Tony had gotten used to it.

“Penthouse floor, J,” Tony said and gulped.

The elevator started moving and then the doors opened and they stepped out. It was different. Tony had remodelled after Ultron’s destruction after the party and then also because of the break-up -- a
way to further remove the memories of him and Pepper. It was weird being back at what it had once been.

Tony followed Bruce towards the lab. The lights were dimmed but they could still see through the glass and the scepter was just there waiting for them. Bruce was the one to open the door and step inside. Tony followed but Steve stayed behind on look out.

Bruce dealt with bringing out the replica they were replacing it with while Tony picked up the scepter. It still felt weird to hold it, knowing how powerful and problem causing it was. It had messed with all of them back on the helicarrier and then it had gone on to give Wanda and her brother their powers before creating Ultron.

“Come on, let’s go,” Bruce said.

Tony nodded and he walked out with him.

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Steve stood watch, conscious of everything around him but there was no need. He could hear 2015 Tony in his bedroom, moving about, but he stayed there. Everyone else was probably just as busy in their own rooms and floors. It seemed like it was all going surprisingly well. Tony and Bruce came out of the lab with the scepter and all they needed was to get out of the tower and travel back.

Things, of course, couldn’t be that simple.

As soon as they were stepping towards the elevator, Jarvis seemed to have finally realized that there were a few doubles and the elevator wouldn’t open. Neither would the door to the stairs.

Tony motioned for him to move and blasted the door. It swung open. The alarm started blaring.

Steve reached back for Tony’s wrist and they were running.

“Holding on, thumbelina?” Tony asked.

“I’m -- I think I’m good,” Scott answered.

Tony tapped his arm as they went down another flight. “Take the stone,” he said. “You’ll make it down faster.”

The problem with being on the stairs was that the floors they were moving past belonged to The Avengers from 2015 and any of them could come out onto the stairs at any moment. Steve was reluctant to leave them behind, but he knew the stone was important enough for him to need to so he rushed down, taking the stairs faster than before and not looking back, not even when he heard Bruce gasp and Tony groan even though he wanted to run back.

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“Tony, what’s going on?”

Tony stared at 2015 Steve who looked not all that different than 2018 Steve. He’d thrown open the door to his floor and come to a stop in front of them with his serious Captain America face.

“Oh,” Tony said. “I -- I set that off accidentally.”

“Tony?” His Steve asked in his ear.

“We’re with you. The you from here,” Scott said -- being the only one that could respond.
“Shit. I -- I’ll come back for--”

Tony shook his head and Scott immediately said, “No. He doesn’t suspect anything.”

The Steve in front of them looked a little skeptical and Tony was sure that it wouldn’t be long before he realized that he wasn’t the Tony from 2015. Or that Bruce wasn’t the Bruce from 2015. They were both a little greyer and different. Older. More battle worn.

“So why are you on the stairs?”

“We -- we were doing a security check for the party later,” Bruce said.

Steve’s attention turned to Bruce and his eyes narrowed. “You look…”

Tony looked to Bruce and then back at Steve who was moving closer to Bruce to get a better look at him and Tony knew that Steve would notice that this Bruce looked nothing like the Bruce that he’d seen earlier that same day. Without knowing what else to do, Tony panicked and he grabbed Steve’s arm and when Steve turned to look at him, Tony surged forward, cupped his face to hold him in place and kissed him.

In 2015 before Ultron was created Tony hadn’t had any kind of inkling that Steve liked him in that way. He’d been in a sort of depressed rut over Peter -- self-sabotaging and so ready to give up Iron Man if he could finally meet his son and because it might mean keeping Pepper. Of course, he’d also wanted the world to be safe -- safe enough to not need him. But all along Steve had been there and it wouldn’t be until long after they dealt with Ultron that Tony would start to notice Steve and see him as more than just a friend and teammate. But Steve had told him once that he’d been crushing on Tony for longer than he’d even realized.

Steve froze for just seconds before he returned the kiss, pressing into Tony in a very familiar way and making a whining noise that almost distracted Tony. He still managed to reach over to Bruce to make him keep moving. He heard Bruce leaving and Steve must have as well because he broke the kiss, turning. Tony pulled him back, smiling up at Steve.

“Hey,” he said.

“Tony what--”

“Just kinda felt like doing that. I -- I have to go. We have a party to get ready for.”

For good measure, Tony kissed him again, breaking the kiss short and then booking it down the stairs.

“What’s going on?” His Steve asked.

“Nothing. Nothing. We’re coming,” Tony said.

“That was one way to throw him off,” Bruce said. He sounded a little winded.

“It worked, didn’t it?” Tony asked.

It felt like an age before he made it down the stairs. Scott went back to his normal size as soon as they were in the parking garage and Bruce seemed to have made it down just a few minutes before they did. Steve stood there waiting, holding the scepter, but he passed it to Scott when Tony appeared.
“Tony what happened? You okay?”

“I’m good. Fine. Had to distract you so I did something that will probably result in a lot of confusion for him and me but it worked. We should go.”

“Confusion? How…”

Bruce chuckled. “Tony kissed him.”

Steve’s eyes widened. “You what?”

Tony pat his arm. “Hon, it was you. I just hope the me from this time doesn’t hurt him.”

“He won’t,” Steve said.

Chapter End Notes

I've been trying to write this chapter since I posted the last but just haven't had the time and then Good Omens came out so I've been screaming about that ever since and just have to say that everyone should watch the show and also read the book. It's amazing. But anyway, got this written and edited today among doing a million other things and finally posting it.

Next chapter shouldn't take me too long and will probably be up on Friday.

Check out my Endgame one-shots
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